

# Harrow

## Area Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



**oneplace**

for an independent overview  
of local public services

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## Harrow at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Harrow. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

**Green flags - exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from**

No green flags have been identified for Harrow

**Red flags - significant concerns, action needed**

No red flags have been identified for Harrow

## The local area

Harrow is an outer London borough in the northwest of the capital. Harrow is ethnically diverse. It has the highest number of different faiths and religions of any local authority in England and Wales and over half the population is from a minority ethnic background.

Overall Harrow is relatively prosperous and, compared with London, unemployment is lower than average. However, there are big contrasts between the richest and poorest people and an increasing proportion of lower income families. In general, the health of the population is better than the average for England although some areas show big differences, for instance, there is poorer health in the central corridor and southern parts of the borough.

The Harrow Strategic Partnership brings together a group of people who represent the Council, health services, police, fire brigade, private sector, job sector plus, business, further and higher education and community and voluntary organisations.

The next section tells you how Harrow's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

## How is Harrow doing?

### Economic development in Harrow

Local organisations are working well to tackle economic issues by creating new jobs and supporting employment locally. This includes making the most of Harrow's good transport links to find jobs elsewhere. New areas of employment such as tourism are increasingly important for a place like Harrow and the early signs indicate that this is bringing new money into the borough. The recession is having an impact here and so local public service partners have started a recession busting group. This provides support, advice and promotion to local businesses and individuals.

Fewer Harrow residents have no qualifications than elsewhere in London or England but recently the number of people with two or more "A" levels has dropped. Residents have fewer UK recognised qualifications than other London boroughs. To help the wider population find employment, good working between employers, colleges, schools and the Council is brought together through the "Harrow Pledge". Projects resulting from this pledge include the Xcite project working with unemployed people and support for Gingerbread (an organisation for single parents). By introducing "slivers of time" the Council and the PCT can employ more local people, and by working with MENCAP people with learning disabilities are helped to find new skills and jobs.

### Every Harrow child

Council staff and others work well together to provide high quality services for children and young people. There are clear priorities and disadvantaged children, young people and families are well supported. Children and young people in Harrow enjoy good schooling and high numbers of both primary and secondary schools are either good or outstanding. Good achievement continues after the age of 16 with high numbers of children staying in education. Harrow has very low numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training. Children in the care of the Council, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in need of protection are supported well. The Council has exceeded its target for adoptions - and those children who remain in Council care have their situation reviewed in a timely manner. Actions are in place to tackle gaps in under achievement. This includes those children in the earliest school years and those children with learning difficulties or disabilities at age 16.

### Health, wellbeing and independence

People in Harrow are generally healthier than elsewhere in England with above average life expectancy. Important issues such as levels of drinking, teenage pregnancy and levels of drug misuse are lower than the rest of England. However, smoking remains the biggest cause of preventable ill-health even if Harrow has a lower proportion of those smoking than either London or England.

Harrow has some serious health challenges - levels of Diabetes are higher than the national average, as are rates of Tuberculosis - and there are wide variations in life expectancy affecting both men and women. For example, women in Pinner South can expect to live up to ten years longer than women in Wealdstone while men in Greenhill will die five and a half years before men in West Harrow. Obesity is an increasing concern. Although healthy lifestyles for children and young people are encouraged strongly, the situation for adults is less good. The proportion of adults taking regular exercise is lower than elsewhere in London and one in five Harrow adults are obese.

Adults who need additional care are well supported. Good progress is being made on transforming services and giving people the right support based on what they say they need. This includes giving them a personal budget or direct payment to help meet their needs and supporting them to be more independent. More work is still required to make sure training for adult services is well targeted and that all services are of the right quality. Following an independent review the Council is working with others to make sure the Learning Disability Partnership Board (this is the group responsible for looking after the needs of people with learning disabilities) works more effectively. This work is at an early stage and needs to be continued.

Harrow has a growing number of older people in the borough and estimates suggest that by 2016 there will be an extra 3000 people aged 65 or over. And there is likely to be a rise in the proportion of Asian older people in Harrow. The makeup of Adult Social Care staff is reflective of the community that it serves and ensures that Harrow is able to meet the different needs of all sections of the community.

