

Pass it on...

Please forward this ebulletin to your friends, family and colleagues.

Healthwatch Harrow is the health and social care champion for local residents.

Join now and get involved!



Picture: The Library, Harrow School

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... plus more!

➔ Our Report on Access to GP Services

The way we access local primary care services, such as GPs is evolving all the time. In recent years there has been a large shift towards remote services, with patients now booking online, and typically receiving their initial consultation (triage) through phone or video call.

Traditional methods, such as booking through the phone or in-person are on the decline, and this will affect certain groups with a support need - such as older people or those with a sensory disability.



Your experiences of GP access

Being able to see a GP of choice, or a GP at all, is also a recent challenge for some patients. Those with long-term, quite often complex needs value the continuity of seeing the same person, and often prefer a face-to-face relationship.

With all this change we launched a survey on access, completed by around 70 people from a range of ages and backgrounds. What did they tell us?

Firstly, booking an appointment is a challenge - just half of respondents (52%) found the process to be satisfactory.

Telephone Booking

40% of respondents book through the phone and when calling, just 58% are usually able to make contact within 10 minutes. While some patients have benefitted from new callback systems, lines are typically congested at peak morning (8am) and afternoon (2pm) times.

“Difficult to park at the hospital.”

Join us today and have your say!

Online Booking

Around half of respondents (52%) usually book their appointments online. As with phone systems, we hear that you need to log in at peak times, in order to successfully book.

One patient says “The online booking system is a nightmare. You have to log in at 8am (when I am always busy with getting kids ready) and it is closed again about ten minutes later.”

On functionality, a marginal majority of respondents (62%) are able to find the form easily, while a smaller number (58%) find it easy to complete. Once submitted, response times are reportedly good.

In-Person Booking

A sizeable minority of patients (28%) are not able to book their appointment at the practice itself. One person, having booked in-person has felt like an ‘inconvenience’ when doing so.



Booking by phone remains popular

Consultations

On booking, half of respondents (48%) have not been offered a choice of consultation method (in-person, telephone, video).

In fact, 92% of respondents have experienced a remote appointment. While this is convenient for many, a sizeable minority (38%) feel that remote appointments are not sufficient, with concerns expressed about diagnosis in particular.

Just 41% of respondents are able to see their preferred GP or nurse. Concerns are expressed about continuity.

We receive mixed feedback on extended practice staff - such as pharmacists. While some experiences are good, there is some resentment, at not being offered a GP, as an option.

Watch this space for our full report.

➔ Bowel Cancer Awareness Month

April is Bowel Cancer Awareness month. Whether you are directly affected by bowel cancer, or you just want to find out more, there are a broad range of opportunities to get involved.

What is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer, which includes colon and rectal cancer, is one of the most common cancers in the UK. It is mostly diagnosed in people over 60, but can be diagnosed in younger people.

The bowel is part of the digestive system and is divided into the small and large bowel. Cancer can affect both areas of the bowel.

What are the symptoms?

Blood in your poo (stools or faeces) can be a sign of bowel cancer. But it is often due to other causes.



If in doubt, speak with your doctor

Other possible symptoms could include a change in your normal bowel habit - such as looser poo; pooing more often or constipation; a lump in your back passage or tiredness.

See your GP if you are worried about any symptoms that you think could be caused by cancer in the bowel - your doctor won't think you are wasting their time. It is important to get tested, and a simple home testing kit is available.

To find out more, visit the Bowel Cancer UK website, which contains useful Information, tips and links to other resources. ➔ [More](#)

“My dentist explained the costs.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Improving Access to General Practice

The local NHS writes “In response to consistent feedback from patients that they struggle to get an appointment with their GP, NHS North West London is looking to improve access to general practice.

This will involve working with practices, primary care networks and patients to develop proposals to improve access in their area.



Clinical decisions will be made by clinicians

NHS North West London is not imposing a top-down solution or a ‘one size fits all’ approach.

