

Harrow Children Looked After

Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2019 - 2024

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Introduction

This 2019-2024 Sufficiency Strategy outlines our plan to meet the future needs of children on the edge of care, children who are looked after and young people who have recently left care. For children looked after, the sufficiency strategy covers internal services such as foster care, and external services such as residential placements, independent fostering placements, adoption and other support services.

As corporate parents we are committed to commissioning the right accommodation and support services to ensure the best possible outcomes for every child and young person. Harrow aims to support children to remain safely within their families wherever possible. Our innovative Keeping Families Together Service offers targeted resources to prevent young people becoming the subject of a child protection plan by trialling new ways of addressing risk in adolescence is a cornerstone in our approach to achieving this. In 2019, we further strengthened our edge of care provisions with the Supporting Families Together team, which aims to prevent families requiring statutory social care and provides a step-down from social care. The team provides intensive support to vulnerable families with multiple, complex problems, where there is a strong possibility of a child or children otherwise requiring statutory social care.

This sufficiency strategy is underpinned by legislation and statutory guidance including:

- **Section 9 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008** which places a general duty on local authorities to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the local authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area.
- **Sufficiency Duty Statutory Guidance** (DfE 2010) which describes the accommodation required for a child looked after that: is near the child's home; does not disrupt his/her education or training; enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling; where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child; and is within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable.
- **Commissioning standards** in the sufficiency duty statutory guidance are also important, emphasising: individual assessment and care planning; commissioning decision; strategic needs assessment; market management; collaboration; and securing services.

We have synthesised these elements with our assessment of the needs of children in care and potentially entering care, to develop a five year strategy to secure sufficiency of accommodation and other support services. We aim to be proactive in our plans to meet the placement needs of looked after children in Harrow and to complete holistic, outcome focussed assessments which achieve permanency swiftly and prioritise placement stability.

Peter Tolley

**Peter Tolley
Divisional Director
Children and Young People Services
Harrow Council**

December 2019

1. Our ambition for children and care leavers

Harrow has high ambitions for children and care leavers. With consideration to feedback from children and young people in care and care leavers, as well the statutory framework, the following outlines our ambition for our Children Looked After (CLA) and Leaving Care services:

1. The views of children and young people are listened to and inform placement decisions. Young people are given detailed information about their placements, and where the placements are planned, young people are able to visit the placement prior to moving.
2. All children looked after are placed in appropriate placements with access to the support that they need, as identified in their care plan or pathway plan, and the services they receive are of high quality.
3. We will aim to minimise disruption to children's education when they come into care or move placement and we will provide additional resources where needed to achieve this.
4. Placements will be located within the local authority area as far as possible or within the West London Alliance boundaries, except where this is not consistent with the welfare of a child, or where a specialist placement is not able to be commissioned locally.
5. Children's services and Housing services have robust joint working protocols to meet the needs of those who are at risk of becoming looked after at the age of 16 and 17 as a result of homelessness.
6. A sufficient range of accommodation and support packages are available to care leavers to support their pathway plans and to ensure all transitions are undertaken in a planned and supportive manner. This includes a clear staying put policy to enable care leavers to remain with their foster carers up to the age of 25 if desired and appropriate.
7. Resources are available to respond to predicted demand for a range of needs and emergencies and a range of placement choices are developed to meet the needs of the diverse CLA population in Harrow.
8. Systems are in place to ensure careful matching of placements and to prevent disruption and to ensure placement stability.
9. Placement providers support children and young people to share their views and inform decision making.

2. Understanding needs: Harrow demographics

Harrow is an area in North West London that is home to more than 250,000 people¹. It is a comparatively quiet and safe area by London standards, noted for good schools and plenty of green space, and a popular area for families and commuters. The population is one of the most diverse in England, with established Gujarati and Irish communities and more recently Other Asian, African and Eastern European communities. Harrow does not have a majority ethnic group. Community cohesion is strong and this is an important success to build on. Unemployment is low, and Harrow has one of the lowest rates of young people (aged 16-17 years) not in education, training or employment (NEET) in England, at 2.1%.²

Despite this positive picture, there are some significant challenges for local people. There is increasing deprivation, particularly affecting children and young families, and significant health inequality. Harrow has both high levels of affluence in such areas as Harrow-on-the-Hill, Pinner, and Stanmore and high levels of deprivation in Wealdstone and South Harrow. The percentage of children living in poverty is just slightly above the England average but lower than the London average.

The number of Harrow children with diagnosed learning disabilities (LD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and challenging behaviours has increased steadily since 2015. Harrow's schools have experienced a growth in demand for children with special education needs and disability (SEND) requiring support in an additionally resourced mainstream school or special school place. The number of statements, (now Education, Health and Care Plans (ECHPs)) has increased since 2007 and continues to rise. The percentage of the school population with SEND has remained stable at 2.6% (as at 2019). The highest category of primary need was speech, language and communication needs followed by moderate learning difficulties.

2.1 National Census

Harrow's population is continuing to grow and change. Harrow's population is now at the highest recorded level, based on records going back to 1901. Over the past decade (2008-2018) the borough's population has increased by around 9.0% (20,582). While this is lower than London's average growth

¹ ONS Mid-year estimates 2018

² The percentage of all NEET 16-19 year olds in England was 5.5%; London 4.8%; Source: DfE NEET 2019 Annual Scorecard.

of 14.0 % over the same period, it is higher than England's population growth of 8.0%³.

The table below outlines the total population of Harrow from the census base population of 241,063 through five-year intervals to a projected 2041 population of 285,718.

Office of National Statistics Harrow Population Projections

Year	2016 Population Projections
2011	241,063
2016	248,945
2021	261,611
2026	266,389
2031	267,513
2036	275,913
2041	285,718

In addition, the 2011 Census showed that Harrow's residents were born in approximately 200 different countries and the percentage of Harrow's residents born in the UK is the 6th lowest ranking nationally. Harrow is ranked 7th nationally (and in London) for ethnic diversity and 2nd for religious diversity in London.

