



HARROW'S HOUSING EVIDENCE BASE SOCIAL HOUSING

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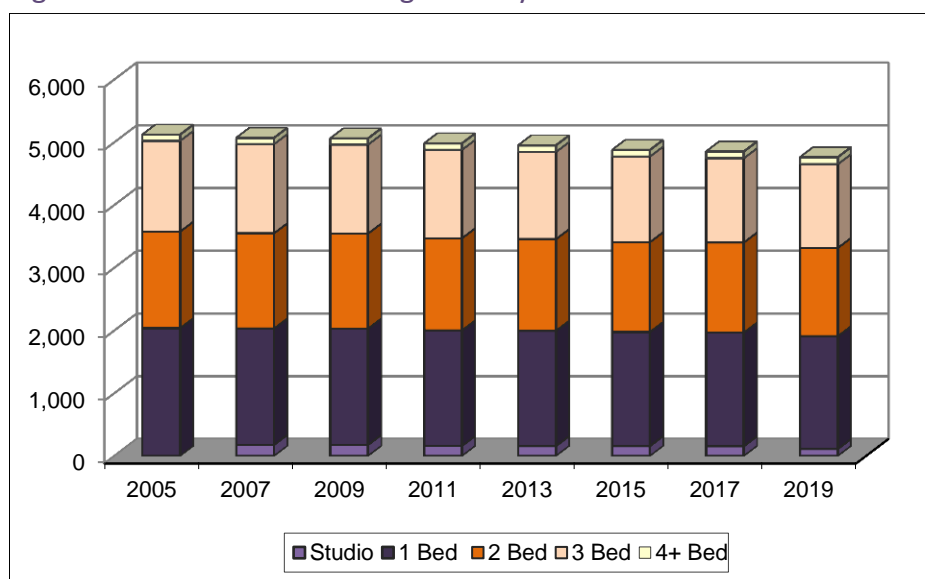
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Social Housing Stock

Although 23% of London's population live in social housing, Harrow has the second lowest proportion at just 10% of its 90,000 households. At March 2019 there were 4,762 Council properties and 4,327 housing association properties. Harrow is ranked 287th out of 326 local authority areas where Rank 1 has the highest percentage of social housing.

One bedroom properties make up 38%, with around half of these being sheltered accommodation within 17 local authority sheltered housing schemes (rented) for older people. 2% of Council stock is studio accommodation, 2 bedroom properties make up 30%, 3 bedroom properties make up 28%, and only 2% of properties have 4 or more bedrooms (fig 5.1).

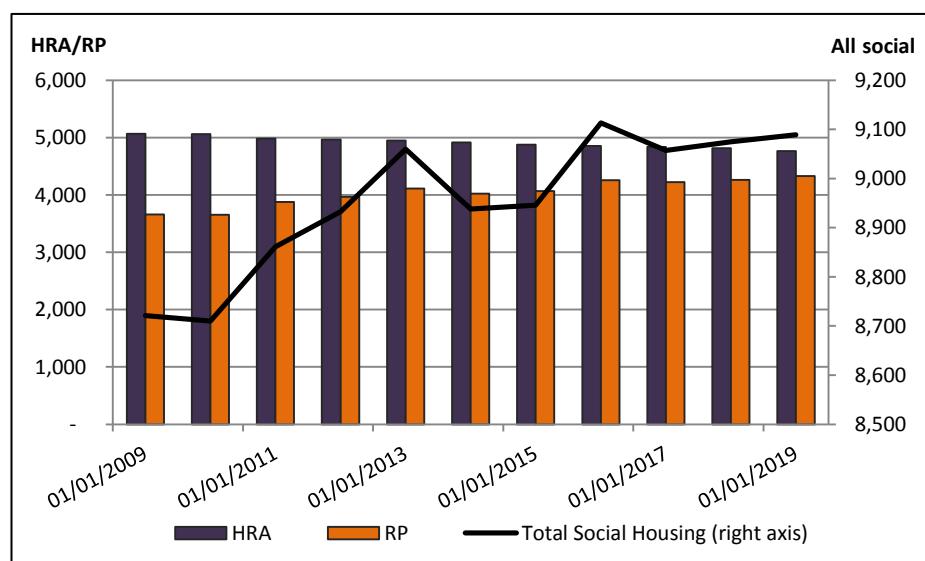
Fig 5.1 Harrow Council Housing Stock by Bedroom Size



Source: Northgate

At March 2019 there were 4,250 General Needs and 512 Sheltered properties in Harrow. In addition, there were 4,327 Registered Provider (RP) properties, also 5% of all housing stock (figs 5.2 and 5.3).

Fig 5.2 Harrow's Social Housing Stock - Council & Registered Provider Homes



Source: Northgate & RANS Team

The Council is building new homes for the first time in decades. At September 2019, 98 new homes were either completed or under construction, with planning permission for a further 37 new homes on 'infill sites' on existing estates. Additional funding has been received for a total council house building programme of 639 new homes - 580 for social rent and 59 for shared ownership. This includes the regeneration of the Grange Farm estate which will see 574 new homes built - 249 for social rent, 25 for shared ownership and 300 for private sale to offset costs.

Neighbouring West London boroughs all have a significantly larger housing stock and proportion of both council (LA) and housing association (RP) stock (fig 5.3).