## An improving environment

Improving the Harrow environment is a key priority and the Council, police and others are putting extra money and effort into this area. Through using "weeks of action" there is an immediately visible impact in a small area, with residents seeing action to sort out environmental, crime and traffic issues - and the eviction of problem tenants.

The Council's waste collection service experienced problems some years ago but has improved as a result of additional actions. This has included cutting and collecting grass (this reduces fly-blown rubbish), reducing waste spillage during waste collection and making sure the Council's street workers can deal with fly posting. Harrow now has the best recycling performance in London. A large percentage of greenhouse gases in Harrow come from domestic sources and transport. Harrow Council is helping residents make their homes more energy efficient and is encouraging more school journeys which do not require a car. And the Council is also looking at its own greenhouse gas production by installing solar panels on schools and reducing the pollution from its own transport fleet.

Housing in Harrow is mainly privately owned and this puts pressure on the availability of affordable homes. Harrow has made good progress in preventing people from becoming homeless and has successfully reduced the number of households in temporary accommodation. Future housing challenges in Harrow will be to accommodate people with young and growing

families while preserving the character of Harrow.

## Culture, communities and identity

Harrow values its unique identity which is linked to the diversity of the local population. Harrow is a place where a broad range of voluntary and community groups, council departments, police and the health service work together to further develop a 'sense of community'. And Harrow is a place where the level of respect which local people show to each other is better than many other places in London. Groups of existing and new residents are supported to live together in Harrow through widespread and specific projects.

Crime levels in Harrow are some of the lowest across London. The police, Council, health services and others are working well together and focusing on the areas that need it most. This has resulted in fewer people now having a fear of crime.

## The future of public service delivery and democracy in Harrow

The Council, health services, the police and others are working towards a common vision for Harrow. And in order to meet future financial challenges and improve services they are starting to consider sharing staff, buildings and possibly money to see how more services can be provided jointly.

A recent survey of voluntary groups within Harrow show they have a low sense of being able to influence decisions - particularly of the health services. Further work is required to create a place where voluntary organisations can do well and are able to influence services locally. The public sector organisations are now working closely with the voluntary sector to create a plan (the Third Sector Strategy) which will describe how they will improve this.

Residents' levels of satisfaction with the local area have increased in recent years but remain lower than the England average. And across London and in Harrow there has been a general downward trend in the number of residents who feel that people and communities get on well together. But more Harrow residents now feel that the levels of respect and consideration in the borough have improved even if this remains below the London and England averages. The number of people who believe that they will be treated fairly by local services is again less than the London and England averages.

## About Harrow

A recent survey shows that in Harrow 70 per cent of people are satisfied with their immediate local area as a place to live. This is broadly the same as the average for similar areas and lower than the national average of 81 per cent.

Harrow is an outer London borough in the northwest of the capital. It is London's twelfth largest borough and the population is expected to grow

slowly over the next ten years. Harrow has the highest number of different faiths and religions of any local authority in England and Wales. Over half the population is from a minority ethnic background and the borough contains ten per cent of Britain's Hindu population and also has large Muslim and Jewish communities. There are growing numbers of older people and a richly diverse and changing child population. There has been an increase in short-term migrants from India and Eastern Europe in the last few years.

Overall Harrow is relatively prosperous, but there are big contrasts between the richest and poorest people and an increasing proportion of lower income families. While the borough has some of the country's most affluent wards, for example, Pinner and Hatch End, some wards are significantly less well off than other parts of England.

Harrow has significant areas of green belt land in the borough which provide access to nature and recreation for local people, complemented by the borough's range of parks and open spaces. The remainder of Harrow is intensively built up with little vacant, undeveloped or underdeveloped land.

In general, the health of the population is better than the average for England, however, there are wide differences in health within Harrow, with poorer health in the central corridor and southern parts.

Compared with London, unemployment in Harrow is lower than average. Nearly two out of three residents work outside of the borough, in particular in other parts of West London and Central London. However there is still a range of employment in Harrow with 65,000 people working in Harrow of which 50,000 work for local businesses. Harrow town centre is one of the ten larger shopping centres in London.

The Harrow Strategic Partnership brings together a group of people who represent the Council, health services, police, fire brigade, private sector, job centre plus, business, further and higher education and community and voluntary organisations.

