



Getting Waltham Forest Active Together

A million more days

to do the things we love

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Getting Waltham Forest Active Together

We are committed to making Waltham Forest a borough where every person has the opportunity and environment they need to lead active, healthy, and fulfilling lives. This means enabling residents of all ages to move more, live well, and feel a strong sense of belonging in their communities – regardless of background, income or ability.

Our strategy builds on the borough's wider ambition to make Waltham Forest a great place to live and age well. It sets out how we'll take a more joined-up, preventative approach – working with residents, partners and local organisations to reduce the barriers that stop people getting active, and to embed activity into everyday life.

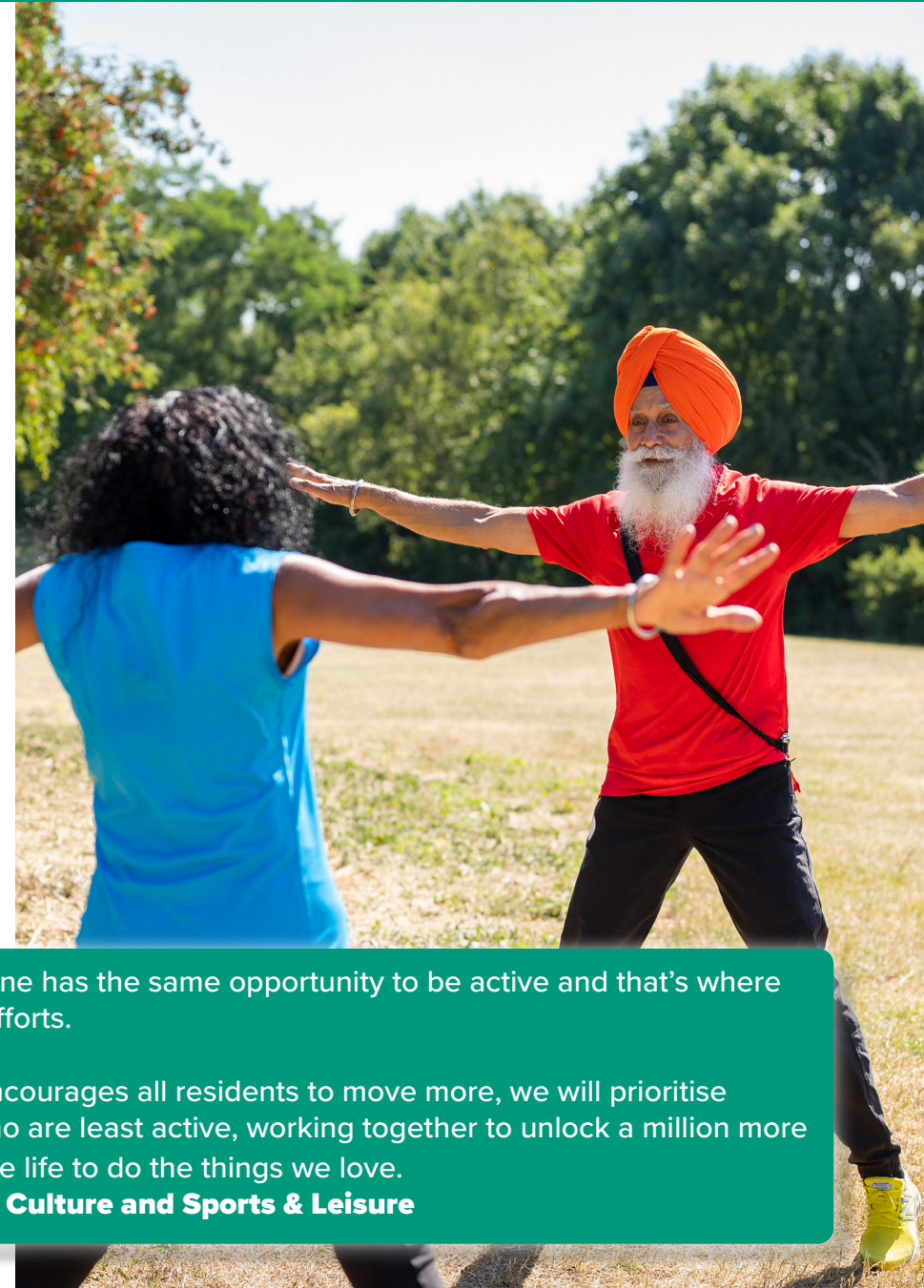
Physical activity is one of the most powerful ways we can support prevention and early intervention. It improves physical and mental health, boosts confidence, strengthens community connections, and helps address challenges before they escalate. Increasing activity levels has a profound impact on wellbeing and extends the number of healthy years people live.



