



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Simon Clarke MP

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF

Rebecca Pow MP

Minister for the Environment

**Department for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs**

2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF

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Dear Colleague,

Public access to tips and toilets

Firstly, we wish to express my most heartfelt thanks for the invaluable work you are doing for communities across the country to protect the environment, public amenities and people's health.

We are writing to draw your attention to the Government's position on household waste recycling centres and municipal public toilets, which we know are issues that are of ongoing public concern.

We are grateful for your hard work to re-open tips in the last few weeks and are aware that this has not been without challenges. I hope that the guidance published by the Government and relevant legislative changes have helped in your local decisions, and that you can continue to deliver these services. There is no reason in law why such sites cannot be open and where possible, local authorities should seek to retain access to waste services for their residents to dispose of waste.

While the majority of councils have opened tips, there is evidence that some have applied excessively tight restrictions on public access. Of course, it is important to maintain social distancing measures and ensure the health and safety of both the workforce and householders. Councils must also consider the harm to public health and local amenity from fly-tipping which is unfortunately fuelled by lack of access to responsible disposal of waste, and the harm from rubbish piling up in or near people's homes. Therefore, councils should avoid unnecessarily tight restrictions like a limited number of pre-booked slots. Where there are opportunities to improve access and to help householders dispose of waste responsibly then we would encourage you to keep measures under review and to extend access where this can be done safely.

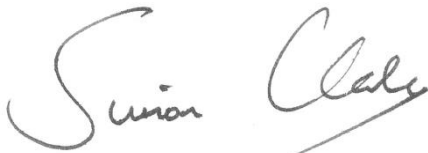
We also want to thank those of you who are keeping open public toilets. Public hygiene is of the utmost importance, especially during the coronavirus pandemic, and enabling residents to access toilets safely is vital. Handwashing is an important activity to help prevent the spread of the virus. Closed toilets may also impact disproportionately on certain groups who for health reasons rely on access to public toilets to be able to leave their homes. They can also make life difficult for young families and people who work outside.

If you have toilets that are still shut, then we strongly urge you to refer to advice on measures that can be taken to open toilets in a safe way that was included in COVID-19 guidance published by Government and which we have included in the Annex below this letter.

The combination of the hotter weather and the Government's push to support outdoor hospitality has reinforced the need for public access to toilets. Again, councils should consider the harm to public health and the local environment caused by people relieving themselves in public. Public authorities should also consider the equality implications of those with particular health needs who need to use the toilet more often.

In both cases, this is not to condone or tolerate irresponsible and illegal behaviour, but councils have a key role in helping prevent such problems thanks to the provision of comprehensive municipal services. It is beneficial to public health to ensure proper access to tips and toilets.

Thank you once again for the work you are doing to support your communities and businesses.



SIMON CLARKE MP
Local Government Minister



REBECCA POW MP
Environment Minister

Guidance for councils on opening public toilets

Public toilets, portable toilets and toilets inside premises should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency and to avoid touching your face, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.
- Consider the use of social distancing marking in areas where queues normally form, and the adoption of a limited entry approach, with one in, one out (whilst avoiding the creation of additional bottlenecks).
- To enable good hand hygiene consider making hand sanitiser available on entry to toilets where safe and practical, and ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or hand driers) are available.
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider use of disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces.
- Keep the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open where appropriate.
- Special care should be taken for cleaning of portable toilets and larger toilet blocks.
- Putting up a visible cleaning schedule can keep it up to date and visible.
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.