



Matter being dealt with by Natalie Cole
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29 June 2010

To: All Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Dear Member,

Re: Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 5th July 2010, 6pm

Attached are the following reports and further information for the above-mentioned meeting which were not available at the time of collation of the agenda:

9. LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK (LINKS) ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

To receive the 2009/10 Local Involvement Network (LINKs) Annual Report.

10. POST OFFICE CLOSURES

Responses to the Post Office closure consultation at Area Assemblies and a collection of responses received from local residents to an appeal by Lynne Featherstone MP, Liberal Democrat MP for Hornsey & Wood Green, for information on how recent Post Office closures have affected them.

13. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

To receive the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2010/11.

Yours sincerely

Natalie Cole
Principal Committee Coordinator

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Haringey LINK

Local Involvement Network



Annual Report 2009 / 2010

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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to our second annual report which covers a full year in the life of Haringey LINK. This year we have been concentrating on the best ways to make a difference in the Haringey community. We have also held elections to Haringey LINK Executive Board. These were independently run and now have 18 members elected to the Board who meet regularly in public. Besides recruiting new members to LINK we have concentrated on reaching parts of the community that don't often get heard and there's more about that later in this report.

Faced with how to make a difference in health and social care Haringey LINK felt it was very important to get involved at the level where decisions were discussed and made – the strategic level. With this aim LINK sought to be included on the decision-making bodies such as the health Trust Boards and local authority committees. I am delighted to report we have succeeded in getting a LINK presence on Haringey NHS Board, both The Whittington Hospital and North Middlesex University Hospital Boards, and as co-optee on Haringey Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). Our latest success is a place on Haringey's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Steering Group where future plans for Haringey are discussed and put forward for action. In the report you can see how these bodies have assessed our input.

Of course this year has been a challenging one with London-wide health reviews having plans that radically affect the health services people receive. As the reviews bring some of the most significant changes in the NHS for years our LINK has started a large piece of research into patient discharge from hospital into the community. We want to know what works and what doesn't so we can influence the new plans as they bring more services away from the hospital into the community health centres. There's more about that too, later in the report.

The latest government changes provide new challenges for the year ahead as we try hard to keep the health and social care interests of Haringey's population at the centre of our work and in front of the decision-makers. Our membership grows and we are keen to welcome more members with any kind of interest in health, social care, or both. We do give details on how to join us further on and we do have a newsletter which you can sign up to if you want to know what we're doing.

Finally a very big thank you to each and every Haringey LINK member for the hard work they have put in throughout the year.

Helena Kania
Haringey LINK Chair



Getting In Touch: Contacting the LINK and the Host

LINK Address	Host Address
Haringey LINK 3 rd floor Wood Green Central Library High Road N22 6XD Phone: 020 8888 0579 Email: haringeylink@shaw-trust.org.uk	Shaw Trust 3 rd floor Wood Green Central Library High Road N22 6XD Phone 020 8888 0579 Email Peter.durrant@shaw-trust.org.uk

Each borough has a LINK, and each LINK is supported by a Host Organisation whose role it is to:

- Promote and support the involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local care services
- Enable people to monitor and review the commissioning and provision of local care services
- Obtain the view of people about their needs for, and their experiences of, local care services
- Make these views known and submit reports and recommendations about how local care services might be improved

The Haringey LINK Host is supported by two full time staff.

The Host office is conveniently located at the Wood Green Central Library, which is the busiest Library in the borough seeing approximately 6000 people going through its doors each day. Situated on the High Street in Wood Green, it is well served by public transport including the London Underground (Wood Green) as well as many London bus routes with direct buses through out Haringey as well as other important parts of London including the West End.

About Haringey



(figure 1)

- Haringey is located in the north of London and has an area of just over 11 square miles.
- Nearly half of its 224,700 population people come from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- The borough has 19 wards.
- Although the borough does not have an acute hospital of its own, it is served by hospitals in the neighbouring boroughs of Enfield and Islington, by the North Middlesex Hospital and the Whittington hospital respectively. It also has St Ann's hospital which serves the mental health trust.
- A recent study found that there are almost 1700 active groups and organisations in Haringey's 3rd Sector.
- Haringey, along with Camden, Islington, Barnet and Enfield make up the North Central London Sector.

What is a Local Involvement Network?

LINKs have been set up to give communities a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered. Run by local people and groups, the role of a LINK is to:

- Promote and support the involvement of people in the commissioning provision and scrutiny of local health and social care services
- Enable people to monitor and review the commissioning and provision of local care services relating to:
 - The standard of provision
 - Whether and how local care services could be improved
 - Whether and how local care services ought to be improved
- Obtaining the views of people about their needs for and their experiences of local care services
- Making such views known and making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved to people responsible for commissioning, providing, managing or scrutinising local care services.

LINK Structure

The LINK Executive Board is the decision making committee for the Haringey LINK

Helena Kania	Haringey LINK Chair, Individual, Ex PPI
Janet Shapiro	Haringey LINK Vice Chair, Muswell Hill and Highgate Pensioners Action Group, Better Local Healthcare Campaign
Sebastian Mani	Haringey LINK Vice Chair, Individual, Ex PPI
Mash Alam	Independent
Celia Bower	Muswell Hill & Highgate Pensioners' Action Group
Michael Brown	Individual
Maureen Carey	Individual, Community Advocate, Haringey Forum for Older People
Andrew Constantini	Open Minds Foundation
Lloyda Fanusie	Haringey Forum for Older People
Margaret Fowler	Muswell Hill and Highgate Pensioners Action Group
Lauritz Hansen-Bay	Haringey Forum for Older People
Etta Khwaja	Individual, Ex Community Health Council, Ex PPI
Faridoon Madon	Individual, Ex PPI
John Murray	North London Stroke Awareness Campaign
Pam Moffatt	Age Concern
Andrew Petrou	Individual
Val Schilling	Individual
Peter Smith	North Middlesex Hospital Patient Representative Forum

Authorised Representatives

In order for the LINK to carry out Enter & View, Authorised Representatives are appointed by the LINK Executive Board.

Celia Bower
Lauritz-Hansen Bay
Helena Kania
Etta Khwaja
Sebastian Mani
Val Schilling

LINK Membership

Membership breakdown

Total number of members as of 31/03/2009	15
Total number of members as of 31/03/2010	26
Total number of participants as of 31/03/2009 (people who had contact with the LINK but did not become active members)	273
Total number of participants as of 31/03/2010 (people who had contact with the LINK but did not become active members)	614
Total numbers of members as of 31/03/2010 of which have a social care interest	43

Diversity breakdown

Age 0-34	3	Age 35-64	8
Age 65 and over	21	Disability	6
Gender Male	15	Gender Female	17
Gay man	2	Lesbian	1
Bisexual	1	Heterosexual	24
Religion stated	5	Religion not stated	13
White British	13	White Irish	1
White Greek / Cypriot	3	White Turkish/Cypriot	1
Turkish		Traveller	
Mixed White and Caribbean		White and Black African	
White and Asian		Indian	3
Pakistani		Bangladeshi	
Caribbean		African	
Chinese	2	Other	4

What we did

The Department of Health started a review of health services in London based on the Darzi report: Healthcare for London. Haringey fell under the North Central London Strategic Organisation Review (NCLSOR) and it quickly became apparent significant changes to how services were delivered were being proposed. As Haringey LINK NCLSOR began to inform us of the basis for change and how these changes were likely to affect users. The move from services being provided in a hospital environment to services nearer home was a key component of the changes.

The LINK felt that to effectively challenge these plans we needed to do some in-depth independent research. Focusing our research effort on one aspect of this move we wanted to look at patient discharge from hospital. Chosen because it had thrown up many issues when we spoke to users it seemed a good project to help us find the good points which we didn't want to lose in any change and points where things needed to be done better. More community activity meant these points which needed improvement would become even more under pressure to perform. We are conducting a research project with The Whittington Hospital looking at a large sample of users discharged from hospital into the community but needing onward clinical care such as district nurses and physiotherapists.

We hope to have some results this autumn when we can bring them to the attention of NCLSOR in formulating future community health plans for the sector.