## How well do priorities for Harrow express community needs and aspirations?

The Harrow Strategic Partnership brings together a group of people who represent the Council, health services, police, fire brigade, private sector, job centre plus, business, further and higher education and community and voluntary organisations. They work well together and have created a locally agreed plan (the Sustainable Community Strategy) for Harrow. This document describes the plans for delivering services to the public, ensuring that they meet the varied needs of Harrow. The plan includes targets for social, environmental and economic issues that will look after current and future generations. Residents and people who use Harrow services have been able to influence what the plan says, which is that by 2020 Harrow will be a place which will be recognised for three things.

Firstly - good quality services that are right for people from different

backgrounds and with different needs. Services that let local people decide what is suitable for them.

Secondly - an area that looks after its environment making sure that it's protected for future generations. An area where people have jobs, homes, education, healthcare, transport and other services all citizens need.

Finally - a place where everyone is as healthy as possible, as involved as they want to be and where they feel safe. A borough where people want to live and feel that they belong.

The Council, Primary Care Trust, Metropolitan Police and others responsible for looking after Harrow have a good understanding about the local area and its population. They recognise that it is not an easy task to make sure everyone has the services they need. Harrow is a borough with a wide variety of people from different backgrounds and the organisations responsible are seeking to involve as many people as possible in planning their services. The aims for Harrow are based on wide ranging consultation including the involvement of over 50 representatives with specialist knowledge and key voluntary and community organisations representing the diverse community. The Residents' Panel (made up of more than 1,100 local residents) were also asked for their views. Finally, two special 'Summit' meetings were then held to decide which of the issues are the most important to the people of Harrow.

One third of residents feel that they can influence decisions locally - this is slightly less than in other parts of London. About the same number have said that they do not want to be involved in decision making.

For those who do want to get involved there are a variety of ways they can do so. For instance there are regular neighbourhood meetings (ward meetings) where residents are encouraged to have their say about how to make the area safer. The Council, Primary Care Trust, Metropolitan Police and others have recognised that more young people need to be involved in these meetings. Focus groups are used to ask people from different voluntary organisations and local businesses what needs to be done to make the area more prosperous.

Young people are involved in the Children's Trust which is an umbrella organisation that brings together all services for children and young people in the Harrow area. As members, they are consulted on local services for children and young people and take part in planning future services. For example, they have a particular interest in raising a positive profile of young people and this has influenced the "Making a Positive Contribution" part of the Children and Young Peoples Plan. They have also been able to influence action for "Staying Safe" and have influenced and led on e-safety and anti-bullying plans. Their work has contributed to reduced anti-social behaviour and offending in the area.

Listening to users is an important part of the Council's priority to improve the lives of adults who need extra care and help. The comments of users directly shape the way services are co-ordinated and delivered. Through key initiatives such as personal budgets, users are supported to exercise choice and control to improve their quality of life. In an attempt to bring communities together the "Ignite" project involves councillors, public organisations, community groups, residents and groups of young people in working out new schemes.



Resulting from this, a new resident's pack has been created which helps new arrivals to the borough get the most from local services. English language skills programmes have also been set up to help people new to this country become part of the community.

"Greener Harrow" is a new group that is made up of local community groups, councillors and council staff. Its purpose is to influence what should happen in Harrow in order to reduce the level of pollution, address climate change and make it a greener borough.

While not everyone wants to be involved in decision making, they may be happy to give their opinion about services. All the organisations responsible for Harrow therefore carry out large surveys of public opinion, regular surveys of Harrow Residents' Panel, small scale web-based surveys, meetings about specific areas of a service and ward-based meetings. This encourages people to make complaints and give compliments. The partnership is also able to supplement this information with more detailed information about specific population groups. Finally, Harrow Council's reputation survey enables the Council and others to monitor things that are important to local people.

There is evidence that peoples views are listened to and changes made to services as a result. For example, after meetings with people who use adult social care, Council staff inform the group what they have done about their concerns. Also, transport arrangements for community centres were recently changed after asking people who use the centres what they needed. Neighbourhoods can help direct environmental improvements through "weeks of action". And as a result of research done by the Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations, a plan for adapting some services has now been made and special sessions held for health staff so they can better understand Somali culture. Similarly, anti-bullying and safety campaigns have been created and more police can now be found on public transport following feedback from the "Tellus" survey of school children. Children in the care of the Council can influence the care they receive by using a computer tool called "Viewpoint".