Fig 5.3 Stock Levels of Social Housing in West London Boroughs, 2018

Borough	Stock	No. LA	% LA	No. RP	% RP
Brent	118,710	8,351	7.0	17,935	15.1
Ealing	133,350	11,947	8.9	11,651	8.7
Hammersmith and Fulham	88,140	12,227	13.9	13,273	15.1
Harrow	90,680	4,813	5.3	4,262	4.7
Hillingdon	109,780	9,925	9.0	7,589	6.9
Hounslow	100,740	13,129	13.0	8,254	8.2
Kensington and Chelsea	87,610	6,790	7.8	12,923	14.8

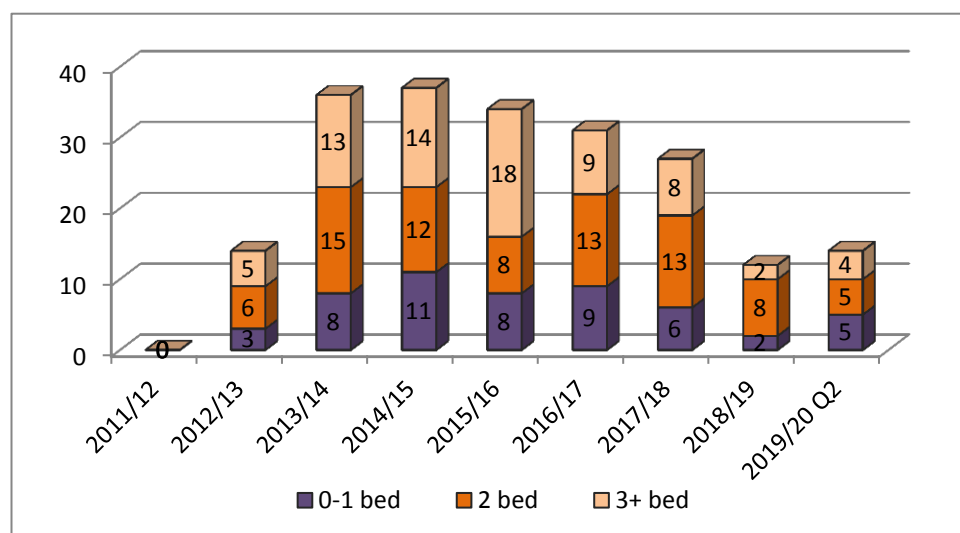
Source: MHCLG

Right to Buy

Since 1980 the 'Right to Buy' (RTB) scheme has given secure council tenants and some HA tenants the legal right to buy the home they are living in at a discount, which is based on length of tenancy, type of property, value and location. The maximum discount in London in 2019 is £110,500, and this increases annually in line with inflation. There are many government restrictions on the use of RTB receipts that make it difficult to replace these properties. Social housing stock may be further reduced if RTB for housing association tenants is rolled out nationally.

Harrow lost 4,191 properties to Right to Buy from when it was introduced in 1980 to March 2019. Sales had slowed since 2014/15 (fig 5.4), but this decline has reversed during 2019/20, with more sold by Q2 than in the whole of 2018/19.

Fig 5.4 Properties Sold Under 'Right To Buy'

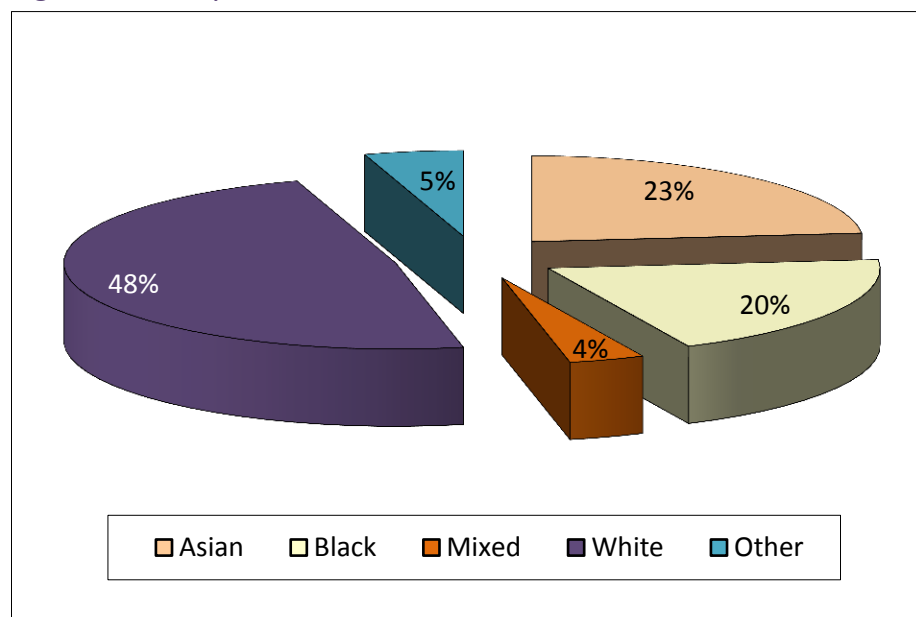


Source: Leasehold Team

Council Tenants

At March 2019 there were 5,715 tenants (including joint tenants), living in 4,762 Council properties, approximately 2.4% of the total population in Harrow. Of the 85% who have disclosed their ethnicity, the largest single group housed within the Council's stock is White, making up 48% of known ethnicity. The next largest groups are Asian at 23% and Black at 20% (fig 5.5). This ratio is disproportionate to Harrow's population, but this may be due to the high proportion of longstanding tenants in a borough with a low churn of properties, very little social housing and the discharge of housing duty into the private sector since 2011.

Fig 5.5 Ethnicity of Council Tenants, March 2019



Source: Northgate

At March 2019, 22% of tenants were aged 16-45, 46% were aged 45-64 and 32% were aged 65+. 63% of these tenants are female and 37% male.

In addition to age, sex and ethnicity, protected characteristics¹ include disability, religion and sexual orientation, but tenants do not always disclose all of these, so some datasets are more complete than others (figs 5.6 to 5.9). For example, only 55% of tenants have disclosed their religion and only 38% have disclosed their sexual orientation.

