

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: Grand Union Canal

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... plus more!

➡ Our Survey On GP Access

Last year, we conducted a survey on GP access in Harrow, with the aim of running it again - a year on.

Please take a moment to complete this year's survey. We are interested to know if things have improved since our previous recommendations were published, in 2024.

The survey closes on 15th May 2025. ➡ [More](#)

What did we find out last year? Firstly, booking an appointment is a challenge – just half of respondents (52%) found the process to be satisfactory. 40% book through the phone and when calling, just 58% were usually able to make contact within 10 minutes.



What's your experience of GP access?

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

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

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

Just 41% were able to see their preferred GP or nurse. Concerns were expressed about continuity. Find out more in the full report. ➡ [More](#)

“I'd like a face-to-face appointment.”

Join us today and have your say!

➡ Maternity Drop-In, Hillview Children's Centre

On Wednesday 12th March, Healthwatch Manager Yaa Asamany visited Hillview Children's Centre, to speak with local residents about their maternity experiences.



Wednesday 12th March at Hillview

A total of 28 mothers attended the drop-in session with children up to the age of 2 years. They shared their stories individually as well as in small groups.

Also in attendance were colleagues from Maternity Voices Partnership and Community Connex.

What did the mothers tell us? Find out in the next edition, which will highlight our report.

Your views on maternity? If you did not attend the session, and would like to share your experiences with us, get in touch or visit the website. ➡ [More](#)

“Our social worker goes the extra mile.”

Join us today and have your say!

➡ Save the Date - 20th May, Citizen's Forum

The Harrow Citizen's Forum is a public meeting open to all local residents, offering the opportunity to engage with leaders from health and social care.

Each forum features a diverse panel of professionals who share information and updates, and answer your questions.

When? Tuesday 20th May. Where? The Conversation Café at St Peters Church. Watch this space for more.

➡ Covid-19 Vaccination - Spring Top-Up

The local NHS writes "This spring you should protect yourself with a Covid-19 vaccination, if you are 75 and over, a resident in a care home for older adults, or 6 months and older and have a condition that means you are immunosuppressed.

Covid-19 is serious at any time of the year, especially for those who are most vulnerable.

For this group it is recommended that you have two vaccinations a year - one every six months for the best protection.



It's important to get 'topped up'

This spring's Covid-19 vaccination offer is free and runs from 1st April to 17th June 2025. You can book a vaccine online using the national booking system or visit a walk-in site." ➡ [More](#)

➡ What is Pension Credit?

Pension Credit is a means-tested benefit for people over State Pension age who have a low income. It comes in 2 parts - Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit. It's separate from your State Pension.

Guarantee Credit tops up your weekly income to a guaranteed minimum level. Savings Credit is extra money if you've got some savings or if your income is higher than the basic State Pension.

By claiming Pension Credit, you might become eligible for other benefits too. ➡ [More](#)

"Weekend opening helps as I work long hours."

Join us today and have your say!

➡ Volunteers Required at the RNOH!

The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital (RNOH) writes "Our Patient Group is looking to expand its membership.



Is the Patient Group for you?

We are an independent group of current or former patients, relatives, carers and interested members of the public who work in partnership with the RNOH Trust as a critical friend to provide a lay perspective on Trust services.

We meet regularly at the hospital site in Stanmore and the group's activities include undertaking regular ward and department visits; preparing reports of our visits; attending committees; previewing patient literature and assisting with audits and inspections.

If you would be interested in learning more please contact the Chair, Pat Jones. All enquiries welcome."

✉ pat.jones1@nhs.net

"NHS 111 gave spot-on advice."

Join us today and have your say!

➡ Mental Health Support Group for Carers

Harrow Carers writes "Do you care for a loved one with a mental health problem? Take a break from your caring responsibilities and join us for a warm welcome in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere.

Join us at Harrow Carers Centre (376 Pinner Road) every 2nd & 4th Friday of the month, 1.30pm to 3pm."

☎ 020 8868 5224 or ✉ admin@harrowcarers.org

➔ Love Your Liver Campaign

The British Liver Trust is the UK's leading liver health charity working to improve liver health for all and supporting those affected by liver disease or cancer.

The charity writes "Liver disease is the third leading cause of premature death and more than one in five of us are at risk of developing the condition.



Getting checked is important

We provide up-to-date information and support and campaign for improved services and care. Our Love Your Liver campaign encourages the best possible liver health for all through encouraging prevention, raising awareness of the risk factors and promoting early detection."

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

"Communication on the ward should be clear."

