

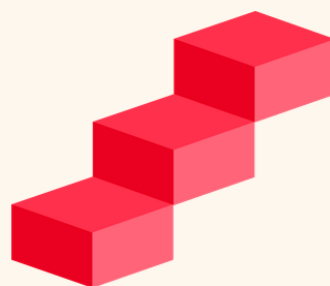
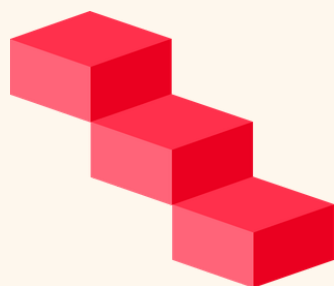
UPROUTE MAGAZINE

Save Our Spaces Campaign: Community Space Access Standard

-1. Overview

This campaign proposes the introduction of a Community Space Access Standard in England, placing a legal duty on local authorities to ensure that all residents have access to a publicly available community space within their local area.

Community spaces, including centres, halls, libraries and creative hubs, play a vital role in supporting mental health, recovery, social cohesion and community resilience. However, there is currently no legal requirement to ensure these spaces exist or remain accessible.



This policy seeks to address that gap by establishing a clear, enforceable standard for access to community infrastructure.

-2. The Problem

Despite recognition in planning policy that community facilities are important, provision is inconsistent and declining.

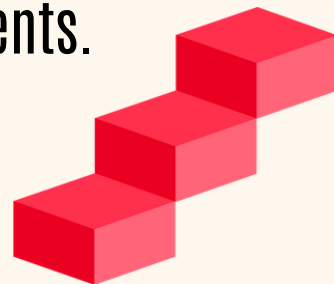
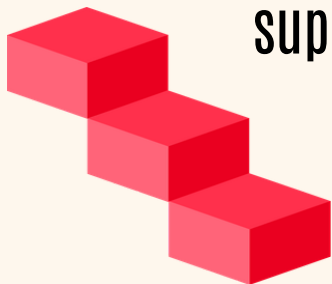
-There is no statutory minimum standard for access to community space

-Local authority funding for youth and community services has significantly decreased

-Hundreds of community facilities, libraries and day centres have closed in the past decade

-Many support groups and community organisations struggle to find affordable, accessible venues

As a result, individuals – particularly those experiencing addiction, homelessness, mental health challenges or social exclusion – are increasingly left without safe, supportive environments.



-3. Proposed Legislative Change

The campaign calls for the introduction of a new statutory duty requiring local authorities to meet a minimum standard of community space provision.

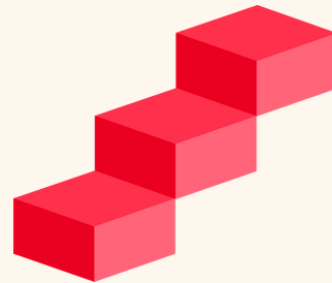
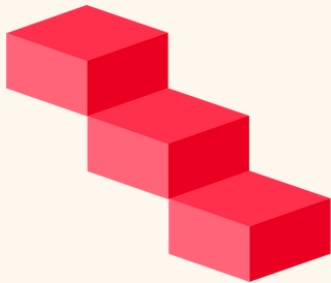
Core Requirement

Every resident must have access to a free or low-cost community space within a 15-minute walk (approximately one mile) of their home, or via accessible public transport.

-4. Definition of Community Space

For the purposes of this legislation, a community space is defined as:

A publicly accessible, multi-use venue that supports social, cultural, educational or recovery-focused activities.



-5. Responsibilities of Local Authorities

Local authorities would be required to:

5.1 Assess Provision

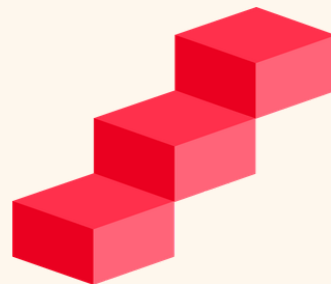
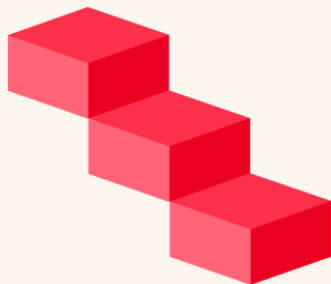
**Map existing community spaces within their area
Identify gaps in provision based on population density
and accessibility**

5.2 Ensure Access

**Maintain or develop sufficient community spaces to meet
the 15-minute access standard
Work in partnership with charities, voluntary
organisations and community groups**

5.3 Protect Existing Spaces

**Prevent the unnecessary loss of community facilities
Where closure or redevelopment occurs, ensure
equivalent replacement provision within the same local
area**



-6. Funding Mechanisms

To support implementation, funding would be drawn from:

Developer contributions (Section 106 agreements / Infrastructure Levy)

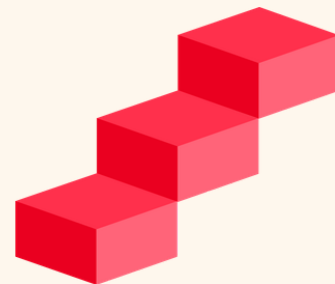
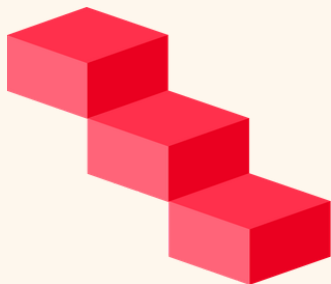
Local authority budgets allocated to community services
Partnerships with voluntary and third-sector organisations

National funding streams, where appropriate
This ensures that community infrastructure grows alongside housing and population increases.

-7. Alignment with Existing Policy

This proposal builds on existing frameworks, including:
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which promotes healthy and inclusive communities
The Localism Act 2011, which enables protection of community assets

NHS social prescribing initiatives, which rely on community-based activities



However, it goes further by introducing a clear, enforceable standard, rather than guidance alone.

-8. Expected Outcomes

The introduction of a Community Space Access Standard would:

- Improve access to support networks and recovery services
- Reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Support mental health and wellbeing
- Strengthen local communities and social cohesion
- Provide preventative benefits in areas such as crime reduction and public health

-9. Conclusion

Community spaces are essential social infrastructure, yet their provision is currently inconsistent and unprotected.

By introducing a legal standard for access, this policy ensures that no individual is left without a place to go, connect, or rebuild their life.