Fig 5.6 Age & Gender of Tenants, March 2019

	Number	%
Aged <45	1,257	22.0
Aged 45-64	2,646	46.3
Aged 65+	1,812	31.7
Female	3,625	63.4
Male	2,091	36.6
Gender not disclosed	4	0.1

Source: Northgate

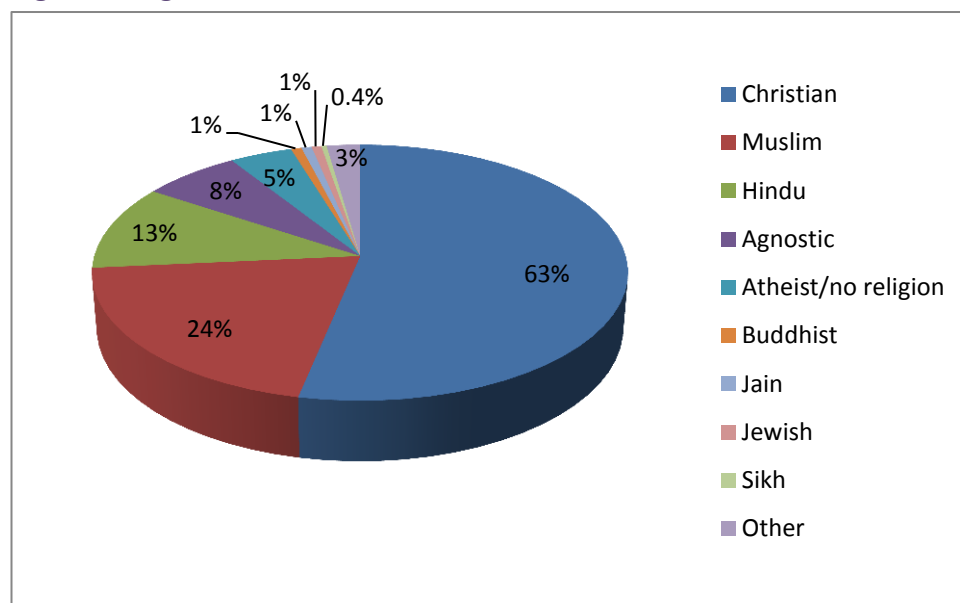
¹ It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of age, ethnicity, religion, disability, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, sex, sexual orientation or gender reassignment, and these are called 'protected characteristics'

Fig 5.7 Disability of Tenants, March 2019

	Number	% of known
Disabled	1,099	38.1
Not disabled	1,785	61.9
Known	2,884	
% known		50.3

Source: Northgate

Fig 5.8 Religion of Tenants, March 2019



Source: Northgate

Fig 5.9 Sexual Orientation of Tenants, March 2019

	Number	% of known
Bisexual	22	1.0
Gay/Lesbian	10	0.5
Heterosexual	2,146	98.4
Other	2	0.1
Known	2,180	
% known	38.1%	

Source: Northgate

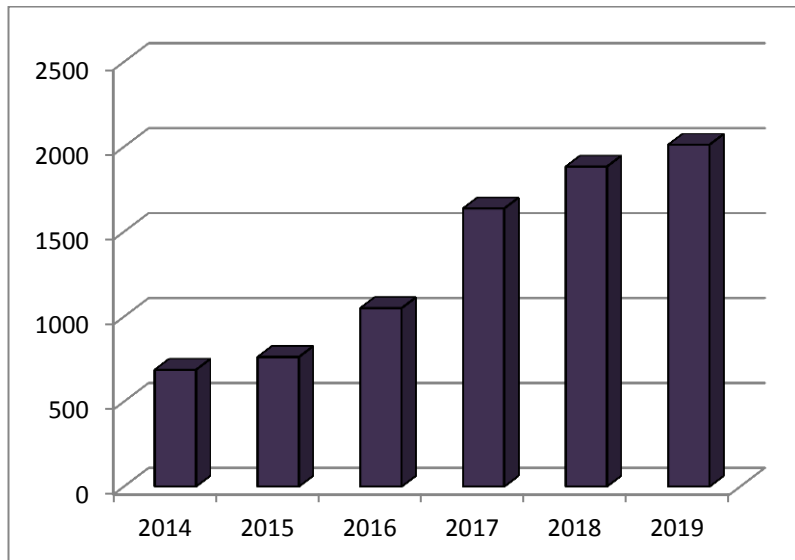
Housing Register

Harrow's Housing Register is run through Locata, a choice-based social rented lettings scheme involving 5 local authorities and 13 RPs in West London.

Each applicant is assessed and those found to be eligible and in priority need are allocated to one of 5 bands: A+, A, B, C or C-. Band A+ applicants are the highest priority, and are either under-occupiers who are in a position to free up larger homes for other families, or those considered to be in an 'emergency' situation. Those in band A are considered to have 'an urgent or high priority need to move', band B a 'standard' need and C a 'non-urgent' identified housing need. Band C- is allocated to households who meet one of the statutory 'reasonable preference' priorities but have not resided in Harrow continuously for the last 5 years and/or are believed to have deliberately worsened their own circumstances.

At 31 March 2019 there were 2,188 eligible applicants. 2,012 (92%) were 'homeseekers' and 176 (8%) were 'transfer applicants' - those already in social housing but with an identified need to move to a more suitable property. The number of 'homeseekers' at March 2019 was almost three times the number in March 2014 (fig 5.10).

Fig 5.10 Number of Homeseekers, March 2019



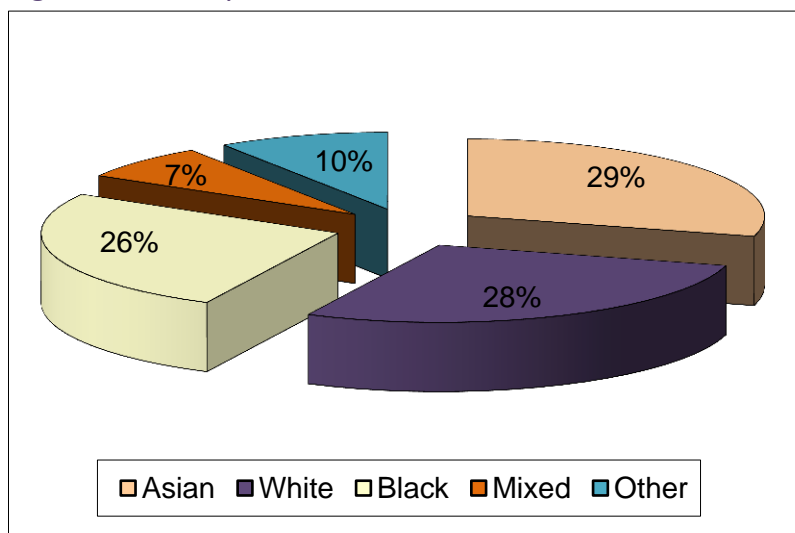
Source: Locata

4% of all applicants were in band A+, 5% in band A, 9% in band B, and 53% in C (6% down year-on year) and 29% in C- (8% up year-on-year). The proportional change in Band C may be due, at least in part, to the introduction of HRA17.