Our efforts to reach the community have worked well in education. We have been asked to get involved in presentations on the work of the LINK for a UCH postgraduate course, for NHS Haringey's management course and input to a health project at 'A' level on infection control. All these were extremely well received.

We are just starting collaboration as the independent voice on stroke information with NHS Haringey and Haringey Council.

Requests for Information

How many requests for information were made by your LINK during 2009-10?	11
Of these, how many of the requests for information were answered within 20 working days?	7
How many related to social care?	5

Enter and View

How many enter and view visits did your LINK make?	5
How many enter and view visits related to health care?	1
How many enter and view visits related to social care?	4
How many enter and view visits were announced?	5
How many enter and view visits were unannounced?	0

Reports and Recommendations

How many reports and/or recommendations were made by your LINK to commissioners of health and social care services?	4/3
How many of these reports and/or recommendations have been acknowledged in the required timescale?	4/3
Of the reports and/or recommendations acknowledged, how many have led / or are leading to service review?	0
Of the reports and/or recommendations that led to service review, how many led to service change?	0
How many of these reports/recommendations related to health services?	3
How many of these reports/recommendations related to social care services?	4

Referrals to OSC

How many referrals were made by your LINK to an Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC)?	1
How many of these referrals did the OSC acknowledge?	1
How many of these referrals led to service change?	0

LINK Impacts

a) GP re-accreditation Project

With this project Haringey LINK had an opportunity to provide user input to a service anyone registered with a Haringey GP can use.

NHS Haringey started a GP with Special Interests re-accreditation programme last year and completed the initial phase early summer 2009. The special interests were minor surgery, rheumatology, and dermatology. From the beginning NHS Haringey asked a LINK member to be part of the initial assessment stages as well as at the panel interviews. The work covered all the GPs with Special Interests practising in Haringey and so affected all 220,000 Haringey residents who could access this service.

The LINK work involved advising on the format of the re-accreditation forms GPs were to fill in, then in checking each form and advising where governance issues needed to be followed up such as out-of-date Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, training needs such as child protection, disability compliance issues, cleanliness, information, and privacy & dignity. It also involved placing a user perspective on the questionnaire and so influenced changes in the wording used. One outcome of this work was a comprehensive action and follow-up list and this was the foundation for confirming re-accreditation and ensuring continuing vigilance in the standards for these confirmed GPs. Another outcome is that it also provided a template for the next re-accreditation process in three years time. LINK is still involved in this process in checking the action list is kept up-to-date. Haringey LINK's input has changed the questionnaire GPs fill in, has changed the governance follow-up and through this has made a better service to Haringey users.

b) Out of Hours Contract

As with the GP re-accreditation project Haringey LINK provided user input to a service anyone registered with a Haringey GP can use. This covers 000,000 Haringey residents.

The Out of Hours (OOH) contract for GPs under contract to NHS Haringey and three other PCTs (Camden, Islington, Hackney and City of London) was due for renewal in 2010. As part of the tender

renewal process LINK representatives from each PCT were invited to be a sub-committee with voting input on the user aspects of the tender and new contract. The Out of Hours contract will assume more importance in future years as urgent care referrals become more community-focused. For example GP clinics having longer opening hours and covering weekends will ease the pressure on hospital emergency departments by providing a place for users to go.

Initially the LINK input was to ensure the tender invitation included a patient-focused approach so the submissions could be analysed for not only clinical excellence but also for patient focus. As a result of LINK comments the tender invitation and criteria to be met were changed to reflect this new focus.

Once the submissions were received this LINK sub-committee was used to vote on two patient-centric sections of the contract. Through a process of discussion a final consensus award of marks from our LINK group went through to join the marks of other interested committees – clinical, finance. The Haringey LINK member went on to represent all four LINKs at the final presentation stage and to vote for the final award.

The outcome of this involvement is that the tender process and voting included a patient-centric element. The ongoing contract maintenance will also include LINK involvement. This is a great example of NHS and LINK working together to benefit service users.

c) Mortuary, The Whittington Hospital

We have a LINK member sitting on the Donor Committee of the Whittington Hospital. This looks at issues concerning organ and tissue donation. For tissue donation including eyes, permission from relatives and friends of patients who have died needs to be agreed quickly.

After research into the best places to approach relatives, the mortuary and its viewing area was felt to capture the most opportunity. However the LINK member had investigated the mortuary viewing area previously and felt it needed improvement if relatives were to be approached at this difficult time over delicate issues requiring consent. The LINK member took this issue to the hospital board when items of capital expenditure were due for

discussion. Following the LINK's intervention the hospital board agreed a budget for the mortuary. This included refurbishing the viewing area to a standard allowing counsellors to discuss tissue donation with relatives.

The outcome is not instantly measurable but as The Whittington has a record of zero eye donors we should be able to see an improvement once the building works have been completed. We are also sure that all relatives and friends visiting the mortuary viewing area regardless of tissue donation requests will appreciate the improvements.

Views on LINK from partner organisations

'NHS Haringey has found LINK increasingly important to our work over the past year. LINK has helped us with our developing programme of engagement.'

'After a long gap we are, at last, in the position of having a voice from the local population through LINK that is legitimate and growing in strength. I would like to take this opportunity to thank LINK for all it does to help improve the health of people in Haringey.'

Richard Sumray, Chair of NHS Haringey

'As Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, I can say that the LINK has assisted us when we have been looking at health and social care issues by providing a valuable service user perspective. This helps to ensure that deliberations accurately reflect the concerns of local residents.'

'LINK representatives have contributed to individual 'task and finish' scrutiny reviews as part of the panel and used their local experience and knowledge effectively.'

'The LINK has also provided a useful means for the Committee to engage with members of the local community and service users. Finally, they have provided the Committee with a valuable source of information on the relevant local issues.'

Councillor Gideon Bull, Chair of Haringey Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Views on LINK from partner organisations (continued)

'The Board of the Whittington Hospital NHS Trust greatly appreciates the time that Haringey LINK dedicates to its collaboration with our hospital. The Chair of Haringey LINK, Helena Kania, is an ever-present attendee at our public board meetings. Her valuable contributions are always welcome and add the important patient and community perspectives which are essential to our deliberations.'

'Via Helena, Haringey LINK has met regularly with the Whittington's Director of Primary Care and Director of Nursing throughout the year and has been both a challenge and a support when considering many of the governance, patient safety and patient experience issues across the Trust. She has taken part in the Trust safety walkabouts, examining patient safety issues in the specific clinical areas in the Trust. Thus LINK has ensured that a local public perspective has influenced the Whittington board's discussions on strategy and operations.'

Joe Liddane, Chair of Whittington Hospital NHS

'From my point of view, I would like to confirm ... that I have valued your inputs and comments on my service to date, I look forward to continuing to work with the LINK as a 'critical friend' and am also happy to be an informal adviser as the role of the LINK develops further. I see the organisation as being robust and focussed and being a valuable addition to the system of checks and balances devised to maintain the quality of service provided in social care.'

Len Weir, Head of Provider Services (Haringey ACCS)

'To highlight some of the contributions, LINKs Haringey has provided a strong voice when re-commissioning the Out of Hours GP Service, a review of Medicines management in Care Homes, Making changes in Foot Healthcare in the community and providing a robust presentation to the PCT's AGM in 2009 encouraging the community to work with the local NHS on health and social care matters'.

Dilo Lalande, Head of Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement,
NHS Haringey

'The work undertaken by Haringey LINK is extremely useful to the North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust (NMUH) in ensuring that our links with what patients want and how they feel is as clear, responsive and as open as possible.'

'Joyce Aslan (Haringey LINK member) is an active attendee to Trust Board meetings and Peter Smith (Haringey LINK member) is involved in our Communications Working Group. Both provide constructive comment to Trust management and operational staff and serve a great purpose as an independent, objective set of 'eyes and ears' regarding the patient experience during their visits to the Trust.'