Dr Genevieve Small, Medical Director, Primary Care for NHS North West London, said:

‘Patients frequently tell us that they can’t get a timely GP appointment. GPs are seeing more patients than ever - there are over 1.4 million appointments every month in North West London - but it is clear that many patients’ needs are not being met.

We have heard from patients and GPs who were worried that everything was going to change in April. That is not the case - we will be working with patients and GPs over the next year and we’re keen to hear their ideas for improving access to primary care, which is the issue our patients and residents most often raise with us. Our aim is to develop plans to gradually improve access in each area.

Our priority is that patients have timely access to high quality care. Whatever proposals are developed, all clinical decisions will continue to be made by clinicians. Patients who need to see their GP will continue to do so.’ ➔ [More](#)

Talk to Healthwatch Harrow...

If you have experiences of accessing GPs, please contact us, in confidence. All views matter!

➔ Make Every Contact Count - Training

Harrow Council, Public Health writes “Making Every Contact Count (MECC) is a concept that focuses on using routine interactions between professionals and individuals to promote positive health behaviour change. It is very useful for prevention and health promotion.



Let's make 'every contact count'

These interactions can address various health related issues such as smoking cessation, healthy eating, physical activity, substance misuse, mental health and health in early years.

By incorporating health promotion messages into every day conversation, MECC helps to raise awareness, educate and motivate individuals to make positive behaviour changes.

“I feel involved in my care planning.”

Join us today and have your say!

MECC training is suitable for front line professionals across all sectors including voluntary and community groups, who come into contact with service users, residents or customers.

How long is the training?

The training will take a maximum of 2 hours. A certificate of attendance will be provided.

Why MECC?

MECC interventions are designed to be brief yet impactful, using evidence-based techniques to influence behaviour change. It is also a cost-effective approach to public health”. View the training slots now online. ➔ [More](#)

➔ COVID-19 Vaccination - Spring Programme

The local NHS writes “From 22nd April until 30th June 2024, the seasonal COVID-19 booster will be available, free, for those who are at greatest risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus.

The NHS will be inviting those eligible, but you do not need to wait to book your vaccine. The national booking system is open. You can download the NHS App and book, visit www.nhs.uk/get-vaccine or call 119 for free if you can't get online.

Alternatively, a number of walk-in sites will be open across North West London from 22nd April.



Do you need to 'get a boost'?

No booking is required at walk-in clinics, but you are advised to contact the vaccination site in advance to confirm their opening times.

Individuals do not need to be registered with the NHS to use walk-in services and do not need to bring any identification.

Those people who are eligible and should have the vaccination this spring are:

- Adults aged 75 years and over.
- Pregnant people.
- Residents in care homes for older adults.
- Individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed (selected sites only).”

Find out more in the full article. ➔ [More](#)

“My surgery's been delayed, again.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Cost of Living 'Remains a Health Barrier'

Healthwatch England writes "The cost of living remains a barrier to health, particularly for people on low incomes, and those requiring dental care.

Last year, our polling highlighted the impact of the cost of living crisis on people's access to health and care.

Our new poll, conducted with 2,008 adults living in England in January this year, shows modest improvements in some areas. However, the cost of living remains a barrier to health, particularly for those under the most financial pressure and those requiring dental care.



People continue to avoid dentistry

We found that more than one in five people (21%) avoided going to the dentist because of the cost in January 2024. This is up from one in seven, 15%, the year earlier.

The number of people avoiding NHS appointments due to the cost of travel has declined from 11% last January to four per cent this year.

The number of people avoiding NHS appointments due to associated costs, including the cost of internet or a phone call, has declined from 11% last January to three per cent.

One in 20 people had to avoid either getting an NHS prescription or the over-the-counter medication they rely on. This is down from one in 10 in January 2023". Find out more in the full article. ➔ [More](#)

“My pharmacist had the answers.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Your Say on Local Maternity Services

Harrow Council, Public Health writes “Are you aged 18 or over? Do you live in North West London? Are you currently pregnant or have you given birth in the past 5 years? Or have you given birth in the past 5 years and lived in North West London at the time?”