24% of homeseekers were eligible for 1 bedroom properties, 36% were eligible for 2 bedroom properties, 29% were eligible for 3 bedroom properties and 11% were eligible for 4+ bedroom properties.

81% of homeseekers disclosed their ethnicity and 29% of these are Asian, 28% are White, 26% are Black, 6% are of Mixed ethnicity and 9% are Other (fig 5.11).

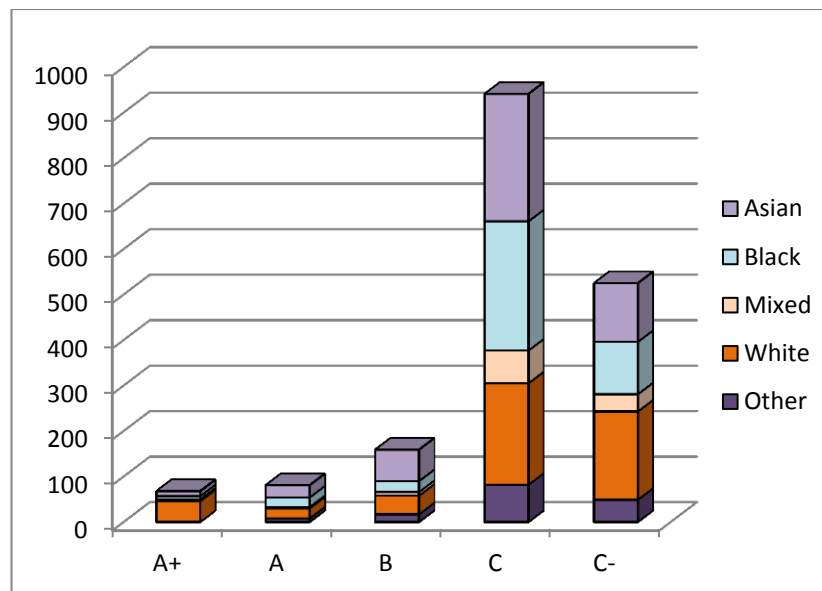
Fig 5.11 Ethnicity of Homeseekers, March 2019



Source: Locata

At 68%, the proportion of White applicants in band A+ appears incongruous in terms of Harrow's current ethnicity, but 62 of the 95 applicants in this band were under-occupiers, and most will be long-term tenants. At 26% across all bands Black applicants are over-represented, and this has also been the case in previous years (fig 5.12).

Fig 5.12 Bands by Known Ethnicity on Housing Register (all applicants), March 2019



Source: Locata

For all applicants, where under-occupation was excluded and pure 'need' was considered, band A+ had 33 applicants in March 2019, and the most common need in this band (excluding the under-occupiers) was 'Medical'. For Band A the most common need was also 'Medical', followed by 'Severe social hardship'. Band B comprised mostly of those needing sheltered accommodation and in Band C over 80% were 'Homeless'. Band C- was almost entirely comprised of 'Initial preference' cases, who may be families that have either not lived continuously in the Borough for 5 years and/or are believed to have deliberately worsened their own circumstances.

In September 2019, 54% of homeseekers were aged under 45, 30% were aged 45-64 and 11% were aged 65+. 64% of these applicants are female and 36% male.

Almost 1,500 (72%) of these homeseekers were recorded as having children. Of this group, 37% had 1 child, 29% had 2 children, 19% had 3 children and 9% had 4 children. The largest number of children recorded in one household was 9 (fig 5.13).

Fig 5.13 Number of Children, September 2019

No. of Children	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
Count	21	556	434	286	136	37	17	5	1
Per Cent	1.4%	37.2%	29.1%	19.2%	9.1%	2.5%	1.1%	0.3%	0.1%

Source: Locata

Applicants do not always disclose all of their protected characteristics, so some datasets are more complete than others (figs 5.14 to 5.16). For example, only 32% of homeseekers have disclosed their religion and only 29% have disclosed their sexual orientation.

Fig 5.14 Homeseeker Statistics by Protected Characteristics, September 2019

	Number	%
Aged <45	1,121	54.3
Aged 45-64	724	29.6
Aged 65+	218	10.6
Female	1,320	64.0
Male	736	35.7
Gender not disclosed	7	0.3
Maternity	164	7.9
Pregnant	39	1.9
Disability benefit: Yes	75	3.6

Source: Locata

Fig 5.15 Religion of Homeseekers, September 2019

	Number	% of known
Christian	261	40.2
Muslim	217	33.4
No Religion	78	12.0
Hindu	70	10.8
Buddhist	6	0.9
Sikh	5	0.8
Jewish	2	0.3
Other Religions	10	1.5
Known	649	
% known		31.5

Source: Locata

Fig 5.16 Sexual Orientation of Homeseekers, September 2019

	Number	% of known
Bisexual	27	4.5
Gay man	4	0.7
Gay woman/ Lesbian	2	0.3
Heterosexual/ Straight	558	92.5
Other	12	2.0
Known	603	
% known		29.2

Source: Locata

Ex-armed forces applicants are given additional preference, but at September 2019 no homeseeker or transfer applicants were recorded as being 'ex Armed Forces Services'.

