

Guide to this Air Quality Action Plan

This plan is about you and your family's health

Even though air quality has improved a lot in recent years, air pollution remains the third cause of preventable disease in our borough. It affects everyone but especially the young, the elderly, and those with heart or breathing problems and other illnesses. We are grateful to the thousands of residents who have already done their bit by choosing to walk, cycle or take public transport, or bought electric cars, heat pumps or solar panels. We need to do more to improve everyone's health. So our plan now is to reduce air pollution further by creating the best local environment in London.

Our overall goal

We are being realistic, we know we can't solve every problem. But we will follow best expert advice on how to reduce pollution further. To protect people's health we've set a target to get air pollution to low levels everywhere in the Borough by 2029¹. We'll use all the means we have to achieve this. For things we don't control, we'll lobby Government and others to try to make the changes needed.

Some people and places need special attention

As part of the Plan we will target the people that need the most help and the places that need the most improvement. Children and schools, people with medical conditions and older people will be addressed in the Plan. We'll work with teachers and the NHS so they can help these people too. Richmond Town and roads around Chalker's Corner get targeted actions, as do local shopping areas where people gather.

Getting around without polluting

A lot of air pollution in the Borough comes from buses, lorries, vans and cars. So we will try to get more of the buses passing through the most polluted areas switched to electric. We want more people to feel safe walking and cycling so more people will do so, so Richmond Town will be improved to make it a nicer, healthier place to spend time, in turn increasing footfall for local businesses. There will be better foot and cycle paths, more bicycle parking, and more charging for electric cars. We'll make similar improvements in Twickenham, Teddington, Barnes and East Sheen, and other areas where air pollution is a concern. We'll provide bicycle, e-bike and cargo bike rental schemes in many of these locations. And we'll expand our work to reduce engine idling using new council powers.

Protecting our school children

Children are especially vulnerable to air pollution, which can harm their lungs for life. So our plan includes a programme aimed at helping children in the borough. We'll improve air quality around schools by reducing traffic with School Streets, promoting active travel to and from schools, and promoting electric buses. Our Air Pollution Detectives workshops will teach primary school children about air pollution and how to protect themselves. We'll assess air quality inside schools and look for funding to install air filtration systems if necessary. We'll promote Play Streets, where side streets are closed to traffic, allowing children to play safely. This work will create a healthier environment for children to grow and thrive.

Working with the NHS and older and vulnerable people

Older people and people with certain medical conditions are also especially vulnerable to air pollution. We will work with children with asthma and their parents to teach them how to reduce their own exposure. Doctors and nurses treat many patients who are vulnerable to pollution, so we will train them to teach patients about air pollution and self-protection. Air pollution can be a problem indoors too, so we'll buy equipment to measure it indoors then target action. And we'll develop better maps of which places need the most improvement so we can adjust our plans as we go along.

Tackling Climate Change and Air Pollution Together

A lot of work to stop climate change getting worse also reduces air pollution. So our plan to be a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030 will help a lot. We will replace polluting gas boilers in our Council buildings with clean systems, and install better insulation. We'll do the same for buildings we lease out and we'll try to help less well-off people do the same in their homes.

Collaborating and communicating with residents

We want people to understand how to protect themselves from air pollution and avoid making more. A programme of information and events will explain this and more, working through community groups in particular and including updates about how well our plans are doing. And we'll encourage commercial kitchens and restaurants to reduce their pollution with a new rating and awards scheme.

Engaging with the community

Engaging our community is essential to improve air quality, so we'll implement a comprehensive communications programme. We'll collaborate with schools and the NHS on self-protection measures. We'll engage drivers, driving instructors and logistics companies about engine idling. We'll organise events promoting clean air and sustainability, addressing topics such as wood burning stoves. By providing information and making sustainable choices easier, we'll encourage people to make small changes to improve air quality. We'll keep residents informed and

involved throughout the process and we seek you and the communities help to work with us.

Getting active in our parks and green spaces

Getting active is really good for your health, and that can help protect you from air pollution. We're working to get more people more active in every way with our plan Richmond Moves for a Healthier Borough. Our parks have some of the cleanest air so we'll encourage their use. To protect this we plan to make events there sustainable, improve the management of open spaces, and to plant more trees. We'll try to provide power outlets and batteries for traders and ice cream vans so they don't need to use diesel generators. And our Healthy Waterways program will try to cut emissions from houseboats. These efforts aim to create a healthier, more active community that makes the best of the clear air in our green spaces.

Protecting air pollution in the future

The Council aims to eliminate air pollution long-term and has identified key issues to address. These include pressing for tighter national targets based on WHO guidelines, investigating environmentally friendly alternatives to cremation, and protecting people from ozone as it increases due to climate change. We continue to oppose the expansion of Heathrow Airport. We will monitor emerging evidence on future threats, such as whether the weight of EVs leads to increases in particulate pollution. And we will continue to monitor local air quality to the highest standards to make better decisions on where and how to protect it. In all of our actions we will use Council powers where possible or robustly challenge outside organisations to help.

This plan will improve your health and our neighbourhoods

This plan will help to reduce air pollution in our borough to safer levels by 2029. It will make our towns, parks and neighbourhoods nicer, healthier and more sustainable places to live and enjoy, for all of us.

¹ In technical terms that means on average below 20µg/m³ of NO₂ and below 10µg/m³ of PM_{2.5} each year.