

# Cool Spaces

Community venues and heat resilience in London

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# COOL SPACES

## What is it?

- GLA-managed register of indoor venues to help Londoners cope during hot weather.
- Essential standards to qualify:
  - seating space
  - free access
  - drinking water
  - guaranteeing lower temperature than outdoors (through shading, ventilation and/or AC)



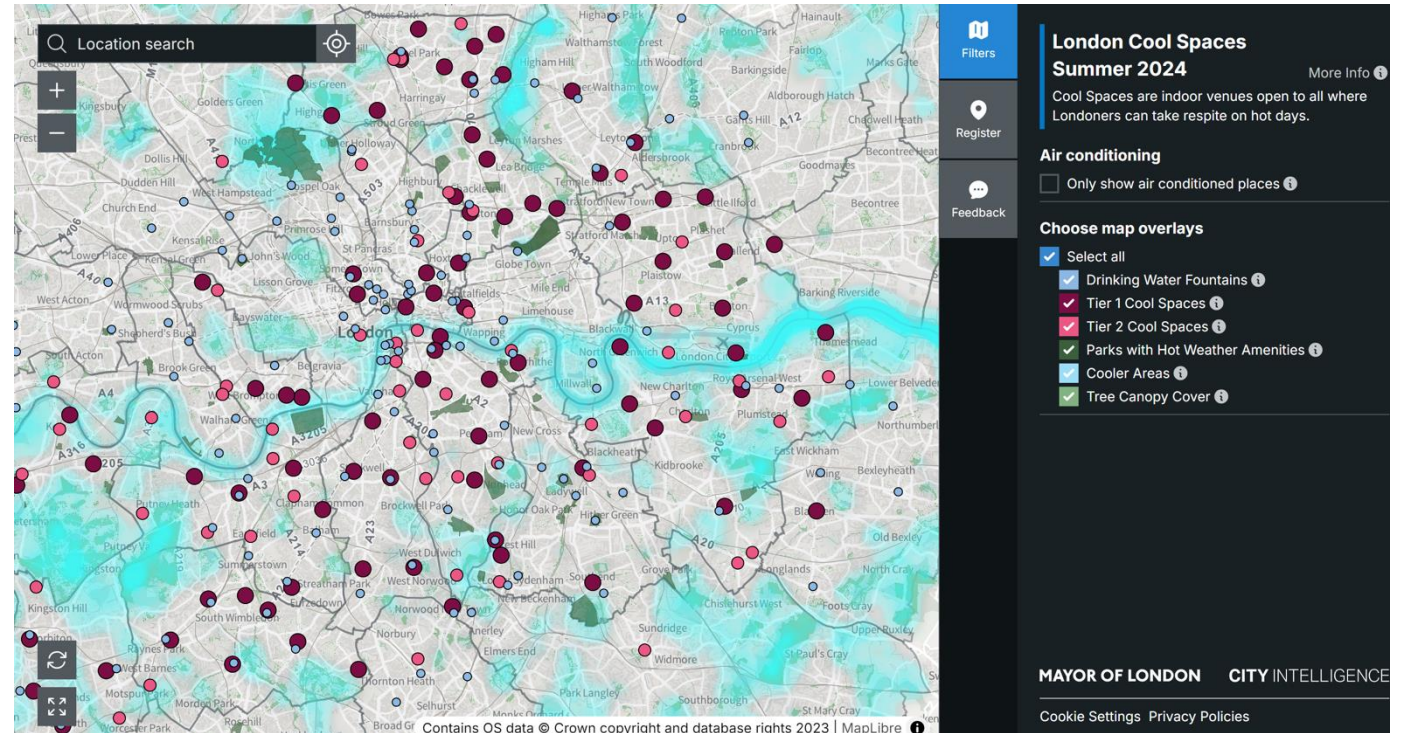
Cool spaces are indoor spaces for Londoners to shelter from the sun, cool down, rest and take respite on hot days.

They may help reduce health risks from hot weather. However, they are not designed to support vulnerable individuals on hot days, or a medical care substitute if someone is

# COOL SPACES

## What is it? - User

- Customisable map
- UX and functionalities:
  - layers
  - complementary data (e.g. canopy cover)
  - 'find a space' search string
  - phone-use optimised



# GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

## Mobilising local energies

- GLA is a 'strategic' metropolitan authority coordinating 33 municipalities.
- Each LB owns buildings and has sector-specific engagement functions.
- The project aims to mobilise local energies and give them coherence.