If so, you are invited to share your thoughts on local maternity services through the “MISSES” survey:



Help to shape our local services

We would like to hear about your experiences of accessing support pre and post-birth.

The findings from this survey will help to shape services locally, and to understand how to make sure that everyone - mothers and their babies - have the best experience possible.

The survey is anonymous and can be translated into 15 community languages.

“Food on the ward has ticked my box!”

Join us today and have your say!

It is part of a study led by Harrow Council Public Health and Imperial College London. The deadline for response is 14th June 2024.

Complete the survey now online. ➔ [More](#)

As part of the study, we are looking to conduct one-on-one interviews. Please get in touch with Billy Hopkins, Research Practitioner in Public Health:”

✉ billy.hopkins@harrow.gov.uk

➔ Local Birthing Centre Reopens

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWH) writes "Northwick Park Hospital's Birth Centre is back in the baby business after a major refurbishment.

The centre now offers five private ensuite birthing rooms; four of which have birthing pools and two with double beds for families to spend time together.



Now featuring ensuite rooms

Improvements to the midwife-led birthing centre is another step forward for the hospital's maternity unit and in line with national recommendations.

Caroline Macrae, Head Of Midwifery & Gynaecology at LNWH Trust, said 'It's all about offering more choice to our mothers and ensuring they are as comfortable as they can be when they give birth.'". Find out more in the full article. ➔ [More](#)

“As a carer I also need support.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Return Your Walking Aids to RNOH!

Did you know, you can now return your used walking aids to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital (RNOH)?

They can be re-used or recycled.

Simply put them in the red bins, located at the main gate, outpatients and the Stanmore building. Do your bit for the NHS!

➔ NHS 111 and the Mental Health Option

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) writes "If you are experiencing something that makes you feel unsafe, distressed, or worried about your mental health, you can contact your local crisis service from 2nd April by calling NHS 111 and selecting the mental health option.

This is an additional way to contact crisis services, and will not be replacing our Mental Health Crisis Line which you can call directly on 0800 0234 650.

What happens when I call?

The phone will be answered by a trained mental health professional who will be able to listen to your concerns and help you get the support you need. With your permission, they can also access your electronic patient records to better meet your needs and to avoid you repeatedly having to tell us your situation. They can offer advice over the phone, put you in contact with our crisis services or refer you to local services.



NHS 111 has a mental health option

Who can call?

You can call for yourself, or someone else. NHS 111 is for all ages, including children and young people and those with neurodevelopmental needs.

Remember if you are already known to CNWL services you can still call us on our crisis line. In emergency situations where there is an immediate risk to life, you should continue to contact 999 or go to A&E. ➔ [More](#)

“We need more disability awareness.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Share for Better Care

Healthwatch England writes “Last year, Healthwatch received nearly 400,000 experiences of health and social care.

When services are under pressure, feedback on care can be crucial to identify what is working and what issues need fixing.

But not everyone's voice is being heard. 'Share for Better Care' aims to help more people give feedback about their care, especially if their community experiences poor health outcomes.

The simple act of sharing feedback is already helping to improve care for the people who use it. We want people to know that their feedback, no matter how small, has the power to transform health and social care across the country.



Healthwatch aims to improve services

Together we can improve health and care, but we can only make a difference if we know about your experience.

Please share your experience and help us make NHS decision-makers aware of what needs to change to improve access to care, for everyone.

We're completely independent and impartial, and anything you say is confidential.” ➔ [More](#)

Share for Better Care runs in partnership with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Remember, all feedback matters!

“Weekend opening helps as I work long hours.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Nominate Your Hospital Hero!

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWH) writes “Do you know someone at your local hospital who has gone above and beyond helping you, a family member or friend?

Why not acknowledge their good work by nominating them for London North West University Healthcare's 2024 Staff Excellence Awards?



Do you have a hospital hero?

