



LONDON BOROUGH OF
HARROW

A year in a life

Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2024



Introduction

Public Health is our health, it is who we are, how we support ourselves and our contribution to our community. I came to Harrow some 17 years ago as a locum Consultant in Public Health intending to stay for a year or maybe two. But Harrow has a way of drawing you in. Now, I'm coming up to my retirement and this will be my final report as your Director of Public Health. I have loved working across the Council, with the NHS and with our hugely talented community, voluntary and charitable sector to improve the health and wellbeing of all our residents.

An annual report serves as a vehicle by which the DPH can highlight issues and areas of focus for universal or targeted attention to help protect or improve the health of their population. It informs residents and makes them aware of risks to their own, their family's, their friends' and their community's health. It also informs policy makers and commissioners of the issues of concern in Harrow and where there may be inequalities that need addressing.

I am delighted to present this Independent Annual Public Health Report which covers a typical year in Harrow. Each month, we have taken a specific theme which, wherever possible, line up with key seasons, national awareness days and community and cultural events. Each month, we present a topic with the reasons why this is important locally and gives three key messages for us all to be familiar with. It ties in with Our Making Every Contact Count approach which helps participants look for someone's motivation to change an unhealthy behaviour, whether they are capable of any change at this point and then

identifies a local opportunity to support that change.

But improved awareness and behaviour change are not the only change we need. We need to create the sort of place that helps people make those healthy choices. In some of our high streets, you're surrounded by junk food takeaways. These areas often also have limited places access to healthy food so you have to travel. It isn't easy if you don't have a car – and it's often more expensive to buy and cook. And if your home is cold, cooking can cause condensation which can lead to mould growing and affecting your and your family's health. Is it any wonder why people find it difficult to make healthy choices. We need to put health and wellbeing considerations into all of our policy decisions so we can create a healthier and fairer Harrow. After all, the council motto *Salus populi suprema lex* means 'The well-being of the people is the highest law'.



Carole Furlong
Director of Public Health

An overview of health in Harrow

Before we start on the monthly topics, we need to look at the picture of health and wellbeing in Harrow as a whole.

Central to Public Health is a requirement to measure health and wellbeing. Figure 1 is the life course diagram. It shows a number of key measures that indicate the local state of health. Where possible, we have used measures that come from national data that can be compared with other areas, or over time. It shows key moments from before birth to older age. Each measure is colour coded to show how we fare compared to the national picture.

You can see that on many of these measures, Harrow is doing better than the national average – like our lower than average smoking in pregnancy rates and longer than average life expectancy. But just because we're doing better doesn't mean we should be complacent – we can still make improvements.

The diagram also shows where we aren't doing so well and where we have inequalities in health. For example, although female life expectancy is higher than the national average, the length of that life expectancy lived in good health is lower than average. This means that women are being diagnosed with long term health conditions earlier than in other areas and so are living longer with them. While this could be a good indication that we pick up disease

early, it could also mean that women in Harrow are getting sicker earlier in life than others. But what it does mean is that we need to act to ensure that we delay the time that both women and men get long term conditions so they can live healthier happier lives.



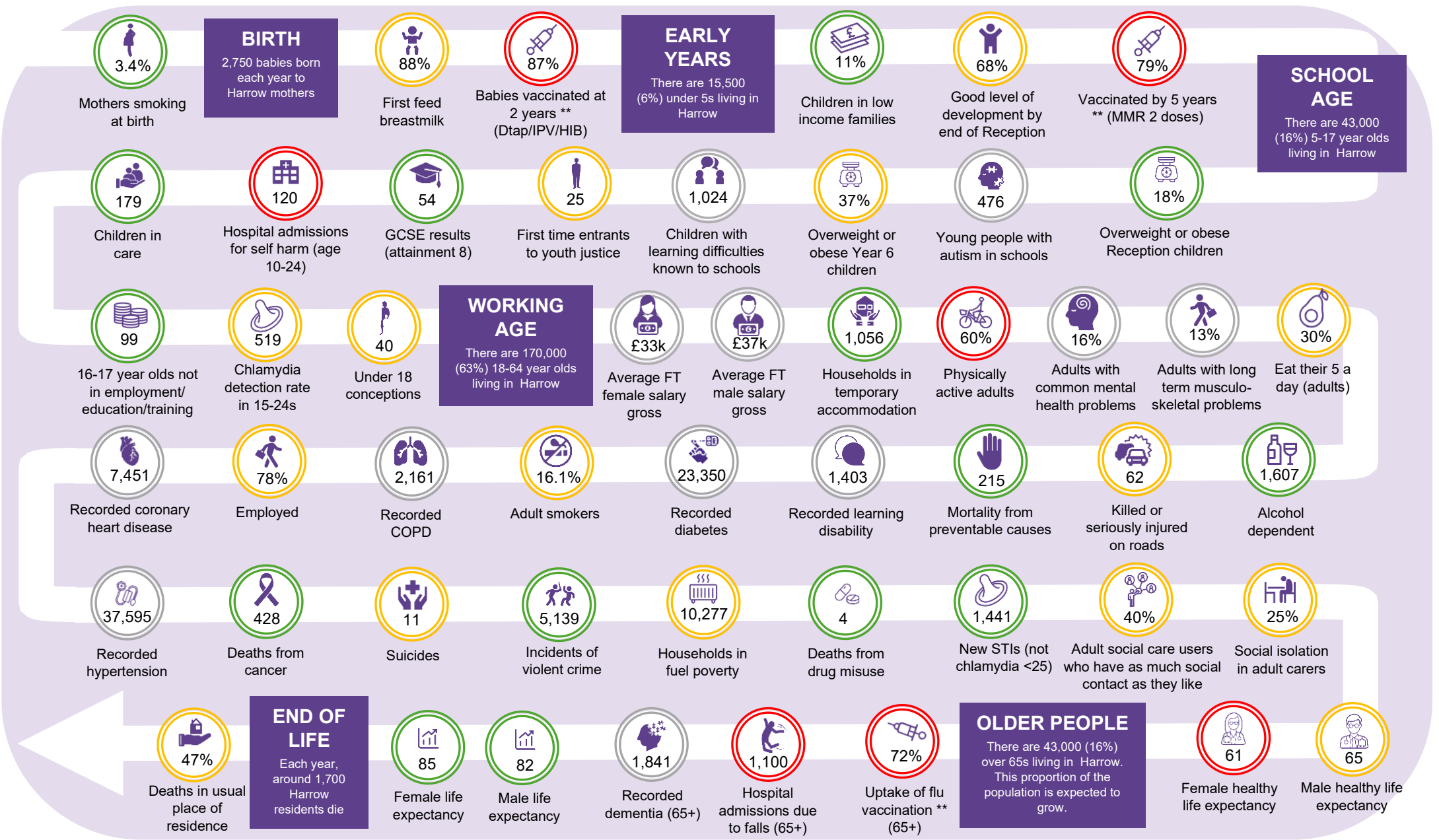


Figure 1: The Life-Stage Snake. Data sources: Public Health Outcomes Framework, October 2024; Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings 2023; GLA 2021 based interim population projections. Notes: Numbers are for the latest year available, and in some cases cover an average for a one-year period, where numbers rather than percentages are shown. Some numbers have been rounded for clarity – please refer to the original data. Red indicates worse than the London average, amber similar, and green better. Grey indicates that the direction of the indicator isn't necessarily good or bad. Arrows indicate recent trend where available – green indicates improvement, red indicates worsening, and amber indicates no significant change. For figures marked with a **, red indicates worse than the target, amber similar, and green better. "Green does not indicate that this is considered acceptable, nor that we are complacent about these figures, nor ignore the suffering and hardship that those individuals experience."

Key Messages

Stay informed
Nothing, or in moderation
Know your units

Alcohol
January



Look after yourself
Support is never far away
Just for you

Mental Health
February



Life-long impact
Support begins before birth
Discover a Family Hub

Start Well
March



Stop old diseases coming back
Protect your newborn
Stay ahead of Flu

Immunisations
April



Leading cause of ill-health
Not a lifestyle choice
Vaping

Tobacco
May



A preventable killer
Know your numbers and risk
Use the NHS Health Check

Circulatory Disease
June



Biggest health threat this century
The Climate Crisis affects us all
Everyone can make a difference

Environment
July



Improves your whole wellbeing
Takes many forms
Active travel

Physical Activity
August



Safe sex
Get tested
Get treated

Sexual Health
September



Think about you
Attend your screening
Seek help

Women's Health
October



Noticing anything unusual
Cut cancer risks
Mental wellbeing

Men's Health
November



Feeling lonely can be harmful
Take action – we can help
Help others

Isolation & Loneliness
December



Key Messages

- 1 **Stay informed:** Understanding the risks and making informed choices can help you maintain better health.
- 2 **Nothing, or in moderation:** Drinking alcohol is a health risk regardless of the amount. Not drinking is best for you, but if you do drink alcohol then do this in moderation.
- 3 **Know your units:** Keeping track of your alcohol units will help you to not drink excessively. You should not drink more than 14 units per week, and you should spread this out over at least 3 days.

Alcohol and alcoholic beverages contain ethanol, a psychoactive and toxic substance with dependence-producing properties¹. Excessive alcohol consumption is a leading risk factor for premature death worldwide. Globally, 2.6 million deaths were attributable to alcohol consumption in 2019, of which 2 million were among men and 0.6 million among women¹. In England, the number of alcohol-related mortalities has increased substantially, up to 21,912 in 2022².

Drinking alcohol is associated with risks of developing noncommunicable diseases, such as liver disease, heart disease, and various types of cancer, as well as mental health and behavioural illnesses such as depression and anxiety. In England, alcoholic liver disease was responsible for

11.6 deaths per 100,000 people in 2022, an increase from 9.1 in 2019².

No alcohol consumption is risk free, however the impact on chronic and acute health outcomes is largely determined by the total volume of alcohol consumed and the pattern of drinking^{1,3}. The UK Chief Medical Officer's guidelines suggest⁴:

- Men and women should not regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week
- Drinking alcohol should be spread over 3 or more days
- If trying to cut down on alcohol intake, people should have several drink-free days each week

What constitutes one unit of alcohol³:



Half pint of "regular" beer, lager or cider (4.5%, 275ml)



Half a small glass of wine (67.5ml)



1 single measure of spirits (25ml)

Across the UK, 30% of those aged 55 to 74 drink at least 14 units of alcohol per week, compared with 19-24% in other age groups. A higher proportion of men (32%) than women (15%) drink more than 14 units of alcohol weekly⁵. This is shown in Figure 2.

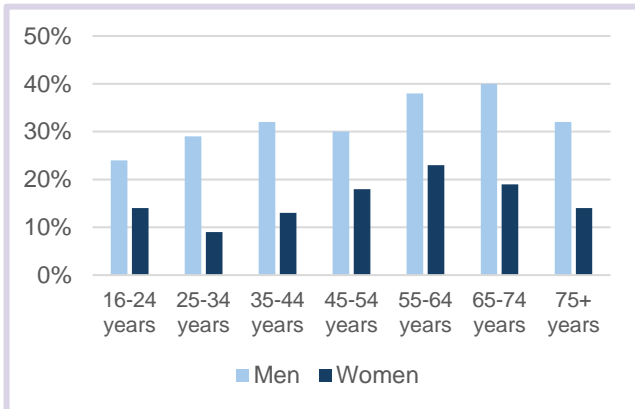


Figure 2: Percentage of men and women drinking over 14 units of alcohol per week by age across the UK⁵

What is the situation in Harrow?

In Harrow, the rate of alcohol related mortality was 29.8 per 100,000 people in 2022, which was lower than in London (33.4) and England (39.7)² as shown in Figure 3. Similarly, there is a lower proportion of Harrow residents who drink over 14 units of alcohol per week (10.9% in Harrow and 22.8% in England)⁶.

28% of new presentations to alcohol treatment services in Harrow between 2020-21 were reported as White British, followed by 'Other White' (8%) and White Irish (5%). There was a notable difference in those of Indian ethnicity (21% in Harrow compared to 2% nationally) and 'other Asian' (at 15% in Harrow and 1% nationally)⁶. Regarding parental status among these new presentations, the highest proportion were recorded as 'not parent – no contact with children' (62%), followed by 'parents living with children' (29%) and 'parent not with children' (8%)⁶.

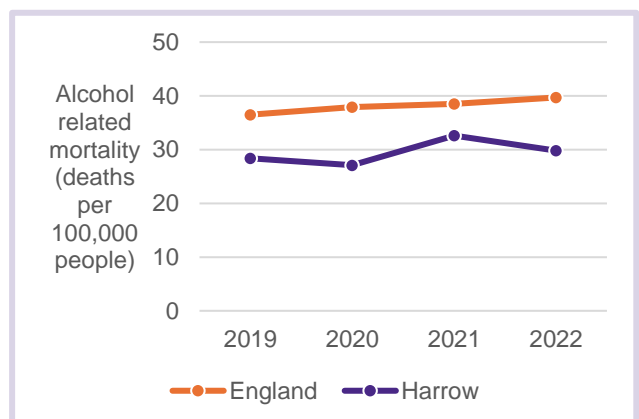


Figure 3: Alcohol related mortality in Harrow compared to England²



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What is being done?

In Harrow the treatment services for drugs and alcohol misuse are delivered by Via⁷ (adult service) and Compass Elevation⁸ (children and young person service).

Via provides free and confidential advice, care and support for adults in Harrow. The service can be contacted by phone or email, or a person can make a self-referral using the online referral form⁹. Any professional, like housing support workers, GPs, social workers or nurses can also make a referral. A wide range of services are available, including evening appointments, online groups and telephone or video sessions.

Compass Elevation offers a free confidential service for five- to 24-year-olds who need support around their own or another person's alcohol use. Self-referral is available by using the online referral form¹⁰ or a person can be referred by professionals.