2.2 Growing numbers of children in Harrow

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid-year 2018 estimate for Harrow highlighted that 21.0% of Harrow's residents are aged under 16 years (52,578). Both the number and percentage of 0 to 15 year olds have been increasing in the borough since 2001, when there were around 41,690 young residents in Harrow. **Since 2001 there has been a 26.1% increase (10,888) in the 0 to 15 year old age group. At 21.0%, Harrow's proportion of under 16s is above both the London average of 20.6 % and the national average of 19.0 %.**⁴

Approximately 13.9 % (34,833) of all Harrow's residents are of school age (5-15), 633 more than in 2017, when 13.7 % were of school age. Compared with London (13.7%) and England (13.1%), Harrow had a higher proportion of residents of school age in 2018.

³ Based on ONS 2008 mid year estimates, revised in the light of the 2011 Census

⁴ ONS Mid-year estimates 2018

Office of National Statistics Age projections for Harrow

Age Group	Population 2011	Population 2031	Change	Percentage change
0 to 3	13,449	12,580	-868	-6.5
4 to 10	20,398	22,779	2,381	11.7
11 to 15	14,892	16,679	1,787	12.0
16 to 17	6,587	6,920	333	5.1
18 to 64	151,851	157,089	5,238	3.4
65 and over	33,886	51,466	17,580	51.9

2.3 Impact of changing and growing population

Harrow's comparatively lower rate of CLA should also be considered in the context of our local population. Harrow is a relatively affluent London borough and its high levels of diversity reflect well established communities, particularly of South Asian origin. Strong extended family networks are common. At the same time, Harrow has significant areas of deprivation, and movement in to the borough coupled with high birth rates suggest that CLA rates could increase further. Even if Harrow is able to successfully maintain relatively low rates of CLA, the growth in base population numbers will result in an increased number of individual children becoming looked after by Harrow.

The table below illustrates possible future Harrow CLA numbers, based on the predicted child population in 2031, and is calculated for a range of CLA rates per 10,000 (including current statistical neighbour and England rates of CLA). This highlights how CLA numbers may increase based on an increase in the child population, as well as the significant increase in CLA numbers if our rate of CLA increased to that of our statistical neighbours or England averages.

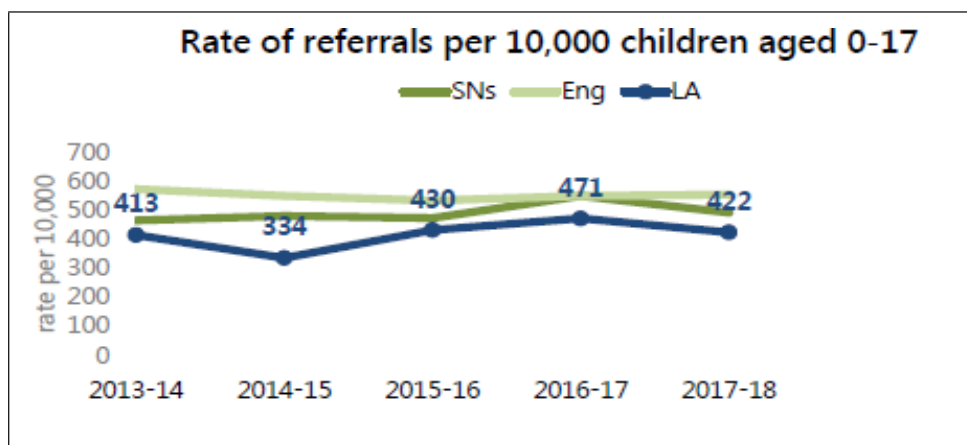
Possible future numbers of Harrow CLA

Year	Harrow Child Population	Rate of CLA per 10,000	Predicted number of CLA
2011	55, 326	26	140
2031	58, 958	29	170
2031	58, 958	50	294
2031	58, 958	65	383

3. Growing demand for services

The graph below illustrates the rate of referrals into children's services per 10,000 children. Harrow's referral rate has consistently remained lower

than our statistical neighbours and the England average over a 5 year period. Although our referral rates are comparatively low, population increases will result in an increase in individual referrals into children’s social care, which has resource implications for children’s services as a whole.



For example, the table “Contacts, Plans and CLA numbers” outlines the increased numbers of individual children who were referred in to Harrow children’s services between 2018-2019, including the increase in children subject to Child Protection Plans and those who were looked after. This reinforces the point that while our referral rates and rates of CLA are lower than our statistical neighbours and England, the growth in our population results in an overall increase in individual children and families requiring a service from social care.

Contacts, Plans and CLA numbers – comparison 2018-2019

	March 2018	March 2019	Increase
New contacts	495	879	78%
Child Protection Plans	223	279	25%
Children Looked After	159	169	6%
Total children allocated	1406	1601	14%

4. Needs Assessment

The following section compares Harrow’s CLA key demographic indicators – gender, age and ethnicity - to published population statistics for Harrow and England. It highlights the particular need for Harrow to develop and maintain a diverse range of placement options for children, particularly for children aged 10 and above.

4.1 Gender

Gender: Harrow CLA compared to published population statistics (Sept 2019) (note, as of 2019, the DfE only published and collected data on male or female children)				
	All CLA	% difference	Harrow Population	England Population
Male	63%	24% higher	51%	51%
Female	37%	25% lower	49%	49%

The table above highlights that **Harrow has an overrepresentation of male children in care by 24%**, when compared to general Harrow and England populations. A higher proportion of male unaccompanied children contributes to this overrepresentation. This demonstrates a need to recruit and identify appropriate foster carers and placements who are able to care for boys, particularly boys aged 16 and above.

4.2 Age

The next table outlines the age breakdown of Harrow's children looked after population in comparison to the general Harrow population and England-wide population. Of significance is the overrepresentation of children aged 10 and above, highlighting a need for placements for older children and adolescents. In particular, **there is a significant overrepresentation of children aged 16 and above who are looked after by Harrow**. This is partly due to the duty to accommodate unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) in care under s20 of the Children Act (1989). Published data from 2013-2019 suggests that UASC account for 15% - 20% of the Harrow children looked after population and the majority of UASC are aged 15 and above. This highlights the need for Harrow to develop and retain placements for older children, adolescents and asylum seeking children.