'The importance of the role LINKs play, will only grow in relevance as this Trust develops the facilities in the new hospital building and looks to build upon the customer service training that has already begun for our staff. The input, ideas and support provided by Haringey LINKs will, I am sure, continue to be a vital element in our planning and review of service developments on this site.'

Richard Milner, Director of Service Development North Middlesex University Hospital

LINK Finance

The Haringey LINK is funded by the Department of Health, and is managed through the Area Based Grant in Haringey.

Amount allocated to the local authority by the Department of Health	£171,000.00
Amount of funding received by the host from the local authority	£153,500.00
Amount of funding received by the LINK from the host	£16,233.00
Amount of funding carried over from previous year	£10,177.00
Other income	£0.00
Total Budget for 2009/2010	£163677.00
Total spend by Host Organisation	£129,315.00
Total spend by LINK	£23,526.00

The Next Twelve Months

Again we have a very full programme ahead especially with the impact of financial and organisational changes from the new government. Haringey LINK Board met before the end of our year to decide on a work plan for the next 12 months. The plan was based on many factors such as feedback from Haringey residents, statistics highlighting health inequalities, and of course changes in health and social care policies.

Let me pick out a couple of highlights of our plan. We will be continuing our work on patient discharge from hospital into the community as once new health proposals are announced we still want to be sure we can influence the changes for the good of Haringey service users. We hope to have some of the results of this work in the autumn.

Some members are working on a care home checklist which will help us assess both the council-run and the independent sector care homes in Haringey. In that list we will include factors with a user-centred focus that includes visitors and carers as well as care home residents. Once agreed we will use this list to go out and visit Haringey's care homes.

We hope to investigate the problems associated with making appointments with a range of health professionals – GPs, physiotherapists, foot care, and send a report to NHS Haringey. Our work plan is available on our website. Do please take a look – www.haringeylink.org.uk

Understanding the Jargon

Here is a list of the more frequently used abbreviations and what they mean:

DoH	Department of Health
Host	the organisation supporting the LINK
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LINK	Local Involvement Network
NALM	National Association of LINK Members
NCL	North Central London
NCLSOR	North Central London Sector & Organisation Review
OSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
PALS	Patient Advise and Liaison Service
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PPI	Patient and Public Involvement



Haringey Council

Briefing for:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
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Title:	Post Office Closures follow up
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Purpose of briefing:	To provide: (1) feedback from local Area Assemblies on post office closures (2) details of the impact of post office closure on a local sub-postmaster (via Cllr Winskill) (3) pictorial evidence of local sub-post offices.(via Cllr Bevan).
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Lead Officer:	Martin Bradford, Overview & Scrutiny Tel: 0208 489 6950
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Date:	June 24 th 2010
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1. Introduction

Six post offices were closed in Haringey in 2008 as part of the Network Change Programme. A brief survey was designed to provide an illustration of local resident opinions on the closure of these post offices. Surveys were distributed to Area Assembly areas in which post office closures took place. Not all Area Assembly's could participate as meetings were scheduled after Overview & Scrutiny meeting on the 5th July.

2. Returned surveys

In total, 36 returned surveys were completed and returned from attendees at Area Assemblies. Returns from Area Assemblies were as set out in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Area Assembly	Survey Returns
St Ann's & Harringay	16
West Green & Bruce Grove	18
Wood Green	2
<i>Total</i>	<u>36</u>

3. Use of local post office services.

A majority (89%) of respondents to this survey were regular users of local post office services (Figure 2).

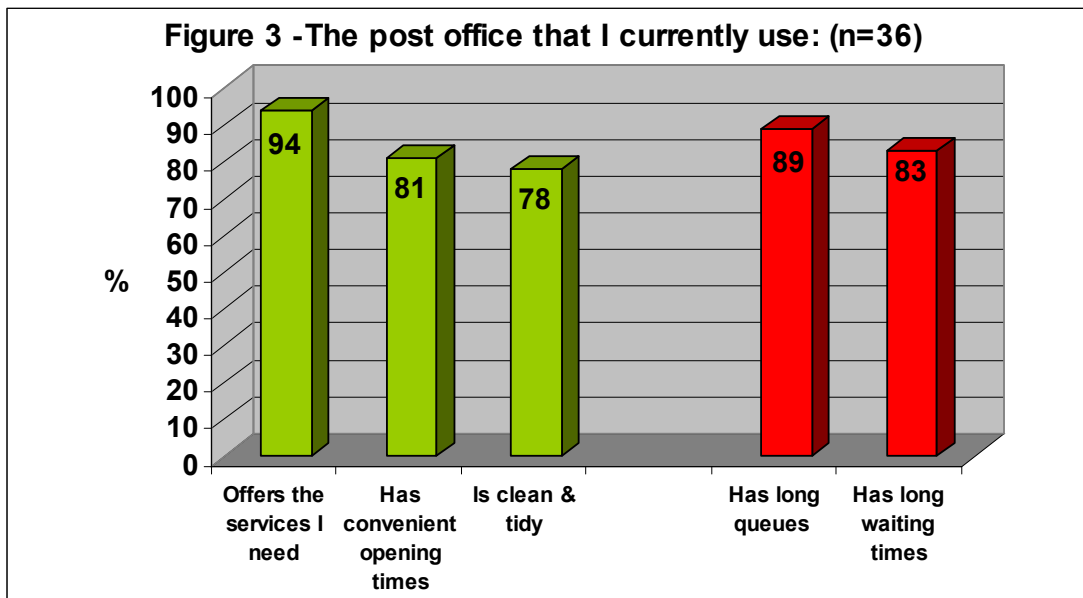
Figure 2

Regular user of post office?	Survey Returns
Yes	32 (89%)
No	4 (11%)

4. Assessment of local post offices

Respondents were asked to assess the local post office which they used from a range of preset options. Analysis of these responses would suggest that respondents were broadly satisfied that their local post office offers the services they needed (94%), was open at convenient times (81%) and was clean and tidy (78%) (Figure 3).

A clear majority of respondents however, also indicated that there was always a long queue at their local post office (89%) and that you had to wait a long time to be served (83%) (Figure 3).



Respondents were also invited to provide qualitative comments to support their responses. Analysis of these responses would appear to verify that respondents experience long queues at local post offices and that there were issues with the cleanliness and tidiness of a number of local post offices:

'The Broad Lane Post office is a public disgrace: the service is slow and the staffs are surly and unhelpful. Collecting packages and signed for letters is a pain because often the items are not there even after 48 hours. The shop is untidy and cluttered and queues spill out on to the street... .' (Attendee at St Ann's Area Assembly)

'There are long queues at the High Road office.' (Attendee at West Green & Bruce Grove Area Assembly)

'The post office at Wood Green is good but the queues are very long... .' (Attendee at West Green & Bruce Grove Area Assembly)

'There are long wait even for simple postings. It always seems to be short staffed. There never seems to be anyone on the money exchange counter

and the stamp machine is empty. (Attendee at St Ann's & Haringay Area Assembly)

There was also a concern that where local post offices are offering a sub-standard service, there is little being done to improve services:

'Bruce Grove post office is a disgrace; it is filthy and cramped and an insult as a public service and to the local people that use it. I believe it's a franchise and I think Post Office Ltd should hold the franchise firmly to account to demand improvements and exact penalties. (Attendee at St Ann's & Haringay Area Assembly)

5. Impact of local post office closures

Although most respondents were users of local post office services (Figure 2), a much smaller proportion (44%) indicated that they had been directly affected by the post office closure programme (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Affected by post office closures?	Survey Returns
Yes	16 (44%)
No	20 (56%)

Post office as a valued local service

At the outset, it should be emphasised that where residents do use a post office local to them it clearly provides a vital public service which is valuable to the communities they serve:

'My local post office is a major information point of my life as well as other services that it operates.' (Attendee at West Green & Bruce Grove Area Assembly)

'I would not like to see my post office go as it's extremely useful to me.' (Attendee at St Ann's & Haringay Area Assembly)

I am delighted our post office is open, the service is great. I feel sorry for all those who lost their local post office as the other big post offices are impersonal and the queues are very long and it is so tiring standing. (Attendee at West Green & Bruce Grove Area Assembly)

Difficulty in accessing alternative services

Analysis of qualitative responses provided by respondents would suggest that local residents were affected by post office closures in a number of ways.