Designed by Freepik

¹ World Health Organisation. Alcohol. 2024. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/alcohol#:~:text=Overview,significant%20health%20risks%20and%20harms>

²Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

Public health profiles.2024. Available from: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

³ North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust. Know Your Units. 2023. Available from: <https://www.nth.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol/know-your-units/>

⁴UK Chief Medical Officers. UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines. GOV.UK. 2016. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80b7ed40f0b623026951db/UK_CMOs_report.pdf

⁵Health Survey for England (2022). NHS England. Available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for->

[england/2022-part-1/adult-drinking#:~:text=Key%20findings%20for%202022,-In%202022%2C%2081&text=55%25%20of%20men%20and%2042.units%20in%20the%20last%20week](https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2022-part-1/adult-drinking#:~:text=Key%20findings%20for%202022,-In%202022%2C%2081&text=55%25%20of%20men%20and%2042.units%20in%20the%20last%20week)

⁶ London Borough of Harrow. Harrow Substance Misuse Needs Assessment. 2022. Available from: https://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/32090/Harrow_Substance_Misuse_Needs_Assessment_June_2022.pdf

⁷Drug and alcohol services Harrow. Via. Available from: <https://www.viaorg.uk/services/harrow/>

⁸Compass Elevation Harrow. Compass. Available from: <https://www.compass-uk.org/services/harrow-elevation/>

⁹Harrow Referral. Via. Available from: <https://www.viaorg.uk/get-help/harrow-referral/>

¹⁰ Referral form. Compass. Available from: Available from: <https://compass.referral.org.uk/selfrefer>

Key Messages

- 1 Look after yourself:** Your mental health is much like your physical health. It needs regular upkeep, and you may need help from others from time-to-time.
- 2 Support is never far away:** There are many ways that you can manage and maintain your mental health – sleep, diet, exercise, and more.
- 3 Just for you:** There are many free resources available to everyone in Harrow to improve your mental health, even in times of crisis.

If physical health is how well your body is functioning, then mental health is how well your mind is functioning. They are closely intertwined – it is very difficult to maintain one effectively without maintaining the other, and they are equally important¹.

Mental health is essentially our level of social, psychological, and emotional wellbeing. Good mental health allows us to learn and grow, be ready to face stressful times or difficult challenges, and maximise our potential².

Mental health is therefore an important public health issue. It is relevant to people of all ages in all areas of life, and the negative consequences of poor mental health can be severe at individual and societal levels: Reduced quality of life, increased risk of chronic illness, and in severe cases contributes to self-harm or suicide³.

What is the situation in Harrow?

The proportion of adults in North-west London in contact with mental health services is similar to the England average at 5.1% (England 5.5%). It is consistently better than the average for children, with 5.3% of children being in contact with mental health services, compared to the national average of 8.4%¹. The prevalence of mental health problems has wide-reaching implications, both for people's wellbeing and financially^{4,5}.

The cost of poor mental health in 2022⁵:



£117.9 billion cost to the UK economy

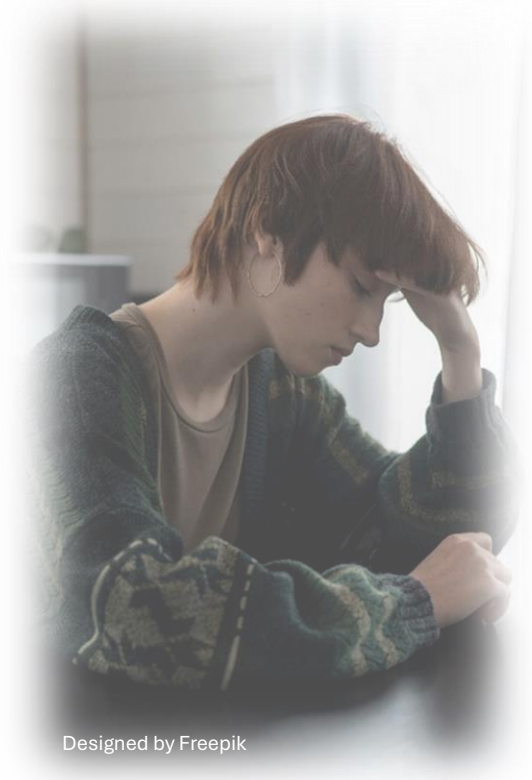
£217.5 million spent on medication

People in the most deprived areas have poorer mental health outcomes



Harrow is ranked 32nd of the 33 London boroughs for rates of neurotic and/or mental health disorders (33rd being the lowest), with 15.6% of the population diagnosed with one or more of anxiety, depression, phobias, panic disorder or OCD. This is marginally lower than the London (18.2%) and England (16.6%) averages^{2,6,7,8}.

Unfortunately waiting times for services continue to be extremely long; there are roughly 4,000 referrals reviewed per month, with just under half of these being seen within 6 weeks of referral⁹. Figures 4 and 5 reveal Harrow residents' use and experience in accessing local mental health services.



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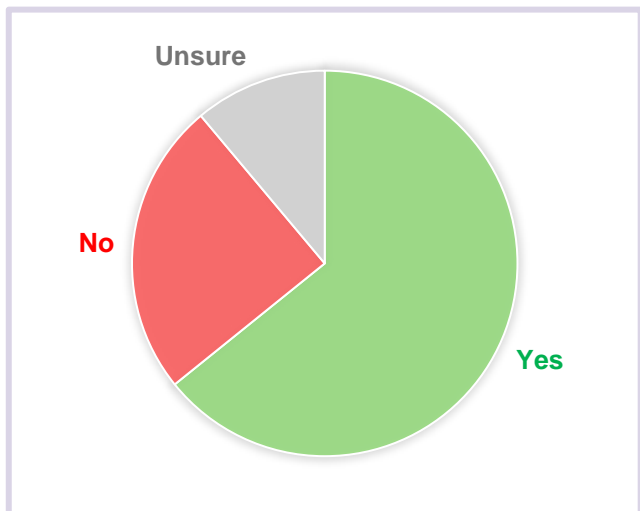


Figure 4: The proportion of Harrow residents who used community-based mental health services when struggling with their mental health²

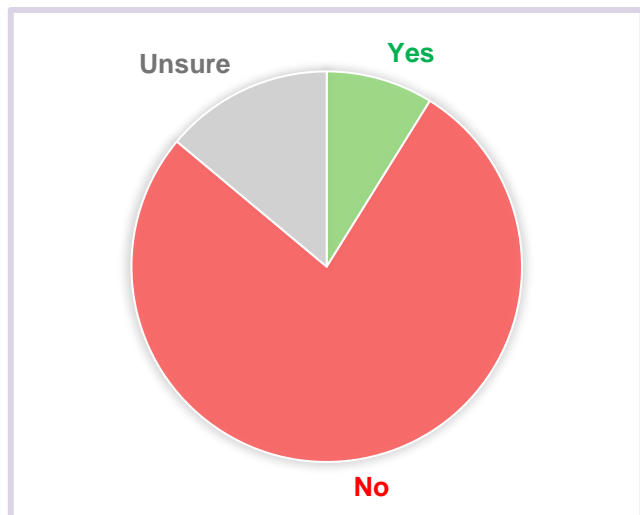


Figure 5: The proportion of Harrow residents who believe local mental health services are adequate and accessible to prevent a mental health crisis²

What is being done?

The London Borough of Harrow has recently undergone a mental health service transition. As of the 1st of July 2023, responsibility for community mental health services moved from CNWL NHS Foundation Trust to Harrow Council's Adult Social Care department in order to better serve the local population and simplify matters of employment for those providing services.

For children and young people, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) support under-18s and their families. Harrow Horizons offers mental health and therapeutic support for those up to the age of 25 and their families that do not meet the thresholds for CAMHS¹⁰. New initiatives such as the Kooth community and app have modernised and simplified accessing support¹¹.

For adults, Cove run 1-to-1 support services for those experiencing a mental health crisis or who feel they are at risk of one¹². Harrow Talking Therapies see thousands of people per month, albeit with a waiting list that peaked at 50,000 adults as of Dec 2023⁷.



CAMHS and Harrow Horizons support children and NHS Talking Therapies supports adults (amongst some of the support available)

Harrow Council works closely with several third sector partners to facilitate the reach and impact of their mental health services. Mind in Harrow deliver several independent services such as mental health champions, their Harrow User Group (HUG), Stepping Stones and a newly launched men's wellbeing group. They also produce regular reports assessing service engagement and highlighting areas of improvement².

A mental health prevention group was established in 2021 by the Harrow Council Public Health team. This is a multiagency forum that meets throughout the year to input on the local mental health 10-point

¹ UK Parliament. Mental health statistics: prevalence, services and funding in England, 2024, Available from: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06988/>

² Mind in Harrow. Mental health engagement report: survey findings. 2024. Available from: <https://www.mindinharrow.org.uk/mental-health-engagement-report-survey-findings/>

³ London Borough of Harrow. Harrow Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2030. 2022. Available from: [https://moderngov.harrow.gov.uk/documents/s180715/2b.FINAL%20DRAFT%20HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY_v6.pdf](https://moderngov.harrow.gov.uk/documents/s180715/2b.FINAL%20DRAFT%20HEALTH%20AND%20WELLBEING%20STRATEGY_v6.pdf)

⁴NHS England. Research demand signalling: national mental health programme. 2022. Available from: https://www.england.nhs.uk/aac/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2022/09/B1482_research-demand-signalling-national-mental-health-programme_september-2022.pdf

⁵ NHS England, National Mental Health Programme. 2022. Available from: https://www.england.nhs.uk/aac/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2022/09/B1482_research-demand-signalling-national-mental-health-programme_september-2022.pdf

plan which identifies key actions and priorities for promoting good mental health. We have also successfully signed up to the Mental Health Concordat, working closely with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)¹³. As signatories, we work as a whole system and across organisational boundaries. We commit to supporting place-based population mental health through coordination of partnerships at Integrated Care System, local authority and neighbourhood levels. This includes the support of key campaigns such as the yearly World Suicide Prevention and World Mental Health days which has proved successful.



Created by Vior from Noun Project

Harrow Council has strong partnerships with key stakeholders and the voluntary and community sector

⁶Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public Mental Health Dashboard December 2022. 2022. Available from: [Microsoft Power BI](#)

⁷NHS England. Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics Dashboard. 2024. Available from: [Microsoft Power BI](#)

⁸ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public health profiles. 2024 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

⁹NHS England. NHS Talking Therapies: Monthly report on the use of NHS Talking Therapies services May 2023. 2023. Available from: [Microsoft Power BI](#)

¹⁰London Borough of Harrow. Harrow Horizons. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/childrens-social-care/harrow-horizons>

¹¹ Kooth. Homepage. Available from: <https://www.kooth.com>

¹² Hestia. Harrow Cove. Available from: <https://www.hestia.org/harrow-cove>

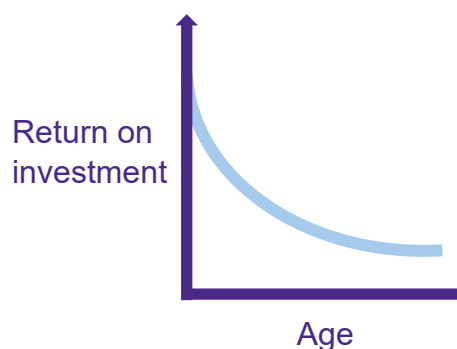
¹³ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health. 2024. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevention-concordat-for-better-mental-health-consensus-statement/prevention-concordat-for-better-mental-health>

Key Messages

- 1 **Life-long impact:** Healthier, happier children not only thrive more in their early years, but for the rest of their lives.
- 2 **Support begins before birth:** Community support starts before birth. Key local areas we are working on are promoting breastfeeding, healthy eating habits and good oral health.
- 3 **Discover a Family Hub:** For all the support a family with children may need.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health”¹. As has been detailed extensively by the Marmot review, childhood is a critical period during which experiences impact on performance at school, social and emotional development, income and employment, short and long-term health outcomes and ultimately culminating in overall life expectancy². Evidence suggests that the highest rate of economic return comes from the earliest investments at the start of life³.

The Heckman Curve: Return on investment is greatest at an earlier age³



This chapter will focus on several crucial aspects of giving every child the best possible start in life: healthy eating behaviours, including breastfeeding, and good oral health. Unhealthy eating significantly contributes to developing childhood obesity, which in turn increases the risk of developing poor health outcomes such as Type-2 Diabetes, cardiovascular disease, poor mental health and tooth decay in early years and into adulthood⁴. Not only is breastfeeding at the very start of life important for protecting against obesity and improving oral health, but also in promoting emotional attachment of the mother and baby as well as reducing infection risk⁵. In turn, tooth decay is a cause of significant pain and distress for children, resulting in missed school and hospital operations⁶.

The effects of unhealthy eating behaviours and poor oral health are felt disproportionately in society, particularly by those from more deprived areas and some ethnic groups⁴. To ensure every child has the best possible start in life, action must be taken to improve children’s health and eradicate these inequalities.

What is the situation in Harrow?

The prevalence of poor oral health in Harrow's children is high. The latest reliable figures from 2019 showed that 42.4% of 5-year-olds had experience of tooth decay, above the London average of 27%⁷ (Figure 6).