Age: Harrow CLA compared to published population statistics (Sept 2019)				
	All CLA	% difference	Harrow Population	England Population
Under 1	8%	23% higher	6%	5%
1 to 4	9%	65% lower	24%	23%
5 to 9	9%	70% lower	29%	29%
10 to 15	38%	22% higher	31%	32%
16 plus	38%	279% higher	10%	10%

4.3 Ethnicity

Harrow's population is one of the most diverse nationally. Diversity Indices rank Harrow seventh highest nationally for ethnic diversity and second for religious diversity⁵. The 2011 Census 69.1% of residents stated they are from minority ethnic groups, 31.9% of residents are White-British, 26.4% are of Indian origin, the largest minority ethnic group. Harrow is also home to the country's largest Sri Lankan born community⁶.

Ethnic background: Harrow CLA compared to published population statistics (Sept 2019)				
	All CLA	% difference	Harrow Population	England Population
White	30%	9% higher	28%	74%
Mixed	16%	84% higher	8%	6%
Asian or Asian British	13%	73% lower	48%	11%
Black or black British	17%	65% higher	10%	6%
Other ethnic group	24%	337% higher	6%	2%

The table above compares Harrow's children looked after population with all children in Harrow and all children in England. The **category of "other" ethnic group is significantly overrepresented in the CLA population, followed by "mixed", "black or black British", and there is a slight overrepresentation of "white" children.** "Asian or Asian British" children are significantly underrepresented in Harrow's CLA cohort compared to the general Harrow population. There is a need to ensure that foster carers and placement staff are recruited and reflect the diversity of our children looked after population and are supported to meet their identity needs.

4.4 Disability, SEND, Mental Health and other complex needs

While disability, SEND, mental health and other complex needs are not the reason for children to become looked after, a number of CLA and care leavers have complex and intersecting needs. Placement provisions which can meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs and support them to thrive are needed. Approximately 11% of the Harrow CLA population have a disability, accounting for 20 individual children (September 2019 data).

⁵ GLA 2011

⁶ National Census 2011

4.5 Children and Adolescent Mental Health

Harrow and the National Health Service (NHS)/Voluntary Sector partnership has embedded access and delivery of tier 2/3 therapeutic services for the children's population including CLA. The jointly commissioned Harrow Horizons service performance is performing well following the launch July 2017. Tier 3 and 4 delivery is embedded through tripartite funding arrangements. Specialist CLA nurses have maintained the provision of timely support with closer alignment with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) pathway.

4.6 Contextual Safeguarding

An emerging area of need for Harrow children and young people is contextual safeguarding, including safeguarding from extrafamilial abuse and exploitation, such as child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation.

*Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, **young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families**. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their **neighbourhoods, schools and online** can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of **extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships**. Therefore children's social care practitioners need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that **assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices**. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, **expands the objectives of child protection systems** in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts. (Firmin, 2016)*

Harrow is supportive of research carried out by the University of Bedfordshire Contextual Safeguarding Network, in particular, the development an evidence base regarding whether placement moves from unsafe contexts and areas increases or decreases risk, safety and well-being for young people. Contextual safeguarding factors are now considered when making placement decisions for children and young people, and this approach is expected to expand further as the evidence base develops.

4.7 Southwark Judgement and homeless 16 and 17 year olds

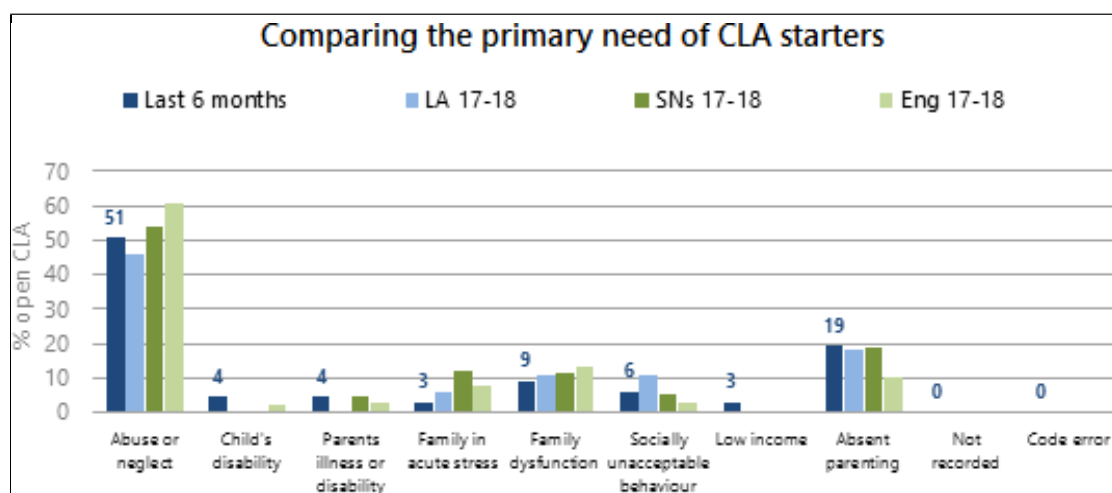
The Southwark Judgement 2009 confirmed local authorities' responsibility to assess the needs of a young person who presents as homeless and to

provide accommodation and support to homeless 16 and 17-year-olds under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 if the young person is assessed as a 'child in need'. Our aim, wherever possible, is to support older children and young people to remain at home within their families. The Children's and Families and Housing Services joint protocol lays out our approach across the Council for children and young people of this age group who cannot remain within their families

As we can see from previous analysis, entry into care in the 17 year age band has contributed to a significant number of the looked after population. This presents a significant challenge as placements for older young people are more difficult to identify, frequently more costly, and the local authority has a duty to continue providing services to children who have been looked after for 13 weeks or more (up to the age of 25 years old).

4.8 Presenting Needs of CLA

Data on the presenting primary need of children who become looked-after by Harrow (as at September 2019, and for the period 2017-2018) is outlined in the table below. The majority of children (51%) became looked after due to abuse or neglect. The next significant reason why children became looked after was due to absent parenting – this is the reporting category used primarily for UASC who arrive in England without family or a primary care giver.



