

Harrow Council's

CREATE

One of the best London Councils by 2012

Staff benefits

2010/11



Introduction

As part of communicating its Total Reward approach to staff, this brochure outlines the range of benefits available to the non-schools workforce. Further information is available on the Council's intranet. Alternatively you can contact Human Resource and Development (HRD) on ext. 2110, 020 8424 1110 or email staffbenefits@harrow.gov.uk.

Following the Council's Staff Survey, the views of staff have formed the Council's Strategy for People Action Plan for 2010/12. This benefits brochure seeks to address staff requests for more information on benefits and well being.

A list of key contacts can be found at the back of this brochure.



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Key

- C** = Core Benefits (where you are automatically given the benefit)
- F** = Flexible Benefits (where you can choose your own benefit, some subject to management agreement)
- V** = Voluntary Benefits (where you pay for your own benefit, some subject to management agreement)

Equal Opportunities And Diversity

The Council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity.

The Council believes in the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity in all that it does. It recognises Harrow's diverse population as a strength and aims to treat all people with dignity and respect, whilst recognising the value of each individual and the positive contribution they make to Harrow's community and workforce.

Harrow Council aims to ensure that the workforce is given the full opportunity to benefit from the services and employment opportunities they provide. No employee or potential employee will be unlawfully discriminated against.



Working Arrangements

- C Flexi-time Scheme** – Harrow Council offers flexitime for some staff graded H11 and below, which can be adapted to suit you by agreement with your manager, and should be based around the Council's standard hours of:
 - **starting time between 8:00am and 10:00am**
 - **finishing time between 4:00pm and 7:00pm**
 - **Core time between 10:00am and 12:00pm and 2:00pm and 4:00pm**
 - **Lunch break of a minimum of 30 minutes or by agreement, a maximum of two hours, between the hours of 12:00pm and 2:00pm.**
- F Job-share** is where two employees share the duties and responsibilities of one full-time post. Job-sharing will be considered for all posts. Job-sharing is an option which may be attractive if you are unable, or do not wish, to work full-time.
- F Compressed Week Working** offers staff the opportunity to work their total number of contracted weekly hours over a shorter period, either four days a week or nine days per fortnight.



Harrow Council has extended access to Flexible Working to all employees, to open up **the opportunity to strike a better balance between working and personal life.**

F Flexible Working – The statutory right to request flexible working is available to parents of children up to the age of 16, and parents of disabled children up to the age of 18. Employees who are carers of adults, also have this right.

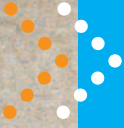
Harrow Council has extended access to Flexible Working to all employees, to open up the opportunity to strike a better balance between working and personal life.

The right to request flexible working is a right to make a request, not a right to have flexible working. The legislation provides a number of reasons why a request can be declined, if there is a sound business reason for doing so. Requests made under the legislation will be considered ahead of other requests.



Time Off

- C Annual Leave – Full time** – basic annual leave for most staff is 23 days, which increases by five days after five year's Local Government service. After ten years Harrow service, you gain an additional day of leave and a day of leave, again after each additional five year's Harrow service, up to a maximum of 34 days annual leave. Youth and Community Workers are entitled to basic annual leave of 30 days, increasing to 35 days after five year's continuous Local Government service.
- C Annual Leave – Part time** – annual leave is calculated on a pro-rota basis in proportion to the full-time equivalent.
- F Carry Over Leave** of up to 10 days of your annual leave allocation, from one leave year to the next. Leave carried over can be added to the current year's entitlement to be taken within that leave year and/or can be banked for extended leave purposes (up to a maximum of 20 days in total). But you must take the legal minimum number of 28 days leave including Bank Holidays before you can carry over leave.
- V Buying Leave** – this scheme gives you the opportunity to buy additional leave or reduce your working hours up to a maximum of 40 days per year.
- F Selling Leave** – this scheme allows you to sell leave back to the Council, up to a maximum of 10 days, and within a certain timeframe and



Harrow Council will grant you **paid time off to undertake election duties** for Harrow Council

subject to you having taken the legal minimum for that year, i.e. 28 days including Bank Holidays.