We know not everyone has the same opportunity to be active and that's where we must focus our efforts.

While our mission encourages all residents to move more, we will prioritise support for those who are least active, working together to unlock a million more days of healthy active life to do the things we love.

Cllr Doré: Libraries, Culture and Sports & Leisure



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Waltham Forest is a vibrant and diverse borough with a **strong universal and existing targeted sport and physical activity offer**, including fantastic parks, leisure facilities and an active voluntary and community sector. From leisure centres and playing fields, cycle paths and walking routes to community clubs and grassroots groups, these spaces are well used by many and are a real asset to our borough.

However, we know that access and participation are not equal. Inactivity rates in Waltham Forest remain persistently too high, contributing to widespread health inequalities in the borough. Data from Sport England Active Lives Report shows that **25% of residents are inactive (doing less than 30mins of activity a week)**.

Going from inactive to active (up to 150 mins per week) can increase healthy life expectancy by up to 3 years

(Vitality Research 2025)

The Marmot Report - A Fairer, Healthier Waltham Forest (2022), highlights that some residents experience unfair and avoidable differences in their health because of where they live, their income, ethnicity, gender and other wider factors - the social determinants of health. There are **inequalities in life expectancy of up to 7.6 years** between some wards in Waltham Forest. Inactivity is both a consequence and a driver of those inequalities.

Evidence shows that encouraging inactive people to take up some form of physical activity has the biggest possible impact on their health and wellbeing and helps to reduce a range of health risk factors and therefore helps to increase their healthy life expectancy.

Now is the moment to act

Over the next five years, our **bold mission, 'a million more days of healthy life to do the things you love'** will be the at the heart of everything we do. Together with residents, communities, and partners, we will open up opportunities that get Waltham Forest active, connected, and thriving.

The impact of even small changes is profound: just one or two active days a week can add over two years to your life. Providing more time to spend with family, more adventures, more joy and more years to do the things you love with the people you love.

Getting active is about more than sport and exercise, it means creating the right conditions for activity in everyday life safe streets, welcoming spaces, affordable and inclusive activity offers and a sense of belonging. Our Active Places, Active Communities and Active Lives framework sets out how we will achieve this, working together to deliver the activities, interventions and brilliant facilities needed to ensure everyone can lead active and healthy lives.

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A vibrant, active place to live

We are starting in a strong place as Waltham Forest has a brilliant universal sports and leisure offer and excellent neighbourhood infrastructure through cycle and walking lanes and green spaces.

Over the past 10 years, investment through Enjoy Waltham Forest has transformed the way we can walk and cycle, making active travel more accessible, our roads safer and our air cleaner for all. We have 7 community leisure facilities and 13 sports grounds as well as over 50 parks and open spaces.

Between the Council, GLL (the Council's leisure operator) and our active community groups, we already deliver a range of weekly targeted physical activity sessions and programmes across the borough at our own sport and leisure facilities, libraries, green spaces and GLL Leisure Centres.

We have a lot to build on, but there is much more to do. This strong foundation will form the basis of our approach to engage and support more residents to access opportunities to be active.

Our Active Communities

104 Sessions delivered each week

49 Different types of activities

19 Feel Good Walks per week

38 Sessions delivered by community partners

Our Active Places

-  **36** sport and leisure facilities
-  **88** green spaces
-  **25** parks and outdoor gyms
-  **55km** of dedicated bike lanes



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Our Vision

Every person has the opportunity and environment they need to lead active, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Our Mission

A million more days of healthy active life to do the things we love.

Our Aims

Empowered & Active Residents

Creating space for residents to shape solutions and share insight, in collaboration with local partners

Healthy Life for Longer

Being more active will mean more years of healthy life for residents (driven by our mission)

Address Inequality

An inclusive and accessible offer for all residents

Prevention First

Building confidence and preventing poor health and isolation before they happen

Our Approach

Active Places

Creating neighbourhoods where everyone has space to move, play and connect

Active Lives

Helping more people feel welcome, supported and motivated to get moving

Active Communities

Working alongside our communities to shape, deliver and sustain a more active borough

How We Will Measure Success

REDUCING INACTIVITY BY 2030

REDUCED inactivity in Waltham Forest
INCREASED walking and cycling levels
MORE people participating in activities
MAINTAINING our strong universal offer

A MILLION MORE DAYS

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Our shared mission is to create a million more days of healthy active life to do the things we love

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Our mission will support 1000 residents who are currently inactive to start doing 30 - 150 minutes of weekly activity so they can gain 1 million more days to spend doing things they love with loved ones.