## Economic development in Harrow

Local organisations are working well to tackle economic issues in a way that seems to be tailored to the needs of Harrow. This includes creating new jobs and supporting employment locally. And Harrow's good transport links can help people seeking jobs in other areas. The group that is leading this work - the Enterprising Harrow Steering Group - is responsible for the implementation of Harrow's Ten Year Economic Development Plan.

Work is also taking place to try and improve other areas of the economy. For example, tourism in Harrow can benefit from the good access to transport links and closeness to major attractions such as Wembley Stadium and Central London. Harrow also has strong links to the Indian sub-continent which could provide many new visitors. There is some early evidence of success with this approach. For instance, existing hotels are reporting increased numbers of visitors and there is interest from some major hotel chains in building new hotels in Harrow.

The Council has recognised the possible effect on local people and the community of the recession. It is taking extra action to support businesses and people. This includes starting a "recession-busting" group including representatives from the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Jobcentre Plus, Harrow in Business, NHS Harrow and all council departments. This provides support, advice and promotion to local businesses and individuals. The Council has changed its purchasing policies to support residents and local businesses during the recession. Funding is also provided to Harrow Citizen's Advice Bureau to provide advice on debt, housing and benefits. Harrow in Business also receives funding to support the increased demand for business start-up, to help employment initiatives and to fund work experience for young people who are not in education, employment or training. The Council also has a monthly information dashboard on its web-site where there are also pages that provide advice about how to reduce the impact of the recession. This has links to other organisations' websites that offer advice to local people and businesses.

The number of Harrow residents with no qualifications is lower than the London and national average. And in 2008 the number of people with two or more "A" levels or equivalent dropped. Harrow residents also have fewer UK recognised qualifications than other London boroughs. However, Harrow does have a higher number of residents with other qualifications and this is significantly higher than the London and England average. These changes are being monitored closely and more information will help determine if this reflects a long-term trend or is only a short-term change.

People with differing needs can be particularly at risk during tough economic conditions. For young people, strong partnerships between local employers, colleges, high schools, Jobcentre Plus and the Connexions service through the "Harrow Pledge" contribute to success in achieving economic well-being. A manager has been appointed by Jobcentre Plus to work with the Council to support customers with caring responsibilities or drug related problems to get into work or training. There is also specific support through the Xcite outreach project. This project works with 300 unemployed people living in social housing within selected areas. It also helps single parents and, with the organisation Gingerbread, runs special nine-week programmes of support. In addition, the Council and the Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations hold workshops with Xcite to assist Somali people to get jobs and training.

The numbers of people with learning disabilities employed by the local public sector organisations have traditionally been low. The Council and NHS Harrow have therefore introduced "slivers of time" (a scheme where workers can commit to small blocks of time). This allows local people to find employment around their own and other people's commitments and to be available for work on an 'as-and-when' basis. By the end of March 2009, 257 hours had been used in this way by the Council. The Council is also working closely with MENCAP to give people with learning disabilities the support they require to enter into employment, including a project manager based in the Council responsible for the Work Right scheme, which creates jobs for this group.

The impact of the recession on people in Harrow and how this affects the ability of the Council, health services and the police to continue to improve the borough will continue to be monitored.

## Every Harrow child

Council staff and others work together very well in order to provide high quality services for children and young people. Their priorities are clear, they tackle problems early and they support disadvantaged children, young people and families well. Almost all places where children and young people go to learn, for example schools and colleges, are particularly strong. Young children get a secure start and achievement in the Foundation Stage has improved to average. The large majority of primary schools are good or outstanding. Secondary schools are either good or outstanding, with pupils achieving very good results and continuing to get better. They all have outstanding standards of behaviour and the number of pupils who are often absent is about the same as in similar areas and nationally. Improving attendance in schools that do not do quite as well is a priority for the Council. Minority ethnic groups show average but generally improving achievement. Narrowing gaps in educational achievement is a key priority and so the gaps between those children who do well and those who do less well are mostly reducing. Few children and young people report being bullied, partly because of successful anti-bullying campaigns.