- F Special Paid Leave** of up to 10 days may be granted in exceptional circumstances, which enables you to have paid time off when you are unable to use annual leave to cover your absence from work. This will need to be agreed by your manager.
- F Time off for Public Duties** – if you are required to undertake jury service or serve on public bodies, you will be given paid time off to attend up to a stated minimum. This does not include attending court for matters unrelated to work.
- F Time off for Election Duties** – Harrow Council will grant you paid time off to undertake election duties for Harrow Council. If you wish to undertake election duties, you will need to seek permission from your manager before committing to this.
- F Career Break – Returners’ Scheme** – The scheme encourages staff to return to work for Harrow Council after a career break of up to five years. If you wish to return to work for the Council you will need to apply for a post, and as long as you meet the requirements for the role, you will be guaranteed an interview. The Council does not however, guarantee re-employment.



Time Off

- F One-4-One Volunteering Scheme** has been developed to support staff wishing to volunteer in the community. The programme is designed to match a staff member's commitment and contribution to the Harrow community up to a maximum of 36 hours per annum. For example, if you commit or already commit to an hour of volunteering, Harrow Council will give an additional paid hour for volunteering out of work, enabling you to give two hours of your time to a good cause. You will need to seek permission from your manager before joining the scheme.
- F Employer Supported Policing BoroughBeat Scheme** – The Council supports this scheme, which allows staff to train and patrol as a Special Constable – volunteer police officer. You could spend one day a fortnight on paid leave for Specials training and duty. You will patrol across Harrow and develop your experience and skills e.g. assertiveness, problem solving to use in your day job. Those volunteering in this scheme are entitled to free travel on London Underground, London Buses, DLR, Tramlink and Transport for London operated London Overground service. You will need approval from your manager before joining the scheme.



Working Parents

- Ⓒ **Maternity Leave and Pay** operates alongside the Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) scheme.

All pregnant women, regardless of length of service, are entitled to paid time off for ante-natal care and 52 weeks maternity leave, commencing no earlier than 11 weeks before the week the baby is due.

Levels of maternity pay are dependant upon earnings and length of continuous local government service. For example, an employee with one year's service at 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth will receive 6 weeks pay at 90% of weekly pay, then 12 weeks pay at 50% of weekly pay plus lower rate SMP, then 21 weeks at lower rate SMP. The remaining 13 weeks are unpaid.

- Ⓒ **Adoption Leave and Pay** is based on the principles of the maternity scheme. You are eligible for adoption leave provided you meet the criteria set out in the scheme.



Working Parents

- F Maternity Support Leave / Paternity Leave** – up to one week's maternity support leave at full pay is available to the father of a child, partner or nominated carer of an expectant mother at, or around, the time of birth or care for adopted child/support the adopter.


If you have more than 26 weeks' service with Harrow, you will be eligible for a second consecutive week's paternity leave, paid at the rate for Statutory Paternity Pay. To qualify for a second week, you must fulfil the criteria set out in the scheme.

- F Parental Leave** for parents of children under the age of five years is available during the year, to care for a child.

Up to four weeks unpaid parental leave may be taken each year, in blocks of one week. Staff are required to give notice and agree the timing of parental leave with their manager.

- V Harrow Play Schemes** are available whether you live in or outside the borough.

- V Childcare Vouchers** – see Financial Benefits and Discounts section for more information on this salary sacrifice arrangement.



The Council recognises the increased pressures placed upon staff both in their personal and working lives

Health and Wellbeing

F Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – The Council recognises the increased pressures placed upon staff both in their personal and working lives. To help employees deal with these pressures, the Council offers this Employee Assistance Programme through First Assist.

First Assist is a free confidential service available to you, which provides 24 hours, 365 days per year support and information on a range of personal and work-related issues and problems such as:

- Coping with change
- Emotional problems
- Family and relationship problems
- Substance and alcohol misuse
- Financial problems
- Health issues.

First Assist also offers a free counselling service.

See the attached card for further details.



