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Community Safety Strategy

2023 - 2026

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1. Foreword from Portfolio Holder

Harrow is a vibrant and diverse borough - and we are one of the safest boroughs in London. While we take pride in this, we know we can do more to keep Harrow safe for our residents and visitors.

In our first year in office, we have listened to what Harrow people want. Our residents want to feel safe - and while we are a safe borough, we know it is not always how people feel.

With this in mind our Community Safety Strategy outlines our targets for a safer borough for 2023-2026. It looks at how we will work with our partners - including the police and the voluntary sector - to put our residents first and deliver a Borough that is clean and safe.

There are a number of things we are already doing to achieve this, like the launch of the Harrow Safer Spaces survey to identify where women, young girls and others feel unsafe in the borough. We will use feedback to identify where we can make improvements to our public spaces and have discussions with the community and partners such as the Police.

We know cleanliness has an impact on how safe residents feel and so we have taken a number of steps to improve the appearance of our borough. We continue to act against those who blight our borough by illegally dumping rubbish; rogue landlords who let dangerous and sub-standard private rented accommodation; and traders who operate illegally and with disregard for others.

We also work jointly with our partners when dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime. Over the last year a number of properties have been served closure notices – banning them from use, and in doing so restoring peace, law and order in our neighbourhoods.

While a lot of work is already taking place, there is more that we can do. This strategy outlines how we will help to reduce Violence against Women and Girls; incidents of burglary, motor crime and robbery; violent incidents; drug use; hate crime and the perception of crime in Harrow.

Our new Corporate Plan sets out our vision for the borough - restoring pride in Harrow. This sits at the heart of everything we do to ensure our borough is a great place to live, learn, work and visit.

Three core priorities fall under this which will help us drive decisions and the services we deliver for our residents. These are:

- a council that put residents first;
- a borough that is clean and safe, and
- a place that supports those in need.

As a resident and Harrow Council's Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety, I want Harrow to be a place where people feel proud to call home, and where they feel safe, supported, and have the opportunity to flourish.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this Community Safety Strategy. By working together, we will create a borough that is clean and safe and where everyone genuinely feels safe.

Signature

Anjana Patel
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environments

2. Introduction to the Community Safety Strategy

Under The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 each statutory Community Safety Partnership¹ is required to produce a Community Safety Strategy. This strategy outlines Safer Harrow Partnership's three-year plan on how we will work to create a Harrow that is safe and clean, ensuring Harrow remains one of the safest boroughs in London.

The priorities in this strategy set out below, have been identified through the analysis of crime trends and data, which have been considered with our statutory and non-statutory partners through a range of consultations. This engagement provided an opportunity to share what partners were seeing, hearing, and experiencing in Harrow and to contribute to the development of a clear picture of the key areas of community safety to prioritise.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)
Burglary & Motor Vehicle Crime
Violence and violent incidents
Drugs²
Hate Crime³
Perception of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Work on each of these priorities will be considered alongside the Harrow Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Adolescent Safeguarding Strategy, including a clear focus on mental health to support those most in need.

Harlow Borough Context

Harlow is a diverse borough and includes:

- Harlow has 261,300 residents
- 51% of our population are female, with 49% being male
- 64% of our population come from a Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic background
- Average age of Harlow residents is 38 years

¹ The Safer Harlow Partnership includes representatives from the Council, the Metropolitan Police Service, Public Health, the Probation Service and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations.

² While acknowledging that substance misuse is a broader issue that can include alcohol, this strategy is prioritising the reduction of offences and harm related to illegal drugs.

³ A hate crime is defined as 'any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender.

Harrow is the second safest borough (excluding the City of London) with only Richmond upon Thames having a lower number of notifiable offences per 1,000 people in 2022

Our objective is to ensure that Harrow remains one of the safest boroughs in London.

From December 2021 to December 2022, the number of notifiable offences in Harrow increased by 2.6% compared to the previous twelve months and a further breakdown is outlined below. However, this was a smaller increase compared to the London-wide average, with Harrow having one of the lowest crime rate increases in London. During this period across London there was an average increase of 9.1% in notifiable offences.

The following figures highlight the levels of high harm and high-volume crimes in Harrow over the twelve months from December 2021 to December 2022 in comparison to the previous twelve-month period.