School sixth forms are good and the sixth form college is outstanding while other educational provision after the age of 16 is satisfactory. In Harrow high numbers of young people continue in learning after the age of 17. Their achievement is much higher than average and continues to improve. The numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training are amongst the lowest in London. And more young people from low income backgrounds go on to higher education than elsewhere in the country.

Children in the care of the Council, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in need of protection are supported well. For children in council care, the target for adoption has been exceeded. Children in care can also expect their situation to be reviewed on time and to stay in one home much longer than in the past. Although the previously very high numbers of young people leaving care going into education, employment or training have fallen, almost all of them have a suitable place to live. All children in need of protection will have their situation reviewed on time and, because of successful work, the numbers needing this protection for two years or more has fallen.

Levels of substance misuse are relatively low, as are hospital admissions for injured children. Good numbers of young people take part in activities organised to prevent criminal behaviour and the "Summer Uni" programme has contributed to a significant fall in anti-social behaviour and crime. There are far fewer than average youths who offend for the first time, very low rates of re-offending and small numbers in custody. Average numbers of young offenders are in education, employment or training.

There are, however, some concerns for Harrow's children and young people. These are understood and action to improve matters is well underway. For instance in the Foundation Stage at school, there remains a large gap between the lowest achieving children and the rest. Although pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress, the gap between them and children without learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average at the end of secondary schooling.

Permanent exclusions from schools are above the national average and similar areas.

## Health, wellbeing and independence

People in Harrow are generally healthier than elsewhere in England. Many important areas such as levels of smoking, both across the whole population and in pregnancy, rates of death from smoking, estimates of binge drinking, hospital stays for alcohol related harm and levels of drug misuse are lower than the England average. Life expectancy for both sexes is good compared to other places in England. Local hospitals have met the national Accident and Emergency four hour waiting time target for over a year and have also met the 18 week target for treatment.

Healthy lifestyles for children and young people are encouraged strongly. Average and improving numbers of children take part in PE and sport and obesity levels are average. Tooth decay for children aged five or under is a continuing concern. Plans are in place to improve both obesity and tooth decay. Teenage pregnancy rates are already amongst the lowest in the country and have shown a further slight reduction recently.

Harrow also has some serious health challenges - some of which are related to changes in the population. For example the earlier on-set of ill health associated with old age in Harrow's Indian Asian population means that they require more support than some other groups. There also remains a marked gap in the life expectancy of some Harrow residents linked to where they live. Women in Pinner South can expect to live more than ten years longer than women in Wealdstone. Men in West Harrow can expect to live for five and a half years longer than men in Greenhill.

Smoking remains the biggest cause of preventable ill health even though the proportion of people who smoke (14.5 per cent) in Harrow is lower than that of London and England as a whole. In Harrow the numbers of people quitting smoking is below the England and London averages. And although binge drinking is on the increase the levels of binge drinking are also below the England and London averages. In Harrow, there are higher levels of people with Diabetes than the national average and new cases of Tuberculosis are high, although the numbers who complete their treatment are good. A higher proportion of people eat healthily (five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day). However, the proportion of people who take regular exercise is lower than elsewhere in London or England. Of particular concern is that one in five adults in Harrow are obese and this is worse than the London average.

Adult who need social care are well supported. There are clear aims and strong leadership. And good progress has been made in improving services and implementing plans to make sure that services are right for the people using them. There are clear priorities for further improvement, one of which is giving people a personal budget or direct payment for their needs. This is an area in which Harrow has made very good progress. Independent surveys provide the Council with a widespread picture of people's views about their services and show improved satisfaction with services. In Harrow there has previously been a large use of residential care for adults with learning disabilities. This is now changing as more home based care replaces previous

arrangements. There is a greater focus on helping people either relearn lost skills or acquire new skills and maintain their independence.

Keeping adults with additional needs safe is an important Council priority. A recent independent review found good areas of work and areas for improvement. Extra staff have been recruited to support this work and current staff made more aware of the right standards. A new quality plan is being put into action which will help improve safeguarding. More work is required to increase safeguarding training for both Council and independent sector staff - and make sure that this continues to improve.