Analysis of these responses indicate that many post office users now have to travel further to be able to access post office services. For particular groups of services users who may have mobility problems or who have difficulty travelling, such as the elderly or those with small children, this can be problematic:

'I now have to travel a long way for my nearest [post office]... I am a pensioner with restricted mobility. A post office which is nearer is less stressful.' (Attendee at West Green & Bruce Grove Area Assembly)

I have been affected badly, now two small children and I have to walk 20 minutes there and back to the post office or pack them both in the car and drive. It's ridiculous. It's too far - my old post office in Weston Park was what I would call local... .' (Attendee at St Ann's & Harringay Area Assembly)

I have two children and now have to go to the Broadway to use the post office this is very inconvenient and not a good service for customers who are time poor. (Attendee at St Ann's & Harringay Area Assembly)

'The post office at the corner of Stapleton Road/ Ferme Park Road was a well used facility and a link for the local community. There are a lot of elderly residents who used the post office regularly who find it difficult to go further a field.' (Attendee at St Ann's & Harringay Area Assembly)

Alternative branches are busier with longer queues

Coupled with longer journeys, respondents would also appear to experience long queues and possible delays at alternative post office services:

'I find it quite difficult to get to either Crouch End or Stroud Green and the queues there are always very long.' (Attendee at St Ann's & Harringay Area Assembly)

'I now have a long walk to Broad Lane where the queues are always long so even simple tasks waste a lot of time.' (Attendee at West Green & Bruce Grove Area Assembly)

'I send hundreds of items every week and now Weston Park has closed I have to drive sacks of mail, then park and carry them to the post office in Crouch End and then queue for ages. The queues are too long plus now I have to drive [which is not good for the planet].' (Attendee at St Ann's & Harringay Area Assembly)

'I have a longer walk to the post office and there are longer queues. The staff seem overworked but friendly.' (Attendee at St Ann's & Harringay Area Assembly)

6. Impact of post office closure on sub-postmaster

Cllr Winskill met with a local ex-sub-postmaster whose post office was closed in the 2008 closure programme. The following are notes of a conversation with the sub-postmaster to examine the effects of this closure on his business.

- The PO was based in the rear of the newsagents in a double parade of a dozen shops.
- There has been a Post Office on the site for at least 56 years and one on the parade since it was built in late Victorian times.
- One of the immediate effects of the closure was the loss of two staff – a part timer and a full timer. They had been paid for out of the salary from the Post Office: the removal of this meant that their wages could no longer be afforded.

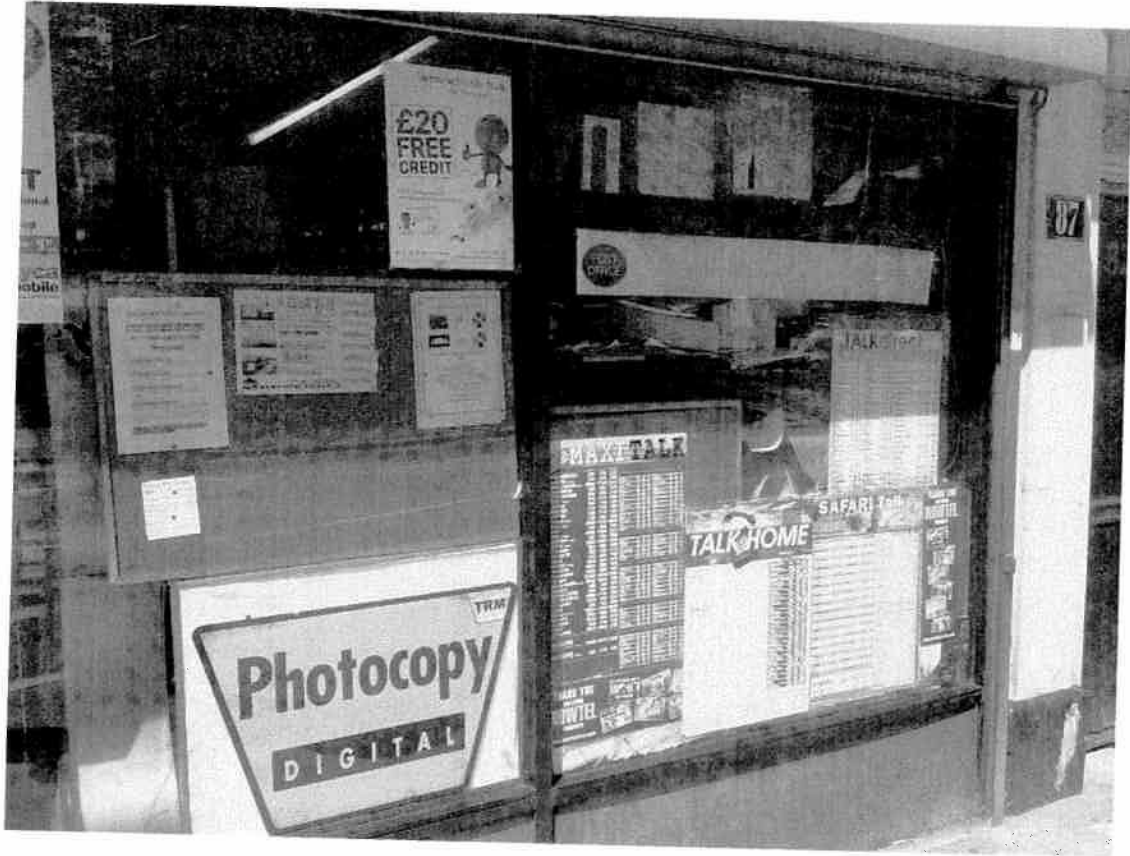
- Since the closure, the sub-postmaster reported that he has lost 25% of his non-Post Office turnover.
- He estimates that 8 out of 10 of his Post Office customers would have bought something else from the shop.
- Trade has been diverted to the Crouch End crown Post Office and with it much of the non PO purchases.
- This is likely to have been experienced by other shops in the area (the grocery shop at No 96 has compensated for this by acquiring a “Pay Pall” facility, attracting customers wishing to pay utility bills electronically.)
- As other overheads on the business remained the same, the unit profit has declined.
- An application to LB of Haringey for a business rate review was unsuccessful.
- The proprietor is keenly aware of the inconvenience this has caused to less able and older people, especially residents of the nearby [care home]. He continues to deliver small items they request by telephone.
- When the closure happened, the PO came to paint out their logo on his fascia board. A new one would cost @ £2 500; not really affordable to a small business.
- Overall the closure has meant that the value of his business has diminished and that the proprietor and his family are contemplating selling.

7. Physical appearance and maintenance of sub-post offices

Cllr Bevan has supplied pictorial evidence (below) of the frontage of two local sub post offices at Broad Lane, Page Green N15 and 105 Turnpike Lane, N8).

It is felt that the frontage of the two sub post offices represent a lack of professional standards by Post office Ltd in the image it aims to present to customers. This is of particular concern when compared with local banks and building societies with whom Post Office Ltd is increasingly in competition with for business.

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Post office at Broad Lane, Page Green

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Post office at 105 Turnpike Lane

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Submission to Haringey Council Overview and Scrutiny Meeting 5th July 2010

The following is a collection of responses received from local residents to an appeal by Lynne Featherstone MP, Liberal Democrat MP for Hornsey & Wood Green, for information on how recent Post Office closures have affected them.

June 2010

Just wanted to say that it now takes me 3 times as long as it used to to get to my local post office and the ques are horrendous, which is why I avoid it at all costs and only go when I absolutely have no other choice.

There used to be a sub post office at both Cranley Gardens and Fortis Green Rd in Muswell Hill, both now long gone. I live almost exactly halfway between post offices in Muswell Hill and East Finchley and one is as bad as the other in terms of queuing. A return to sub post offices, at least for basic services, would serve the community better than the present system which seems more intent on creating queues so that someone can try and sell one a variety of services one doesn't want while waiting to be served.