Pippa Nightingale, Trust CEO said ‘This is a great opportunity to showcase the work hospital staff do and I would encourage colleagues and the public to support them. The more information you can provide when nominating someone the better and we look forward to beating the record number of applications we received last year. There is a lot of great work going on so let's share and celebrate it.’

“My vaccine was fast and efficient.”

Join us today and have your say!

Sandy Young, a critical theatres manager, who won the surgical division award last year, said ‘It was a complete surprise to win and a real honour. It is important to cast your vote to show our colleagues that they are valuable and significant to you.’

Nominations are open until Friday 31st May and can be made by anyone, including colleagues, patients, relatives, or representatives of our partner organisations.

Our winners will be chosen from a panel of judges and will be announced at a special ceremony at Wembley Stadium in October.” ➔ [More](#)

➤ Introducing Talking Therapy

The NHS is encouraging anyone struggling with feelings of depression or anxiety to seek help through the free, confidential service, NHS Talking Therapies.

Talking therapies are delivered by trained clinicians, online, on the phone, or in person. They can help provide responsive, evidence-based interventions and support for common mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, nightmares, panic attacks and obsessive thoughts.



Support that is built around you

Your GP can refer you, or you can refer yourself, you do not need to have a diagnosed mental health problem to do this. These services are available in all North West London boroughs, so you can find services near you. ➤ [More](#)

➤ Strength & Balance - Exercise Classes

Watford FC's Community Sports and Education Trust have been funded by the London Borough of Harrow to deliver strength and balance exercise classes in Harrow. These sessions are run by qualified instructors to improve peoples' balance and strength, as well as their physical and mental wellbeing. All exercises are tailored to reduce the risk of falls. This will be for individuals who have had a fall, near miss or ongoing fear of falling that affects daily activities.

Initially, sessions will be delivered from Cedars Community Centre and Cannon Community Association. Future sessions are planned to start later in the year in Kenton West, South Harrow and Pinner.

For more information or to book please contact Shona McHale:

☎ 07510 593192

✉ shona.mchale2@nhs.net

➤ New HIV Support Services for Harrow Residents

Funded by Harrow Council, Living Well is working in collaboration with the London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWH) and HIV organisations such as Positively UK and The Food Chain to provide a new community-based HIV support service for people living with and affected by HIV in Harrow.

Harrow residents will now be able to access free HIV-specialist services such as counselling, coaching, peer support, self-management groups, art therapy, nutritional support, wellbeing workshops and welfare and benefits support.

Face-to-face one-to-one and group-based services will be provided from the Caryl Thomas Clinic, Northwick Park Hospital, and other community venues, while support will also be available online and over the telephone depending on need.



A range of support is on offer

Despite advancements in medical treatments, HIV continues to affect many lives in our community. It's not just about the medical interventions, but also the social, emotional, and psychological support that these individuals require.

Harrow's new HIV service will provide those residents with a supportive network where they can receive the help they need.

For more, visit the website or get in touch. ➤ [More](#)

☎ 020 3137 3373 or ✉ info@livingwellcic.com

“I need to be involved in my care planning.”

Join us today and have your say!

➤ Social Enterprise Helping Harrow's Homeless

Harrow Council writes "Harrow has been working with innovative social enterprise, Beam, since August. Already it has helped ten homeless families to find suitable long-term accommodation and is working with many more. Its clients also include prison-leavers, who face particular challenges.



Tackling local homelessness

Beam offers one-to-one casework support, tailored to each family's needs. This includes help with budgeting and employment support, as well vital assistance with house-hunting.

“Receptionists do a difficult job.”

Join us today and have your say!

London Borough of Harrow's Cabinet Member for Housing, Cllr Mina Parmar, said 'Temporary housing leaves families in a precarious situation. It limits potential and affects quality of life.

We're keen to explore any approach that can unlock this difficult situation and give homeless families the promise of a better future. Beam's work brings sustainable housing within reach and has the clear potential to transform many more local lives.'

Uniquely, Beam supports its clients through an online community, which connects people with sources of support and public fundraising.