Health and Wellbeing

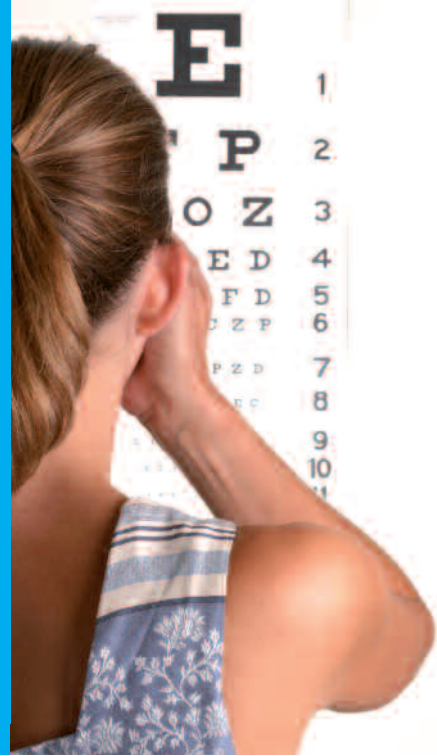
C Occupational Health Service (OHS) is an independent and confidential service run by Connaught PLC that is available to all Harrow Council employees. The role of the service is to:

- offer advice and guidance when an employee returns to work following illness, injury and surgery.
- Run immunisation programmes for occupational risks as determined by Risk Assessment.
- Offer support at work for people with special medical needs e.g. ongoing health problems.

In addition, the service also provides:

- Follow up on referrals to Occupational Health after work related illness and injury.
- Referral to Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for health and personal worries, stress, bereavement, addictions (alcohol, drugs, etc).

Consultation is by appointment only. The Occupational Health Service does not provide treatment or diagnosis for general health conditions, which remain the responsibility of your General Practitioner.



F Health Fairs – Occupational Health Service run promotions for staff throughout the year in accordance with the Health Promotion National Calendar.

F Eye Testing – if you are a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) User who has problems with your vision, you may request a vision screening test from Occupational Health (OHS) following a workstation assessment. Before you contact OHS to book an appointment, your manager needs to complete a Vision Screen Report Form, which you will need to bring with you to the appointment.

If you are identified by OHS to have a visual defect requiring corrective spectacles related to the use of DSE, you will be provided with a pre-paid eye care voucher from Specsavers Opticians, which will entitle you to a free eye test. If corrective spectacles are required specifically for DSE use, then the voucher will also entitle you to a free pair of NHS glasses or £45 off the cost of any other pair of spectacles from, Specsavers.



Health and Wellbeing

C **Sickness Absence** – The Council wants to support employees unable to attend work due to sickness, and to take the necessary steps required to facilitate their early return to work. If you have concerns regarding your health, you should speak to your line manager or contact the Council's Occupational Health Service. Alternatively, you could speak to a Counsellor from First Assist. See attached card for further details.

F **Tai Chi Chuan** is based on ancient Chinese martial art principles and is often practiced as a form of gentle, slow moving exercise and meditation. The Chinese believe that the practice of Tai Chi Chuan will assist in both physical and spiritual wellbeing. Practitioners of Tai Chi Chuan often find a benefit to both physical health and mental relaxation.

There is a Tai Chi Chuan group which practice at the Civic Centre. This is currently free to Harrow Council staff and the group practice on Tuesday mornings at 8:00am. The Group is led by a National Academy of Martial Arts' approved instructor, who has over 30 years experience in teaching martial arts.

V **Yoga** – a 12-week Yoga course has been running at the Civic Centre for many years, organised by Occupational Health. There are three courses a year mirroring the school academic year. This form of Hatha yoga concentrates on holding the posture for an extended period of time. It is a well-balanced combination of Relaxation, Breathing and Posture, aimed at steadying the mind and bringing it into focus.



V Recognised Trade Unions: UNISON and GMB

UNISON and GMB are trade unions recognised by the Council for non-schools staff. Becoming a member of either trade union could provide you with a range of benefits including representation at work and legal advice, support and other fringe benefits. To find out more information and/or join, contact the relevant Harrow branch.

F **Employee Support Groups** are offered to staff who wish to attend, and with agreement from your manager, this will be granted as time off with pay:

- **Harrow Council, Black Workers Group (HCBWG)** supports employees and gives black workers the opportunity to discuss work-related issues of interest and concern. The group provides Harrow Council with feedback on the views of black and minority ethnic employees.
- **Disability, Advice and Information Service (DAIS)** supports staff with disabilities. The group meets quarterly and regularly invites speakers to present on a variety of issues relevant to disabled people.



Health and Wellbeing

- **Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Group (LGB)** – Harrow Council is supporting the development of this group. The support group is for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees.
- **Staff Carers'** – Harrow Council has a manager leading on carer issues. The group aims to hold forums on a regular basis, to offer opportunities for staff who are carers to meet, discuss issues, and receive information about support available to them.