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Research shows that going from an inactive lifestyle to an active one can have significant impact on life expectancy. Even getting active over one or two days can increase healthy life by two years. Together, we will unlock these days by supporting each other to find movement that is enjoyable and accessible, from walking to work, gardening, to chair yoga at home or swimming.

We will start with better targeting of our existing offer and enhanced partnership working, and then grow into improved commissioning and intervention design.

We will launch our Million More Days campaign in early 2026 with new activities and opportunities, tips for getting active and improved promotion of the amazing existing offer.

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**Our mission
'a million more
days'
will encourage
residents to be
active but will
specifically focus
initially on three
key cohorts**

Low Income Groups

There is a direct correlation between deprivation, inactivity and poor health outcomes with people living in the UK's most deprived areas twice as likely to be inactive.

Women Aged 45-55

In 2024, long-term sickness is the top reason for women being out of work in the UK.

Inactivity levels in this age group generally drop due to womens' health factors.

Older People Aged 65+

This age group are at particular risk of falls due to reduced strength and mobility.

OUR APPROACH

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To turn our ambition into action, we've set clear priorities that will guide how we will deliver over the next five years. These priorities reflect what our residents told us matters most and where we can make the biggest difference together.

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Active Places

Creating neighbourhoods where everyone can move, play and connect

Waltham Forest has fantastic parks, leisure centres and community spaces, but not everyone feels welcome or able to use them.

We want every local space to support healthier, more connected lives.



Active Lives

Helping more people to feel welcome, supported and motivated to get moving

Physical activity should feel possible, joyful and inclusive for everyone, every day. But barriers like cost, confidence and access remain too common.

We want everyone to feel they can live healthy active lives.



Active Communities

Working with residents and local groups to co-create and sustain an active borough

We know the most meaningful change happens when we work together. That's why we're committed to partnering with residents, local organisations and community groups to co-create opportunities that make being active easier, more welcoming and more inclusive.



OUR COMMITMENTS

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To meet our key aims, '**Empowered and Active Residents, Healthy Life For Longer, Address Inequality and Prevention First**', we are committing to the following actions over the next five years:

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Active Places

WE WILL

Make better use of shared spaces, including parks, schools and community centres

Promote and enhance active travel routes, providing safer walking, cycling and wheeling links

Improve access to green and blue spaces, building in movement, nature and climate resilience

Promote bookable facilities, unlocking local pitches, courts and halls

Support Green Gyms, combining movement with purpose and social connection

Ensure provision of open and accessible offer at GLL leisure facilities

Active Lives

WE WILL

Design inclusive programmes, especially for women, older adults, low-income and disabled residents

Grow free and low-cost activities including walking groups, local sports, cycling

Support everyday movement, from active travel to home-based options

Link activity to wellbeing, via Health Champions, social prescribing and more

Create intergenerational opportunities, encouraging families and all ages to move together

Active Communities

WE WILL

Co-design offers with communities, shaping activities around real needs

Strengthen partnerships across health, education, culture and sport

Improve communication with clearer messaging and open feedback

Build capacity with funding, training and toolkits for local leaders

Use celebrations, festivals and community events such as cultural events, fairs and neighbourhood street parties, to raise awareness, reach new audiences and show how physical activity can be fun and social

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More people living active, connected and healthy lives

Over the next five years we want to see more people in Waltham Forest living active, connected and healthy lives; wherever they live, whatever their background and however they choose to move.

Whether it's a short walk, a football match, a dance class or a session in the park, every active day counts.

We will measure activity via the Sport England Active Lives survey, participation data and our Resident Insight Surveys.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE



REDUCED
inactivity in Waltham Forest



INCREASED
walking and cycling levels



MORE
people participating in activities



MAINTAINING
our strong universal offer



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How to find out more

This strategy is a shared document to focus on prevention, encourage inclusion and create the right conditions for everyone to enjoy the benefits of being active.

Whether you are a resident, a community group, a school, health partner or leisure provider, there is a role for you to play.

Together we can make Waltham Forest a place where everyone can live and age well – and where being active is part of everyday life.

FIND OUT MORE



Waltham Forest Sports & leisure Instagram
@WFFeelGood



Our Website

www.walthamforest.gov.uk/libraries-arts-parks-and-leisure/sports-and-leisure-centres