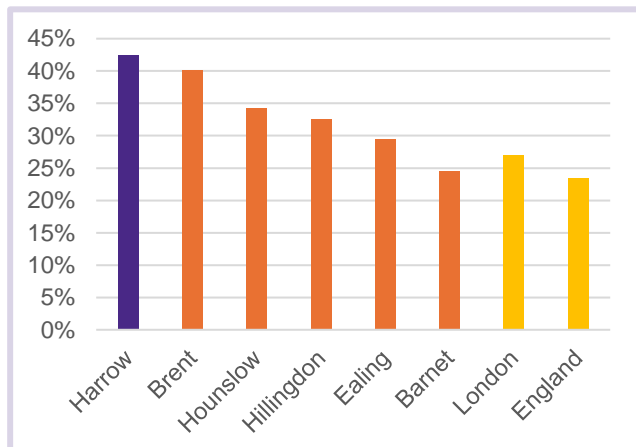


Figure 6: The percentage of children with tooth decay in Harrow, other North-west London boroughs, London and England⁷

As shown in Figure 7, the latest local data reveals that 78.8% of children are breastfed at 6-8 weeks in Harrow. 44.8% of these are totally breastfed, while 34.0% are partially breastfed. The overall proportion of children being breastfed in Harrow is unchanged since 2015, however a greater proportion are only partially breastfed.

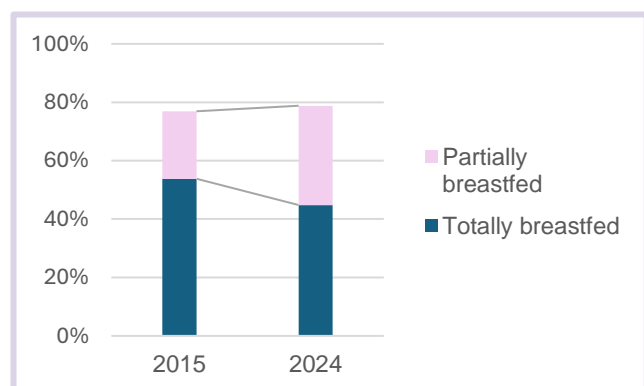


Figure 7: The percentage of Harrow mothers totally and partially breastfeeding in 2015 and 2024

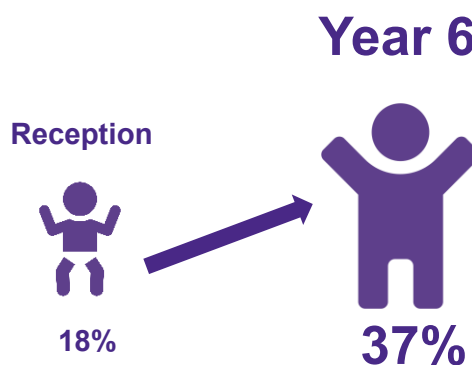


Designed by Freepik

Only half of children in Harrow eat vegetables every day, with 30% having fizzy drinks and 16% takeaways at least several times a week⁸. 18% of Reception children are overweight or obese, with that number doubling to 37% in Year 6⁹. Inequalities in eating habits and weight are clear, experienced by those from more deprived areas, and those from Black backgrounds^{8,9}.

These figures highlight the importance of providing effective public health interventions to give children in Harrow the best possible start in life.

The rise in overweight/obesity rates from Reception age to Year 6⁹



What is being done?

The London Borough of Harrow prioritises giving every child the best start in life through its Health and Wellbeing Strategy¹⁰. We work in partnership with a wide range of NHS services and the voluntary sector to deliver this.

Central to our approach is Making Every Contact Count (MECC). The “Healthy Beginnings” module covers key areas of health promotion for children, including oral health and healthy eating¹¹, and substantially improves the knowledge and confidence of those who use it.

The benefits of MECC:

>90% Felt their knowledge improved

97% Were confident to implement MECC

In addition to midwifery and GPs, Family Hubs¹² and Health Visiting¹³ services offer valuable support. This support for Harrow residents begins before birth, with Family Hubs providing courses to prepare parents for their child. These Family Hubs act as a gateway to Harrow Council services, providing guidance and access to evidence-based services delivered by the Council’s skilled staff and partner agencies. The offer supports the first 1,001 days from conception to age 2, and spans into early years and later childhood up to the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)).



There is one youth centre and nine Family Hubs in Harrow, which are:

- Cedars (Hub): delivery sites at The Pinner Centre, Chandos, Stanmore Park, and Whitefriars.
- Hillview (Hub): delivery sites at Kenmore Park, Gange, and Elmgrove

The Harrow Health Visiting service takes over from midwifery about 10 days after a child is born. Its purpose is to help families ensure their newborn develops into a healthy child, reaching appropriate milestones. They offer a home visit for all 3,000 children born in Harrow every year with follow-up development reviews to check on the health of the mother and child at 6-8 week, 12 months and 24 months. Other services they provide include breastfeeding

support groups, drop-in clinics to check on weight gain and additional support for mums who have postnatal depression. When children start school the Harrow School Nursing service measures their height and weight and conducts vision screening to detect any problems that need correction with glasses or more specialist intervention from ophthalmology.

The voluntary sector also provides an excellent system of support, beginning before birth and extending throughout childhood. Breastfeeding in Harrow, a UNICEF Baby Friendly accredited organisation, provide breastfeeding support via antenatal baby courses and support groups. They help mothers understand more about breastfeeding and its benefits, empowering them to overcome challenges¹⁴.

Harrow has strong connections with HENRY, a national programme which tackles the fundamental issues leading to unhealthy eating habits in children. Their 8-week “Healthy Families Right from the Start” programme provides a holistic approach to support and empowers families to take personalised, manageable steps to improve their child’s diet¹⁵.

Although these breastfeeding and healthy eating initiatives benefit oral health, direct interventions are vital. A supervised toothbrushing programme, Harrow Happy Smiles, operates in partnership with the Whittington Health NHS Trust. Participating schools ensure that children brush their teeth and develop good oral health behaviours, working with parents to continue these practices at home¹⁶.

¹United Nations. Convention on the Rights of the Child. 1989. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

²Marmot M, Allen J, Boyce T, Goldblatt P, Morrison J. Marmot review 10 years on. Institute of Health Equity; 2020 Feb. Available from:

<https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/marmot-review-10-years-on>

³Heckman. The Heckman Curve. 2014. Available from:

<https://heckmanequation.org/resource/the-heckman-curve/>

⁴Public Health England. Early years high impact area 4: supporting healthy weight and nutrition. 2021. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-of-public-health-services-for-children/early-years-high-impact-area-4-supporting-healthy-weight-and-nutrition>

⁵Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Healthy beginnings: applying All Our Health. Public Health England; 2024 Jul 18. Available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-beginnings-applying-all-our-health/healthy-beginnings-applying-all-our-health>

⁶Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Child oral health: applying All Our Health. 2022. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-oral-health-applying-all-our-health/child-oral-health-applying-all-our-health>

⁷Public Health England. National Dental Epidemiology Programme for England: oral health survey of 5-year-old children 2019. 2020. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e721fdc86650c72713d2520/NDEP_for_England_OH_Survey_5yr_2019_v1.0.pdf

⁸Newman T. HAY Harrow survey report 2021. Young Harrow Foundation; 2021 Aug. Available from: https://youthharrowfoundation.org/images/downloads/ypfVW_ebsite/HAY-Harrow-survey-report-2021-v12-FINAL.pdf

⁹NHS Digital. National Child Measurement Programme, England, 2022/23 school year. 2023. Available from:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2022-23-school-year>

¹⁰London Borough of Harrow. Health and wellbeing strategy 2022-2030. 2022. Available from:

https://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/31683/HAR_PH_HEALTH_AND_WELLBEING_STRATEGY_web_v2.pdf

¹¹Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative. Training and Events: [25th September 2024 Make Every Contact Count \(MECC\) session Booking form \(google.com\)](https://www.voluntaryactionharrow.co.uk/25th-September-2024-Make-Every-Contact-Count-(MECC)-session-Booking-form-(google.com))

¹²London Borough of Harrow. Early Support. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/childrens-social-care/early-support-hubs>

¹³NHS Central and North West London. Harrow Health Visiting Service. Available from:

<https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/services/community-services/harrow-health-visiting-service>

¹⁴Breastfeeding in Harrow. About us. 2024. Available from: <https://www.breastfeedinginharrow.org/about-us/>

¹⁵HENRY. Homepage. 2024. Available from: [Homepage | HENRY](https://www.henry.org.uk/)

¹⁶Whittington Health NHS Trust. Harrow Oral Health Promotion Team. 2024. Available from: <https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/default.asp?c=42368>

Key Messages

- 1 Don't let old diseases make a comeback:** Diseases like measles are lurking – vaccinate today to keep them at bay and protect future generations.
- 2 Protect your newborn:** Vaccinate against whooping cough and other preventable illnesses during pregnancy to give your baby the best chance of staying safe in their vulnerable early months.
- 3 Stay ahead of Flu:** Protect yourself, your family and the community from the seasonal Flu as early as possible – get your Flu jab.

Immunisation is arguably the world's most effective public health intervention, preventing 6 million deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) each year. It is now considered a foundation of a safe and healthy population¹.

However, some VPDs remain a threat due to fluctuations in vaccine uptake rates. This leaves an increasing number of people susceptible to these deadly diseases. One disease currently in focus is measles, with a rising incidence prompting the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to declare a 'national incident'². Measles is highly contagious and can cause severe complications such as pneumonia and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Notably, all deaths from measles since 2000 have been in unvaccinated individuals^{3,4}.



A person infected with measles will transmit it to 9 out of 10 unvaccinated people they come into contact with²

The measles vaccine has saved an average of 81 lives per year since it was introduced³



The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommend 95% coverage of measles to achieve herd immunity⁹

One of the key barriers to maintaining recommended vaccination rates nationally is inequality – certain communities face greater hurdles to accessing immunisation than others. Increasing complacency and misinformation are also growing problems. Systems such as the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) Yellow Card scheme are in place to ensure people receive information from trustworthy sources⁵.

Both childhood and adult vaccinations are equally important. As people age, their immune systems weaken, and the presence of underlying health conditions increases. This makes Flu and COVID-19 vaccinations for those over 65 particularly essential, as this group is more vulnerable to severe illness and complications from these viruses⁶.

Vaccination during pregnancy, such as the pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine, is also vital in providing immunity to newborns during their most vulnerable early weeks of life. Pertussis causes severe coughing fits and difficulty breathing, which can be life-threatening and extremely challenging to manage in infants. Therefore, prevention through vaccination is crucial⁷.



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What is the situation in Harrow?

In Harrow, maintaining the recommended uptake for certain vaccines has been challenging in recent years. For example, Harrow's uptake rates for the first Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) dose at age 2 in 2022-23 was 84.6%, which was lower than the national average of 89.3%⁸ (Figure 9). This is significantly lower than WHO recommendations for 95% measles vaccination rate to achieve herd immunity⁹.

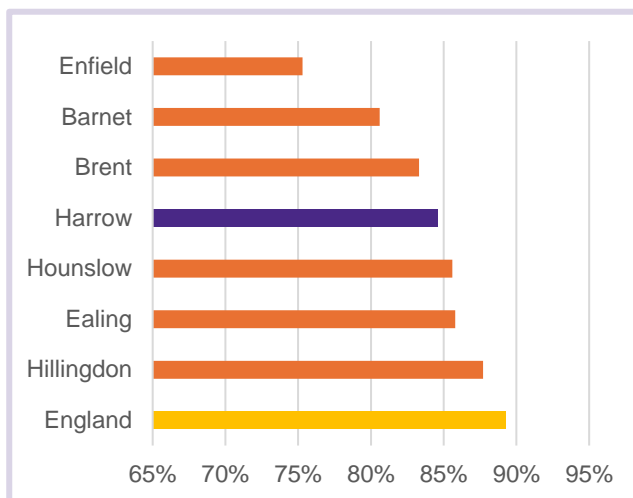


Figure 9: Percentage of first MMR dose uptake at 2 years in 2022-23 for Harrow, neighbouring boroughs and England⁸

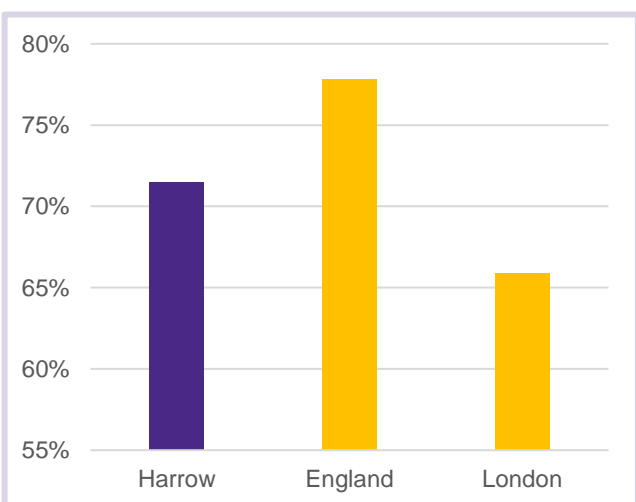


Figure 8: Percentage of adults over 65 years who received a Flu vaccination in 2023-24⁸

Although there is no specific data for Harrow with regards to pertussis vaccination coverage in pregnant women, regional data shows that coverage in North-west London is currently 43.5%, which is much lower than the national average of 58.9%¹⁰.

Similarly, Flu vaccination coverage in Harrow is lower than the national average but remains higher than London (Figure 8). Although Harrow has made significant progress in flu vaccination promotion, there is still a gap in achieving the national target. This highlights the need for continued local efforts alongside the work already being done⁸.

What is being done?

The London Borough of Harrow is stepping up its efforts to increase vaccination uptake and protect the community, especially learning from recent measles outbreaks across the country. With over 2000 suspected cases of measles in 2024, and a concerning concentration in London's most deprived areas, the urgency for a stronger immunisation response is clear^{8,11}

To combat these risks, Harrow Council has launched comprehensive plans to improve access, capacity and engagement with local communities. GP surgeries are expanding their capacity with extended MMR clinics and inclusion of late-night and weekend appointments. Innovative ways to improve access are also being explored, such as delivering childhood immunisations through community pharmacies. Vaccines are administered at GP surgeries, most high street pharmacies, maternity units, and schools. Public Health, the Integrated Care

Board (ICB), and local NHS organisations are working to maximise vaccine coverage, especially in vulnerable populations across Harrow. A broad range of locations offering vaccinations increases the opportunities to protect yourself and the community¹².