The management team at the Council responsible for adults with additional needs has been strengthened and works well with other organisations. Following an independent review the Council, with other agencies, have strengthened the Learning Disability Partnership Board (the group responsible for looking after the needs of people with learning disabilities) to make it more effective. A plan has been developed, which has had input from users, carers and staff. However, it is not yet possible to show that this has resulted in noticeable improvements for people. Work has started with the private sector to develop a wider range of services, but this work is at an early stage and needs to be continued. Evidence from independent inspections helps to make choices about which services are used and to improve the quality of care. The Council has worked with two of their main residential and nursing home care providers to improve services. These are now adequate, but more work is required to make sure this improvement continues.

There are a growing number of older people in the Borough and estimates suggest that by 2016 there will be an extra 3000 more people aged 65 or over. There is likely to be a rise in the proportion of Asian older people in Harrow. The makeup of Adult Social Care staff is reflective of the community that it serves and ensures that Harrow is able to meet the different needs of all sections of the community. The Council is well positioned to address the changing population profile of the borough as demonstrated by the large number of Black and Minority Ethnic service users (48 per cent) who have personal budgets and who have used the funding to purchase services which are right for them.

## An improving environment

Improving the environment in Harrow is a key priority and so extra money and effort has been put into this area. The most immediately visible project comes from the Council, the police and others working together to introduce the "weeks of action" which try and improve small areas in a large way. During one week there will be highly visible and concentrated action in a specific area. This improves the area by concentrating on environmental, crime and traffic issues, such as removing unwanted cars and graffiti, clearing rubbish and evicting housing tenants who are causing problems. Areas which have benefited include Burnt Oak Broadway, Harrow town centre and Rayners Lane. The benefits are both immediate and long term. For example, it has helped with understanding why some of the problems with "grot spots" arise and has also helped to address wider issues with crime and burglary through the subsequent placing of alley gates.

The Council experienced difficulties in 2006 when it introduced a three bin waste system and changed the waste collection cycle. Since then it has worked hard to restore local residents' confidence and implemented learning from initial mistakes. This has included additional actions such as cutting and collecting grass (this reduces fly-blown rubbish), reducing waste spillage during waste collection and making sure the Council's street workers can deal with fly posting. These actions have had results and in June 2009 half of all Harrow's rubbish was being recycled, giving Harrow the best performance in London.

In Harrow a high percentage of pollution (greenhouse gases) comes from domestic sources. Harrow also has a high level of car usage and one of the highest rates in London for people driving their children to school. To help reduce pollution Harrow Council is working with other public sector organisations. This includes adaptations to 1,100 Council houses to make them more energy efficient and work to increase the number of travel to school journeys which do not require a car. All schools in Harrow now have travel plans and early signs are that the Council's plans to reduce the numbers of cars used to travel to school is working. To support this over 500 adults and children have been trained to cycle safely. As part of a wider commitment to reducing carbon usage - which contributes to pollution - the Council is making changes to its transport fleet and the routes it operates on. Thirty schools are intending to install solar panels and the Council has a helpline which provides advice on energy, transport, biodiversity, construction and waste. Through the West London Warm Zones scheme, insulation and heating repairs have been offered to over 200 households with the greatest need and free or discounted insulation to 1,000 other households. While these projects do contribute to helping achieve reduced carbon usage, there is still a significant challenge to reduce this pollution enough.

Levels of home ownership in Harrow are high. A majority (89 per cent) of homes are privately owned (of which 12 per cent are rented). These levels of home ownership are much higher than the national average and this puts extra pressure on the availability of affordable housing. This is particularly so as Harrow has a relatively low number of Council houses (about six per cent of the total housing available). In 2008/09 271 new affordable homes were built - 52 more than the agreed target. The Council has successfully tackled a government target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 and the target was met in mid 2009. Last year the number of council homes reaching the government's decent homes standard fell slightly below the agreed target, but that target is now expected to be met by the end of 2010. The level of decent homes in the private sector is above the average for London and the country as a whole. Accommodation for young offenders is satisfactory and very good for young people leaving the care of the Council.

The borough faces housing challenges to make sure that all its residents, whatever their needs are well housed. Additional homes will be required to meet the needs of people at different life stages, for example, people with young and growing families. There is also a continuing challenge to preserve the character of Harrow whilst building new homes.