V Staff Restaurant (RetrEAT) – there is a staff restaurant at the Civic Centre site, which provides a range of breakfast and lunchtime meals.

V Cycle to Work – See the Financial Benefits & Discounts section for more information on this salary sacrifice arrangement.

F Active at Work Campaign (Lunchtime Walks) – Groups of staff meet for regular lunchtime walks. Regular walking reduces the risk of coronary heart disease by up to 50% and these groups can help staff stay motivated by taking part with others, as well as making walking fun!



The Council seeks to **provide a variety of learning and development opportunities** to staff

Learning & Development

Harrow Council is committed to ensuring it has a competent highly-skilled workforce that is able to support the organisation to achieve its corporate priorities now and in the future.

The Council seeks to provide a variety of learning and development opportunities to staff. These opportunities build on existing skills and knowledge, enabling staff to achieve the Council's priorities as well as individual targets and career aspirations.

The Council is committed to working towards and achieving the Investors in People Standard (IIP) across all directorates; the Chief Executive's Department and Legal and Governance Services are currently recognised. The Corporate Strategy Board have agreed that the Council will work to all directorates achieving IIP by 2012.

Working in line with the IIP best practice framework helps to make certain that the Council continually strives to improve its people management and development practices and processes.



Learning & Development

- F** **Post Entry Training** offers staff the opportunity to study for qualifications that are relevant to their work. If you are interested in studying for a qualification you should discuss the opportunities and support (including non-financial) available to you with your manager, as such qualifications may not be funded or fully-funded, and are subject to the requirement of the job role.
- C** **IPAD** is the Council's performance appraisal and development scheme, which is designed to help staff understand how they contribute to the success of the organisation, the setting and achievement of objectives, as well as providing a means for identifying learning opportunities to support staff development. It also provides an opportunity for staff to consider their longer-term career aspirations and the steps required to achieve them. The annual IPAD cycle starts in January and ends in December, to coincide with service improvement planning.
- C** **Learning 4** is Harrow Council's workforce development programme for staff, delivered in partnership with Harrow College and Stanmore College. The programme presents a number of work-based learning opportunities and activities for staff, enabling them to build their skills, confidence and performance to help meet the Council's objectives. Staff are able to achieve a formal nationally accredited qualification at the same time as investing in their future.



The Council is committed to providing support to all leaders and managers from the first line upwards

- F** **The Right to Request Time Off to Train** – from April 2010, if you have a minimum of 26 weeks service, you will have the right to request time off to undertake training that will help you to be more productive and effective at work or to address a particular skills need.
- C** **Coursebooker** is a new intranet based system, being launched in April 2010 and will enable you to keep a central record of all your professional development at the Council. You will also be able to search for and view all available training courses and book them electronically (with manager approval). Look out for information on posters, in the *Grapevine* and at demonstrations at various council offices.
- C** **Leadership and Management Development** – The Council is committed to providing support to all leaders and managers from the first line upwards. The Council has a number of leadership and management development activities available to help build the capacity and capability of the workforce. Leadership and management development opportunities consist of a range of activities to improve individual and organisational performance. Activities are designed to support the development of knowledge, skills (hard and soft) and the practical planning (service, people and finance) of performance management, within the local/national government context.



Financial Benefits & Discounts

F Pension Scheme – the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is statutorily funded. As such, staff can trust that it is secure, because its benefits are defined and set out in law. The LGPS is contracted out of the State Second Pension (S2P) and must, in general, provide benefits at least as good as most members would have received, had they been members of S2P. Benefits provided by the LGPS include:

- a pension based on your final pay;
- an optional tax-free lump sum when you retire;
- the ability to increase your pension by paying extra contributions;
- voluntary retirements from age 60;
- retirement from age 55 with the Council's consent;
- an ill health pension from any age;
- redundancy cover from age 55;
- a death in service lump sum of three times final pay;
- a widow's, widower's, civil partner's or co-habiting partner's pension'
- children's pensions; and
- the index linking of benefits to ensure that they keep pace with inflation.

In addition, as a member of the LGPS, your contributions will attract tax relief at the time they are deducted from your pay and, up to State pension



age, you will also pay lower National Insurance contributions on earnings between the Lower and Upper Earnings Limits, unless you have opted to pay the married woman's/widow's reduced rate of National Insurance.

The pension contribution rate is dependant on your pay and will be between 5.5% - 7.5%, depending on your grade; the Council contribution rate for individual pensions in fiscal year 2010/11 is 18.60%.