Winter vaccinations are crucial to protect against circulating pathogens. The NHS booking system is available for Flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccinations. In 2024, for the first time, RSV vaccines will be available for those aged 75-79 and pregnant women from 28 weeks. MMR and Mpox vaccination programmes also remain available for at-risk groups^{13,14}.

In support of winter vaccination efforts, London communities have developed a new campaign that aims to foster open dialogue about immunisations – 'Why We Get Vaccinated'. This is a year-round initiative that uses social media and real-life scenarios in order to provide messages to our communities in an informative rather than instructive way¹⁵.

¹Ehreth J. The global value of vaccination. *Vaccine*. 2003 Jan 30;21(7-8):596-600. Available from:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12531324/>

²University of Oxford Vaccine Knowledge Project. Measles. 2024. Available from:

<https://vaccineknowledge.ox.ac.uk/measles>

³The Benfleet PCN. Measles cases are on the rise.

Available from: [Measles cases are on the rise - The Benfleet PCN](#)

⁴Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board. Childhood Immunisations. 2023. Available from:

<https://staffsstoke.icb.nhs.uk/childhood-immunisations>

⁵Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. Yellow Card. 2024. Available from:

<https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>

⁶International Longevity Centre UK. Adult vaccination: a key component of healthy ageing. Available from:

https://ilcuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Adult-vaccination_a-key-component-of-health-ageing.pdf (ilcuk.org.uk)

⁷Vaccine Knowledge Project. Pertussis (Whooping Cough). 2024. Available from:

<https://vaccineknowledge.ox.ac.uk/pertussis-whooping-cough>

⁸ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

Public health profiles. 2024 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

⁹World Health Organization. Herd immunity, lockdowns and COVID-19. 2020. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/herd-immunity-lockdowns-and-covid-19>

¹⁰ UK Health Security Agency. Pertussis immunisation in pregnancy: vaccine coverage (England). 2024. Available from: [Pertussis immunisation in pregnancy: vaccine coverage \(England\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹¹ UK Health Security Agency. Latest measles statistics published. Available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/latest-measles-statistics-published>

¹²NHS England. NHS MMR catch up campaign successfully boosts uptake. 2024. Available from: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2024/04/nhs-mmr-catch-up-campaign-successfully-boosts-uptake/>

¹³ NHS. Book a flu vaccination. 2024. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/pharmacies/book-flu-vaccination/>.

¹⁴ NHS. RSV vaccine. 2024. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/rsv-vaccine/>.

¹⁵ ADPH London. Why We Get Vaccinated Campaign. 2024. Available from:

<https://www.adph.org.uk/networks/london/why-we-get-vaccinated-campaign/#:~:text=UKHSA%2C%20London%20Councils%2C%20ADPH%20London,our%20health%20leaders%20across%20London.>

Key Messages

- 1 Leading cause of ill-health and early death:** This can be avoided.
- 2 Not a lifestyle choice:** Tobacco use is a chronic addiction to nicotine which requires specialist support.
- 3 Vaping:** Vapes are an important way to help people quit smoking but should not be used by those who do not smoke.

Tobacco remains the leading cause of both debilitating illness and premature death across the UK¹. Associated poor health and decreased quality of life is seen across the life course². If used as directed by manufacturers, tobacco will kill over half its users³, therefore, to ensure it remains a viable business, they must recruit new smokers who are often children and young people or the most vulnerable in society⁴.

Forms of tobacco vary from combustion cigarettes to smokeless tobacco through to shisha. All have detrimental impacts on health and there is no safe level of use². Tobacco use is wrongly perceived as a lifestyle choice when in reality it is a chronic addiction requiring specialist support². Options to help someone quit tobacco have changed extensively since 2010 with vapes becoming the most popular quit aid in the UK, helping 3 million people, surpassing both nicotine replacement therapy and prescribed medication⁵.

Vapes are not risk free but are significantly safer than tobacco products⁶ as they heat a liquid opposed to either burning or chewing a product containing over 4000 chemicals.

The cumulative impacts of tobacco use on health²:



Pregnancy

- Low birth weight
- Still birth and miscarriage
- Higher chance of baby smoking



Children

- Slower lung function development
- Chest infections
- Peer pressure to smoke
- Less aware of smoking harms



Adults

- More sick days and lower earning potential
- Worse mental health
- Other health problems worsened by smoking
- Lower quality of life
- More likely own children will use tobacco



Elderly

- Dementia
- Respiratory disease
- Cardiovascular disease
- 15 types of cancer
- Fading quality of life
- Less likely to see children's and grandchildren's milestones
- Less inheritance to pass on

What is the situation in Harrow?

Tobacco use in Harrow had declined over recent years, however latest data suggests smoking rates are higher at 16.1% in 2023. This is spread unequally across different groups. The highest rates of smoking within Harrow residents are in: Males, those of Asian, Black – Caribbean and other White ethnicities, those with a mental health diagnosis, and those on lower incomes. It is important to note, rates of tobacco use in under 18's remain low^{7,8,9}.

Approximately 25% of all deaths in Harrow are directly related to tobacco use (Figure 10), which result from associated conditions such as various types of cancer, cardiovascular disease, or respiratory disease. Tobacco also remains the leading cause of premature mortality across Harrow. Over 8,000 residents in Harrow will die early due to tobacco¹⁰.

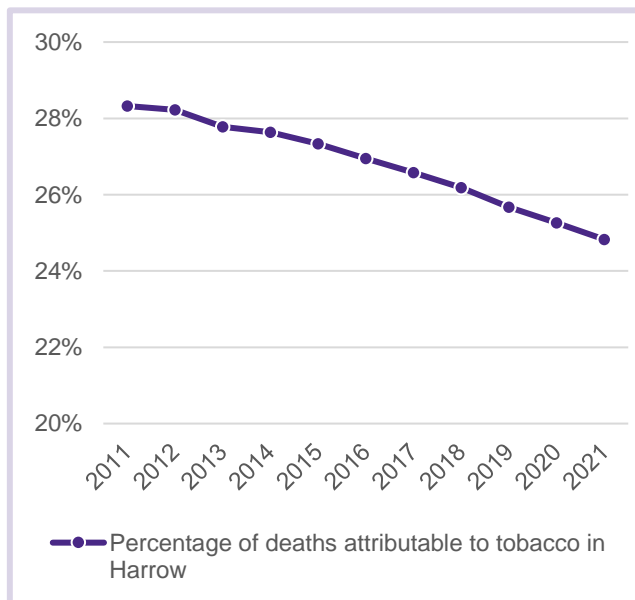


Figure 10: The percentage of deaths in Harrow that are attributable to tobacco use¹⁰



The use of vapes in Harrow continues to increase and these have become the most popular way for individuals to quit smoking – and they are also the most effective⁷. Use of vapes in under 18-year-olds is increasing but reported use is below what is seen in London and across other parts of the UK. Vapes should not be used by those who have not previously smoked¹¹.



What is being done?

Harrow continues to offer free support for all individuals who live, work, study or have a GP in Harrow. The most up-to-date evidence is utilised to help all those using tobacco to make a supported quit attempt when they are ready. Via are the commissioned provider and deliver all smoking cessation support in Harrow. Their services can be accessed by self-referral or be completed by any professional, such as housing support workers, GPs, social workers or nurses¹².

Harrow Council is in the process of developing a tobacco control strategy for 2024-2027 to address the impact it has across the Borough. Our vision is to ensure Harrow is Smokefree by 2030 and comprises four components:

- Increasing capacity and tailoring support to the needs of residents: Ensuring our services are capable of providing personalised support to each resident.
- Enforcement of illicit tobacco and other nicotine products: Supporting trading standards to ensure regulations are followed by retailers across Harrow.
- Preventing the next generation from using tobacco products: Working across children and young people's services to offer specialist support and outreach for those who need it.
- Partnership working across the whole system: Clear leadership of the tobacco and nicotine control alliance with an aligned vision to help achieve a smokefree Harrow by 2030.

¹House of Commons Library. Statistics on smoking. 2023. Available from: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7648/>.

²British Heart Foundation (BHF). Smoking. 2023. Available from: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/risk-factors/smoking/>.

³Royal College of Physicians (RCP). Hiding in plain sight: treating tobacco dependency in the NHS. 2018. Available from: <https://shop.rcp.ac.uk/products/hiding-in-plain-sight-treating-tobacco-dependency-in-the-nhs/>.

⁴Tobacco Tactics. Tobacco industry targeting young people. 2024. Available from: <https://www.tobaccotactics.org/article/tobacco-industry-targeting-young-people/>.

⁵Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). Nearly 3 million people in Britain have quit smoking with a vape in the last 5 years. 2024. Available from: <https://ash.org.uk/media-centre/news/press-releases/nearly-3-million-people-in-britain-have-quit-smoking-with-a-vape-in-the-last-5-years/>.

⁶Lindson N et al. Electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews.

2024 Jan 08. Available from: <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD010216.pub8/full>.

⁷Young Harrow Foundation. This is Harrow. 2023. Available from:

<https://youngharrowfoundation.org/images/downloads/harrow/this-is-harrow-ebrochure-2023.pdf>

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⁹Harrow Council. Annual Director of Public Health Report 2022/23. 2023. Available from:

<https://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/31916/Annual-Director-of-Public-Health-Report-2022-23-b.pdf>

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<https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-results/>

¹¹Department of Health and Social Care. Chief Medical Officer for England on vaping. 2023. Available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chief-medical-officer-for-england-on-vaping>

¹²Via. Via – Smoking Cessation – Harrow. Available from: <https://www.viaorg.uk/services/harrow-smoking-cessation/>

Key Messages

- 1 A preventable killer:** Circulatory Disease includes heart disease, stroke and vascular dementia and collectively these are the biggest killers in Harrow.
- 2 Know your numbers and risk:** Many people are at risk of Circulatory Disease and don't know it. Knowing your blood pressure will help you to take action.
- 3 Use the free NHS Health Check:** Take up the offer of a free health MOT every five years with the NHS if you're aged 40 to 74.

Circulatory Diseases are collectively the biggest killer in the UK, responsible for 27% of deaths. They are a group of associated conditions that affect vascular circulation with broad implications. This ranges from conditions affecting the heart including coronary heart disease, and those affecting the brain such as stroke and vascular dementia¹.

Around 7.6 million people live with circulatory disease in the UK¹, despite 90% of incidence being preventable². Key modifiable risk factors include hypertension, diabetes, kidney disease, high cholesterol, air pollution, smoking, overweight/obesity, diet and exercise¹.

Certain groups of people are at higher risk of developing and dying from Circulatory Disease and it is one of the largest contributors to health inequalities. The age and genetics of an individual will always be partly responsible for many diseases, but Circulatory Diseases are also caused by unhealthy behaviours¹. People from South Asian and Black backgrounds are at higher risk of Circulatory Disease, and it is responsible for 20% of the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived communities².

Modifiable risk factors of Circulatory Disease¹:

Hypertension



Diabetes



Kidney disease



High cholesterol



Air pollution



Smoking



Poor diet



Physical inactivity



Overweight/obesity



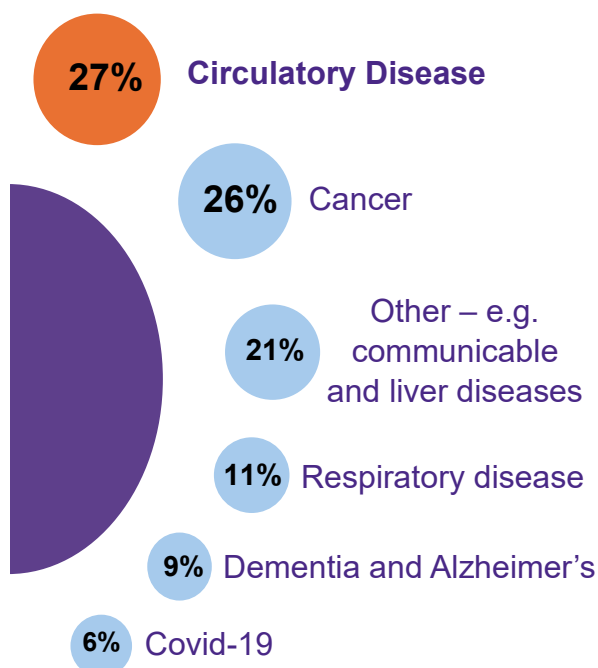
Alcohol



What is the situation in Harrow?

9% of the Harrow population live with Circulatory Disease³. It is responsible for 206.7 deaths per 100,000 people and remains the greatest cause of death in the area⁴. The importance of continuing to address this therefore cannot be understated.

The proportion of deaths in Harrow by cause (2022)⁴:



There is a significant prevalence of risk factors for Circulatory Disease in the Harrow population (Figure 11). Rates of diabetes are particularly high compared to the rest of London at 10.2%. 13.3% have Hypertension, and the number of cigarette smokers stands at 16.1%. 26.5% of adults are physically inactive while overweight/obesity rates remain static at 52.8% but below the England average⁴.



Figure 11: The percentage of people in Harrow and London living with modifiable risk factors of Circulatory Disease⁴.



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What is being done?

A number of services exist in Harrow to support the local community in optimising their circulatory health. A key intervention is the delivery of free health checks. NHS Health Checks at local GPs are utilised well in Harrow compared to the rest of England⁴. An NHS Health Check explores an eligible person's overall health with a focus on assessing each individual's risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease and stroke and how this risk could be reduced. It enables people to take early action to improve their circulatory health with patient-centred approaches⁵. Similarly, many pharmacies in Harrow also offer free blood pressure checks⁶.