5. Principles and framework

5.1 Children first

All placement decisions, including the decision to accommodate a child are based on the assessed need of the child. All placements of Harrow children are based on the following principles:

- Every child has an individual placement profile to support with matching their needs with the skills of carers
- Siblings are placed together wherever safe and possible to do so; if not placed together, then regular sibling contact is clearly outlined in their care plan
- The views, wishes and strengths of children are highlighted and supported
- Connections to family, community, school and friends are maintained wherever possible unless it has been assessed as not in the best interests of the child
- No child under 16 is placed in semi-independent or unregulated placements
- No child is placed in bed and breakfast accommodation
- The Divisional Director must give agreement to any children placed outside of the local area.

5.2 Keeping families together whenever possible

Harrow's approach to safeguarding children is based on the core principles of the Children Act (1989) – the welfare and best interests of children is paramount, and children are best looked after by their families wherever possible. We aim to maintain a low rate of children becoming looked-after, wherever this is safe to do so. In order to do this, we have commitment to an appropriately resourced Early Support service, excellent partnerships and use of community resources, safe management of risk on child protection plans, and special guardianship orders and placement with family and connected persons whenever this is in the best interests of children.

We are optimistic that the continued work of the Keeping Families Together Service, delivering new approaches to delivering services for teenagers on the edge of care will further impact the reduction of the numbers of young people coming into and remaining in care. Better targeting of systemic practitioners and our commitment to Early Support Services will also result in better outcomes for children and families and safely reduce the number of children in care.

5.3 Early Permanence and Placement Stability

Placement stability and achieving permanence is a priority for the service. Looked after children have six weekly permanency planning meetings. In addition to their own Looked After Reviews, children's progress is tracked and monitored through the Monthly Care Planning Panel, chaired by the Head of Service - Quality Assurance. All permanency plans, whether for long term fostering, Special Guardianship Orders or Adoption

are accompanied by robust support plans. These are presented, alongside the matching information, either to the RAA Adoption and Fostering Panel or the Local Authority Permanence Panel before being signed off by the Agency Decision Maker. All support plans are reviewed on an annual basis by the Adoption Support and Kinship Team.

There are signs of improvement in adoption timescales for the increased number of younger children coming into care with increasing numbers of children in adoption placements and increasing number of children with placement orders. We will continue our drive to improve in this area increasing the numbers of children being adopted out of the care system.

Timely implementation of care plans is progressed through the Care Planning Group meets monthly to review all:

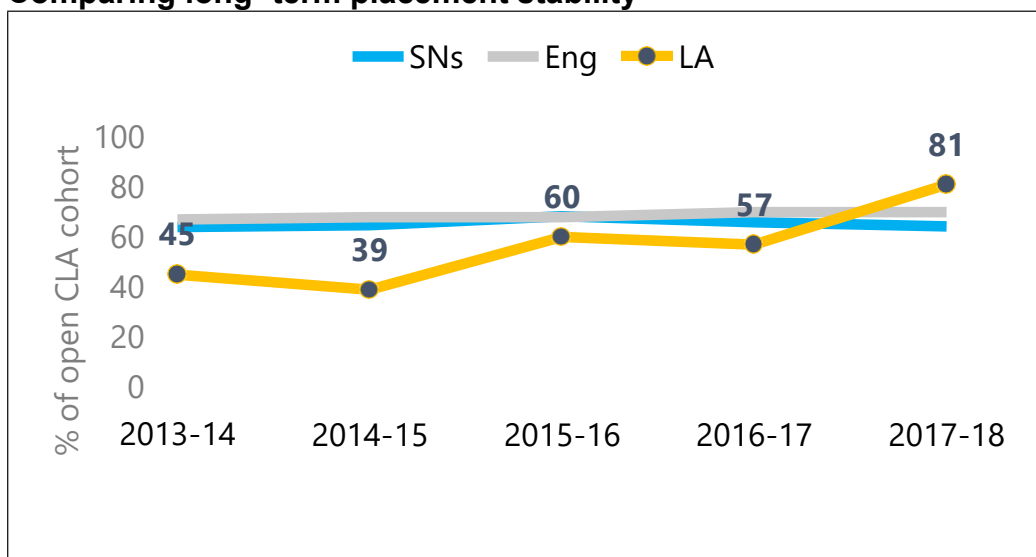
- Children subject to a legal planning meeting and the Public Law Outline pre proceedings process
- Children who are subject to on-going care proceedings
- Children who have a permanent plan of adoption
- Children who have a permanent plan of long term fostering

Individual Permanency Planning Meetings are held every six weeks on all these cases where the detailed implementation of the relevant care plans are discussed, developed and progressed. These complement the statutory review meetings which take place in accordance with the statutory review framework and ensure permanency is achieved in a timely manner.

Harrow has appointed a case manager to oversee and track all cases in proceedings to ensure cases are progressed in a timely manner and to avoid drift and delay and to comply with the requirements of the new Public Law Outline and Family Justice Review. We are also beginning to put in place permanence plans for all children entering care. These plans will be performance managed against, to ensure that internal or external providers are meeting the anticipated timescales to achieve the required outcomes and permanence.

Placement stability is a priority for Harrow and there is a well established link between placement stability and better outcomes for children. Placement stability is therefore a good proxy-indicator for the outcomes we want to children to achieve.

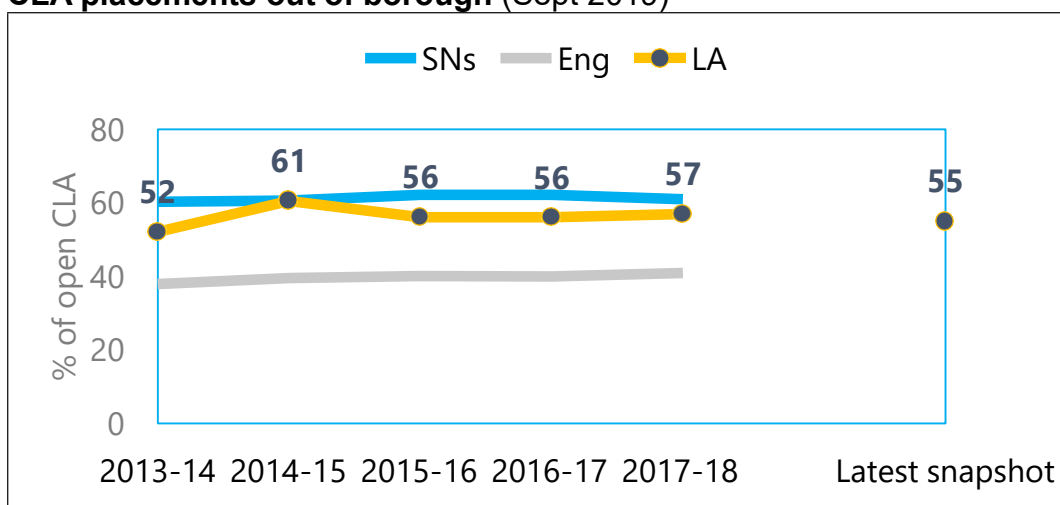
Comparing long-term placement stability



The above graph shows the placement stability for each current CLA aged under 16 who has been looked after for 2½ years or more. Harrow has made steady progress towards better placement stability for children, and in 2017-2018, Harrow performed better than our statistical neighbours and the England wide average.

