

Harrow

Area Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



oneplace

for an independent overview
of local public services

Contents

Harrow at a glance

How is Harrow doing?

About Harrow

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

Priorities for Harrow

- Economic development in Harrow
- Every Harrow child
- Health, wellbeing and independence
- An improving environment
- Culture, communities and identity
- The future of public service delivery and democracy in Harrow

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.

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for an independent overview
of local public services

London Borough of Harrow

Organisational Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



oneplace

for an independent overview
of local public services

London Borough of Harrow

Overall, London Borough of Harrow performs well

Managing performance	3 out of 4
Use of resources	2 out of 4
Managing finances	3 out of 4
Governing the business	2 out of 4
Managing resources	2 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

Overall Harrow Council performs well. The Council makes sure that its services provide good value for money. It has improved significantly in recent years and has clear priorities which are the things residents want to see improved. The Council has managed a difficult financial position, strengthened its financial reserves, made substantive savings and invested extra money in priority areas. And in nearly two-thirds of the key performance indicators the Council can show improvements. Front-line services such as refuse collection, recycling and street cleaning have improved. People worry less about crime and anti-social behaviour while children and young people continue to achieve well in local schools. It scores two for how it uses its resources, but because important services are performing well and the Council has a wide range of good improvements, we have decided that overall the Council performs well.

Harrow Council scores three out of four for managing performance. The three areas that the Council gives most of its attention and effort to are delivering cleaner and safer streets, improving support for people who need it most and building stronger communities.

However, the Council plan has other important priorities and projects for the coming year to make sure that the needs of Harrow residents are well met. This includes making sure the Council delivers all of its services as well as possible, as well as focusing on specific services, such as those for adults and children. Other actions include managing the Council finances better, helping residents and businesses through the recession and improving the local environment.

Harrow Council can show significant improvements in the way it has provided

services over the last year. In 2008 nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of its performance measures improved. An independent study carried out on behalf of the Council shows that when measured against other London councils Harrow is the second most improved council in London. It was also recently runner-up in the Municipal Journal annual competition to find the best achieving council in the country. The Council is much more financially stable than it has been in the past and has made savings of over £45 million since 2006/07. This year council tax increases were held below three per cent.

Like all councils, Harrow will need to deliver ambitious savings over the next three years as the country makes tough choices around public spending. The Council has started to address these challenges and has launched an ambitious "Better Deal for Residents" programme to look at new ways of delivering services and new ways of working with local partners and residents. It aims to help the Council balance its medium term budgets, deliver its Sustainable Community Strategy (the plan which describes the priorities and plans for the area), work well with residents and maintain its current rate of performance improvement.

Ofsted has rated the Council's children's services as one that performs well. Young children get a secure start and achieve the same as other areas and nationally in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The large majority of primary schools are good or better than similar areas or national averages. Secondary schools perform well and all have good or outstanding standards of behaviour. All four school sixth forms are good and the sixth form college is outstanding, although general further education and other higher education providers are satisfactory. Of the four special schools, two are good and two are outstanding. This good provision contributes to achievement at age 16 which is well above the national average and improving. Very high numbers of young people continue in learning after 16 and at the age of 19 qualification levels are well above similar areas and national averages. Services for looked after children in Harrow are satisfactory and the rate of adoptions has shown very good improvement.

The Care Quality Commission has rated the Council's adult social care as performing well. The Council provides good support for adult social care and has invested extra money. The current transformation plan is driving improvement. Information from service users and carers is used well to help make services right for those who use them. Over the last year the number of people choosing a direct payment or personal budget has increased significantly. The Council has also continued to strengthen the way it protects adults needing care and support from abuse by raising awareness of abuse. But more work is required to ensure that all staff put this into practice.

The Council scores two out of four for use of resources. The Council provides good value for money for the services it delivers within its resources. The Council has managed its finances well and reduced the costs of its services while improving them. However, the Council needs to lead by example in the way it manages its own natural resources by having better plans and targets.

The Council understands residents' needs better now and the way the Council communicates with its residents has improved. It is investing money to improve services that are important to them such as cleaner and safer streets. There is a strong commitment backed up by investment and plans to change and improve the way the Council works with residents. There are creative

plans and projects to improve value for money by delivering services in a different way.