High Volume Crime

Violence without injury decreased by 0.8%

Burglary offences decreased by 3.5%

Theft from motor vehicles decreased by 2%

Theft of motor vehicles increased by 9.4%

Drug possession decreased by 34.1%

Robbery increased by 37.4%

Total theft from the person increased by 18.4%

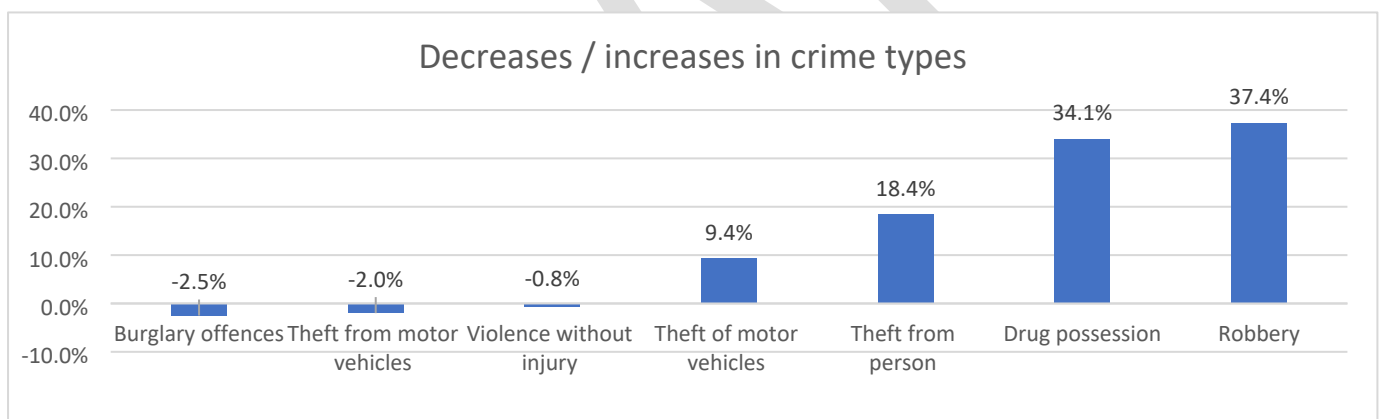


Figure 1: High harm and high-volume crimes in Harrow over the twelve months from December 2021 to December 2022

High Harm Crime

Violence with injury increased by 13.9%

Sexual offences decreased by 2.8%

Knife crime increased by 24.1%

Knife crime with injury decreased by 3.3%

Domestic violence increased by 0.1%

Domestic violence with injury increased 5.7%

Intent to supply drugs increased by 33.9%

Racist, religious hate crime increased 6.2%

3. A Clean and Safe Borough – Harrow’s Community Safety Priorities

During our work to identify the community safety priorities for 2023 – 2026, the consultations highlighted the importance of a partnership approach to tackle community safety issues in the borough.

The Safer Harrow Partnership is responsible for this strategy through a multi-agency approach and is accountable for its effective implementation. To ensure that the priorities in this strategy are implemented, several workstreams will be established which will report back to the main group. All progress under each workstream will be monitored through quarterly reporting at Safer Harrow to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents. Our partnership model cuts across all our community safety priorities and will range from working together on targeted initiatives and days of action, to information sharing between partners.

Working with our residents, communities, local businesses and all our stakeholders will be instrumental in keeping the people of Harrow safe from crime and repeat victimisation.

A key challenge as we undertake this work will be to build and increase public confidence in the organisations and bodies who are working to make Harrow safer while adopting a victim focused approach. The recent Baroness Casey’s report (published in March 2023) investigated the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service (“the Casey Review Report”). This highlighted along with other findings, that public confidence in the Metropolitan Police Service to do a good job locally has fallen from high points of 70% in 2016 and 2017 to a low of 45% in March 2022.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is currently reviewing its Turnaround Plan 2023-25 following the findings from Baroness Casey’s report, however, has committed to and begun delivering on investing in the strongest ever Neighbourhood Policing and Public Protection. There is still much work to be undertaken by the MPS and we will continue to engage with our local police force in Harrow to identify and understand their response to the report, and its implications for creating a safer Harrow and this will be built into our delivery action plan.

To increase public confidence locally in Harrow and to be transparent, the Safer Harrow Partnership will publish an annual report on each of its priorities, providing an overview of the work being undertaken across the partnership to reduce crime and deliver positive outcomes for residents.

Finally, the Safer Harrow Partnership has a new Serious Violence Duty, introduced by the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. The Duty requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence, which will encompass several other key priorities such as Drugs and Violence against Women and Girls. The partnership will need to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence, and publish this by 31st January 2024.