Voids and Lettings

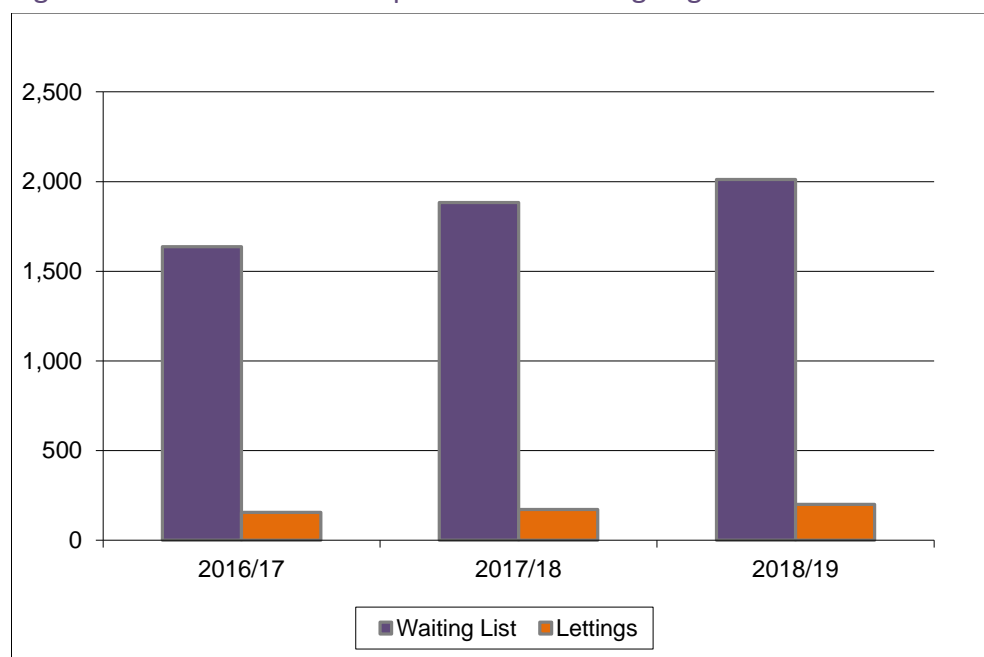
During 2018/19 there were 201 Council properties re-let as permanent stock, with a further 44 let as temporary accommodation. In 2017/18 the figures were 172 and 71 respectively (fig 5.17). This is a tiny proportion in relation to need (fig 5.18)

Fig 5.17 Council Re-Lets

	2017/18	2018/19
Total properties (excl. TA lets)	172	201
0/1 beds	98	127
2+ beds	74	74
General Needs properties	147	159
Sheltered properties	25	42
Major Works properties	75	33
Standard properties with no Major Works	97	168
Average void time (days) for all properties let (termination to let date) excluding time spent undergoing major works	23.7	32.1

Source: Voids Team

Fig 5.18 Council Re-Lets Compared with Housing Register

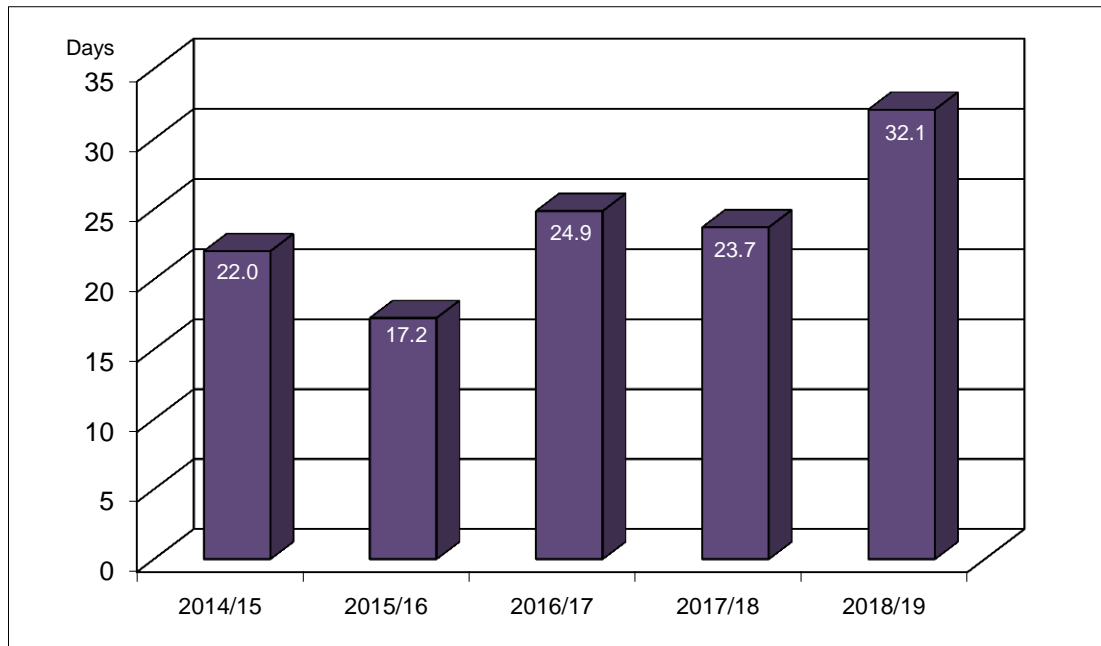


Source: Locata, LAHS

The length of time properties are void affects availability and rental income. This is kept as short as possible through pre-allocating properties and ensuring all lettings are through accompanied viewings. However, it has become more challenging to meet re-let targets for both standard voids and for those needing major works, and indicative 2019/20 void times are significantly longer than in previous years.

The Key Performance Indicator for void to re-let time is the average void time for all LA properties let (termination to let date) excluding time spent undergoing major works. In 2018/19 this was 32.1 days, significantly above its target of 25 days and an increase of over 1/3 from 2017/18 (fig 5.19). This trend has continued during the first half of 2019/20 with a further steep increase to 44.8 days average void time.