Harrow Council, in association with Voluntary Action Harrow, have established a Healthy Harrow website. This promotes a Champion programme which develops community action to prevent Circulatory Disease. The MECC programme helps ordinary people to have meaningful conversations with others about Circulatory Disease risks and how to avoid them⁷.

Specialist Diabetes initiatives are also available in Harrow. The NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme provides free, expert-led coaching and support for people at risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes⁸. Know Diabetes is available for diagnosed diabetics, providing health records and

support to help people live with their condition⁹.

These interventions do not simply promote medical management of circulatory disease risk factors such as hypertension and diabetes, but also lifestyle interventions. This might include diet improvements, increasing physical activity, losing weight, stopping smoking and reducing alcohol intake, as well as referrals to appropriate local services and sources of support⁵.

Several initiatives target smoking and physical activity directly. Details are outlined in their respective chapters of this report.



¹British Heart Foundation. UK CVD Statistics Factsheet. 2024. Available from: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/-/media/files/for-professionals/research/heart-statistics/bhf-cvd-statistics-uk-factsheet.pdf>

²Raleigh V, Jefferies D, Wellings D. Cardiovascular disease in England: supporting leaders to take actions. London: The King's Fund; 2022. Available from: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/reports/cardiovascular-disease-england>

³Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Results Tool. 2024. Available from: <https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-results/>

⁴Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public health profiles. 2024 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

⁵NHS. NHS Health Check. 2024. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-health-check/>

⁶NHS. Find a pharmacy that offers free blood pressure checks. 2024. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/pharmacies/find-a-pharmacy-that-offers-free-blood-pressure-checks/>

⁷Healthy Harrow. Healthy Harrow. 2024. Available from: <https://healthyharrow.org.uk/>

⁸Healthier You. Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme - GP Registration. 2024. Available from: <https://healthieryou.org.uk/gp/>

⁹Know Diabetes. Know Diabetes. 2024. Available from: <https://www.knowdiabetes.org.uk/>

Key Messages

- 1 The climate crisis is the biggest health threat of this century.**
- 2 The climate crisis affects all of us:** The global crisis has local impacts in Harrow, such as air pollution and heatwaves, which affect everyone throughout their whole lives.
- 3 Everyone can make a difference:** Small acts we all do can have a big impact – walk more, enjoy Harrow’s parks, turn off lights, shop locally.

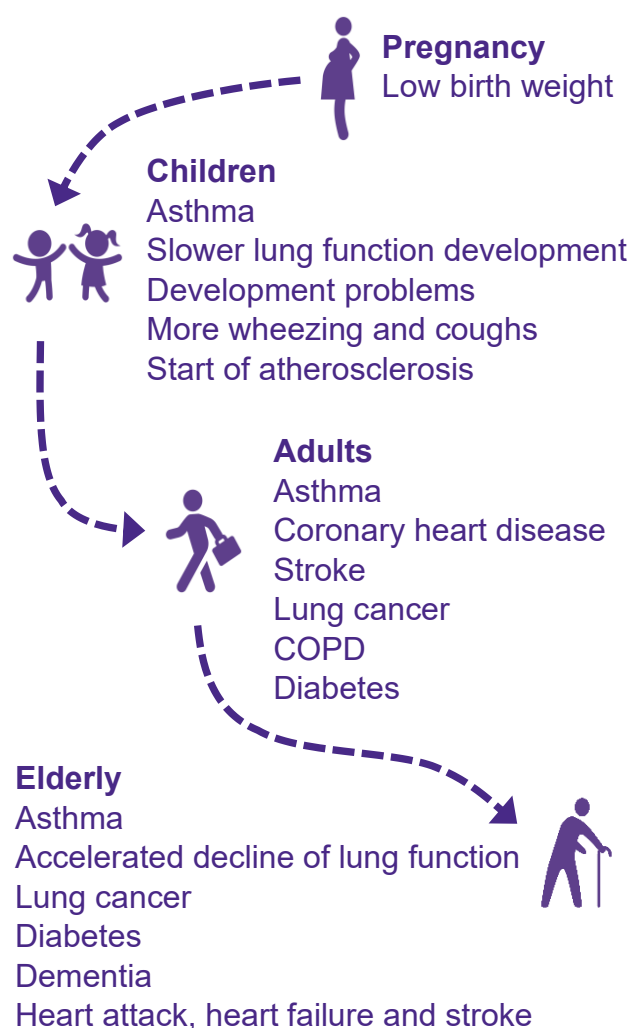
The climate crisis that we face is predicted to be the most substantial health threat of this century¹. Rising temperatures and air pollution are two critical issues that have contributed to the declaration of a climate emergency affecting London².

The UKHSA has highlighted air pollution as the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. Air pollutants harm people in varying degrees depending on their individual exposure and vulnerability. It has been proven to cause short and long-term effects throughout people’s life course, particularly respiratory and cardiovascular damage as well as lung cancer with recent associations with dementia, diabetes and developmental problems³.

Simultaneously we are seeing progressively rising temperatures and consequently more hot spells with frequent heatwaves⁴. The effect this heat has on our body increases the risk of heart attack, stroke and lung

problems⁵. The effects of air pollution and heatwaves are felt unequally, with the elderly, children, pregnant women, people with underlying medical conditions as well as those from more deprived communities more vulnerable^{3,5}. It is of vital importance that all people are protected from these harms, with focus on eliminating the unequal effects felt by certain groups.

The effects of air pollution on people throughout their lives³:



What is the situation in Harrow?

Data suggests that air pollution levels in Harrow have generally improved over recent years (Figure 12). These consistently meet the national air quality objective, but are above the WHO guideline limit^{6,7}. Pollution levels are particularly high in areas around main roads⁷. As a result, 7% of Harrow's mortality in over 30-year-olds is attributable to fine particulate air pollution alone – this is similar to the London average⁶. There is considerable evidence that air pollution disproportionately affects those with underlying medical conditions and from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds³.

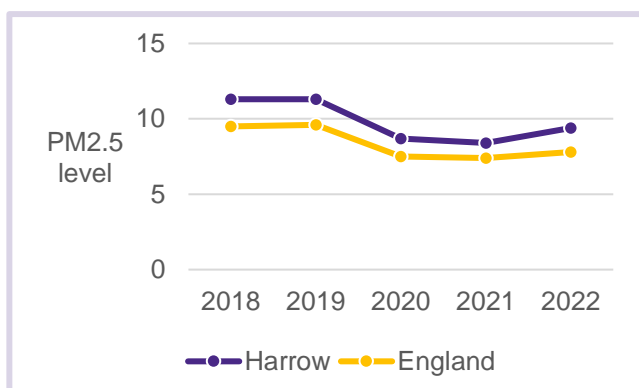


Figure 12: Particulate Matter (PM2.5) levels in Harrow and England from 2018 to 2022⁶

Summer heatwaves are becoming more common and affect urban areas most significantly. These heat episodes have an associated rise in mortality on a national scale – 2,295 deaths in 2023⁸, a number expected to triple by 2050⁵. People in Harrow with underlying medical conditions, as well as children, the elderly and pregnant women are more vulnerable to heat-related harms⁵.

What is being done?

The London Borough of Harrow declared a climate emergency in 2019⁹ and has several plans in place to address this. These are the Climate and Nature Strategy⁹, Health and Wellbeing Strategy¹⁰ with a new Long Term Transport Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan due in 2025. The Climate and Nature Strategy outlines four focus areas that aim to stabilise Harrow's climate and promote the many benefits and opportunities that will arise from this, including improved health and wellbeing:

- Clean energy used efficiently
- Green mobility
- A waste-free economy
- Healthy places for us and Nature

Harrow Council is taking action to reduce its own environmental impact by working towards carbon neutrality. This has involved installation of low carbon and renewable energy sources, such as heat pumps and solar panels, upgrading street lighting to energy-efficient LEDs, and progressively decarbonising council operated vehicles⁹.

Council initiatives have been created to assist residents in their individual efforts to cut carbon and air pollution production. Public transport options will be enhanced, as well as active options like cycling or walking that simultaneously reduce climate impact and promote a healthier community. The installation of more publicly available Electric Vehicle charging points will also help to support this mode of travel. Harrow's Energy Advice service provides a Green Doctor who identifies ways households can become more energy efficient. This not only provides invaluable support for those

affected by the cost-of-living, but also helps households to reduce their carbon footprint⁹.

Harrow is delivering green space improvements, with approaches to enhance local parks and optimising tree and hedge planting through the Trees for Streets partnership. In 2024-25 Harrow Council also launched a project that seeks to create habitats and provide greater access to nature for residents in some of our open spaces¹¹. These measures will improve physical and mental health through promoting environmental connection and will help to cool temperatures by reducing heat island effects⁹. Resident climate resilience is also supported through the availability of aids that enable individuals to react to climate hazards. AirTEXT is an online tool that alerts users to high levels of air pollution and enables them to take action to mitigate risk¹².



Designed by Freepik

¹Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Climate and health: applying All Our Health. 2022. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/climate-change-applying-all-our-health/climate-and-health-applying-all-our-health>

²Greater London Authority. Climate change. 2024. Available from: <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/climate-change>

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⁶Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public health profiles. 2024 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

⁷Greater London Authority. Harrow Air Quality for Public Health Professionals. 2013. Available from: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/harrow_air_quality_for_public_health_professionals.pdf

⁸UK Health Security Agency. Heat Mortality Monitoring Report: 2023. 2024. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heat-mortality-monitoring-reports/heat-mortality-monitoring-report-2023>

⁹London Borough of Harrow. Living Harrow: Climate and Nature Strategy. 2023. Available from: [Living Harrow](#)

¹⁰London Borough of Harrow. Harrow Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2030. 2022. Available from: https://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/31683/HAR_PH_HEALTH_AND_WELLBEING_STRATEGY_web_v2.pdf

¹¹London Borough of Harrow. Nature Recovery in Harrow. Available from: [Nature Recovery in Harrow | MyHarrow Talk](#)

¹²Cambridge Environmental Research Consultants Ltd. airText: Air Quality Forecasts and Alerts. 2024. Available from: <https://www.airtext.info/>

Key Messages

- 1 Improves your whole wellbeing:** Physical activity not only improves mood and energy levels, but also reduces the risk of conditions like heart disease and diabetes.
- 2 Takes many forms:** There are countless ways to incorporate movement into your daily life, from cycling and gardening to walking and dancing.
- 3 Active Travel:** Walking counts – a 20 minute walk a day is enough, but make it a routine.

Physical activity is an essential component of public health. Growing evidence in recent years has reinforced the strong link between regular physical activity and improved quality of life¹. It plays a crucial role in community wellbeing, and efforts must be made to identify and address any barriers that hinder access to regular physical activity.

Engaging in regular physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of noncommunicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain cancers. Additionally, it can improve mental health, cognitive function, and overall wellbeing². National guidelines for adults recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity per week³.

Unfortunately, many individuals face barriers to engaging in regular physical activity. Common obstacles include cost and time constraints, which prevent individuals from meeting the recommended physical activity levels. It is essential to address these barriers through community initiatives, policy changes and improved access to affordable opportunities for physical activity⁴.

Increasing access to opportunities and programmes across a variety of settings will allow all individuals in Harrow to engage in regular physical activity. This will significantly reduce the burden of chronic diseases and foster a healthier community. It is therefore not just an individual responsibility, but a societal one that can transform the wellbeing of our Harrow community^{5,6}.

The many forms physical activity can take (to name just a few):



What is the situation in Harrow?

In Harrow, 26.5% of adults are physically inactive, exceeding the England average of 22.6% (Figure 13). While over half of adults in Harrow do meet the recommended 150 minutes of weekly exercise, inactivity is certainly a widespread issue⁷. The latest HAY Harrow survey shows that 49% of 9–18-year-olds exercise for an hour a day on only 4 days or fewer per week, highlighting a concerning trend of low exercise levels among children and young people as well⁸. Closely linked to this is the substantial prevalence of overweight and obesity in Harrow at 52.8%, although this is below the national average⁷.

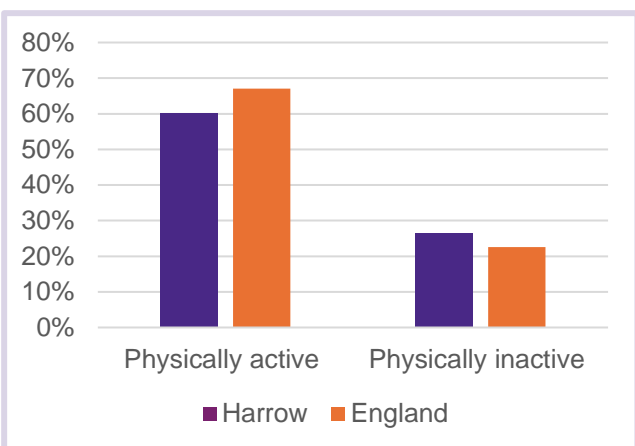


Figure 13: Percentage of adults in Harrow and England who are physically active and physically inactive⁷.

What is being done?

The importance of physical activity for health is recognised in the London Borough of Harrow's Health and Wellbeing Strategy⁹. Part of the solution is encouraging better and more extensive use of the large number of parks and open spaces in Harrow. Currently 6 of our parks have been awarded 'Green Flag Status' which is an international accreditation given to publicly accessible parks and open spaces, managed under licence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and more parks are hoping to achieve this. There are opportunities to get more involved by volunteering and connecting with other local people. Harrow Council has committed to developing walking trails across parks from 2024 to 2026.



Simultaneously, The Harrow Health Walks programme consists of free walks with at least 18 weekly sessions. Recently, it has partnered with local organisations (the Man Down Project and Harrow Nature Heroes) to arrange specialist events for specific audiences, including men's wellbeing walks and a nature wellbeing course¹⁰.