An important element of placement stability and suitability is placing children close to their local area and connections whenever it is safe to do so. Placing children within borough is a particular challenge for London based local authorities due to the paucity of affordable housing. Despite this, Harrow performs better than our statistical neighbours when it comes to placing children in borough, and this is due to strong commissioning arrangements and active foster carer recruitment activity.

CLA placements out of borough (Sept 2019)



6. Services

This section contains an analysis of the services that we commission. The decision for a child or young person's placement is based on their assessed needs, and additional resources and support may be sought through the weekly Access to Resources Panel.

The WLA Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle for foster placements and children's homes was launched in April 2019. This has expanded our reach to other providers locally and nationally to better meet the needs of children and young people.

6.1 Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders

Harrow has an effective and longstanding adoption partnership with Coram. In 2019, Harrow became the lead local authority in the Coram Ambitious for Adoption Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). This is a unique model involving the commissioning of a leading Voluntary Adoption Agency to manage the adoption service across Harrow, Redbridge, Bromley, City of London, Waltham Forest, Hillingdon and a further 4 local authorities are in the pipeline to join (making a total of 10 LA in partnership with Coram). The RAA gives Harrow access to the pool of adopters recruited by Coram and as the LA are not all geographical neighbours, it gives scope for the children to be placed within the region. However, when this is not possible, to prevent drift and delay, interagency placements are sought.

Coram has taken the lead on all adoption work in the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), including adoption recruitment, assessment, family finding, post adoption support and letterbox contact. Recruitment to a Central Adoption Panel has been successful, and the Panel has been operational since July 2019. Since July the Harrow Adoption and Fostering Panel became the Permanence Panel with a single focus on Fostering and Permanency, including consideration of SGO assessments and support plans.

Coram staff are located alongside the social work teams in Harrow Civic Centre, which has facilitated a positive and close working relationship and supported permanency planning to begin at an early stage of the child's journey. This has included early permanence (EP) carers – i.e. concurrent carers and fostering to adopt carers.

Children in need of adoption support have a comprehensive assessment and have a wide range of services available. Harrow has made considerable use of the Adoption Support Fund to ensure all adopted children have access to appropriate therapeutic support.

Harrow has consistently performed better than our statistical neighbours on the adoption scorecard. Data for latest three year averages (2015-18) are as follows:

- The average time (days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted - Harrow - 454 days, SN average – 547
- The average time (days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family - Harrow - 153 days, SN average - 224
- Percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family - Harrow - 58%, SN average – 49%⁷

6.2 Internal Foster Care

Harrow Council has a well established and supportive in-house fostering team. As of 31st March 2019, Harrow had 66 approved fostering households, with 83 individual children placed with in house foster carers. The benefits of placing children with in-house carers are many: it ensures children can maintain their local connections to schools, GPs and support networks; we know foster carers are receiving high quality support and training; and placement moves are minimised as supervising social workers complete minimum 4 weekly visits to in house carers. In 2019, Harrow placed a greater percentage (43%) of CLA in our own provision compared to our statistical neighbours (36%) and in-house fostering is the preferred option for children who are looked after, whenever this meets their assessed needs.

The Fostering Recruitment Plan sets out the plan to increase the numbers of foster carers to meet local demand. Harrow regularly reviews and monitors the fostering recruitment plan via the following mechanisms:

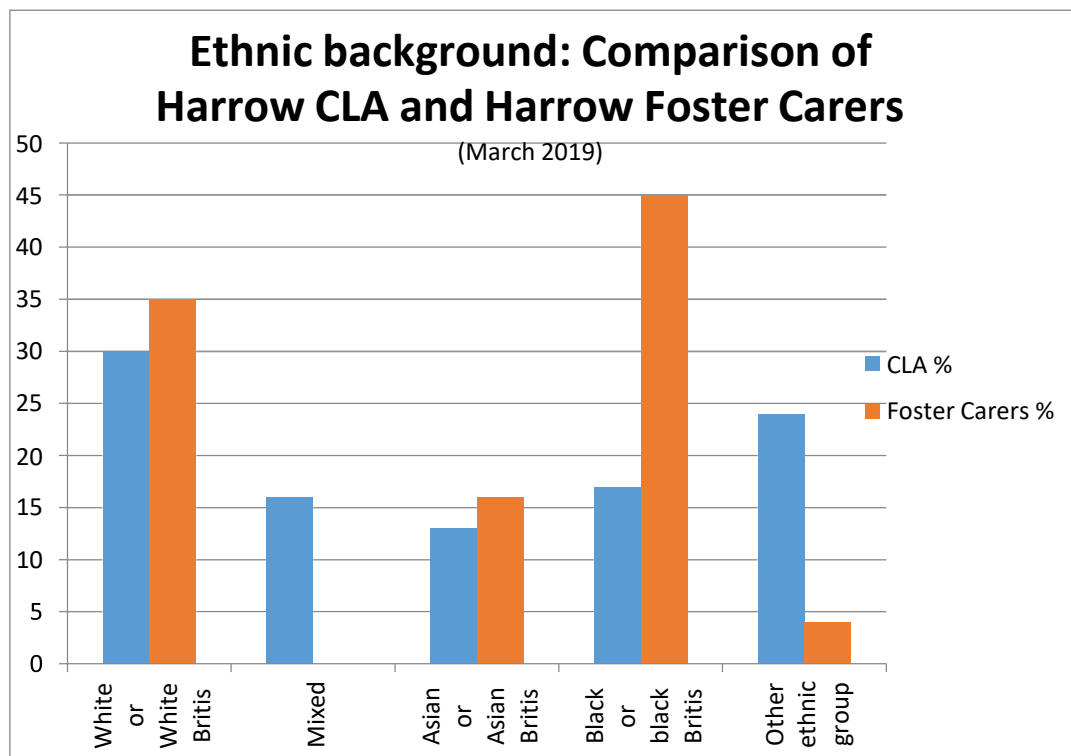
- Monthly performance reports on recruitment and assessment activity provided to Head of Service, Corporate Parenting
- Quarterly meetings between the Fostering Service and the Communications Team
- Quarterly reports to the Harrow Adoption and Fostering Panel
- Key fostering recruitment data reported at monthly Children's Services performance meetings
- Key fostering recruitment data reported to the Department for Education (DFE) and used to compare with statistical neighbours