About London Borough of Harrow

Harrow is an outer London borough in the northwest of the capital. It has an estimated population of more than 215,000. The population is increasing slowly and includes a growing number of older people and a richly diverse and changing child population.

Over half the population is from a minority ethnic background. Harrow has the highest number of different faiths and religions of any local authority in England and Wales. It has a particularly large Indian Asian community. This level of religious diversity gives Harrow a wide range experiences, cultures and skills and also challenges around communication and understanding.

Harrow is relatively prosperous - its residents enjoy an above average standard of living and low unemployment. But Harrow has big contrasts between its richest and poorest people and an increasing proportion of lower income families.

Harrow is a borough with high levels of commuting and freelancing and also a significant range of employment in local businesses. More than six out of ten Harrow residents work outside the borough mainly in West London and Central London. This level of commuting means that for many Harrow residents the car is an integral part of their lives.

Harrow has a good reputation for the quality and quantity of its green belt land. This provides access to nature and recreation for many local people. In contrast to the green belt the remainder of Harrow is intensively built up with little vacant, undeveloped or underdeveloped land.

Organisational assessment

The three areas that the Council gives most of its attention and effort to are;

- delivering cleaner and safer streets;
- improving support for people who need it most; and
- building stronger communities.

However the Council plan also has other important priorities and projects it will focus on to make sure that the needs of Harrow residents are well met. This includes making sure the Council delivers all of its services as well as possible, as well as focusing on specific services such as those for adults and children. Other actions include managing the Council finances better, helping residents and businesses through the recession and improving the local environment.

Harrow Council works well to identify and deliver important services for local residents. It has a clear process for identifying concerns using local

knowledge and information from local reports about the area. The Council regularly assesses how well they have delivered each service and councillors, council officers and local residents work well together to make sure that national and local policy is built into local actions. All of this helps to make sure that the priorities identified are those that matter to local residents. These priorities are described in the Councils Corporate Plan, which sets out their aims and targets for the coming year and over the next three years. Before being finalised the Council uses a number of ways to ask residents their views. These include publishing aims in the local press, discussion by local councillors with residents and linking with the Residents Panel. This is a group of 1,200 local people in Harrow who have signed up to give their views about anything the Council and its partners ask them. It is representative of the boroughs over 18 population and people who have different employment status.

Children and young people are also consulted about services in Harrow. The Youth Council has sub groups which look after the five important priority areas and this has been important in the development and design of the Childrens and Young People Plan. They are consulted on local services for children and young people and take part in planning future services. For example, they have 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.

Deliver cleaner and safer streets.

Keeping the streets clean is an increasingly important priority for residents although satisfaction with street cleaning has fallen in recent years. Harrow has high levels of recycling and recent figures show that it is the second best authority for recycling in London. It also has the best performance in London for composting green waste although more work is required to help people living in flats take part in recycling. A new approach has been taken to cleaning the streets. For instance, a "blitz" team of thirty additional sweepers is in operation around the town centre and stations. Also an "envirocrime" team has been created, which helps tackle problems such as fly-posting, fly-tipping and graffiti. Significant time and effort has been invested to ensure that areas such as Harrow town centre are clean.

Working with organisations such as the Police, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority, the Probation Service, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the London Fire Brigade, Harrow Council has implemented "weeks of action". These are concentrated efforts to make a big impact in a small area and have been successful in improving or removing "grot spots" where rubbish, abandoned cars and other hazards have caused long standing problems. Examples of areas where these "weeks of action" have taken place include Rayners Lane, Wealdstone High Street and Herga Lane. Nearly three quarters (70 per cent) of residents feel that their "week of action" has improved their area.

Harrow is one of the safest boroughs in London and has been for some time. In 2007 crime in Harrow reached a 30 year low. Recent figures for knife crime have shown a reduction but fear of crime has been an issue, although this is now reducing with improved resident figures for fear of crime and perceptions of anti-social behaviour. These are generally lower than across London. Harrow now has in place a jointly funded policing team in the town centre.

The Council is adding more CCTVs to the boroughs network and has installed alley gates which increase security and deter fly-tipping.