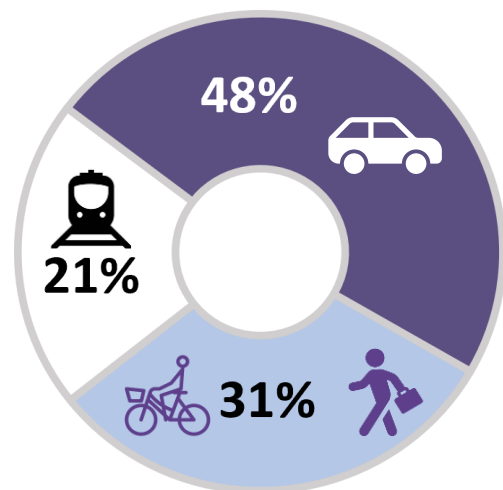
Street Tag is an app-based game that encourages schools and the community to become more active by collecting points and tags through walking, running, and cycling. It fosters community collaboration in teams to combat physical inactivity¹¹.

Meanwhile, 13 schools have benefitted from the installation of Daily Mile tracks, with 7 more being set up. These aim to help children meet their daily physical activity target, as well as improving other physical, mental, social and emotional outcomes^{12,13}.

For the over 65s, the Borough supports a free strength and balance training programme run by Watford Football Club. While the primary purpose is to prevent falls, it is hugely beneficial for overall physical and mental wellbeing¹⁴.

Harrow Council is also investing in enhanced active transport options for residents. Utilising these will boost physical activity levels as well as reducing climate impact. Currently only 31% of transport in Harrow is active¹⁵.

The percentage of adults in Harrow who use different methods of transport¹⁵:



Telling someone to 'get more exercise' is not enough. It risks simply serving as a reminder of what they are missing rather than motivating a change. Active travel could be the most frequent form of exercise in London. Residents need to be reminded that doing the recommended amount of exercise is best achieved when it is part of a routine like going to work, taking the children to school or even going to the shops. Anyone supporting a client or patient can refer to the Active Travel Toolkit for more help on what to say¹⁶.

The Active 10 (NHS) mobile app shows users how much brisk walking they do and guides them to incorporate more brisk walking into their day. It breaks this brisk

walking down into manageable chunks of ten minutes and encourages at least one session every day (which equates to 70 minutes a week)¹⁷. Users can set their own goals and the app encourages people to progress up to 30 brisk minutes of walking per day, to meet the 150 minutes recommended by the Chief Medical Officer

Other applications that may help include:

- Couch to 5K (NHS) – a running programme for beginners¹⁷.
- Ramblers – an app to search for Ramblers walking groups and routes¹⁸.
- Tree Talk – generates walking routes through local trees¹⁹.

¹UK Chief Medical Officers. UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines. 2019. Available from: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d839543ed915d52428dc134/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf>

²World Health Organization. Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment: Chapter 9. 2024. Available from: <https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/who-compendium-on-health-and-environment/who-compendium-chapter9.pdf>

³NHS. Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults Aged 19 to 64. 2024. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults-aged-19-to-64/>

⁴Public Health England. Understanding and Addressing Inequalities in Physical Activity: August Update. 2021. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/611cd4188fa8f53dcf15655e/PHE_Inequalities_in_physical_activity_August_update_Final.pdf

⁵World Health Organization. Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030: More Active People for a Healthier World. Geneva: 2018. Available from: <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/272722/9789241514187-eng.pdf>

⁶Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Physical Activity and Your Weight and Health. 2024. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/physical-activity/index.html#:~:text=For%20overall%20health%2C%20adults%20need,what%20works%20for%20your%20schedule>

⁷Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public health profiles. 2024 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

⁸Young Harrow Foundation. How Are You (HAY) Harrow. 2024. Available from:

<https://youngharrowfoundation.org/HAYHarrow>

⁹London Borough of Harrow. Harrow Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2030. 2022. Available from: https://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/31683/HAR_PH_HEALTH_AND_WELLBEING_STRATEGY_web_v2.pdf

¹⁰London Borough of Harrow. Harrow Health Walks. 2024. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/health-leisure/health-walks>

¹¹London Borough of Harrow. Street Tag. 2024. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/health-leisure/street-tag>

¹²London Borough of Harrow. Daily Mile Track Gets Children Active. 2024. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/news/article/11308/daily-mile-track-gets-children-active>

¹³The Daily Mile Foundation. Research on The Daily Mile. 2024. Available from: <https://thedailymile.co.uk/research/>

¹⁴Watford FC Community Sports & Education Trust. Falls Prevention. 2024. Available from:

<https://www.watfordfccsetrust.com/project/fallsprevention/>

¹⁵London Borough of Harrow. Harrow's Long Term Transport Strategy. 2024. Available from:

<https://talk.harrow.gov.uk/harrow-transport-strategy>

¹⁶ Department for Transport. Active travel: local authority toolkit. 2022. Available from: [Active travel: local authority toolkit - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-local-authority-toolkit)

¹⁷ NHS Better Health. Get Active. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/#ra4GXuo8cxOwWQVe.97>

¹⁸ Ramblers. Homepage. Available from: [The Ramblers: Britain's walking charity](https://www.ramblers.org.uk/)

¹⁹ Tree Talk. Homepage. Available from: [Explore the trees of London's streets and parks | TreeTalk | TreeTalk](https://www.treetalk.org.uk/)

Key Messages

- 1 Safe Sex:** Take control of your sexual health. Use condoms and contraception to protect yourself and your partner.
- 2 Get Tested:** Regular testing is key to staying safe. Many Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) have no symptoms, so make testing a routine part of looking after your sexual health.
- 3 Get Treated:** Don't delay your treatment if you test positive. Early care means better health and less worry.

Sexual health incorporates a broad range of topics, each of which have their own sensitivities to manage: Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), relationships and sex education (RSE), contraception and terminations, female genital mutilation (FGM), HIV testing, prevention and treatment, and more. To that end, assessing how and where to direct efforts to be most effective is paramount. As in most aspects of public health, focus is on prevention being better than cure, therefore significant resources are directed towards education and regular testing, especially with regards to HIV¹.

Sexual health is an essential contributor to the effective functioning of any society. Conveying the importance of sexual health to the diverse community we live in and effectively managing all aspects of sexual health is often complicated by stigma and discrimination, and combatting these is often just as difficult as combatting the physical health issues themselves¹.



What is the situation in Harrow?

Harrow is one of the most ethnically diverse (61.8% ethnic minority) areas in the country, which presents a unique circumstance for developing effective sexual health messaging and service delivery.

In 2023 there were 1,441 new STI diagnoses (excluding chlamydia aged under 25) at a rate of 552 per 100,000 people (Figure 14). This was above the national average, and an increase of 14% since 2022. However, the STI testing rate (excluding chlamydia aged under 25) of 4,409 per 100,000 people being above the national average alongside a positivity rate of 5.6% being below the national average suggests that Harrow has relatively effective STI detection services². This is vital in enabling more effective STI treatment.

The chlamydia detection rate in 15–24-year-olds in Harrow was 1,739 per 100,000 people in 2023 (a total of 519 diagnoses). This was also above the national average and a rise in the past year².

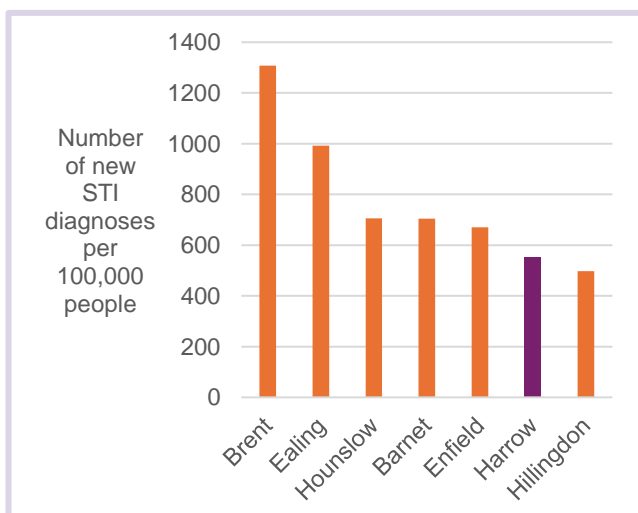


Figure 14: New STI diagnoses (excluding chlamydia aged under 25) per 100,000 people in Harrow and neighbouring boroughs²



STI diagnoses are increasing in Harrow, with a rise of 14% in the last year (excluding chlamydia <25 years)²



Data suggests Harrow has relatively **effective STI testing** – testing rates are comparatively high while positivity is low²

HIV diagnosis prevalence is 1.84 per 1,000 people in Harrow, which is just above the national average of 1.73. The new HIV diagnosis rate is 11.4 per 100,000 people, which again is just above the national average of 10.4². Figure 15 shows HIV testing coverage in Harrow and England, and how this has changed over time.

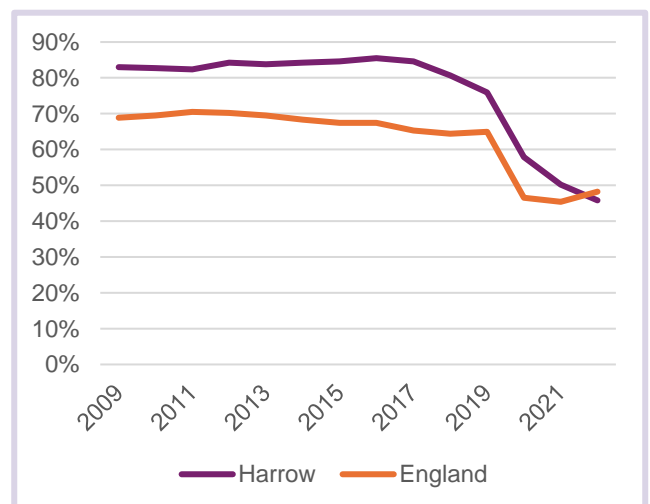


Figure 15: HIV testing coverage in Harrow and England²

As with any disease, but especially so with sexually transmitted ones, it is not as simple as higher diagnosis rates equaling higher actual incidence. Destigmatising regular testing can actually cause an increase in diagnosis rates by increasing testing rates, whereas areas with low testing rates will usually have lower diagnosis rates too.

What is being done?

Several measures have been implemented in Harrow to combat STIs within its diverse community. Central to this is the work of the Caryl Thomas Clinic, which serves as a community hub for a range of services, including STI testing and contraceptive provision. The clinic aims to streamline access by integrating multiple sexual health services, thus ensuring individuals can receive care quickly and efficiently³.

Another key initiative is the improvement in access to online services for the Harrow community. This ranges from remote access to STI tests and treatment to receiving professional health advice without having to visit a clinic. Harrow is part of a Pan-London online sexual health contract which has helped make these improvements with an aim to divert 30% of routine clinic visits to convenient online services. The Sexual Health London (SHL) e-service plays a pivotal role in this, providing online triage, STI testing and contraception⁴.

The Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) runs outreach programs including HIV point-of-care testing, distribution of free condoms, and free sexual health advice. THT also provides peer mentoring to support individuals affected by sexual health concerns⁵.

Furthermore, Brook's outreach services offer relationship and sex education (RSE) to

children and young people, along with a C-card scheme providing free condoms. Brook also provides training to professionals to enable them to deliver RSE themselves⁶.

Living Well is a community organisation that aims to improve the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing for people living with a range of health conditions, but with a strong focus on HIV. Examples of services they offer include one-to-one counselling, life coaching and support from HIV specialist dietitians⁷.



¹ Mitchell KR et al. What is sexual wellbeing and why does it matter for public health. *Lancet Public Health*. 2021; 6: e608-13. Available from: [What is sexual wellbeing and why does it matter for public health? - The Lancet Public Health](#)

² Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public health profiles. 2024 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

³ London North West Sexual Health and Contraceptive Services. Caryl Thomas Clinic (Harrow). Available from: <https://shc.lnwh.nhs.uk/caryl-thomas-clinic/>

⁴ London Borough of Harrow. Harrow Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health Service Commissioning update. 2018. Available from:

https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fmodern.gov.harrow.gov.uk%2Fdocuments%2Fs151535%2FISRH_Update%2520-%25203.doc%3FCT%3D2&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

⁵ Terrence Higgins Trust. My Community. 2024. Available from: <https://www.tht.org.uk/>

⁶ Brook. Sexual health & wellbeing for under 25s. 2024. Available from: <https://www.brook.org.uk/>

⁷ Living Well. HIV Care and Support. 2024. Available from: <https://www.livingwellcic.com/hiv-care-and-support/>

Key Messages

- 1 **Think about you:** Life can be complex and demanding, no one is invincible. Explore the Women's Health area of the NHS website.
- 2 **Attend routine clinical appointments:** Screening helps to prevent the progression of diseases when you may have no signs or symptoms.
- 3 **Seek help:** Talk to your GP if you are anxious about changes in your body, understand the range of support that is available to you.

Women's health remains a critical priority in public health policy across the UK. Significant progress has been made in areas such as reproductive healthcare access and cancer screening¹.