⁷ Adoption scorecard data for 2018

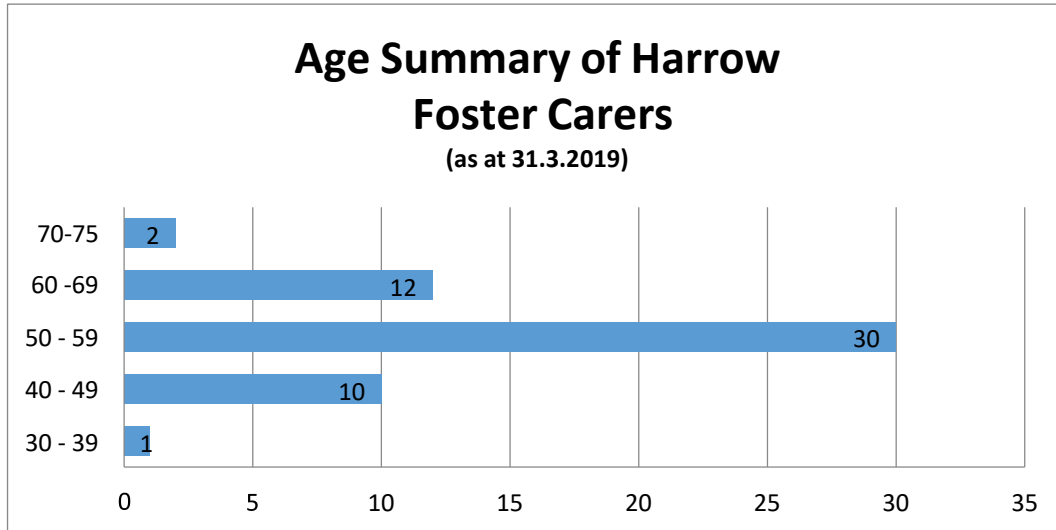
- In depth needs analysis carried out on quarterly basis by the Team Manager and Training and Development Officer to inform and update the recruitment strategy
- A target of approving 8 fostering households = an additional 10 placements for financial year 2019/2020.

6.3 Foster Carer Demographics

The graph below illustrates the ethnic background of Harrow foster carers, compared to the Harrow CLA population. Nearly 45% of Harrow foster carers identify as “black or black British”, followed by 35% of carers who identify as “white”. Approximately 16% of foster carers identify as “Asian of Asian British” and only 4% of carers identify as belonging to an “other” ethnic group. While there may be differences in recording and self-identification, there appears to be a need to recruit more foster carers of “mixed” ethnicity and “other ethnic” groups. In the meantime, foster carers have access to a diverse and supportive training package to support them to meet the identity (and other) needs of children placed in their care.



The majority of foster carers registered by Harrow Council Fostering Team are aged between 40 and 70 years. The majority of foster carers are currently aged in their 50s.



6.4 External Foster Care / Independent Fostering Agencies

A central project within the WLA programme has been to develop a framework agreement to deliver more efficient commissioning arrangements for looked after children placed with external Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). The aim is to exploit the West London Boroughs' combined purchasing power to deliver financial efficiencies and a diverse and quality assured market, with clear pricing frameworks and specifications.

We have also sought to achieve the following benefits to improve accommodation:

- Sufficiency requirement – the framework has enabled Harrow Council to deliver its obligations and ensure a greater proportion of our foster placements are within a 20 mile radius of the borough.
- Market development – by awarding a framework contract for four years the West London boroughs will communicate a clear message of our joint intention to stimulate the growth of local capacity. This will be achieved by giving providers on the framework the confidence to increase their recruitment of local foster carers, resulting in more placement choice for commissioners and children and decreasing the likelihood of costly placement moves.
- Improvement in quality – by robustly specifying, tendering and monitoring Independent fostering placements within the framework IFA placements will be delivered to a better standard of quality and any underperformance will be subject to rigorous processes as set out in the Terms and Conditions of the IFA contract.

- Contract management – commercial contract management of the framework will be facilitated by the WLA in partnership with the boroughs ensuring robust quality performance management of providers.
- Placement searches/negotiation – having a framework of approved providers with tendered prices, discounts, specifications and referral processes will reduce officer time required for finding and arranging placements.

6.5 Children and Young Adults Disability Service (CYADS) and Internal Residential Care

The Children and Young Adults (0-25) Disabilities Service (CYADS) proactively supports children and families in a person centred way. This includes making sure the journey from childhood to adulthood is simplified in a 0-25 team of social workers. With a team manager dedicated to supporting disabled children 0-18 and a Transitions team manager based in the same service supporting young people into adulthood, the child and its family now have dedicated managers and Senior practitioners to work together and support the journey into adulthood.

Referrals, assessments, and planning are done jointly with SEND and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) services for the most complex and vulnerable children. This has improved the implementation of EHCPs and greater access to continuing healthcare funding for the most disabled and complex children. Tripartite panels (Health, Social care and Education) review and make funding decisions about children with the most complex needs. A Dynamic register of those children is maintained by the CCG and allows a multidisciplinary approach to supporting the most vulnerable disabled children and disadvantaged homes. Disabled children and young people and their families are able to access services such as short breaks, and social care packages where appropriate. In order to meet their assessed needs Harrow provides a comprehensive local offer, published on its website, that allows families to see what is available for their child and themselves as carers.