In answer to your Post Office request - using any local post office is now a nightmare. Because the Alexandra Park Road office was shut, we now either have to go to the main post office in Muswell Hill or use the small one in Colney Hatch Lane. The main post office in Muswell Hill has queues stretching out of the door. It takes at least 15 minutes queuing to be served. What's additionally annoying is that there is a PO worker going up and down the line trying to sell Post Office insurance and such things! Colney Hatch Lane is OK but we have to drive to get to it and it's difficult to park. So all in all, we truly miss our local post office.

The queues are much larger at the post-offices and on occasions go out onto the street. I am now buying in bulk my stamps i.e. books of 100 as I do not want to waste time in queues.

I avoid the PO if I can since the closure of Weston park.

The queueing in C End PO is nearly always long - 10-20 minutes wait.

Emotionally, I deeply miss the business of our little local PO. It was a place to bump into people, have a short gossip and feel a sense of community. This sense of community provides a sense of warmth, greater security, and thus, generally, adds to the sum total of people's happiness, and that is always a good thing.

Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago? - Yes - now try to avoid using the PO

What are the queues like at your nearest post office? - Nearly always out onto street at main Muswell Hill Office

How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office? - never

go to main one (Queues!!)

Do you have to take one or more buses to get there? - **if necessary drive to small one on Colney Hatch Lane**

How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago? - **15 minutes**

If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures. - **Very sad at the loss of the wonderful family who ran Alexander Park Road Post Office**

Thanks for getting in touch. I'm getting in touch as I imagine those motivated to reply will have a bad experience, and I'd like to provide some balance. Since the post offices you mentioned closed I have not noticed any change whatsoever. We live in an age when so many fewer transactions need to occur at Post Offices it is only right that their use should be reviewed.

I'm sure you agree that it would be scandalous for your government to propose, as it is, cuts to the armed forces, university places and welfare payments while ignoring that £150m a year is spent propping up post offices that have no commercial case and by definition don't serve enough customers to be viable. What it is about Post Offices, compared to, say, Universities, that makes them such sacred cows I do not know. I do know that the Vince Cable who tells me that we need to get real on public sector pensions would also tell me that spending hundreds of millions of pounds a year to subsidise loss-making shops will need to end.

I'm generally impressed with the Post Offices in Wood Green - they seem lively and generally the staff are more friendly and better resourced than those in Central London. No doubt it is their ability to operate effectively that has meant they are still open today.

Here's my story about losing our local post office in Weston Park.

Nearest PO in Crouch End is now an extra half mile away
Takes 6-7 minutes longer to walk to the PO than before
Use PO more now than 2 years ago - mainly for business postage services
Queues at Crouch End main PO during the middle part of the day, when I usually have to go, are AWFUL, 10-30 minutes queue time - normally min. 15 minutes

What would have previously been a 6-8 minute door-to-door trip is now a minimum of 20 minutes, but usually 35-40.

Thanks for your email on the subject of the effects of local PO closures.

The closure of the Ferme Park Road PO has certainly affected my use of PO services. Whereas before, I just needed to pop down to the end of my road (2 min. walk), I now need to get a bus to the nearest PO in Crouch End or on Stroud Green Road (the local PO near my work in Clerkenwell has also closed down, so I need to get a bus to the nearest one near Old Street tube). To use my nearest post offices, I need to plan my Sat. mornings carefully, as they close by 12 or 1pm, so if I miss the opening hrs I have to wait another week before I can get to them. If I have other plans for a Saturday morning, I don't get to them at all. The consequence of this is that I no longer send parcels anywhere as it is too much hassle. I have also pretty well stopped sending anything by recorded delivery, and just take the risk of things getting to their destination. I know that my pensioner neighbours are having real trouble since the PO closed. Yes Lynne, it is very inconvenient to have lost Ferme Park PO. Only today I had to rush down to Stroud Green PO just to post a birthday card to South Africa - 20 minutes each way walking or by bus - and then there was waiting time of 10 minutes. Drawing out cash on my debit card requires planning now as I don't see why I should pay £1.50 to access my own account, small as it is anyway. Crouch End PO is a bit of a nightmare as it has big queues and is very hot.

I find it very sad that the old post office/newsagent is now struggling. Various ideas it had have not worked because Londis has it all bigger and better: including newspapers which they shouldn't sell - I make a point of getting mine from the newsagent.

As you know I was deeply involved with the campaign ,which you so vigourously supported, to save our post office in Alexandra Park Rd N10 from closure.

Despite meeting the criteria for retaining it, and despite the PO in Colney Hatch Lane being less busy, and the owner wishing to retire.....we lost the battle,.

ONE of my concerns was security ...especially with regard to elderly residents collecting pensions. The owners KNEW most of their customers and the set up was such that people were not at risk from being targeted to be the victims of mugging.

We knew there was a great deal of robbery and bag snatching etc going on in Muswell Hill...in the shops and in the street....and on buses. Much of which is STILL unreported as the victims feel so embarassed.

A neighbour was robbed in the main post office , of her pensiona moment's inattention, and the gang that operate have got their money and passed it on.

The SAME pensioner was robbed AGAIN ...having collected her pension from the PO ...between St James Church and Sainsbury's. I think she feels too stupid to talk about it now.

I took this up with Rhiannon on the Ham and High, as I had been fined for appearing to park just beyond the line....filmed by a camera alongside the church. Using the Freedom of Information Act, Rhiannon Evans learned that POLICE cameras have detected very few incidents over the past 3 years. I believe it was about 30 ! The traffic fines run into thousands!

So, the cameras are MEGA efficient at recording minor infringements ...(and I am STILL not convinced that I was beyond the line....but paid anyway.)....but not serious crimes like robbery that happen frequently.

The queues at the Main Post Office are a LURE for criminals who seem to then stalk their victims . THIS did not happen when the sub post office was the preferred place to collect pensions for many local people.

On the point of robbery, over the past year, within a few hundred yards of my home, I can identify 7 neighbours who have been robbed , some on more than one occasion, in the Muswell Hill area. The BUS seems a popular means of carrying out purse snatches....the robber gets off before the victim realises they have been robbed. Another must have been followed from the Building Society and then robbed of both HER and her husbands' savings withdrawal.

I wonder what all those cameras are for?

Thank goodness the present government is re-thinking the surveillance culture we seem to have been forced into.....with so little benefit to the community in terms of crime prevention. CCTV may help on problem estates....but does not seem to be monitored in our area.

As for my own usage of the PO I certainly cut down on sending things as I hate the queues at the main PO....I DO however use the sub PO in Colney Hatch Lane , to invest in PO products, buy stamps, pay bills and send parcels.

I HOPE we DON'T LOSE that one too.

The closure of Alex Pk Rd PO has left a hole in the community. It acted as a glue that kept us together. We looked out for eachother, kept up with news, supported the owners ,it was personal and acted as a therapy centre for some othersise very isolated people.

Those are my main points.

Yes, I was very disappointed that the PO in Alexandra Park Road closed. If I now need to go to a PO I have to use the central Wood Green office and find the queues are horrendous - it usually takes at least three quarters of an hour to be served. Having family and friends living overseas, posting greeting cards to them is a half-day exercise, as it takes me about a half-hour in each direction to go there in my wheelchair

I hope you will be able to put some pressure on to have local PO's reopened

run a small business from home and often need to post samples, which need to be weighed, and registered letters & to purchase stationary.

The closure of the post office in Alexandra Park Rd adds a minimum of 1 hr every time I need to post something. My nearest post office is

Wood Green where there are always long queues whatever time of day I go.

Working alone this one activity costs me at least hours work , which effectively means I lose money each time I need to use the service. The small sub post office in Alexandra Park was part of the community and meant that I also used local shops , I am sure the closure adversely affected everyone nearby.

It is mid-afternoon and I have just returned from the post office, the main Crouch End one in Tottenham Lane, where I queued for 15 minutes. This is about average now since the closure of the smaller POs in the area. There were only 3 cashiers and when I left the queue was out into the street which is not unusual.