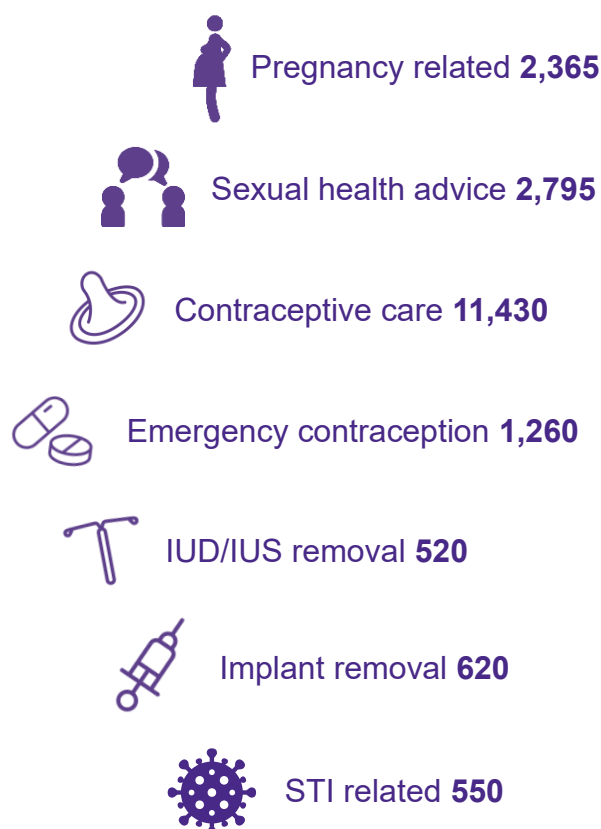
A woman's reproductive health encompasses her entire life, from the onset of menstruation through to choices around contraception, access to maternity services, and menopause, exhibiting the broad and interrelated nature of her health needs at each stage. This is reflected in the varied use of reproductive services². The NHS website is an excellent resource to explore issues affecting Women's Health and support that is available:

www.nhs.uk/womens-health/

The Public Health community in England has highlighted the far-reaching impacts of poorly managed reproductive health on women's morbidity and mortality, the generational impact on children and its economic effects¹. The Department of Health and Social Care announced that priorities for 2024 would include improving support for domestic and sexual abuse victims and investing more funding into tackling maternity inequalities³.

Despite ongoing efforts, disparities in access and outcomes persist particularly for women from ethnic minority communities⁴. Addressing these inequalities is vital to improving women's health.

Use of sexual and reproductive health services in Harrow (2022/23)²:



What is the situation in Harrow?

In Harrow, life expectancy for females is higher than the national average at 85.4 years. However, women in the poorest parts of the borough live for 6 years less than those in wealthier areas⁵. Healthy life expectancy for females in Harrow is 60.9, compared with 64.8 in males. This means that women who live in Harrow tend to spend nearly 25 years of their lives in ill-health, which is substantially more than men – this is reflected in the proportion of women locally who report being in bad health in the 2021 Census (16%, compared with 13% of men as shown in Figure 16)⁶.



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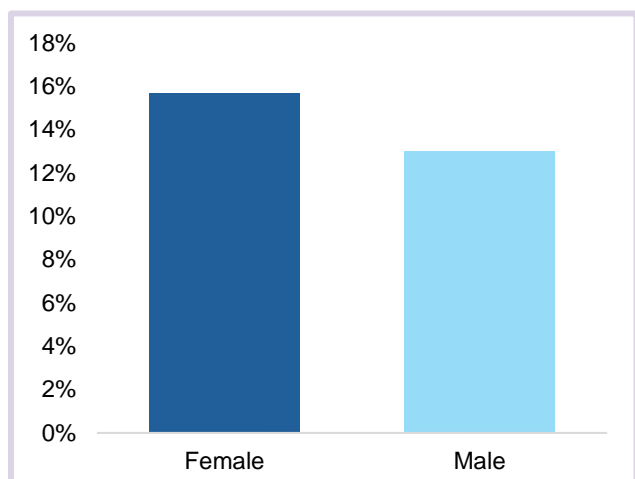


Figure 16: Percentage of females and males living in bad health in 2021⁶

Two key screening programmes available to women are breast and cervical cancer screening. In Harrow, uptake of these screening programmes sits at 60.6% for cervical cancer and 62% for breast cancer in 2022, below the national averages^{7,8}.

Abortion figures can be an indicator of good quality contraception services and advice, as well as problems with individual use of contraceptive method. In Harrow, rates have fallen somewhat over the past ten years, compared to a rise nationally (Figure 17)⁵.

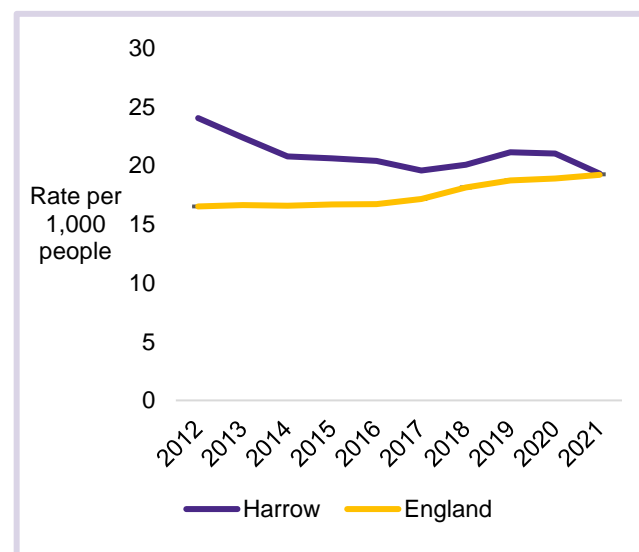


Figure 17: Abortion rates (per 1,000 people) in women aged 15-44 years⁵

A key driver in economic inequality between men and women nationally is the distribution in unpaid care work – an average woman will carry out 60% more unpaid work than an average man⁹. The employment rate for males in Harrow is 81.7% compared with 70.1% in females¹⁰. Nationally, 85% of lone parent families are headed by a mother¹¹, while 81% of widowed Harrow residents who live alone are women⁶.

In the UK, 5% of adults (6.9% women and 3% men) aged 16 years and over experience domestic abuse¹². Domestic abuse related crimes disproportionately affect females – in 74.1% of crimes the victims are female, while 72.1% of victims of domestic homicide are female¹³. According to Harrow Council's 2023 residents survey, female residents reported that they are significantly less likely to feel safe after dark (60%) than males (79%)¹⁴.



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What is being done?

Working with healthcare partners, the London Borough of Harrow promotes national screening programmes. Encouraging uptake helps to improve health outcomes through earlier diagnosis and intervention. Harrow Council works with Royal Marsden (RM) Partners (The North-west and South-west London Cancer Alliance) to raise cancer awareness and produce easy-read material for certain groups such as those with learning disabilities¹⁵. The Council helps to enable women to make informed lifestyle and health choices by conducting information events on women's health. A women-only walk is scheduled every Wednesday at the Recreation Ground¹⁶.

Community organisations play a key role in improving women's wellbeing. Diya is a support group for South Asian women experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing. Diya provides members with a 'safe space' to talk about their experiences and participate in member-led activities and techniques to improve mental wellbeing¹⁷. Harrow Cove also organises a weekly women's group and offers one-to-one drop-ins¹⁸.

DAWN is another community organisation providing counselling in a women-only "safe space" to safeguard confidentiality, security and anonymity of women. They recognise support needs of socially isolated, hard-to-reach women and girls from ethnic minority communities who face multiple barriers in accessing mainstream mental health services¹⁹.

Resourceful Women's Network assist women by providing family law consultations, counselling, art, exercise and other groups and drop-ins. They provide information and guidance on a range of issues that affect women²⁰.

Harrow Council promotes the delivery of several Sexual Health services which women can access, such as the Caryl Thomas Clinic that provides STI testing and contraception. The details of these services can be found in the Sexual Health chapter of this report.



¹Public Health England. What do women say? Reproductive health is a public health issue. 2018. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b64731940f0b668806ca8e1/What_do_women_say_reproductive_health_is_a_public_health_issue.pdf

²NHS England. Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (contraception) – Data tables. 2023. Available from: [srh-serv-eng-22-23-tab.xlsx](https://srh.serv-eng-22-23-tab.xlsx) (live.com)

³Department of Health and Social Care. Health Secretary announces new women's health priorities for 2024. 2024. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/health-secretary-announces-new-womens-health-priorities-for-2024>

⁴House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee. Black maternal health: Third Report of Session 2022–23. 2023. Available from: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/38989/documents/191706/default/>

⁵Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public health profiles. 2024 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

⁶Office for National Statistics. Census. 2024. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

⁷NHS England. Cervical Screening Programme Statistics. 2022. Available from: [Microsoft Power BI](#)

⁸NHS England. NHS Breast Screening Programme Statistics. 2024. Available from: [Microsoft Power BI](#)

⁹Office for National Statistics. Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2022. 2022. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2022>

¹⁰Office for National Statistics. Labour Market Profile - Local Authority: London. 2024. Available from: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157269/report.aspx#tabempunemp>

¹¹Office for National Statistics. Families and households in the UK: 2023. 2024. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2023>

¹²Office for National Statistics. Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2022. 2022. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2022>

¹³Office for National Statistics. Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2022. 2022. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2022>

¹⁴London Borough of Harrow. Annual Director of Public Health Report 2022/23. 2023. Available from: https://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/31916/Annual_Director_of_Public_Health_Report_2022_23_b.pdf

¹⁵RM Partners. Homepage. Available from: <https://rmpartners.nhs.uk/>

¹⁶London Borough of Harrow. Harrow Health walks. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/health-leisure/health-walks/2#wed2>

¹⁷Mind in Harrow. Diya South Asian Group. Available from: <https://www.mindinharrow.org.uk/our-services/culturally-specific-services/diya-south-asian-group/>

¹⁸Hestia. Harrow Cove. Available from: <https://www.hestia.org/harrow-cove>

¹⁹DAWN. Social Wellbeing Services. Available from: <http://www.dawncharitabletrust.org.uk/>

²⁰Resourceful Women's Network. Homepage. Available from: <https://www.resourcefulwomensnetwork.org/>

Key Messages

- 1 Noticing anything unusual:** Listen to your body and contact your GP if you notice anything that is not normal for you.
- 2 Cut cancer risks:** Quit smoking, cut down your alcohol intake, keep active, watch your diet, stay safe in the sun.
- 3 Mental Wellbeing:** If you are struggling with your emotions or how you are feeling, ask for support.

There are several physical and mental health issues that disproportionately affect men in the UK. These include outcomes from conditions such as cardiovascular disease, cancers and death by suicide. The overall diagnoses and hospital admission rates for coronary heart disease have decreased over the last few years but men remain disproportionately at increased risk¹.

The underlying reason for these health inequalities appears to be multifactorial with reduced health seeking behaviour and socio-economic factors playing a key role². Research has identified differences in engagement with healthcare services between men and women particularly with mental health issues³.

Approximately, 1 in 6 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime and it is the second most common cause of cancer death in men in the UK⁴. Unfortunately, there is no standardised screening programme as the Prostate-specific Antigen (PSA) test has a low sensitivity and a high false positive rate⁵, making the importance of symptom awareness vital.

It is important to recognise that there are also inequalities between groups of men particularly in the transgender and non-binary communities². Enhancing access and overall awareness of men's health in all groups in Harrow will be key in improving overall outcomes.



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What is the situation in Harrow?

In Harrow, while life expectancy for males is higher than the national average at 82.0 years (Figure 18), this is still lower than females at 85.4 years⁶. Life expectancy for males in Harrow is 7 years less for those in the poorest parts of the borough, compared with wealthier areas. For many long-term conditions, such as circulatory disease, respiratory disease, and most cancers, there are higher mortality rates in men in Harrow. In 2022, 71% of deaths considered to be preventable in Harrow, were in males⁶.

Men's health in Harrow⁶:



Male life expectancy is 82 years



Healthy male life expectancy is 65 years



Male life expectancy is 7 years shorter in poorer parts of the borough

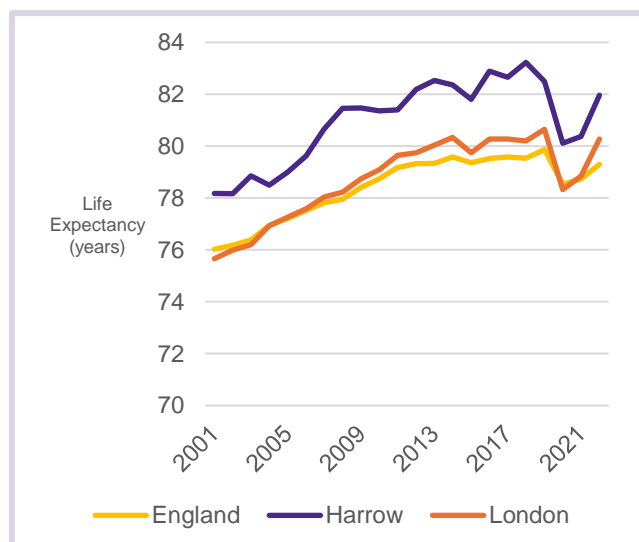
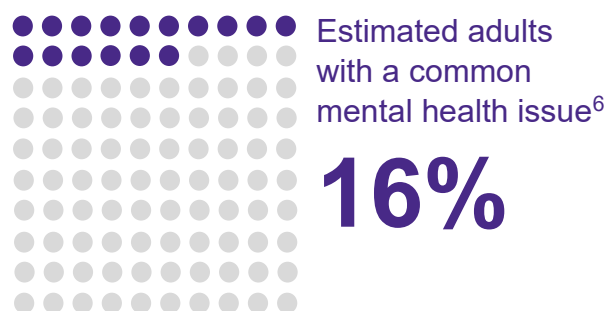


Figure 18: Life expectancy of males in Harrow compared to England and London between 2001 and 2021⁶

Men are less likely to consult their GP than women (even accounting for reproductive appointments), and less likely to attend an NHS Health Check⁷. While there is evidence that common mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety are more common in women overall, men are considerably less likely to seek support from their GP⁷, with only 32% of referrals to NHS Talking Therapies in North-west London during 2022/23 being for men⁸. In Harrow, 76% of suicides in 2021-23 were males⁶.



Men are also more likely to engage in behaviours which directly risk their health. For example, in Harrow, 22.8% of men smoke, compared to 11.2% of women⁶, and 8.1% of men have substance misuse disorders, compared with 2.6% of women⁹.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer affecting men⁴, and over 30 men in Harrow die from prostate cancer each year which is similar to the London average⁶. Testicular cancer is much less common overall, however it is more common in younger men¹⁰.

What is being done?