The Pensions team also sends out an Annual Benefit Statement to everyone in the pension scheme, which gives an update on the pension benefits as at 31 March each year, as well as a projection of benefits to age 65. There is also a section on this statement related to the estimated State Pension Scheme benefits.

- F Flexible Retirement** – The LGPS regulations have been amended to permit the immediate payment of pensions benefits, at the employers' consent, where a scheme member from age 55 reduces his/her hours or moves to a lower grade, even though the scheme member has not retired from employment and continues to build up benefits in the Scheme. For further information, please contact the Pensions Office.



Financial Benefits & Discounts

- C Reward & Recognition Scheme** allows staff to be financially rewarded for carrying out work beyond their contracted duties and responsibilities, which could be a cash sum of £250 or £500. Undertaking the duties and responsibilities of a higher graded post could attract an acting up allowance.
- C The CREATE Awards (staff awards scheme)** – recognises staff for outstanding achievement in demonstrating the Council's CREATE values. A prestigious event is held bi-annually to celebrate the winners of the awards.
- C Long Service Award** – In addition to granting additional annual leave for long service, Harrow Council also awards employees a memento to a maximum value of £320, in recognition of 25 years continuous service. This award is currently being reviewed with a view to modernising our approach and we will communicate any changes to staff when it is finalised.
- V Car Loans** are available to you if your role carries an essential user car allowance. This offers financial assistance in the form of a loan from the Council, in order to purchase a vehicle to carry out your official duties.
- V Car Loans for Staff with Disabilities** – if you have a disability, which affects your mobility, you may be eligible to participate in this scheme. A loan may be granted to cover the purchase price of a new or second hand car, plus the cost of any adaptations necessary. This is subject to certain conditions and approval from your manager.



- V Interest Free Car Loans** are available to staff whose role is graded above H10 and designated an essential car user. This offers financial assistance in the form of an interest free car loan from the Council, in order to purchase a vehicle to carry out the individual's official duties.
- V Season Ticket Loan** – The Council offers financial assistance for you to purchase annual season tickets, subject to certain conditions. The season ticket loan can be used to purchase an annual bus, tube or train ticket for travel between home and work. The interest free loan is repaid by deductions from your pay over 12 months.
- V Cycle to Work** – This salary sacrifice scheme allows you to purchase a bike and to payback at a reduced cost as a result of the tax and national insurance contributions you will save. During a window of opportunity held once or twice during the year (dates will be published), simply choose a bike online or visit a local shop, claim your voucher and the bike is yours for a twelve month hire period. The cost of the bike and any safety equipment are spread over a 12 month period. At the end of the hire period, you may be given the chance to own the bike for which a Fair Market Value may be payable. During the window of opportunity, use the online calculator at www.cyclescheme.co.uk to find out exactly how much you will save.



Financial Benefits & Discounts

- V Bus Travel (Green Travel Scheme)** – A 12-month salary sacrifice arrangement is being considered for implementation later this year, which will provide you with tax and national insurance savings on your Harrow bus travel.
- V Credit Union** – Harrow Council has developed a Credit Union with Credit Union Solutions. The Credit Union, called M4Money serves people working and/or living in Harrow and Hillingdon.

Credit Unions are cooperatives owned by and run for their members. They offer loans at affordable interest rates and pay members a dividend at the end of each year, based on profits generated.

Normally members of a Credit Union have to save for 12 weeks before they can apply for a loan. However, council staff who join M4Money will be able to obtain a loan immediately. The amount of interest a Credit Union can charge is fixed. So that a loan of £100, repaid over 12 months would cost £13 in interest. In addition the Credit Union offers free loan protection and life savings insurance, as well as a range of different savings accounts. Signposting to money advice is available if requested.



Credit Unions are registered by the Financial Services Authority and are covered by the Savings Deposit Guarantee up to £50,000.

Payments to the Credit Union can be made from payroll deductions. Staff do not need to be on a permanent contract, or out of their probationary period, to join the Credit Union.

- C Mortgage Subsidy and Relocation Expenses** are available to newly appointed key staff, who sell and buy a property as a result of taking up an appointment at the Council. The decision to offer the mortgage subsidy will be taken by the appropriate Corporate Director in consultation with the Divisional Director for Human Resources and Development.
- V Key Worker Housing Scheme** – Harrow Council staff whose household income is less than £60,000 and savings of less than £50,000 may apply for Low Cost Home Ownership. Details are at www.harrow.gov.uk/lcho. This includes part buy/part rent, intermediate rent, and rent to HomeBuy. Home Ownership will be on a priority basis.