This award-winning model harnesses the power of community action and technology to help people overcome barriers, improve their wellbeing, and develop the skills they need to live and work independently." ➤ [More](#)

➤ WaterSure - Help With Water Bills

The Citizen's Advice Bureau writes "WaterSure is a scheme which helps some people with their water bills. To apply for the scheme, you must be on benefits and need to use a lot of water either for medical reasons or because your household has a certain number of school-age children. You also need to be on a water meter or be waiting to have one installed.

If you get help through the WaterSure scheme, your water bill will be capped. This means you will not pay any more than the average metered bill for the area your water company deals with.



Could you save on water costs?

In some cases, your normal metered water bill could be less than your company's WaterSure cap. If this applies to you, you will only be billed for the amount of water you use. Find out more online. ➤ [More](#)

➤ Introducing the Conversation Café

An opportunity for Harrow residents, unpaid Carers and the people they support to meet face to face with representatives from Adult Social Care, voluntary organisations and charities.

Every Tuesday, 10am - 3pm, St. Peter's Church (upstairs hall), Sumner Road, HA1 4BX

Do drop in! To find out more:

✉ Conversation.cafe@harrow.gov.uk

“The text reminder was very handy.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Dementia - Living Well After Diagnosis

Have you recently been diagnosed with dementia?

Get your copy of the latest version of the dementia guide. Compiled by the Alzheimer's Society, it has lots of tips and advice to help you live well with dementia and keep you doing the activities that you enjoy.

It will help you to understand more about dementia and the treatments, support and services that are available.



A useful guide by the Alzheimer's Society

Find out more on the website. ➔ [More](#)

Latest Newsletters

- ➔ Harrow Council - Harrow People Newsletters ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Harrow Carers - Newsletter, Winter 2024 ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital - Articulate Newsletters ➔ [More](#)

News Summary

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- ➔ The latest news from Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ The latest from NHS North West London ➔ [More](#)
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- ➔ NHS staff deliver performance improvements despite record demand ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Thousands more lung cancer patients to get innovative blood test as part of NHS pilot ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS self-referral for tests and appointments for hundreds of thousands of patients ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ One in nine councils granted emergency support to balance books ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS expands 'one-hour' liver testing to help detect and eliminate Hep C ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ More than 2.7 million use new NHS App feature for prescriptions in first two months ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS MMR catch up campaign successfully boosts uptake ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Five million more GP appointments delivered in February than before pandemic ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS announces first ever national clinical director for women's health ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Online GP registrations reach 1 million as digital service hits milestone ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS rolls out artificial pancreas in world first move ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Use of agency social workers up 25% year on year in adults' services ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS launches innovative new drive to recruit armed forces veterans ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ New NHS gambling clinic opens amid growing demand ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Boosted GP practice access for patients thanks to new phone technology ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ AI expansion to help tackle missed appointments and improve waiting times ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ 100,000 patients receive early access to latest cancer therapies on NHS ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ DHSC sets out plans for funding adult social care training ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS to launch cross-sector ADHD taskforce to boost care for patients in England ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS urges young adults to catch up on missed MMR vaccine ➔ [More](#)