Fig 5.19 Average Re-Let Time of LA Properties

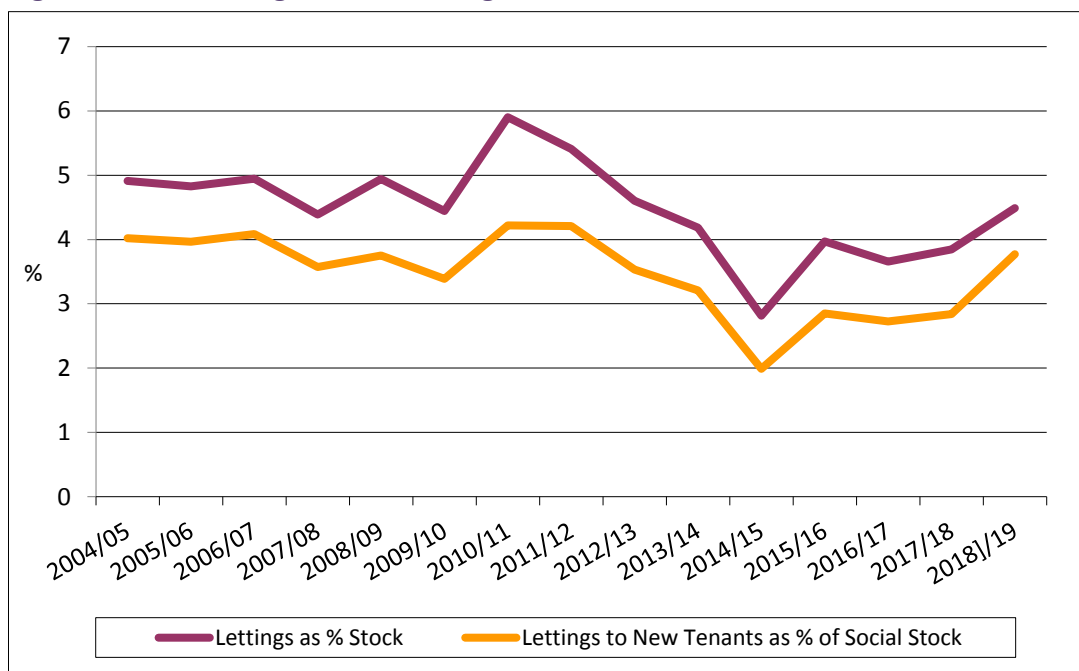


Source: LAHS

In 2018/19, total rent lost from 'void date to tenancy commencement' was £137K, and from 'ready to let date to tenancy commencement' was £31K. Some of this lost income is due to all tenancies commencing on Mondays.

69% of all social housing lettings to permanent stock were local authority and 42% were Registered Provider (housing association). Lettings to new tenants have stayed at around 80% of all lettings throughout the last ten years (fig 5.20).

Fig 5.20 Total Lettings as a Percentage of All Social Stock



Source: Northgate

Waiting Times

The average waiting time across all bands increased for almost all property types between 2016/17 and 2018/19 (figs 5.21 to 5.23). The worst affected were those that needed 2 or 3 bedroom properties, and the average waiting time for a 2-bed house increased four-fold to 5 years. The waiting time for sheltered property let in 2018/19 was 13 months, up from 10 in 2016/17.

Fig 5.21 Number of Lets and Waiting Times for Those Housed, 2018/19

2018/19 – All Bands	No. of Lets	Shortest wait	Longest wait	Average wait
Sheltered	59	5 days	4 years	13 months
Studio GN	6	8 weeks	32 months	8 months
1-Bed GN	88	0 days	4 years	10 months
2-Bed Flat / Maisonette	54	4 months	17 years	4 years
2-Bed House	14	7 weeks	20 years	5 years
3-Bed Flat / Maisonette	9	21 months	15 years	10 years
3-Bed House	29	12 weeks	18 years	5 years
4-Bed	5	18 months	10 years	4 years
5-Bed	1	8 years	8 years	8 years

Source: Locata

Studio, 3 bed flat/maisonettes and 4 and 5 bedroom properties have too few lettings to compare year-on-year waiting times.

Only one 5 bedroom property was let in each of the last 2 years, and the waiting times were 8 years and 5 years. This reflects Harrow's extreme shortage of larger properties.

Fig 5.22 Number of Lets and Waiting Times for Those Housed, 2017/18

2017/18 – All Bands	No. of Lets	Shortest wait	Longest wait	Average wait
Sheltered	44	7 weeks	7 years	12 months
Studio GN	8	0 days	21 months	9 months
1-Bed GN	92	11 days	5 years	9 months
2-Bed Flat / Maisonette	48	4 weeks	14 years	3 years
2-Bed House	16	8 weeks	4 years	14 months
3-Bed Flat / Maisonette	3	10 months	12 years	7 years
3-Bed House	45	12 weeks	16 years	3 years
4-Bed	7	6 months	13 years	3 years
5-Bed	1	3 years	3 years	3 years

Source: Locata

The most common lettings in band A were for sheltered accommodation and 1 bed General Needs properties. The waiting times have not significantly changed for these over the last few years, remaining at around 6 months and 5 months respectively.

Most of the band B lettings were for sheltered accommodation and the average waiting time in this band was 18 months, up from 13 months in 2016/17.

Those in band C generally wait far longer, averaging 13 years for a 3 bedroom house in 2018/19, up from 6 years in 2016/17, and those in band C- are highly unlikely to ever be offered a property.

Fig 5.23 Number of Lets and Waiting Times for Those Housed, 2016/17

2016/17 – All Bands	No. of Lets	Shortest wait	Longest wait	Average wait
Sheltered	45	4 weeks	4 years	10 months
Studio GN	5	4 weeks	7 months	3 months
1-Bed GN	62	4 weeks	10 years	11 months
2-Bed Flat / Maisonette	28	10 weeks	14 years	35 months
2-Bed House	15	13 weeks	5 years	15 months
3-Bed Flat / Maisonette	3	8 months	6 years	34 months
3-Bed House	28	12 weeks	14 years	32 months
4-Bed	13	6 months	14 years	4 years
5-Bed	4	28 months	17 years	11 years

Source: Locata

Letting Refusals

142 permanent stock properties were refused at least once during 2018/19, and the most common reason was that the viewing was not attended. This happened 188 times, with 3, 4 or 5 no-shows for some properties, and non-communication is a major issue. The next most common reason for refusal was 'prefer a larger property' (fig 5.24). Some families living in TA with more bedrooms than they are currently eligible for prefer to stay there, particularly if their children are now adults and considered non-dependents. The lack of lifts within blocks is also a factor, as is local crime. In 83 cases the reason was recorded as 'Other'.