A crisis response pathway is well established as part of the CYAD service to provide a more rapid and joined up approach to escalations of behaviour and difficulty in the home. This is having a positive impact, and feedback from families has been overwhelmingly positive. This has helped successfully divert children with a learning disability and / or autism from crisis and Accident and Emergency (A&E) admission and helped them remain at home with their family. The *Harrow Joint Commissioning Strategy for people with learning disabilities and with autistic spectrum conditions 2015 – 2020* and the *Harrow SEND Strategy 2019-2024* further underpins the work in this area.

Harrow operates one short-break children's residential home. It was judged to be outstanding at its most recent Ofsted inspection in July 2019. This home has achieved outstanding in every inspection for the last 11 years. The Fir is a residential short breaks unit for children with disabilities offering short breaks for children with a high level of need and challenging behaviour. The unit offers short breaks to 30 children with disabilities.

6.6 External Residential Care

Harrow's Access to Resources team manage the placements of children in residential children's homes. Our practice is to only place children in homes which have been graded Good to Outstanding by Ofsted. If a children's home is downgraded while a Harrow child is placed there, then the risk will be assessed and managed in partnership with the allocated social worker and the placements team. The Head of Service and Divisional Director are notified of any children's homes which require improvement or are inadequate.

The Access to Resources team has a robust system regarding the commissioning and procurement of external placements. All external placements have appropriate contracts and Service Level Agreements in place and all arrangements are reviewed and monitored on a regular basis.

6.7 Parent and Child Assessment Placements (including mother and baby placements)

We have increased our number of in house foster carers to take parent and child placements and we also utilise a preferred list of providers for IFAs and Residential placements through WLA frameworks and agreements. An enhanced payments system for in house carers is also utilised on a needs led basis where there is evidence of additional complexity.

6.8 Semi-independent placements and Care Leavers

In 2019, unregulated semi-independent placements of children in care gained national media attention and much needed scrutiny. Harrow has a longstanding policy of not placing children under 16 years of age in semi-independent placements, alongside a robust commissioning and review framework of semi-independent placements in partnership with the WLA.

In December 2019, the Access to Resources team completed a review of semi-independent placements for young people under the age of 18. The review identified the following:

- 38 children (16-18 year olds) were placed in semi-independent Accommodation. This represents 20% of the CLA population.

- 23 of the 38 children (60%) were UASC, and of these, 21 were placed in specialist placements for UASC (others have been placed in other semi-independent provision to meet their specific needs)
- All 38 young people were placed in accommodation with 24:7 support provided
- Placement stability for this group was good with 89% (34 young people) having only 1 placement move within the last year

6.9 Partnership with Housing

Harrow is developing other local partnerships with local providers to ensure a sufficient range of appropriate semi-independent provision to meet the diverse needs of our looked after and care leavers population. Harrow Children and Families and Housing Directorates have jointly updated the CLA/ Housing protocol in relation to homeless 16 and 17 year olds to ensure processes and responsibilities are clear between the two departments.

A Leaving Care charter, developed with young people clarifying what support and accommodation they can expect from the local authority is in place. An Independent skills manual has also been developed to assist them to prepare for independence and progress their pathway plans. Harrow has also produced a Staying Put policy enabling Care leavers to remain living with their foster carers beyond their 18th birthday, providing appropriate support to those who need a longer transition to independence.

7. Commissioning

Harrow has a robust approach to commissioning placements. The majority of placements for young people aged 16+ are secured via the West London Alliance (WLA) Framework for Semi-Independent Accommodation.

The WLA Semi-Independent Framework expires in March 2020. As such the WLA, lead borough Hammersmith & Fulham with input from other WLA authorities are working on a replacement procurement vehicle (Semi-Independent Accommodation and Support Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle).

Harrow also commissions the following block contracts under the West London Alliance List Agreement for the provision of Semi-Independent Living Services

- 29 Semi-Independent placements with 24:7 support– West London YMCA (Roxeth Gate)

- 8 Semi-Independent placements in supported lodgings – West London YMCA
- Floating Support for care leavers moving into independent living – Centrepoint Soho

7.1 WLA Accreditation

With financial and officer support from local authorities, the WLA also introduced an accreditation scheme for unregulated 16+ services in August 2019.

Included in the scheme are semi-independent services, hostels, supported lodgings and floating support services. The scheme will support the oversight of quality of support services and provision of accommodation. This will also form part of the decision making when undertaking placement searches and considering responses – as to whether or not providers have meet the required standards for WLA accreditation. This will also be a key factor in the award of contracts under the new dynamic purchasing vehicle when it goes live in 2020.

7.2 Sufficiency

The WLA Framework and accredited providers have delivered a good sufficiency of placements for 16+. As such only a small number of non-framework providers are used. Several of these are established local providers including a previous in-house foster carer who has developed a semi-independent provision with a high level of support; placement stability is strong and feedback from social workers and young people is excellent. Harrow also continues to independently commission Gayton House, a specialist UASC provider for 30 young people based in Harrow.

7.3 Monitoring

The Placements Team undertake monitoring visits to providers. Monitoring frequency varies dependent on whether these are solely Harrow providers or also used by other boroughs. The team will particularly focus on those that are non-WLA providers or where there may have been any issues highlighted by social workers. Harrow commissioned provision is monitored quarterly with additional visits made as and when necessary. Information is also shared across the local authority partners, monitoring information can be uploaded to CarePlace and in the event of any concerns and joint work undertaken with WLA or via a lead LA to address these with providers.

7.4 After Placement / Safety

An individual placement agreement meeting is signed off by the provider and the local authority and this is reviewed if there are any concerns. Providers send monthly reports to the social workers to give written updates on the progress of children's development and well-being. Monitoring takes place annually (or quarterly if it is a Harrow-commissioned provision). If there are concerns with a provider regular meetings take place until issues are resolved. If serious issues occur – a placement move would be considered to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people.

7.5 Review of Placement via Panel

New placements are agreed /ratified at the weekly **Access to Resources Panel** at which point review timeframes are considered. **Monthly review panels** consider whether the young people are getting the best out of their placements and whether either the provider needs to be challenged, a new placement considered or additional support or input is required from the social worker or another professional. Cases are then reviewed again at a following panel to avoid drift and delay.