Do you need support with

Health and wellbeing

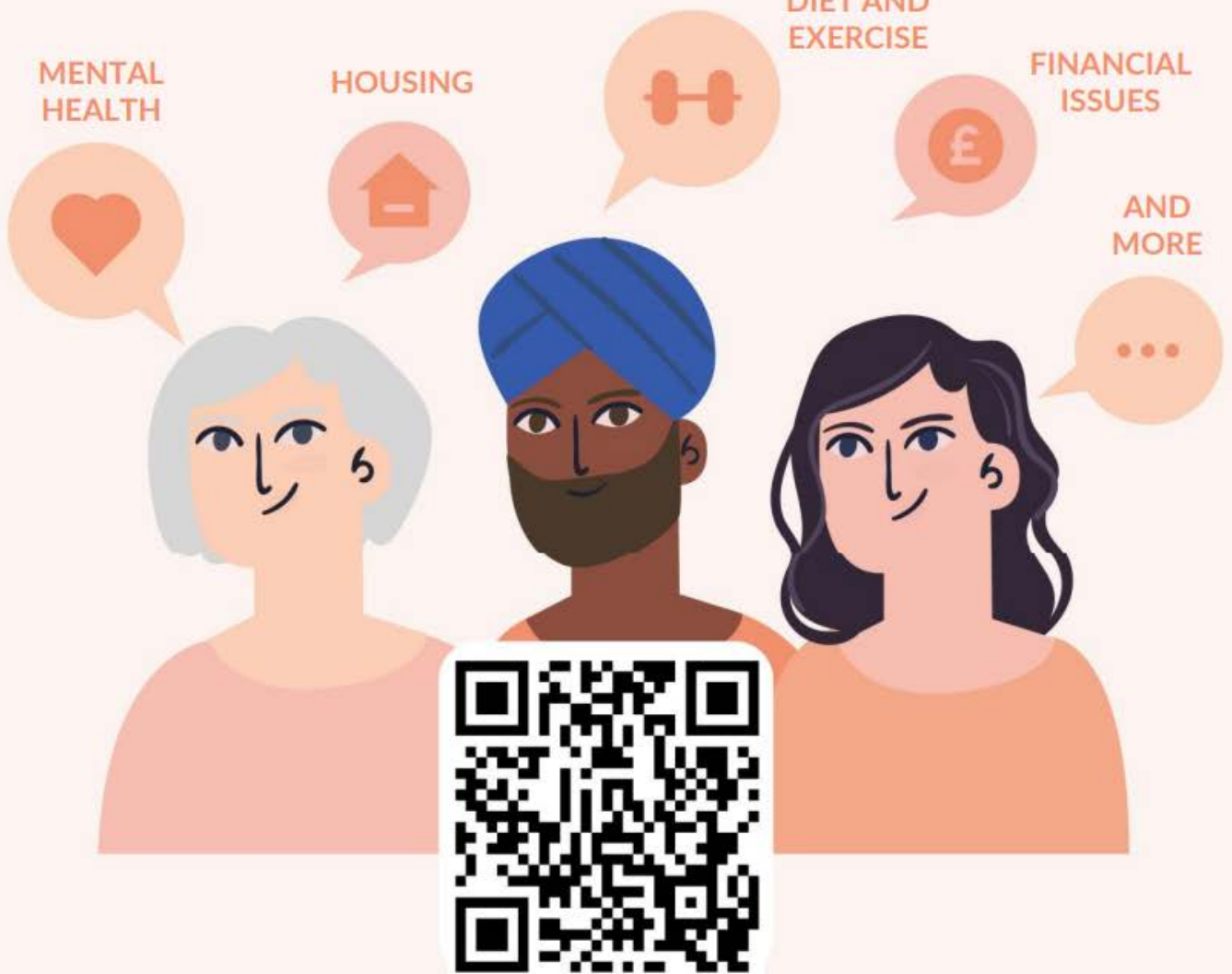
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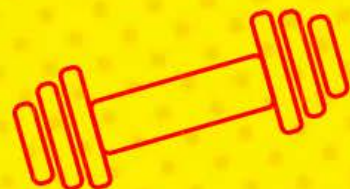
AND
MORE



Scan to discover and access local support
from community-based organisations.



<https://services.thejoyapp.com/>



Harrow Falls Prevention

Strength and Balance Exercise Classes

For those individuals who have had a fall, near miss, or experience ongoing fear of falling that affects daily activities.



Free strength and balance exercise class run by qualified instructors to improve physical and mental wellbeing to reduce your risk of falls.

When and where?

**Canon Community Association,
Stanmore HA7 2DU**

Session One: 1.45pm to 2.45pm

Session Two: 3pm to 4pm

Pre-Assessment date 7th May

Starting on Tuesday 28th May to
Tuesday 30th July



**For more information or to book please contact Shona Mchale
on 07510593192 or email fallsprevention@watfordfc.com**