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Think 'Pharmacy First'

Pharmacists can offer advice on a range of illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, ear infections and aches and pains. They can also give advice about medicines. This includes how to use your medicine, worries about side effects or any other questions you have.

Most pharmacies can offer prescription medicine for some conditions, without you needing to see a GP, this is known as 'Pharmacy First' Ask a pharmacist to find out what services they offer. ➔ [More](#)

➔ Protections on NHS Letter Delivery

Healthwatch England writes "The NHS will get its own postage class to help stop late letters leading to missed appointments, after lobbying from us and partner organisations.

Under the new plans, specific barcodes will be introduced to automatically identify, separate and process patient letters.

Lousie Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England says 'We have been delighted to work with Royal Mail and other health partners to make sure that people's experiences of delayed letters have been listened to and addressed.



Having to 'chase essential information'

Delayed delivery of letters is a frustrating issue that people share with us. Recent research shows that 1 in 5 people received an invitation to an appointment by letter or text - after the appointment date.

Whether missing important appointments or vital test results, letters arriving late can be a patient safety risk, and often puts the burden on people to chase essential communications themselves. We hope these changes lead to improvements for patients and NHS teams.'

Emma Gilthorpe, Chief Executive of Royal Mail said 'We have been working with NHS providers and patient groups to ensure the timely delivery of identifiable medical letters and welcome the truly collaborative approach taken.'" ➔ [More](#)

"The phone is constantly engaged!"

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Additional Funding for Pharmacies Awarded

Healthwatch England writes "The Department of Health and Social Care has reached an agreement with Community Pharmacy England to provide an additional £617 million for pharmacy services over two years.

What's included in the deal? Overall, the new pharmacy contract will mean NHS pharmacies in England will receive £3,073 billion in funding for core work such as dispensing prescriptions, in 2025.

A further £215 million will be made available to continue the Pharmacy First programme - as an alternative to GP appointments for patients to be seen for certain conditions - as well as funding blood pressure checks and other extra services.



Investing in community pharmacies

Emergency hormonal contraception (the 'morning after pill'), will now be available for free at every NHS pharmacy, replacing the previous system, which saw some women charged as much as £30.

The contract will also make it easier for pharmacies to change the timing of their core opening hours. This flexibility would allow them to choose when to deliver their usual 40 contracted hours over a week to avoid opening when it's not 'economically viable.' Read more in the full article. ➔ [More](#)

Your experience of local pharmacies?

Share your views, good and bad, with Healthwatch Harrow. All feedback matters! ➔ [More](#)

“The receptionist fitted me in the same day!”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Walk-In Service for Mental Health Crisis

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) writes "From 27th January people in North West London are able to walk in to CNWL's Mental Health Crisis Assessment Service (MHCAS) at St Charles Hospital in Kensington and Chelsea.

Based at St Charles Hospital in Kensington and Chelsea, the service is open 24/7 and provides a calm, therapeutic alternative to visiting an emergency department.



Have a chat, over a hot drink

This service is available to anyone aged 18 or over experiencing mental health difficulties, who does not require urgent physical health treatment, and resides in Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, Brent, Harrow, or Hillingdon.

What to expect? MHCAS is a calm environment where you can talk to professionals about your mental health. The experience of coming to the centre may feel upsetting, but people should feel welcome and cared for at all times.

You will be seen by a specialist nurse soon after arriving. We want you to feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible. There will also be food, hot drinks and snacks available.

Where appropriate, you may be referred for follow up psychological interventions, or to voluntary sector services near to your home, as well as other services to meet your individual needs."

To find out more, visit the website. ➔ [More](#)

Further Help

You can also contact your community mental health team or call our Single Point of Access line 24/7 for support and advice on 0800 0234 650. ➔ [More](#)

➡ How Can We Better Support Unpaid Carers?

Age UK writes “The contribution that unpaid carers make to society is frequently underestimated and undervalued. Too often, those who look after loved ones don’t see themselves as carers. For many, a carer is a paid professional – so providing support to those close to you is something you ‘just do’.

It is estimated that there are currently 10.6 million unpaid carers in the UK. Many older people are supported by unpaid carers, and 1 in 5 (20%) of people aged 65+ are unpaid carers themselves.

The effect on carers’ mental wellbeing can be significant. Recent Age UK research found that for unpaid carers aged 50+:



Raising awareness of available support

Almost 9 out of 10 (86%), equivalent to 3.3 million across England, had worried about whether they will be able to keep caring or providing support.

Almost half (48%), equivalent to 1.9 million carers across England had felt anxious because of the care or support they provide.

More than a third (34%), equivalent to 1.3 million carers across England, had felt overwhelmed because of the care or support they provide.