4. Our Priority - Tackling and Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

The Safer Harrow Partnership is dedicated to tackling all forms of VAWG as part of our shared commitment to making Harrow a [clean and] safe borough and supporting the most vulnerable.

A higher proportion of violence against women and girls is domestic abuse (DA) where the violence occurs within the context of an established relationship and the perpetrator is known. However, there is an increase in reported incidents where violence against women and girls is perpetrated by strangers where there is no history of a previous relationship.

Over the twelve months ending December 2022, the number of sexual offences in Harrow dropped by 2.8%, domestic violence rose by 0.1% and domestic violence with injury rose by 5.7%. These are crimes that disproportionately impact women and girls.

A common theme that emerged from the consultation workshop was to prioritise the safety of women and girls and it was widely felt that building confidence in the response of the police and Council was a priority. This is echoed in the findings of the Casey Review Report which concluded amongst its findings that the MPS needs a dedicated women's protection service and a more victim-centred approach to dealing with VAWG and we welcome any developments to offer more specialised support to victims of VAWG.

The Safer Harrow Partnership will work across the partnership to pursue perpetrators of VAWG and to provide the help that victims and survivors need, ensuring there is a wide public awareness of these services and how to access these, and to promote confidence in these services. Work will also address areas and concerns that cause women and girls to feel unsafe in our borough including a range contributing environmental factors. This will be expanded further in a dedicated VAWG action plan.

Outcomes:

- Reduction in VAWG and DA incidents across the borough.
- Increase in women and girls reporting feeling safe in the borough, currently measured through a council led survey on safe spaces
- Increase our awareness of risks to safety by collaborating with partners to share information and data, with the Community Safety unit acting as the central hub
- Positively change male attitudes towards VAWG through education, awareness raising and communication programmes.

Over the next three years, we will:

- Collaborate as a partnership to increase the number of safe spaces in Harrow to support victims of VAWG and Domestic Abuse.
- Work to address perpetrators through the Criminal Justice System or other preventative initiatives.
- Continue engaging with the women and girls of Harrow to identify locations where they feel at risk and / or unsafe
- Enable victims / survivors to access support services to receive the required help

5. Our Priority – Reducing Burglary / Motor Vehicle related theft / Robbery

Theft, robbery, burglary, and motor vehicle crime (including the theft of and from motor vehicles) incorporates issues that are visible and decrease feelings of safety for residents.

Burglary is one of the predominant crimes in Harrow in terms of volume, and includes the theft, or attempted theft, from a building or premises or damage to a building or premises that appears to have been caused by a person attempting to enter to commit a burglary. Theft of a motor vehicle relates to the theft or attempted theft of a vehicle, driving without consent of the owner, or as a passenger of a stolen vehicle.

Incidents of burglary have reduced by 3.5% over the twelve months ending in December 2022 but are still higher in the autumn and winter months, which sees a police response through targeted operations. Robbery has increased by more than a third in the twelve months to December 2022. Theft of catalytic converters has fallen by more than a third between April 2022 and December 2022

Burglary, theft, and motor vehicle crime were raised during consultation workshops and there was consensus that these collective crimes need to remain a priority in the Community Safety Strategy. As these are very visual criminal acts, they have the potential to impact perceptions of crime in the borough and prioritising these issues are key to ensuring the borough is safe and feels safe for residents and visitors. Perceptions will also be impacted by the current lack of public confidence in police, and this further supports the need for the Safer Harrow Partnership to monitor, publicise an overview of the work and outcomes for each priority area.

Outcomes:

- Reduce the number of catalytic converter thefts measured through police data
- Reduce thefts from a motor vehicle measured through police data
- Reduce the number of thefts of a motor vehicle measured through police data
- Reduce burglary measured through police data
- Reduce incidents of robbery measured through police data

Over the next three years, we will:

- Collaborate as a partnership to share information and data to identify hotspot locations
- Increase partnership working between the police and relevant council teams to support targeted initiatives, including Days of Action and Nights of Action
- Use the partnership to deliver key messages and alerts to the local community in a timely manner to reduce and prevent crimes.

6. Our Priority - Reducing the number of violent incidents in the borough

To deliver a Harrow that is clean and safe, it is essential to address the issue of violence in the borough. This includes knife crime, which encompasses all criminal offences committed using a knife or a bladed article as a weapon and can often be linked with other issues such as drugs, gang involvement, organised crime, exploitation and county lines.