Financial Benefits & Discounts

V Childcare Vouchers – If you have a child under the age of 16 years, you could benefit from reduced childcare costs, (including day nurseries, child minders, crèches, Au Pairs, Nannies, before/after school clubs and holiday clubs). Reduced costs are through savings you would make in tax and national insurance contributions of up to £1196 per year, which you will receive through entering a salary sacrifice arrangement i.e. your monthly pay will be reduced by the monthly amount of childcare vouchers you will receive, and your tax and national insurance contributions will then be calculated based on the lower rate of pay. The vouchers are available up to a current maximum value of £55 year week.

V KAARP – All Harrow Council staff can benefit from the KAARP scheme for benefits and discounts, such as travel, shopping, health and entertainment.

Simply visit the website (www.kaarp.com) and type in Username: 'Harrow' and Password: 'Benefits' to find out what offers are available.

V Staff Offers – Special offers are available to staff from eating out to tickets for shows. Staff offers can be found on the Intranet under Staff Offers.



As a direct result of your feedback, Harrow Council held its first ever staff sports day in December 2009

Other events you might like to know about

- F Chief Executive's Staff Forums** – The Chief Executive hosts his staff forums on a six monthly basis. These offer you the chance to hear from and ask questions of the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and other Corporate Directors.
- F Other ways of finding out what you think** – A number of regular surveys and focus groups are held to give you the opportunity to ask questions and offer feedback to senior managers, as well as helping to shape major policy or programmes of work. To get involved, look out for posters, Staff Updates and items on the intranet with further details.
- F Chief Executive's Lunches** – These staff lunches are informal and provide you with the opportunity to talk to the Chief Executive about anything that you would like to discuss in relation to working at the Council. They are not compulsory, but if you get an invitation, please do come along as the Chief Executive would like to meet you and hear your views.
- F Annual Quiz** – The Chief Executive's Christmas Quiz is a favourite with staff, so it will now be held as a six monthly event. Look out for further details in the CE's E-Newsletter and on the intranet.
- F Harrow Cup** – In the April 2009 Interim Staff Survey, you asked for social activities that would promote a healthy lifestyle. As a result, the Council held a staff sports day in December 2009 and will continue to hold regular sporting events for staff.

Key Contacts

Car Loans	020 8424 1311 (ext. 2311)
Credit Union – M4Money	020 8756 3866
Cyclescheme	www.cyclescheme.co.uk/cf1cb5
Disability, Awareness, Information and Support	dais@harrow.gov.uk
Employee Assistance Programme	0800 716 017
Harrow Council Black Workers Group	020 8863 5611 (ext. 3776)
Human Resources & Development Duty Adviser	020 8424 1110 (ext. 2110)
KAARP Staff Discounts	www.kaarp.com Username = HARROW, password = BENEFITS
Key Worker Housing	020 8416 8009 (ext. 8009) keyworker@harrow.gov.uk
Leapfrog Childcare Vouchers www.leapfrogvouchers.com	0800 783 7624 or visit
Learning & Development	020 8424 1415 (ext. 2415)
LGB	lgb@harrow.gov.uk
Occupational Health Services	020 8424 1449 (ext. 2449) ochealth@harrow.gov.uk
One-4-One Volunteering Scheme	020 8424 8249 (ext. 8249) volunteering@harrow.gov.uk
Pensions Service	020 8416 8087 (ext. 8087)
Play Schemes	020 8424 1811 (ext. 2811)
Policing BoroughBeat Scheme	www.met.police.uk/esp
Season Ticket Loan	020 8424 1197 (ext. 2197)
Staff Benefits	staffbenefits@harrow.gov.uk
Staff Carers	020 8424 1726 (ext. 2726)
Staff Offers	http://harrowhub/site/ and either select link from the top right of the Home Page or type in 'Staff Offers'
Tai Chi Chuan	020 8424 1021 (ext. 2021)
Trade Unions	
GMB	020 8424 1086 (ext. 2086)
UNISON	020 8424 1795 (ext. 2795)
Yoga	020 8424 1449 (ext. 2449) ochealth@harrow.gov.uk