I queued at the Archway Road sub- post office for half an hour recently - there are only two staff and if one of them gets busy searching for a parcel

I thought the Highgate Village office did a great job in the past and should never have been axed .(power to the people I don't think)

It is now a ten minute walk and with a large parcel etc etc.

The queue wait time at the Archway Road post office is now ridiculous.

There is at the very least an half hour queue there all day long as it is the only nearby post office for Highgate.

It is a very small post office with only 2 counter staff and there is no space inside it, the queue often stretches our into Archway Road.

People have to go there to collect undelivered packages. Have people really thought of the population density in London. How many post offices are there per person?

- > Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago? No
- > What are the queues like at your nearest post office? Reasonable - never
- > more than say 10 minutes. Depends on time of day.
- > How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office? 5

> minutes walk
> Do you have to take one or more buses to get there? No
> How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest
post office today,
> compared to two years ago? N/A
> If you have a local business, or know of a local
business that has been
> affected, it would also be great to hear how they have
coped with the post
> office closures. N/A

Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?
--MORE

> What are the queues like at your nearest post office?
LONGISH

> How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest
post office? LESS
> THAN 10-MINUTE WALK

> Do you have to take one or more buses to get there? -
NONE

> How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest
post office
> today, compared to two years ago? NO LONGER

Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?

Yes. I avoid it.

What are the queues like at your nearest post office?

The queues in the Muswell Hill Post Office often stretch out of the door and down to the next shop.

How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office?

It's a twenty-minute walk.

Do you have to take one or more buses to get there?

Two buses if it's raining.

**How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today,
compared to two years ago?**

Twice as long.

**If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been
affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post
office closures.**

-

I used to enjoy going to the Post Office in Alexandra Park Road. The staff were warm and personal, and I used to enjoy sorting out problems like sending various packages and getting the help I needed.

I dread visits to Muswell Hill Post Office. The waiting time is usually half an hour. Even though I bring some reading, it is uncomfortable and hard to concentrate. The whole queue is usually thoroughly bad-tempered at the loss of precious time. The staff try to be kind and helpful. But who feels easy taking up time to ask the staff enough questions, knowing very well that there is a queue of people smouldering with frustration waiting for you to finish?

The Weston Park post office closed 2 years ago so I need to visit the crouch end one even though it was used.

Effects: Now I send onlu regular sized mail with standard postage as it's very hard to reach a post office in my working week. I have to take extra time off to visit post office near work which is a disruption to the office.

So I send less parcels or anything that needs weighing, sizing, special delivery or abroad. That's indifference from government to a sizeable income due to the closures, as well as to the shop and surrounding community.

In wealthy areas small sub post offices seem to be open i.e. Richmond, Highgate. Not sure if case but seen some.

Queues at Crouch End post office huge so takes up whole saturday morning to visit. Only go if have to, I.e. Tax disk. Have savings in post office needing attention.

I've stopped using PO for services ie foreign exchange, insurance, accounts, parcels, special/registered delivery, stationery, premium bonds or other. As it's way too troublesome to get to.

dread using Muswell Hill post office - can take nearly an hour
Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?

we often have to queue out on the pavement
What are the queues like at your nearest post office?

it's five minutes' walk, so that's no problem
How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office?

no
Do you have to take one or more buses to get there?

n/a
How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago?

If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures.

Counter staff are kind and patient, but they spend ages asking people to buy insurance, to invest money etc in various schemes. They have so many extra boxes to tick that service at the counter is slow slower slowest. Often the waiting conditions are horrid _ can be terribly hot in summer. The post office in East Finchley - which admittedly has more floor space, seems to have a speedy electronic monitoring system for the queues so you feel the wait is not out of control..

Muswell Hill staff are sympathetic but seemingly powerless to deal with the bad service. Every time i ask to see the manager to complain about the long waiting time they ask me please to make a written complaint, saying it would help their cause. I must have done that three times now. No useful response.

I use the PO less now, but when I have to, the queues are long and time-consuming and the assistants bombard you with trying to sell their wares.

I think the closures have been madness to say the least. I have very rarely been to a post office that does not have queues 3 deep. So if I need 'special' post, ie large envelope or whatever the new size/coding blah blah, then I have to queue for maybe a quarter to half an hour! They most (if not all) don't have machines because 'they are vandalised', and Wood Green branch used to have a service desk for just such a use - but no more!

How on earth management think that running their retail and postal service in this manner works then think again because just look at the competition that has moved into their market.

I used to use the post office in Weston Park. This was efficient, fast and friendly, particularly when my disabled mother stayed with me and needed to access her pension. I now use the one in Crouch End which always has a queue out onto the pavement. I avoid going there and now do more on my computer so that articles are delivered automatically. I have attempted to use the one in Wood Green but the queues there are even longer.

I think the closure of the local post offices was appalling and it has severely affected the provision of their services
I live close to the main post office in Muswell Hill but I am very reluctant to use it as there are normally long queues, not helped by the staff trying to sell insurance etc!

I tend to go to smaller post offices if I am out in the car to avoid Muswell Hill.

I do not understand their thinking - the PO has an important role in

the local area and should remain local.

It was a disgrace they shut so many small ones and put additional burden on the remaining ones without seemingly staffing up accordingly.

I now use Stroud Green Road PO instead of Ferme Park Road PO. It takes an extra 10/15 mins walk which is fine for me but may not be so convenient for others, who would need to take a bus rather than have a five minute walk.

I have only used Stroud Green Road PO a couple of times but the queue has been quite lengthy both times. Unless picking up a redirected parcel, I now use a PO nearish to my workplace in central London instead (still a queue but it's easier for me to spend a lunchtime queueing).

As far as my experience of Post Office closures is concerned, I moved to Muswell Hill soem 18 months ago and am very well served in terms of lcoation as the P Office is a 10 minute walk away. That said, the queues are often outside the door even in the middle of the day and my heart sinks whenever I have to visit. Another problem wih that particular P Office but I suspect is not confined to that branch, is the fact that every single time I go (with the aforementioned queues being out of the door), one of the clerks shuts up shop, leaving one lesswindow open. I complained to the manager at one stage and on that day he himself came forward to man the window but the problem continues.

Consequently there are two issues here, one leading on to the other:

unnecessarily long queues
poor level of staffing/manning,

A couple of months ago I waited for 55 minutes in the nearest main post office to be served. 2 weeks later I waited 40 minutes to get to the window. On both occasions when I left it was closing time and the queue was still to the door.

I have always up to the closures used the small sub post offices and NEVER had to queue so long. I know this is a familiar tale as when I moaned to friends they have had similar tales to tell of queuing times.

Thanks for asking my opinion on the post office closures. To say in summary I have been effected by the Alexandra Park Road Post Office closure as I used to use it on my route to Edmonton where I often go for work .

It is no longer there and I have to either use the Muswell Hill Post Office which is even busier or the one on Hornsey High Street which is out of my route. In any event

it is difficult for me< It costs money to travel the extra mile or queue up in another one by wasting in each case an extra 30 minutes at least.

I wish they never closed the post office on Alexandra Park Road as I think it is completely irresponsible.

My nearest post office is now the main one in Muswell Hill and it is a short walk, but it is soooooo crowded and the queues are so long that I almost never visit any longer. I do my shopping online for presents which are then delivered direct to the recipients, I go elsewhere for insurance that I used to buy from the post office. I buy stamps in the newsagents and do savings and investments online. The only thing I absolutely can't avoid the post office for is Oyster card applications for 11-15 year olds. Last time I queued it took around 45 minutes. If I absolutely have to go, I always take a book.

Our local post office was on Alex. Park Rd and we miss it for its convenience. I hate going to Muswell Hill. You generally have to wait 15-20 min to be served, the queue is often out of the door, great when it rains or very cold. This post office is too small for the nos. of people who have to use it. It irritates me that some of that time is taken up by asking people if they want to top up their mobile or take out insurance. I go to the PO to post parcels, letters etc! I therefore try not to use that post office but would rather use the one in Bounds Green on my way to work or the little post office in Kew Gardens where I sometime work.