The Macmillan Community Champions programme¹¹ reaches out to communities to raise awareness of cancer screening. They promote the importance of individuals contacting their GP if they notice anything abnormal with their body such as lumps or unexplained pain or bleeding.

Group activities by Mind in Harrow¹² help residents improve their mental wellbeing and Harrow Council, in partnership with Harrow Health Walks, organise monthly group walks for men known as the 'Mandown Project' Walks¹³. Harrow Cove provides one-to-one support, advice, information and signposting, providing the

opportunity to develop a safety plan for self-care¹⁴.

'Man On'¹⁵ is a free mental health service delivered by CNWL NHS Trust. The service offers men support through conversations and sport. It runs every week and has already proven to improve mental and physical health as well as build on an individual's support network. Sessions start with a demand-free game of football followed by an indoor conversation around positive mental wellbeing. CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) runs campaigns to ensure everyone has the knowledge and skills to unite against suicide and help people by providing ways to manage their mental health¹⁶.

¹ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Cardiovascular disease and diabetes profiles: statistical commentary. 2024. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cardiovascular-disease-and-diabetes-profiles-march-2024-update/cardiovascular-disease-and-diabetes-profiles-statistical-commentary>

²Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. Men's health. 2023. Available from: <https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pb-0056/>

³ NHS Professionals. Men's Health Week. 2024. Available from: <https://www.nhsprofessionals.nhs.uk/health-and-wellbeing/helpful-links/mens-health-week>

⁴ Cancer Research UK. Prostate cancer statistics. 2024. Available from: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/prostate-cancer#heading-One>

⁵ David M, Leslie S. Prostate Specific Antigen. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing. 2024. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK557495/>

⁶ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public health profiles. 2024 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

⁷ Baker P. Missing Persons? Men's use of primary care services. TRENDS in Urology & Men's Health. 2024. Available from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/tre.950>

⁸ NHS Digital. NHS Talking Therapies. 2024. Available from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-tools->

[and-services/data-services/mental-health-data-hub/dashboards/nhs-talking-therapies](https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-tools-and-services/data-services/mental-health-data-hub/dashboards/nhs-talking-therapies)

⁹ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. Global Burden of Disease Study 2021 (GBD 2021). 2024. Available from: <https://ghdx.healthdata.org/gbd-2021>

¹⁰ Cancer Research UK. Testicular cancer statistics. 2024. Available from: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/testicular-cancer>

¹¹ Voluntary Action Harrow. Community Champions in partnership with Macmillan. 2024. Available from: <https://www.vah.org.uk/community-champions-in-partnership-with-macmillan/>

¹² Mind in Harrow. Adult Services. Available from: <https://www.mindinharrow.org.uk/services-category/adult-services/>

¹³ London Borough of Harrow. Health Walks. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/health-leisure/health-walks>

¹⁴ Young Harrow Foundation. Harrow Cove Mental Health Support. 2022. Available from: <https://youngharrowfoundation.org/projects/details/harrow-cove-mental-health-support>

¹⁵ Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. Man on! A mental health service to support men in Harrow launched this month. 2023. Available from: <https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/news/man-mental-health-service-support-men-harrow-launched-month>

¹⁶ Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM). Available from: <https://www.thecalmzone.net/>

Key Messages

- 1 Feeling lonely can be harmful to your health:** Sometimes we can feel lonely, but this can be harmful in the long-term.
- 2 Take action – we can help:** It's difficult to take the first step, but we can help you to learn a new skill or take up a new hobby
- 3 Help others:** Volunteering within your community or even online communities is a great way to do good whilst combatting loneliness

Feeling alone and isolated happens to everyone at some point in their lives, but when it becomes a constant state rather than a transient one, it can profoundly affect mental and physical health. Social isolation is a potent determinant of health for people of all ages, and high-quality, regular social interaction is not just good for health and wellbeing, but crucial for them¹.

Loneliness is not a mental health problem in itself but can form part of a vicious circle during a period of poor mental health. In fact, poor mental health is the most significant factor in loneliness. Those with a mental health problem, either diagnosed or undiagnosed, are more likely to feel lonely compared to those without mental health issues².

Age, location, and socioeconomic class also have strong correlations with loneliness³. Other risk factors include being single or living alone, recent significant life changes, poverty, disability, and experiencing prejudice or feeling different to those a person lives amongst⁴.

There is a distinction to be made between social isolation and loneliness⁵: Social isolation is a quantification of the amount and type of interactions whereas loneliness is the subjective perception that there is a mismatch between the amount of social interaction one has, and the amount one desires⁶.

Six key factors associated with loneliness^{2,3,4}:

Poor mental health



Being acutely poor



Being single or living alone



Being deaf or disabled



Going through life changes



Feeling different or experiencing prejudice



What is the situation in Harrow?

Roughly 1 in 13 adults in the UK feel lonely often or always⁷. In Harrow, this is around 1 in 10 adults (Figure 19)⁸.

The COVID pandemic had an indelible and persistent impact on the population in Harrow. An increasing reliance on virtual tools has left people finding it difficult to reach out in real life now that normalcy has broadly resumed⁹. Those who are digitally excluded are more likely to feel lonely and could benefit from the digital literacy activities at the Community Hubs¹⁰ or digital literacy courses by Learn Harrow¹¹.

Following conversations with colleagues in the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams in the borough, it has been established that many housebound residents and those with transport needs are living in loneliness. Some people have hesitation or lack skills making new connections. Possible ways to address these barriers are being explored for the new provision of Community Hubs initiative¹⁰.

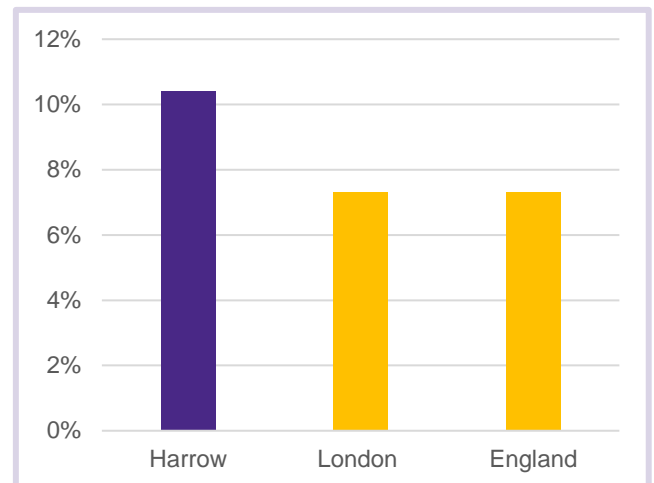


Figure 19: Percentage of people who “often or always” felt lonely in 2021 in Harrow, London and England⁷



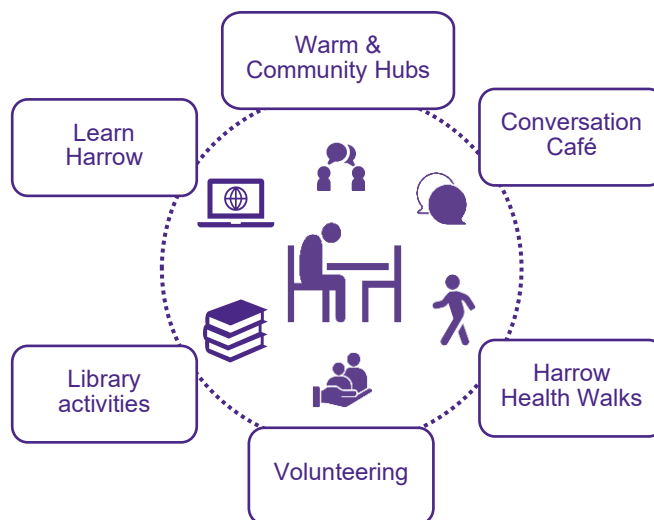
What is being done?

The London Borough of Harrow continues to work with third sector and healthcare organisations to help residents overcome loneliness & isolation through the provision of community hubs, the Conversation Café¹², health walks¹³, activities in libraries¹⁴ and adult learning courses¹⁵. The community hubs, previously run only during winter months will now run throughout the year until March 2026. These offer opportunities for residents to connect with people and communities through various activities including games, information sharing, health checks and informal chats.

Harrow Council has been working closely with the frontline workforce such as social prescribers to understand barriers faced by residents accessing such opportunities and is committed to address those barriers. The team promotes use of JOY, the online

Directory of Services for providers and residents for better accessibility of resources¹⁶. The workforce and community engagement leads in various organisations are brought up to date with information through MECC and Community Touch-point meetings.

Support services for loneliness and isolation in Harrow:



¹World Health Organization. Reducing social isolation and loneliness among older people. Available from: <https://www.who.int/activities/reducing-social-isolation-and-loneliness-among-older-people>

² Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Mental Health and loneliness: the relationship across life stages. 2022. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-loneliness-the-relationship-across-life-stages/mental-health-and-loneliness-the-relationship-across-life-stages#chap3>

³ Office for National Statistics. Loneliness – What characteristics and circumstances are associated with feeling lonely. 2018. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/welbeing/articles/lonelinesswhatcharacteristicsandcircumstancesareassociatedwithfeelinglonely/2018-04-10#profiles-of-loneliness>

⁴ Campaign to End Loneliness. Reconceptualising Loneliness. 2022. Available from: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Reconceptualising-Loneliness-Final-for-Pub-29Mar22.pdf>

⁵ What Works Wellbeing. Brief Guide to Measuring Loneliness. 2019. Available from: <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Brief-Guide-to-measuring-Loneliness-Feb2019.pdf>

⁶ Marmalade Trust. Loneliness Guide. Available from: <https://www.marmaladetrust.org/loneliness-guide>

⁷ Office for National Statistics. UK Measures of National Well-being Dashboard. 2024. Available from: [Measures of National Well-being dashboard \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/indicators/metrics/dashboards/uk-measures-of-national-well-being)

⁸ Office for National Statistics. Loneliness rates and well-being indicators by local authority. 2021. Available from: [Loneliness rates and well-being indicators by local authority - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/welbeing/articles/loneliness-rates-and-well-being-indicators-by-local-authority)

⁹Healthwatch Harrow. Harrow Mental Wellbeing Report. 2021 Apr. Available from: https://nds.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/default/files/reports_library/20210517_Harrow%2520Mental%2520Wellbeing%2520Report%2520April%25202021%2520%2520FINAL.pdf

¹⁰ Harrow Giving. Harrow Community Hubs. Available from: <https://harrowgiving.org.uk/warmhubs/>

¹¹ Learn Harrow. Courses. Available from: [Web.Enrol Learn Harrow \(webenrol.com\)](https://www.learnharrow.ac.uk/web-enrol)

¹²London Borough of Harrow. The Conversation Café. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/adult-social-care/conversation-cafe>

¹³London Borough of Harrow. Harrow Health walks. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/health-leisure/health-walks>

¹⁴London Borough of Harrow. Events and activities in Harrow. Available from: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/libraries/events-activities-harrow-libraries>

¹⁵Learn Harrow. Homepage. Available from: <https://www.learnharrow.ac.uk/>

¹⁶ JOY. Local services. Available from: <https://services.thejoyapp.com/>

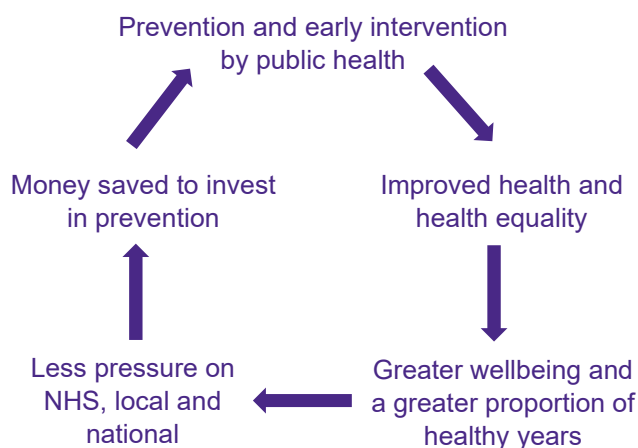
The formal role of Public Health in Harrow Council

Public Health moved from the local NHS to Harrow Council in 2013, and it continues to influence how the Council approaches all its functions, as almost everything the Council does has a health impact. With a focus on prevention and early intervention the ambitions are to improve the quality of life, preserve resources and reinvest locally. The Director of Public Health (DPH) will ensure this approach is extended into the Harrow Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB). The HWB is made up of political, clinical, professional and community leaders that come together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population and reduce health inequalities.

Directors of Public Health lead a team of experts to improve and protect health and prevent harm. Public Health is also responsible for producing this annual and independent report collating, interpreting and providing information and statistics about residents' health and wellbeing to the NHS, local authorities, social care, community-based organisations and the public.

With information and statistics Public Health will influence strategies for other services and environments to positively impact health and wellbeing. The Virtuous Circle of Public Health illustrates how prevention and early intervention will ultimately reduce acute need and therefore improve quality of life¹:

The Virtuous Circle of Public Health:



A central perspective to any influence will be on the evidence of effectiveness, and equality for all groups however they may be defined. The 2010 Equalities Act defines particular groups of people known to be subject to inequalities, but there are other important groups not defined in legislation such as more deprived communities, carers, and those with English as a Second Language, the 2023/24 annual report describes these in more detail.

The DPH is responsible for the use of the Public Health Grant. They must commission certain services directly e.g. sexual health, and will invest in other activities that benefit the health and wellbeing of the public e.g. addiction services or weight management. The process of deciding how and where to invest is informed by the publication of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy by the Harrow Health and Wellbeing Board².

¹ Local Government Association. From transition to transformation in public health. 2012. Available from: <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/resource-sheet-2-understa-b9d.pdf>

² Department of Health and Social Care. Role of the director of public health in local authorities. 2023. Available from: [Role of the director of public health in local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/role-of-the-director-of-public-health-in-local-authorities)

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