Violence against the person is greater within the Greenhill ward, which includes the town centre and transport hubs, with a rate of 51 incidents per 1,000 residents in this ward. The borough average was 21 incidents per 1,000. Weapon enabled crime remains relatively low in Harrow and we continue to have the lowest number of weapon possession offences in comparison to our neighbouring boroughs.

Possession of weapons in Harrow in the twelve months ending December 2022 has decreased by 5.3%; and we have seen an average of three gun-crime offences per month.

Street violence and knife crime were raised as concerns during the consultation process. It was acknowledged that along with gang-related activity, these are high profile crimes and therefore have a significant impact on fear and people's perception of safety in Harrow. This is heightened by a perceived lack of police visibility and slow responses, issues identified within the Casey Review Report. The MPS has committed to delivering investment into Neighbourhood Policing which will be key to address violence and violent incidents in the borough.

Outcomes:

- Reduce incidents of violence (with or without injury)
- Reduce all incidents of knife crime including possession and incidents of knife crime with or without injury
- Reduce the risk of exploitation of young people and adults in Harrow

Over the next three years, we will:

- Reduce incidents of violence (with or without injury) measured by police data
- Reduce all incidents of knife crime including possession and incidents of knife crime with or without injury
- Deter and reduce young person at risk from becoming involved in activities that may lead to their involvement in violence or to carry knives through access to more relevant programmes and monitoring of programme outcomes
- Reduce the risk of exploitation of young people and adults in Harrow

7. Our Priority – Tackling and reducing offences and harm caused by drugs

The possession of illegal drugs, their use, and intent to supply have implications for community safety and public health in Harrow. This issue is closely linked to other criminal activities including burglary and robbery, gang-related activity, violence, exploitation and organised crime. In addition, where the use of drugs is taking place, it can decrease feelings of safety.

The Combating Drugs Partnership (CDP) continue to work to develop and agree system-wide priorities that are focused on breaking drug supply chains and delivering a world class treatment and recovery system while achieving a generational shift in demand for drugs. The Adolescent Safeguarding Strategy will also outline actions across the Safer Harrow Partnership, to prevent and reduce the criminal exploitation of children which can lead to gang affiliation, drug possession and other forms of criminality. These actions will focus on Prevention, Targeted Intervention, Engagement and co-creation and using effective partnerships including with our voluntary sector partners.

While offences for drug possession are decreasing, intent to supply drugs has risen by over a third in 2022 in Harrow and is on the rise across London as a whole, and 20% of young people sentenced to a Youth Justice Order or Pre-court Disposal were for drug offences.

During the consultations, concerns were widely shared around the intent to supply and the use of drugs in Harrow and the impact this has on community safety. From an enforcement perspective, it was suggested that there needs to be greater visible consequences, an effective deterrent for drug dealing, and a better follow-up when drug dealing in properties is reported. The Safer Harrow Partnership, in its annual report, will share information on the work undertaken to tackle this issue and the outcomes achieved.

From a safeguarding perspective, it was felt that more needs to be done to protect young people from exploitation by criminal gangs and prevent them from being drawn into these types of activities. The Casey Review Report highlighted the need for children to be seen as children who need protection from harm and not just as threats or perpetrators of crime.

Outcomes:

- Reduce the incidents of intent to supply drugs in Harrow
- Ensure people are getting the right treatment and advice
- Reduce the number of young persons being exploited and drawn into drug activity
- Break drugs supply chain
- Deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system
- Achieve a generational shift in the demand for drugs

Over the next three years we will:

- Invest in treatment and recovery pathways to increase the number of people that are supported in Harrow with substance misuse issues through our providers
- Tackle the exploitation of young people by working with partners to create diversionary activities and opportunities to reduce the number of young people being drawn into crime
- Target known hotspot locations where drugs are used and / or distributed

8. Our Priority – Tackling Hate Crime

Community cohesion and resilience in Harrow is strong, however, racist, and religious hate crime can be an area of concern for our diverse community having increased 6.2% in 12 months (from Dec 2021 to Dec 2022). This is an issue that people can face in public, at work or even at home through online hate crime and consequently it can have a great impact on feelings of safety in our borough.

The three headline data types (racist, religious, hate) will need breaking down further and we need a wider campaign aimed at community level / societal level change addressing historically encouraged and entrenched, cultural and institutional forms of discrimination. So there needs to be a public health/campaigning style of action against this type of crime.