I use Archway Road and the queues are horrendous - Christmas style virtually all the time. Terrible shame that Highgate High Street was closed as of course they now all have to use Archway Road. Absolutely criminal it was ever closed. What the criterion was I can't imagine.

I really miss the Highgate High Street post office. The one on Archway Road is very cramped, dirty, smelly and there are frequent long queues which wind around the tiny shop and sometimes spill onto the pavement outside. It has been likened to a third world facility and is a disgrace. We need a proper postoffice with sufficient space for queueing and for buying stationery. The one in the village was very easy to visit and not so cramped.

Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?
definitely

What are the queues like at your nearest post office?
dreadful, out the door at Muswell Hill always with old people and mothers with young children having to stand

outside. The queues at Bounds Green are bad too and one time a major argument broke out there as a young mother had waited 50 minutes and got angry. I imagine the Post offices workers face this kind of upset much more than before.

How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office? I now have to use the car or bus before I walked. Do you have to take one or more buses to get there? only one. How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago? depends on the method of transport walking or bus or car, but probably three times as long as before. If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures.

Several of my local post offices have closed, mainly my closest one on Highgate High Street near Bisham Gardens, and another one further down the Archway Road which closed years ago. I have to go to the one at the corner of the Archway Road and the Muswell Hill Road now, which almost always has an enormous queue. As a result, I use the Post Office as infrequently as possible. Last Christmas I spent almost an hour in the queue posting Christmas cards abroad.

While I realise the Post Office is very short of money, mainly for its pension fund, I do think this is a service the country needs, particularly if we are to wean ourselves off of oil. I suggest therefore that we have more online services so people can print postage from home. Also, bring back the local post offices which bring so much convenience.

My family regularly use the post office mainly in East Finchley; we've given up on the Muswell Hill PO. The East Finchley PO is far busier than was usual. I take a newspaper IPOD etc. which was usual to use on the tube! The only plus side is that I sometimes find someone interesting to talk to, to take my mind off the waiting-how would the Germans cope?

I think Muswell Hill post office needs to be a bigger space. My local PO was Alexandra Park Road I used it about once a year.

With the closure of the small local Post Offices I now tend to use branches in Central London when I go there for work.

The main PO in Wood Green is generally too busy and the last couple of times I went there I cued for 35 minutes and 20 minutes respectively.

The branches in central London are not as efficient as they used to be either, as most seem have now less people, leading to only few tills being open at any one time.

In the last year or so the quality of the service has visibly deteriorated, with letters being lost or being delivered to wrong addresses, I regularly receive mail for a number of my neighbours, which seems to indicate less care in the sorting office too, likely due to staff shortages.

It has also happened that parcels that couldn't be delivered because no one was at home were then left in a PO in Tottenham, requiring an hour travel by bus to go and collect.

Quite apart from the aggravation and waste of time caused to people, not to mention the real problem it must be for the old and disabled, the poor service surely must have a negative impact on all small local businesses.

The first time I came to the UK, in the late 70s, one of the things that impressed me was how efficient Royal Mail was, and how superior to the European average, which was especially impressive given the size of London.

While the postal service has dramatically improved across Europe, sadly today's UK mail reminds me of the (dis)service that was common in Italy in the 60s.

I feel that my family and I have been very affected by the closure of the post office on Alexandra Park Road. I will try and respond to your suggested questions:

**Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?
Yes, I only go
now to collect my benefits.**

I have used the post office close to Bounds Green station and have noticed that the queues can be long (stretching close to the end of the shop) just before 5pm. Maybe if the post office on Alexandra Park Road was still open this would not be the case?

Just to let you know that I was not directly affected by the Post Office closures, but my own Post Office in Muswell Hill is very busy, the queues are long and sometimes it takes up to 20 minutes to be served.

I was annoyed when Ferme Park Road post office closed because I used to go there to avoid the occasional long queues in Stroud Green Road post office.

But the truth is that for the last 2 years I have rarely been inconvenienced by the closure nor have the the queues in SGR been excessive on the occasions I have gone.

In my experience for some reason the waiting time at SGR Post Office seems to be less than before the closures!

Thanks for following up on this. I imagine you will grt more complaints than satisfied responses like mine but there it is

I live in Albany Road. The local office in Ferme Park Road closed two years ago; the nearest office is in Stroud Green Road (near to Tesco).

It's difficult to say that I use the post office less than before: I certainly use it less to withdraw money, but otherwise needs must and I go to Stroud Green. I certainly use it less often -- that is, I batch things up because it is now much more inconvenient.

The queues are worse. When they are bad they are much much worse. I often have to wait twenty minutes.

I'm 65 and fit: I can cycle to Stroud Green. But instead of a five minute stroll it's a fifteen minute walk, the days I don't cycle. I could get a bus, but the bus stop is just where the old post office was -- hardly a convenience.

Worst of all, the post office changed hands just before the close down exercise. The new people were trying really hard to make a better service, and to get to know their customers (no hope of that at Stroud Green -- too many customers). The business is dying. I feel they were swindled. I know the PO bosses won't care about that.

Losing our post office has been a real loss. It means the shops at Ferme Park get much less foot traffic, more car traffic, and are more impersonal.

I am fortunate enough to live lose to the Archway Road sub post office so I am only indirectly affected. However as you would expect the queues have increased considerably at my 'local' such that i always go armed with a newspaper and on the rare occasions that there is not a queue I complain that I do not have enough time to read my newspaper. I hope this helps.

I have moved to the area soon after the post office was closed, so I didn't experience much of its closure.

I must say I mainly use the post office on station road, opposite alexandra palace station, which service is absolutely inefficient. I've seen people getting their parcels lost _every_ single time I've been there, and even the funny (if not disrespectful) excuse "there's no parcel for you, probably the postman left the postcard as he forecast you are going to receive one in the next few days".

There are always queues at any time of the day, and the staff is really impolite. The only advantage for me is that this post office is within walking distance from where I live, Alexandra Park Road.

I guess the service could be much better hadn't they closed the other post offices, at least for the queues (which, I guess, impact greatly on the work quality of postal workers, for their increased stress, especially when they also see their jobs at risk - this is not to excuse their impoliteness, but surely we need to take this into account).

Thanks again for working for Hornsey and Wood Green so well.

Fortunately I have not been negatively affected by the closure of the local post offices in terms of time or difficulty to get to one. However, there is always a long long queue at the main one in Muswell Hill whenever I go, usually trailing outside the door. I do not visit at any particular time so it is not about a particular time of the day or week. I often feel irritated that all of the cashier positions are not staffed. If they have the provision for more positions than are staffed, it would be helpful to have more of them staffed. I also feel irritated when I am asked at the end of a transaction which I have come to carry out, whether I want some other service from them such as Travel Insurance, or financial products. If I wanted these from the post office I would ask for them, and think it would be quite enough, if they must, for the staff to ask if there is anything else.

I'm v fortunate to say i have been unaffected by the post office closures - i can easily walk to the main one in crouch end. i used to use the small one on weston park to avoid queues at the main one. Certain days/certain times the queues are out the door but fairly fast moving in my experience. I use it fortnightly/monthly and am not dependent on it like some

many thanks for all your work locally - hospitals/schools/pot-holes etc - it is very much appreciated!!

Today I use the Post Office far less than I did before.

I am still very angry and concerned at the closure of our local Post Office (in Ferme Park Road).

As many of us know to our cost there are long queues now at the nearest Post Office (in Stroud Green Road). It is a 10 minute walk from my home or a short two-stop bus ride. In total it now takes more than 15 minutes extra than it did before for me to visit the Post Office.

The old system has been completely destroyed. The Post Offices bosses and the previous Government were in my opinion extremely foolish to have stood back and allowed the demise of the Post Office system. I do not think that it will ever recover.

They should not have been allowed to damage our communities in the way that they did.

The closure of Ferme Park Rd was disgraceful.

The postmaster was a broken, depressed character and a valuable, local amenity was lost.

It was a lovely atmosphere that fostered social cohesion.

Queuing for ages on Stroud Green Rd doesn't compare.