Fig 5.24 Reasons for Refusals

Reason for Refusal	Number of refusals
Prefer larger property	45
Failed to respond to offer	14
Prefer another offer	12
Prefer to be nearer shops/ transport	9
Prefer to be nearer to existing support	7
Prefer different toilet/ bathroom arrangement	6
Consider rent too high	5
Prefer different property type (e.g. house or bungalow to flat, or general needs to sheltered)	5
Changed mind about wishing to move	4
Consider property to be in poor state of repair/ décor/ cleanliness	4
Consider there are too many stairs	4
No reason given	4
Prefer different floor level	4
Property cannot be adapted to meet needs	4
Consider insecure or at risk there	3
No parking	3
Dislike neighbourhood/estate	2
No contact	2
Not allowed to keep pets	1
Only available on Fixed term tenancy	1
Other	83

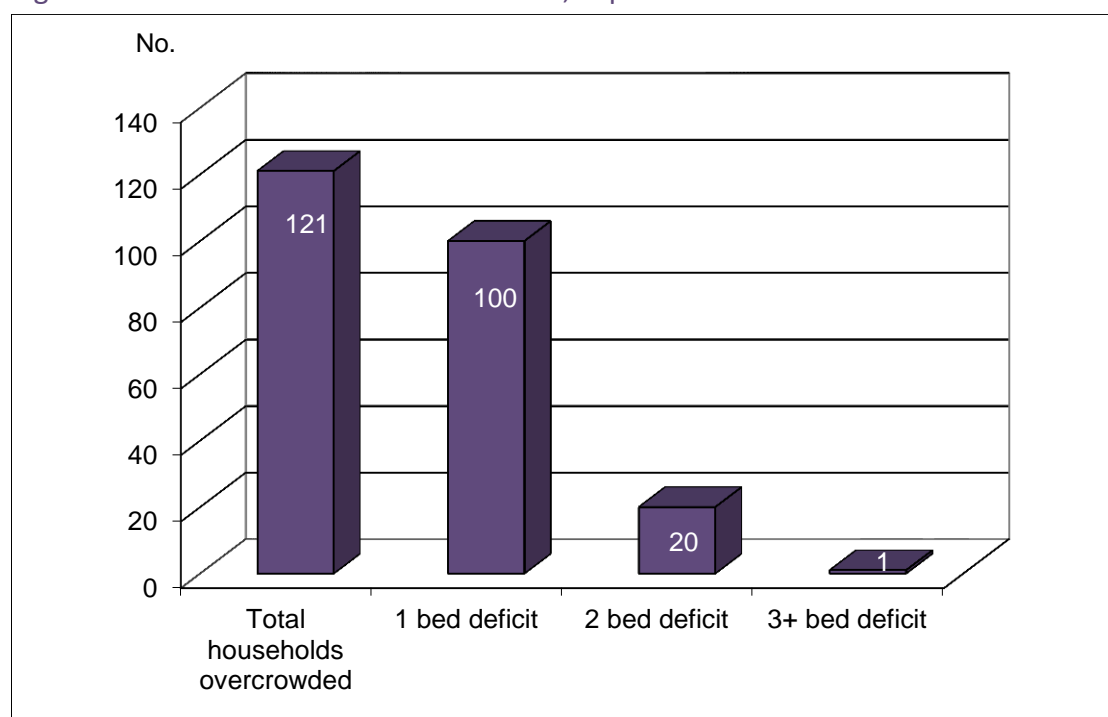
Source: Locata

Overcrowding

In considering whether a household is overcrowded the Council uses the 'West London Locata Standard' (WLLS) which is very similar to the national 'Bedroom Standard'. This is calculated using the number of household members, their relationship to each other, and the number of bedrooms in the property.

At September 2019, 233 tenants were identified as being overcrowded. 83% (100 households) had one bedroom less than the WLLS but 17% (21 households) were severely overcrowded, defined as having at least two bedrooms less than the WLLS (fig 5.25).

Fig 5.25 Number of Overcrowded Tenants, September 2019



Source: Northgate/Locata

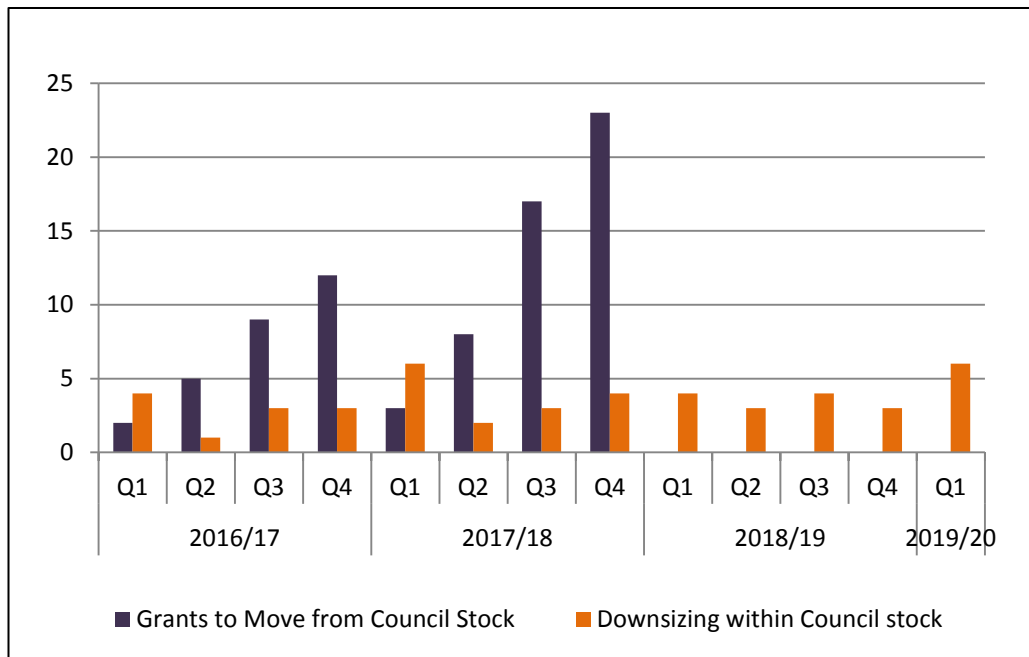
Under-Occupation and Downsizing

Despite high demand for social housing and many overcrowded households, there are those who have more rooms than they need. Under-occupying tenants are encouraged to downsize, but many are reluctant to move from their familiar surroundings and support networks unless they have a specific reason, such as failing health making it difficult to manage in their current property. The introduction of the spare room subsidy or 'bedroom tax' was intended to incentivise under-occupiers to downsize, but it doesn't apply to the elderly, the most common group of under-occupiers. Some are incentivised by the prospect of cheaper living costs in a smaller property, but most are willing to move only if they are offered a 'desirable' property/location, and it is often difficult to meet their expectations, resulting in a reluctance to bid for the properties that become available. There are also a significant number of refusals of properties at viewings.