Harrow Council wants to reduce pollution levels in the borough and has taken steps to restrict greenhouse gases from housing and transport. Currently a large amount of pollution comes from domestic sources and in order to help reduce pollution levels the Council has made adaptations to 1,100 council houses to make them more energy efficient. And working with other organisations, the Council has offered insulation and heating repairs to over 200 households with greatest need. Thirty schools will be installing solar panels.

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 this most schools in Harrow now have travel plans which reduce the number of car journeys, and over 500 adults and children have been trained to cycle safely. So far the number of car journeys taking children to school has fallen by one per cent in the last year. The Council is looking at its own activities and now understands its own part in creating pollution. It is making changes to its transport fleet and the journeys its vehicles make. Finally, the Council advice line can help residents with information on making the best use of energy, transport, waste and associated issues which can damage the wider environment.

Improve support for people with additional needs.

Adults who need social care are well supported. There are clear aims and strong leadership. And good progress has been made on improving services for the people who use 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 giving skills back to people and helping them 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 some 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 all those responsible deliver improved 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 Council management team responsible for adults with additional needs has been strengthened and works well with other organisations. Following an independent review the Council, with other organisations, has 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. The Council has worked with two of their main home care providers to improve services which are now adequate.

Other Council developments include building new neighbourhood centres which will improve the day care support for people with learning difficulties. Also, the first purpose-built extra care (this is very sheltered or assisted living) housing in Harrow is planned for this year. This will provide suitable accommodation for older people and people who need a lot of additional support to live independently. These actions are all part of the plan to modernise day care facilities for all service users and supporting people to live at home, including those with a complex range of needs.

The Council wants to increase the employment opportunities for people with disabilities. To increase this area of support the Council has now introduced “slivers of time” a project which offers suitable work in small packages to individuals and so far nearly 300 hours of employment have been provided in this way. Additionally, the “Xcite programme” helps people to find their way back into the workplace and provide income for people who have been out of the workplace for a long time.

Build stronger communities.

Harrow is a place with a wide range of communities and faiths. Over half the population is from a minority ethnic background and Harrow has the highest level of religious diversity of any local authority in England and Wales. Harrow has a large Indian Asian community and is often a place where new migrants choose to settle in London.

Harrow Council values its specific and unique identity and does not have serious problems with the level of respect people show to each other. This is better than many places in London although in recent years the number of people who think that their local neighbourhood is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together has declined. The Council is working to address this by supporting new and existing communities and residents. This work is targeted at new arrivals who tend not to have networks and can become isolated and disadvantaged. To help overcome this and help new migrants settle in the borough the Council provides the “Welcome to Harrow pack”. This is distributed through community networks and helps residents access services such as health and housing advice. The Council has also provided a “myth busting leaflet” for existing residents which aims to encourage a better understanding of different faiths and communities and their places of worship. New populations generally want to speak English and the Council has helped fund additional English courses for people where it is only spoken as a second language.

The Council is helping build stronger communities through the launch of the year long community and cultural calendar and one-off events, such as the “Under One Sky” festival. In June 2009 this brought together over 13,000

residents from different backgrounds. Other actions include promoting new and existing cultural activities to encourage participation from people in Harrow. An example of this is the establishment of the "Harrow Heroes" awards, an annual event which promotes and celebrates community volunteering. The Council works closely with the local community to build resilience to violent extremism, for example Harrow Central Mosque accommodates Council community officers so that they are at the heart of the community. The Somali Interagency Task Force has been set up to address problems in one of the fastest growing and most disadvantaged communities in Harrow. Examples of projects led by them are role modeling, translation and interpretation services, extended homes and community outreach.

Adults and housing.

The Council has a range of actions to improve the way it supports adults who need additional care. This includes modernising services and involving adults who use the services in making changes. In addition to helping people to live at home longer, the Council wants to increase the numbers who will receive an annual review of their needs. They have also provided more opportunities for people with physical and learning disabilities and mental health issues to find, and stay in, employment.

The performance of housing services in Harrow has improved in recent years and is now performing well. The Council is good at meeting housing needs and allocating affordable housing. It also manages its own housing stock well.

Levels of home ownership in Harrow are high (nearly nine out of ten homes are privately owned and only six per cent of the total housing available is Council owned). Last year the number of Council homes meeting the Government's decent home standard fell slightly below the target. However, this is expected to be met by the end of 2010. The relatively small number of Council houses puts extra pressure on the availability of affordable housing.