## Culture, communities and identity

Harrow values its unique identity which is linked to the diversity of its local population. The population mix is varied and changing as a result of people moving into the area from other parts of the world and other groups leaving the borough. Harrow is a place which does not have a serious problem with the level of respect local people show to each other and is better than many other places in London. However, recently there has been a small increase in the amount of community tension. Local organisations are working with Harrow residents to make sure they enjoy the diversity Harrow offers under the banner "Community Connects". This is a new borough-wide publicity campaign which helps all communities to live together and is supported with additional police resources, crime prevention campaigns and alley-gating schemes.

There is also a wide programme of activity which supports people who already live in the area as well as seeking to integrate new migrants who may not already have local support. Some good examples of this are the Faith, Community and Cultural events calendar which provides a full on-line listing of community events as well as information about the many faiths represented in Harrow. Events include the "Under One Sky" festival, which attracts 13,000 visitors and provides an opportunity to share information with the community from the various agencies in Harrow. The "Passport to Culture" scheme promotes the many cultural opportunities available to all ages across the borough. Other recent developments during the year include the building of the first voluntary aided Hindu school in the UK; the re-location of Gayton Library, and the new Harrow Central Mosque. The Black Pupils Achievement Project in 15 schools is making a real difference to the performance of the pupils there. Over 30 schools are involved in a "Narrowing the Gap" project that targets Black African, Black Caribbean and White Working Class Pupils.

The community tension monitoring group also helps ensure that issues are dealt with before they become too serious. This is helped by targeted projects such as the women's e-safety project which promotes internet safety awareness. The role of English as a first language is seen as important here and so extra money has been secured to provide additional English as a second language courses.

The Council, police, health services, learning and skills council, Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary and community sector have come together to help support the Somali community. The monthly Community Confidence Road Show, which includes the Council and Police Community Safety Unit, also advises on reporting hate crime which raises the awareness of this issue within the community. The number of reported hate crimes has increased, but this may be the result of encouragement to report such crimes and providing additional places where people can report hate crime.

Harrow has some of the lowest crime levels across the capital. And people feel there is less anti-social behaviour in the borough than previously (this is also better than across London as a whole). This is even the case in those areas where there are problems with teenagers on the streets, noisy neighbours and abandoned cars. Knife crime in the area has also fallen. Re-offending by young people in Harrow is far lower than in similar areas. Crime has fallen from first to fourth in residents' priorities and the proportion of people identifying fear of crime as one of their top five concerns has also fallen. This is the result of the work that the Council, health services and the police are doing together which focuses on the areas that need it most. In

response to concerns raised by residents, extra investment has been made in the area between Harrow town centre and Wealdstone. Although crime in Harrow reached an overall 30 year low in 2007 there has been an increasing trend in wounding, interference with vehicles, and more recently a slight increase in burglaries, although there has been some progress in tackling this.

## The future of public service delivery and democracy in Harrow

The Council, health services, the police and others are working towards a common vision for Harrow. They have started to look at sharing staff, buildings and possibly money and to see how more services can be provided jointly.

According to a recent survey, voluntary groups within Harrow have a low sense of being able to influence decisions - particularly of the health services. This suggests that significant further work is required to create a place where voluntary organisations can do well and are able to influence services locally. The public sector organisations are now working closely with the voluntary sector to create a plan (the Third Sector Strategy) which will describe how they will improve this. The Council and NHS Harrow are also supporting the voluntary sector so that they are better able to provide the services Harrow residents require. We will see what effect this has in a few months' time.

Residents' levels of satisfaction with the local area have increased in recent years but remain lower than the England average. Across London and in Harrow there has been a general downward trend in the number of residents who feel that people and communities get on well together over the last three years. But more Harrow residents now feel that the levels of respect and consideration in the borough have improved although this remains below the London and England averages. The number of people who believe that they will be treated fairly by local services is again less than the London and England averages. The Council, health services, the police and others want to improve this and have made positive steps to better understand community concerns and make sure that Harrow is a place where all communities are well treated and satisfied with the services they receive.



CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ  
Telephone: 0844 798 1212  
Fax: 0844 798 2945  
Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946  
[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)



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