7.6 Tripartite Panel (Health, Education & Social Care)

Placements secured to meet the needs of children leaving Tier 4 specialist provisions (e.g. mental health) or which have an element of therapeutic support are presented at the monthly Tripartite Panel to seek joint funding. The Tripartite panel also reviews joint-funded cases and scrutinises whether placements provide evidence based services to meet the needs of the child /young person.

8. Conclusion

Harrow is committed to commissioning the right accommodation and support services to ensure the best possible outcomes for every child and young person. Our sufficiency strategy is based on the foundation of three core principles:

- Children first
- Keeping families together wherever possible
- Early permanence and placement stability

Harrow has safely maintained a low rate of children who are looked after, and this is underpinned by a strong focus on delivering effective Early

Support Services to children and their families. Where children are not able to safely live with their parents, other family members and friends are explored as Special Guardianship carers, and achieving early permanence and placement stability is a priority across Children's services.

Whilst there has been much progress in developing our range of internal and external services to ensure sufficiency of accommodation, we face the dual challenge of additional demand for services and increasing pressure on Council budgets. The actions set out in the attached action plan are designed to improve the quality of services for our most vulnerable children and young people, and improve how effectively we meet their needs and improve the outcomes that they achieve.

9. CLA Placement Sufficiency Action Plan: Dec 2019 - March 2021

Action	Owner	Deadline	Progress
1. Regularly review the Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT) to understand the needs and profile of Harrow CLA and care leavers	HOS Corporate Parenting; TM Access to Resources Team; Snr Practitioner, Performance	Quarterly review	The ChAT tool is reviewed regularly during SMT and informs the service plan
2. Review and accreditation of semi-independent placements for children and care leavers	Access to Resources Team and WLA	July 2020	Draft framework has been circulated
3. In depth needs analysis of fostering provision to inform and update the recruitment strategy	Fostering Team Manager and Training and Development Officer	Quarterly review	Being reviewed in FY 2019/2020 Q4
4. Increase sufficiency of specialist placements for children with complex needs who are at risk of multiple placement breakdowns	Access to Resources Team and WLA	Quarterly review	Under review at tripartitepanel

<p>5. Access to resources panel and monthly challenge panel to review sufficiency, value for money and outcomes of placements and other care packages agreed at panel</p>	<p>HOS Corporate Parenting; TM Access to Resources Team; allocated SW and TMs</p>	<p>Weekly and monthly panels</p>	<p>Weekly and monthly placement review panels are embedded in the service and functioning well</p>
<p>6. Access to Resources team to carry out monitoring visits of a cross-section of commissioned placements to enhance quality assurance framework</p>	<p>Access to resources team</p>	<p>Monthly</p>	<p>Access to resources team have been focussing on reviewing out of borough semi-independent placements</p>

Action	Owner	Deadline	Progress
7. Triangulate feedback from young people and social workers to inform review of placement commissioning.	Access to resources team; HOS Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer /HOS for Q&A	Annually.	

10. Appendix 1

Department for Education s.251 report for 2018-2019 – Children's Services expenditure snapshot.

Location	Sure Start Children's Centres and early years	Children looked after	Other children's and families services	Safeguarding children and young people's services	Family support services	Services for young people	Youth justice	Total spending by LA on children's and young people's services (including CERA) Per head of 0-18 population
ENGLAND	£49	£405	£9	£202	£96	£33	£23	£819
LONDON	£66	£387	£27	£241	£102	£40	£24	£889
INNER LONDON	£111	£474	£33	£295	£134	£62	£35	£1,144
Camden	£269	£462	£99	£262	£179	£121	£37	£1,427
City of London	£1,150	£1,009	£464	£904	£131	£159	£0	£3,817
Hackney	£237	£390	£0	£399	£186	£79	£24	£1,315
Hammersmith and Fulham	£41	£522	£32	£380	£217	£24	£33	£1,249
Haringey	£62	£533	£0	£228	£88	£13	£17	£940
Islington	£337	£661	£0	£476	£132	£111	£37	£1,754
Kensington and Chelsea	£32	£383	£5	£284	£229	£151	£24	£1,109
Lambeth	£110	£522	£104	£314	£61	£11	£39	£1,161
Lewisham	£46	£530	£1	£293	£149	£77	£29	£1,125
Newham	£61	£371	£72	£237	£107	£17	£63	£931
Southwark	£31	£611	£62	£304	£121	£32	£46	£1,206
Tower Hamlets	£120	£385	£2	£240	£147	£69	£37	£999
Wandsworth	£82	£451	£0	£295	£126	£75	£24	£1,061
Westminster	£27	£374	£16	£195	£93	£107	£24	£836

OUTER LONDON	£40	£337	£24	£210	£83	£28	£18	£740
Barking and Dagenham	£18	£390	£0	£240	£52	£12	£22	£734
Barnet	£21	£302	£15	£184	£161	£28	£9	£720
Bexley	£20	£318	£7	£229	£70	£33	£15	£691
Brent	£67	£277	£0	£227	£102	£13	£26	£712
Bromley	£21	£329	£0	£228	£54	£14	£24	£672
Croydon	£65	£545	£160	£185	£104	£7	£14	£1,079
Ealing	£52	£342	£34	£200	£33	£35	£10	£706
Enfield	£14	£260	£4	£177	£121	£8	£44	£628
Greenwich	£78	£512	£30	£258	£74	£26	£23	£1,002
Harrow	£16	£210	£0	£208	£94	£34	£20	£582
Havering	£7	£319	£1	£268	£72	£38	£17	£722
Hillingdon	£63	£289	£24	£244	£60	£11	£16	£708
Hounslow	£47	£387	£3	£212	£70	£84	£29	£833
Kingston upon Thames	£30	£267	£18	£114	£88	£65	£3	£584
Merton	£48	£296	£32	£266	£97	£42	£29	£810
Redbridge	£30	£255	£22	£175	£46	£14	£19	£561
Richmond upon Thames	£39	£283	£12	£135	£81	£53	£3	£607
Sutton	£22	£376	£40	£215	£77	£10	£11	£753
Waltham Forest	£82	£352	£2	£212	£98	£42	£0	£788