More than a fifth (21%), equivalent to 830,000 carers across England, had felt lonely because of the care or support they provide.

What can we do? There is a lot that needs to be done for carers to feel supported, acknowledged and valued. However, there are some key things that we can all do to support carers.

We can help make people aware that they’re a carer, and raise awareness of available support.”

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

➡ Over 50s: ‘Life Saving’ Bowel Cancer Test

NHS England writes “Hundreds of thousands more people will be sent a home-testing kit that can help to detect signs of bowel cancer, as the NHS expands its lifesaving screening programme to those aged 50 in England.



Earlier diagnosis has many benefits

People aged 50 and 52 are now starting to automatically receive a home test kit every two years by post when they become eligible, marking the final phase of the NHS ambition to offer everyone 50-74 the screening test. Around 850,000 additional people in England a year will be eligible for the screening test, with over 4 million more people invited since roll-out began in 2021.

The kit, known as the faecal immunochemical test (FIT), checks for blood in a small stool sample, which can be a sign of bowel cancer.

The NHS is also calling on more people to take up the potentially lifesaving offer, as figures show that uptake is lower in those aged 54 - 59 - with less than 60% of 54-57 year olds having taken up the offer, compared to over 70% returning their FIT kits in the 60-74 range.

Expansion of the national bowel screening programme to all over 50s is the latest step in the NHS drive to find cancers at an earlier stage when they are easier to treat.”

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

“We need quicker waits for children.”

Join us today and have your say!

➡ Local Charity Tunes into Hearing Loss

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWT) writes "A small headset is making a big impact on patient care at Northwick Park Hospital thanks to the thoughtful observation of Physician Associate Sarah Kamal and support from Northwick Park League of Friends.

Sarah noticed some patients struggling to follow conversations on the frailty unit - not due to confusion or delirium as was first assumed - but because they couldn't hear properly.

Sarah said 'We see more than 200 elderly patients a month and up to 10% either arrive without their hearing aids or have undiagnosed hearing loss. It often results in raised voices and frustration, which can compromise the quality of care.'



Patients across the hospital will benefit

In response, the League of Friends funded ten AudiMed Communicator headsets. The easy-to-use lightweight devices are worn by patients helping amplify sound during conversations with staff.

The reusable headsets are ideal for busy, high-turnover environments and are now being used in A&E, Same Day Emergency Care and elderly care wards helping improve communication, reducing stress, and preserving patient dignity.

Feedback has been positive with many rating the devices 5 out of 5 with one patient saying it worked better than his personal hearing aid." ➡ [More](#)

"Visiting the pharmacist did the trick!"

Join us today and have your say!

➡ St Mark's Unit Open for Business

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWT) writes "St Mark's Endoscopy Unit and Bowel Cancer Screening Centre at Northwick Park Hospital has officially reopened after a multi-million pound refurbishment reflecting its status as one of the best gastrointestinal services in the UK.

The screening centre benefits from two additional clinic rooms reflecting the expansion and age reduction of the National Screening Programme, a dedicated colonoscopy room and recovery area.



The new unit is open for business

The Endoscopy Unit offers patients' private ensuite facilities and improved air flow ensuring compliance with its state-of-the-art facilities and equipment.

The unit enjoys Joint Advisory Group accreditation, reflecting the high standard of service, despite the refurbishment." ➡ [More](#)

"First impressions really do matter!"

Join us today and have your say!

➡ Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Forum

The Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Forum brings together local charities, community groups, and nonprofit organisations to work together on the issues that most impact local communities.

It's essential for VCS organisations in Harrow to have a voice in local changes.

Find out more today! ➡ [More](#)

➡ All Smiles this World Oral Health Day

Harrow Council writes "World Oral Health Day (20th March 2025) is a global initiative to promote good oral hygiene and raise awareness of the importance of dental health.

Harrow's children are brushing up on their best smiles. That's because tooth decay rates have dropped significantly, thanks to Harrow's Public Health supervised toothbrushing programme in schools. This includes free oral health workshops.



Young smiles across the borough

Recent survey data shows Harrow's rates of tooth decay in five-year-olds fell from 42.4% in 2019 to 27.6% in 2025. Over the last year, more than 2,500 children have taken part in tooth brushing exercises across 82 Harrow schools and early year settings. Hundreds of families have attended workshops which provide expert advice on dental hygiene and best practice to keep tooth decay down.

**“They treat symptoms,
not the root problem.”**

Join us today and have your say!

Councillor Jean Lammiman, Portfolio Holder for Public Health said 'Tooth decay isn't just a cosmetic problem, it can cause pain, school absences, speech problems and even land children in hospital. There has been a lot of work that has taken place to put children's dental health at the top of the agenda.