Reported incidents of hate crime have remained steady over the last three years with an average of 420 incidents per year. However, while this is the third lowest rate in London, with 1.7 incidents per 1,000 people, we are aware that racist, religious, disability and LGBTQ+ hate crimes remain unreported in Harrow.

While recognising that Harrow is diverse, and the positive outcomes this has for the borough, it was noted consistently during the consultation workshops, that hate crime, including the targeting of religious groups and disabled people, were rising. In addition, it was noted that many incidents of hate crimes (including disability) may not be reported, and this underreporting needs to be addressed.

Outcomes:

- An increase in residents who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- An increase in people who are confident that reporting an issue will lead to a positive outcome
- An increase in hate crime reporting directly to the police and third parties, measured through police data and Stop Hate UK data
- Decrease in number of actual hate crime incidents based on any of the 9 protected characteristics

Over the next three years, we will:

- Promote hate crime reporting through a variety of diverse communication channels (including different languages, media and through the use of advocates where necessary)
- Provide robust support for victims of hate crime through enhanced police support
- Celebrate diversity positively and provide greater support for marginalised and vulnerable communities in the borough.
- Recognise the impact of historically entrenched institutional, cultural and societal level forms of discrimination, through public communications, campaigning and establishing safe talking spaces for such expression and support

9. Our Priority – Perception of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Current data demonstrates that Harrow remains one of the safest boroughs in London, but this does not align with perceptions of crime and feelings of safety in the borough. One of our priorities is to ensure that residents and visitors are not only safe, but also *feel* safe. This will require addressing anti-social behaviour and environmental elements (such as fly tipping, nuisance) that can contribute to an atmosphere of increased crime and has the potential to encourage more serious crimes while negatively impacting perceptions of safety. Consideration will also be given to how we communicate and engage with the public so as not to increase fear unnecessarily.

According to the How Are You (HAY) Harrow Survey 2021, four in ten young people said there are areas of Harrow where they feel unsafe; this was higher in young persons who identify as having additional or special needs. This perception is not limited to our young residents. In the Harrow Safer Spaces Survey 2022, 77.6% of the women and girls who responded to a question about feeling safe said they feel unsafe or mostly unsafe in the borough. Further highlighting the fear of crime, 79% of residents were concerned that knife crime is a problem in their area and 44% of residents were concerned that gun crime is a problem in their area.

The fear of crime remains a real issue and to deliver a Harrow where people are and feel safe, this is an area that needs to be tackled. Perception of crime is often inflated by social media and to address this problem we need to consider how we communicate with residents so as not to increase fears. It is also important that partners respond adequately to reports of anti-social behaviour and environmental issues which can lead to increased feeling of being unsafe when left unaddressed or repeat incidents give a perception of a lack of action.

Police presence and visibility, particularly at night, would also contribute to allaying fears of crime and increasing feelings of safety. The MPS has committed in its Turnaround Plan 2023-25, to delivering its strongest ever Neighbourhood Policing and increasing trust and confidence. These steps are further conclusions in the Casey Review report which highlight the MPS's need to secure and maintain the public's respect and approval, to rebuild consent, particularly with communities where this is most at risk.

Outcomes:

- Reduction in high volume crime /high harm crime
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour and environmental offences that increase feelings of unsafe
- An increase in residents reporting feeling safe in the borough

Over the next three years, we will:

- Implement targeted Days of Action to increase resident reassurance and gain better intelligence around local hotspots
- Increase police presence in our neighbourhoods through the Met Police's new Turnaround Plan to restore public trust and confidence
- Increase awareness of police or other operations to residents
- Work with school related partnerships including schools, school councils, schools' police, social workers in schools and Early Support workers in schools, to support pupils feeling safe following their being witness or social media witnesses to violence in or near to schools
- Development and promote awareness of reporting pathways for both residents and front-line staff who are often the "eyes and ears" across the borough.

10. Next Steps

As the overarching body which has the statutory responsibility to produce a Community Safety Strategy, the SHP will oversee this work. Being a strategic Board, the partnership will delegate the operational aspects of this strategy to sub-groups who will implement the work and report back to the partnership quarterly. This falls under the remit of the SHP with the Board's Terms of Reference already allowing for the establishment of thematic sub-groups and setting out how they report to the SHP.

There will be six thematic sub-groups which reflect the six priorities in the Community Safety Strategy. To avoid duplication, any forums that currently exist will report to the SHG on a quarterly basis.

The Strategy will cover the period 2023 to 2026 and will be reviewed annually by Safer Harrow.

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