Under-occupiers are identified through joint working with other organisations and teams, such as Revenues and Benefits, and invited to Sheltered open days. Those that are willing to transfer to a smaller property are given the highest priority band of A+ on the Housing Register (there were 70 at March 2019), reflecting the need to free-up family-sized properties. They are also offered financial incentives of up to £4,500, £1,500 for each bedroom they 'release'.

46 households were incentivised to downsize within Council stock between April 2016 and June 2019, and a further 67 properties were freed-up through the Grants to Move Scheme that operated between 2013 and 2018 (fig 5.26).

Fig 5.26 Incentives to Move or Downsize

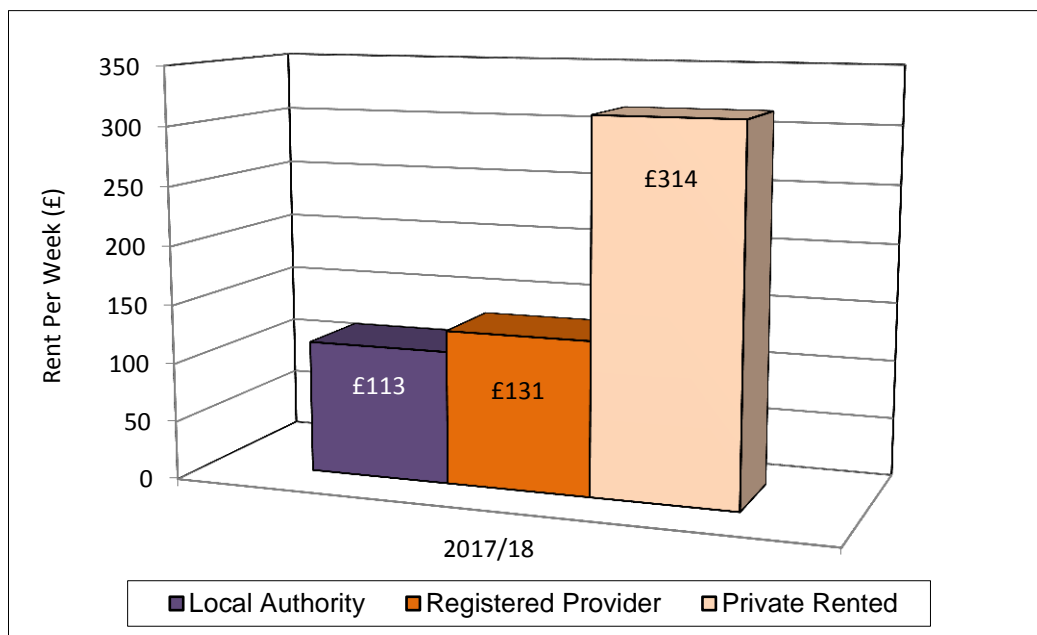


Source: Enabling Team & Housing Needs

Rents

Social housing is subsidised and rent levels are subject to a national formula. In 2017/18 average LA rents in Harrow were around 36% of those in the private rented sector (PRS), and Registered Provider (RP) rents around 42% (fig 5.27).

Fig 5.27 Average Rents in the Social and Private Sectors, 2017/18



Source: MHCLG & VOA

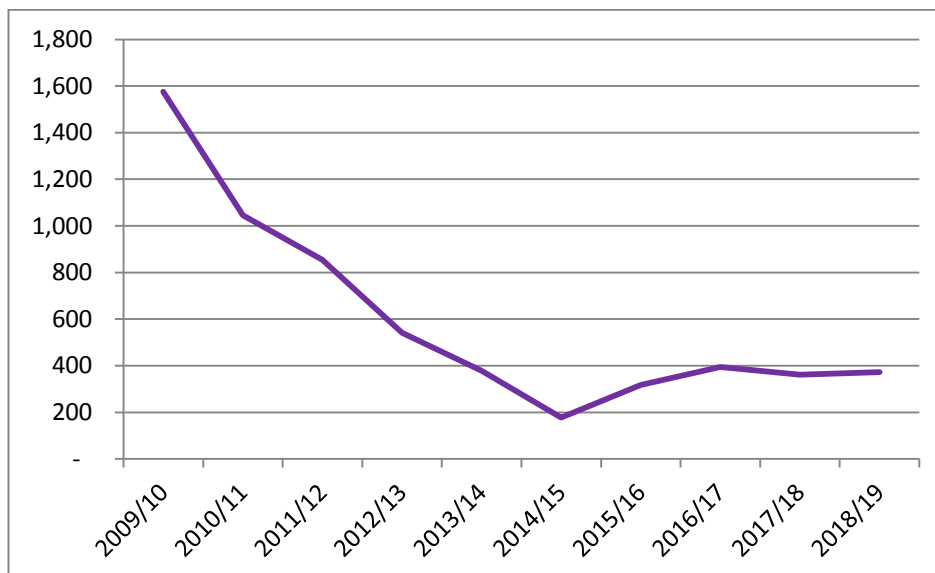
Decent Homes Standard

The government's Decent Homes Standard (DHS) set the minimum acceptable standards in terms of state of repair, thermal comfort, age and layout of kitchens and bathrooms to meet the legal minimum standard of fitness for housing. Local authorities have a duty to take enforcement action in relation to Category 1 Hazards and discretion to act in relation to Category 2 Hazards.

The Council works hard to identify non-decent homes, improve them via a 'major works' scheme and record the improvements. There were 373 non-decent properties at March 2019, around 7% of stock. This was slightly higher than the previous year which was 361 (fig 5.28). No LA properties were known to have Category 1 Hazards and all met the standard for "reasonably modern amenities and services".

The standard is still referred to by local and central government and housing charities. However, as the most recent version of the Standard still refers to a deadline for improvements of 2010, its status is no longer clear.

Fig 5.28 Council Housing Stock Condition – Non-Decent Properties



Source: LAHS