We're putting residents first by addressing tooth decay early. By doing that it means we will see healthier, happier children and take some strain off parents and our healthcare system.'” ➡ [More](#)

➡ Appeal for Green-Fingered Volunteers!

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWT) writes "Green-fingered volunteers are needed to help prepare and plant designated areas around Ealing and Northwick Park hospitals.

The green makeover was given the thumbs up by staff last year who voted for four projects as part of a £1m donation by LNWT Charity.

The trust, which is working in partnership with Cultivate London, is looking for up to 20 volunteers who can be periodically available during the next ten months with the busiest time between March & May.

Several locations have been identified on each site which will be used to encourage biodiversity including attracting more insects and wildlife.



Do you have green fingers?

Cultivate London will provide supervision and equipment with the first ground preparation session planned in February." ➡ [More](#)

➡ Survey on Mental Health Crisis Care Services

This survey is specifically intended for individuals who have accessed crisis care services through the NHS 111 'select mental health option' service.

Its purpose is to gather feedback on your experience and the support you have received.

The survey closes on 15th July 2025. ➡ [More](#)

**“I get my test results
online. It's easy!”**

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Social Care and Support Guide

If you or someone you know needs help with day-to-day living because of illness or disability, this guide by NHS England explains your options and where you can get support.

Topics covered include money, work and benefits; practical tips if you care for someone; help from social services and charities; care after a hospital stay; caring for children and young people; making decisions for someone else; support and benefits for carers; equipment and more.



Get information on a wide range of topics

The guide is available online now. ➔ [More](#)

Latest Newsletters

- ➔ Harrow Council - Harrow People Newsletters ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Harrow Carers - Bi-Monthly Newsletters ➔ [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](#)
- ➔ Targeted breast cancer treatment approved for routine NHS use ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS invites millions to book life-saving COVID-19 jab ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ More than 1 million older people urged to get respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS 'ping and book' screening to help save thousands of women's lives ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Hospital admissions for strokes rise - as NHS urges the public to 'Act FAST' ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Age UK London reveals the extent of public toilet decline in the capital ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS launches search for 150,000 volunteers to help transform cancer treatment ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS rolls out 'stop-smoking' pill to help tens of thousands quit ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ New iPhone device to help rule out throat cancer ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Bill to overhaul 'outdated' Mental Health Act introduced ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Millions of patients benefitting from improved care as new NHS IT software rolled out ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ More people receiving adult social care following years of decline, data shows ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Government unveils plan to prevent risks to telecare users from digital switchover ➔ [More](#)
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- ➔ Revolutionary gene-editing therapy for sickle cell 'offers hope of a cure' for NHS patients ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS opens new mpox vaccination sites across England ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Digital eye screening for people with diabetes could save thousands of hospital appointments ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS rolls out lifesaving home testing for bowel cancer to over 50s ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Hundreds of people at increased cancer risk identified by new testing programme ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Millions more patients can register with a GP at 'touch of a button' ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Public twice as likely to check bank balance regularly than for signs of cancer ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Skin cancer patients given fast-tracked access to 'revolutionary' cancer vaccine trial ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Targeted breast cancer treatment approved for routine NHS use ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Beds lost to seasonal viruses this winter greater than population of Malta ➔ [More](#)

Liver disease: are you at risk?

LOVE
LIVER
YOUR



The Liver

The liver carries out **500** different jobs including:

Making proteins and blood-clotting factors

Helping digest food and manage your body's energy supplies

Protecting you by breaking down toxins and other harmful things

Liver Disease

Did you know?

Liver disease death rates are 4 times higher now than they were in the 1970s.

At the same time, deaths from most other major diseases have been falling.

In 2021 around 11,400 people died from liver disease in the UK.

1 in 10

people scanned on our Love Your Liver roadshow have signs of liver damage.



HOW TO LOVE YOUR LIVER

9 in 10 cases of liver disease could be prevented. Making small changes to love your liver can add up to a big difference and reduce your risk of liver disease.



Follow the alcohol advice. Max 14 units a week. With a 2 to 3 day break.



Eat healthily, base meals on veg, fruit and wholegrains.



Watch out for sugar, fat and salt. Check the traffic light label.



Look for ways to move more in your day to day life.



Know the risks for viral hepatitis. Get tested or vaccinated if you're at risk.

Take our Love Your Liver screener to check your liver health

www.britishlivertrust.org.uk/liver-screener



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TRUST

Love Your Liver is
a British Liver Trust
campaign

www.loveyourliver.org.uk

Registered charity England and Wales 298858 Scotland SC042140