# EMERGENCY RESPONSE SUPPORT

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## Messaging, risk awareness and enabling community response



- Formal role of the project is to support preparedness messaging and community response to heat. (e.g. amplifying hot weather advice)
- The map provides a memorable anchor for the messaging and makes it tangible.
- CSs is not a public health intervention (i.e. not cooling centres for vulnerable people)

Example of TfL messaging on a hot day

# PUBLIC HEALTH

## Criteria and tier system for 2025

- Tiers assigned to indoor spaces.
- Tier 1 are more often. Tier 2 may not have toilets or not be fully accessible.

Tier 1 Indoor Cool Spaces
<p><b>Accessibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open to all at least 10:00 – 17:00, at least 5 days a week.</li><li>• Free of charge.</li><li>• Accessible to disabled persons.</li><li>• Staffed.</li></ul> <p><b>Amenities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lower temperature than outdoors<sup>1</sup> (air conditioning available, if specified).</li><li>• Free seating space for rest and recovery.</li><li>• Free drinking water (e.g., tap, water fountain, water cooler).</li><li>• Toilets on site or within a short distance and signposted.</li></ul>

Tier 2 Indoor Cool Spaces
<p><b>Accessibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open to all during specified hours, at least 2 days a week.</li><li>• Free of charge.</li><li>• Clearly states <u>if not</u> accessible to disabled persons.</li><li>• Staffed.</li></ul> <p><b>Amenities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lower temperature than outdoors<sup>1</sup> (air conditioning available, if specified).</li><li>• Free seating space for rest and recovery.</li><li>• Free drinking water (e.g., tap, water fountain, water cooler).</li><li>• Clearly states <u>if</u> there is access to toilets on site or within a short distance.</li></ul>

# INCIDENTS

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## 2022 heatwaves and record 40C+



- 2022 record breaking heatwaves resulted in better awareness.
- Significant numbers' increase.
- Improved engagement with sectors: culture, faith, community, boroughs.

Hyde Park in summer 2022



# SECTORS AND VENUES

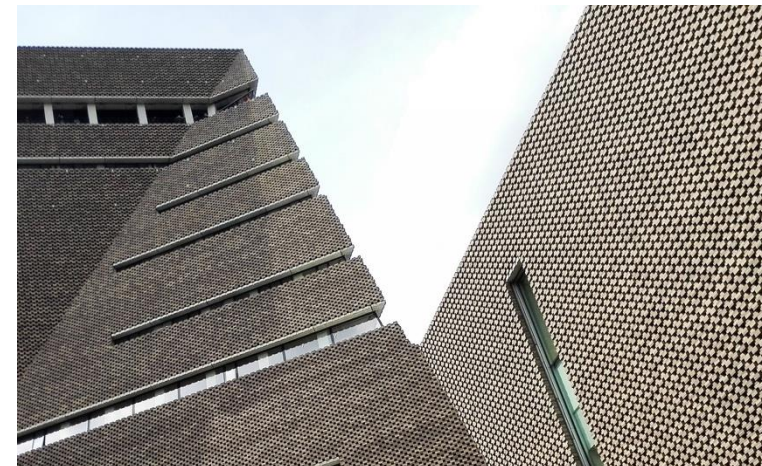
## 2025 – Sectors and organisations

In 2024:

- 160 Cool Spaces

In 2025:

- 250 Cool Spaces in 31 LBs
- Sectors:
  - libraries
  - community spaces (40)
  - faith-based spaces (29)
  - culture spaces (28)
  - sports venues (18)





# MONITORING

## Map visits and website accesses

We are monitoring map accesses and single visits.

Working with academic partners and supporting research grant bids to conduct social research on Cool Spaces' real life usage.

- Clear correlation between heat and map accesses. E.g., in 2022, 104,832 map visits. Of these, 95,204 - or almost 91% - were during heatwave days.



# LONDON BOROUGHS' COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

## Gathering LB officers working on heat



- Since 2024 we have been convening a CoP for LBs tailored to local needs (participation from Public Health, Adaptation, Emergency Planning, Community Engagement).
- Objectives: exchange information, discuss solutions, coordinate programming.
- Results: emerging solutions identified, e.g.: using net zero funding with adaptation co-benefits, better coordination with culture programming.



Ealing Council

Summer Reading Challenge 2024

Home / Leisure, parks and libraries / Libraries / Summer Reading Challenge 2024



# LOOK AHEAD TO SUMMER 2026

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## Cool Spaces pilot grants programme



We are now designing a training and grants programme aiming to:

- Build capacity of VCS (voluntary and community sector) organisations to respond to heat, e.g., targeting Cool Spaces managers and organisations using their venues.
- Mobilise energy and knowledge of local organisations to identify gaps in local response to heat and build solutions in partnerships with their LB (London borough/municipality).