To help this 271 new affordable homes were completed in Harrow in 2008/09 which was 52 more than the agreed target for the year. And by March 2010 a further 219 homes that are affordable to local people should be completed. The Council has impressively met a government target of halving the number of households in temporary accommodation a year ahead of schedule.

Harrow Council continues to deliver an excellent housing benefits service, achieving the highest possible scores of performing strongly for the last four years. This includes the speed that they deal with claims from people who need benefits, as well as making sure that claims are received by the right people and are for the right amount.

Childrens services.

Council staff and others with responsibilities for children and young people work together very well. 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 very good achievement which continues to get better. All secondary schools have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and the numbers of pupils who are often absent are 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 and generally improving attainment. Narrowing gaps in educational achievement is a key priority and the gaps between those children who do well and those who do not are mostly closing. Few children and young people report being bullied, partly because of successful anti-bullying campaigns, for example MissDorothy.com.

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

Levels of substance misuse in children and young people 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 first time offenders, 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. In the Foundation Stage, there remains a very 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. This reflects in part an overall improvement in results that are already very high. Permanent exclusions from schools are above the national average and similar areas.

Communities and environment.

The Council is doing a number of things to improve the environment, including

planting an additional 500 street trees. A weed control team will help the area look tidy and more Council staff and money will help make Council allotments easier to use and more attractive. The frequency of the “weeks of action” is being increased which will tackle additional “grot spots” and more alley gates will be installed to increase security and reduce fly-tipping.

National indicators show that satisfaction with Council services has generally fallen since 2006/07. This is most marked for services such as sport and leisure services, parks and open spaces and libraries. Satisfaction with cultural and recreational services is also lower than in most other parts of London. However, the Council's reputation tracker survey with more recent local data shows that satisfaction levels have been increasing in the last two years. The Council recognises that current sports and leisure facilities are in need of renewal and has advanced plans for the Anchor leisure centre in Wealdstone. These have been delayed by the recession, but in the meantime extra monies are being spent to improve current facilities and reverse the fall in usage.

A better, more efficient and more effective council.

The leadership of the Council has improved markedly in the last three years and it has set the foundations for becoming a high performing authority. And Harrow is a low spending Council which is currently implementing a three year plan to help it deliver better services in a less expensive and more efficient way. Their plan, which covers 2008-2011, includes having a clear understanding about what the Council needs to do, and radically changing the way the Council is organised to make sure the right people have the right skills to do their job well. The plan also includes making sure that the Council is focused on its residents needs through actions such as improving access to services. The Council's “CREATE” programme for all its frontline staff puts the needs of service users at its core. And Harrow residents should now see changes in the way the Council communicates with residents particularly through "Access Harrow". This is the Council one-stop shop with a call centre based at the Civic Centre which has recently received customer service accreditation. Since replacing customer reception areas the Council can show improved efficiency, better customer services and improved staff and customer satisfaction.

Leadership, capacity and capability.

The ability of councillors and senior officers to focus on the important issues for Harrow is good. In recent years the Council has focused on making the services which matter most to Harrow residents as good as possible. This has been achieved while improving the financial stability of the Council, keeping within its budget and making savings of over £45 million since 2006/07. The Council was recently short-listed by the Municipal Journal as one of the Best Achieving Councils in the country. Staff performance has also improved. Sickness levels have fallen and staff surveys show increases in the number of people who would recommend the Council as an employer and the number who feel that they are provided with good direction and leadership. Harrow residents will have seen improved customer access and service and a marked increase in the amount of positive media coverage. Councillors measure and challenge performance well and have improved their skills and knowledge in

this area through training and linking with other councils. The Council is also looking further into the future. By 2020 it wants Harrow to be recognised for joined-up quality services which can focus on preventing problems and give users choice, availability and control. It wants to balance environmental, economic and community issues. And be a place which remains one of the safest boroughs in London and where there is respect between different community groups. Harrow also faces challenges - for example, the population is not just increasing but the number of older people is also growing, and the expectation of residents is increasing. Costs are increasing - and the current recession means public sector funds will come under large pressures in the coming years.

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