Thank you for your concern. I miss the PO in Weston Park Crouch End very much. The next nearest in Tottenham Lane is overloaded and often has very long queues. The loss of other small POs across London means that just 'popping in' on the way to do something else is not an option, it has to be an expedition (the other main PO I now use near my workplace, in Camden Town has seating and numbered tickets to mitigate the queues - it is quite absurd)

When the small post office was open at the top of Salisbury Road, I had a 5 minute walk thereto and a 5 minute queue. Now I have a 11 minute walk and almost always more than a 5 minute wait, sometimes about 12 minutes. I use the post office to send parcels and special delivery items, things that only a post office can do.

I am part of the generation that does as much by internet. Parcels and special delivery cannot be done by internet. Imagine the elderly, who are not savvy with the internet, queuing endlessly. I know they have the time, but that's not the point!

To my surprise, I was shocked by the decision of Royal Mail and Local

Council supporting these closures

How difficult and painstaking to go to another Post office, which they

should know of people
who are bound by their physical difficulties and which
are not near
to us. We were deprived of community Post office,
social networking meeting people with pleasure and
facilities they have
provided for local communities, are totally vanished, by
this act,
how worse the suffering and distress to local people
and long queue
for another Post office provided. I am presenting this
not only for my local Post Office, but all Local Post
offices'
closure????????????????

I recommend and request those, to open local Post office
for Local
people that is why the Council and Royal Mail are for?

I hope, PLEASE, Please listen to the powerful voice of
People and
understand their severe wounds that
YOU have given it to the local people and to their
happiness!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Wish the Haringey People and voice of local People will
win this simple
but hard battle"

The closure of the Alexandra Park Road post office has been a detrimental
decision.
I now have to go to Muswell Hill and the queue there is usually always out the
door.

I am currently on mat leave so have the luxury of going when most people
should be at work, however the queue is still quite horrendous at these
'quieter times'.
Christmas 2009 was a complete nightmare to get cards/gifts posted, with the
waiting times.

I don't mind walking, however for those that can't walk far, the local post office
closures must have hit them harder.

Also I used to spend money in the local post offices, ie buying cards, or other
newsagent items, helping a local business. This is not done in the other post
offices now, mainly as the facilities aren't there, but also to avoid losing a
space in a queue.

I use the Highgate near Highgate Station Post Office on Archway Road. Due to the closure of Highgate High Street Post Office, the queuing time is now on average 20-30 minutes, which is very frustrating if you only need to check the weight of an item to ensure it bears the correct postage.

Inside, the Post Office is very small and last Christmas, the queue coiled round the inside of the Post Office and then continued outside. The queuing time then was approx. 1 hour.

This Post Office has very little ventilation and no air conditioning so, coupled with being small, it is very hot in Summer and very cold and full of condensation in the winter. I am sure that it cannot be healthy for so many people to be within such a small space for a long period of time. In fact, when I used the Post Office just before Christmas last year, I felt as though I was sharing everyone else's germs!

I use this Post Office more now than I used to since I gave up work and so do not have the benefit of using a central London Post Office.

I used to use the post office on Ferme Park Rd, opposite Londis regularly. I now buy stamps online from Ocado, or still from behind the counter. However I've stopped writing to friends overseas as I never know how much the letter or package will cost to send. It really saddens me. I also stopped selling things on e-bay as I can't easily work out costs etc. My kids are not growing up knowing about pen friends and learning about weights etc. I used to use the cash facility on the Link machine in the store too. It's very sad to see that family business fade away as now they just sell papers and sweets and the shop is so dark I can't imagine how they will continue to make a living and Haringey will have another boarded up shop.

I'm just a domestic user so i can't imagine how local businesses survive.

The post office queues at muswell hill are awful. I have registered with fast drop-I have to send packages in my business very often-but I presume the closures you refer to are responsible for the problem.

Also it maddens me that in a full post office the clerks still try and sell you insurance over the counter.

I use the Post Office as much as I always have done

The Post Office in East Finchley has usually a queue which takes 15-20 minutes to clear

This is 1 mile from home

There is no bus outside our home, so I have to take the car which means putting a much higher amount into the meter, knowing that I will be in the queue.

Honestly, I find that the staff at this Post Office is rather 'union-minded' - ie, they take the slowest time - and never really pleasant service

Briefly, I often now use a post office in Barnet in a small paper shop and queue there, rather than in the open in Crouch End or Muswell Hill. Last time I went to post an overseas letter in Crouch End there were 23 people waiting so after a few minutes I went away. I tend to guess what the postage on letters will be and probably am over paying with too many stamps

Old people often with walking frames and sticks have nowhere to sit while they queue up to have their turn to collect their pensions etc. No one in the large post offices knows them, whereas when there was a small PO in Park Road, the counter staff knew them and checked up if they didn't come in to get their pensions, calling in social services or to my knowledge, once, the police.,

Anything you can do to get post office counters reopened would be worthwhile.

Thank you for this enquiry. It is indeed a disheartening experience to visit Muswell Hill Broadway P.O. the waiting time there is at least 20min on a good day. This is an unacceptable waste of time and illustrates to the public with what contempt they are actually regarded by Central Government. I imagine the same goes on in the other public facilities where ordinary 'hard working families' have to go to obtain their benefits. I imagine things will only get worse unless attitudes change and people like you start putting the boot in.

Best of luck

Although I am sure there must be a lot of people who have been adversely affected by P O closures, I am fortunate enough to have one at Bounds Green at present, within 8 minutes walk and Wood Green about 15 minutes walk or a short busride away. Although I must say I would be very upset to lose the one at Bounds Green. I believe this one must cater for a very wide area and to close it would be quite unjustifiable.

Re the post office closures - as lucky Crouch End residents, we still have easy access to the main Post Office in Crouch End, but the queues are certainly longer to the point of having to stand out in the road at peak times. Not much fun in the pouring rain, and certainly not helpful if one is elderly, disabled, or in charge of young children. I know my friends in Highgate are particularly affected.

Luckily I am not effected so far as Crouch End PO is still operating

Post office was shut down to prepare for privatisation so some ministers can hand it over to DHL or FEDEX and get a cut.

That is what it is all about, that is why you have entered the coalition so as to make all services double in price and offer a worse service despite the population doubling in the area over the last 20years.

If you can end up charging double the council tax and offer ZERO services you will have accomplished your political aims

I use the Muswell Hill post office with varying frequency for business, at times more than twice a week. The queues also vary according to the time of the week or month; at worst one can expect to wait on the pavement outside with up to 5 people before reaching the door. When it is raining or cold that can be a problem. Occasionally I also use the Wood Green office where the queues are particularly lengthy though all indoors.

The number of staff in post is sometimes too few and management can be lax in linking staff to queues. The efficiency of individual staff is in general good and new recruits well trained but the time taken by staff members away from their post has been irritatingly long on occasions. Occasionally customers lose patience with waiting. On average the waiting time is at least 10 minutes, at worst 20/25 minutes.

A new computer system has been introduced recently which has improved performance but supervision can still be unsatisfactory. The training of supervision at Muswell Hill should have been considerably better over the period concerned but things are improving. There may be scope for improving the office layout.

It takes me a 10 minute walk to reach MH post office. That has not changed over the 2 years.

The closures have not affected me personally though initially MH inefficiencies made me go elsewhere but that no longer applies. I rate MH efficiency at around 70/75%. It could be better. More than 2 years ago there was a nearer small PO but owing to rent or whatever it had to close. The financial viability of small offices is obviously a factor.

The post office now offers a range of services and staff try to sell insurance etc Because MH PO is comparatively small there cannot be much scope for increasing the range of services including banking.

There is of course a lot more to be said about the post office and the coalition proposals for it. I understand that the organization is now well in profit though the pension problem is unresolved. Mechanization is apparently going ahead and workforce difficulties largely overcome. Extra capital will no doubt be useful but a foreign participant is not necessarily the best option. The people's bank idea is already partly operational.

Although letter post is lessening as emails increase parcel post is said to be growing through Amazon and others. Parcelforce performance used to be abysmal but appears to have substantially improved. Much better management is partly in place though needing to go further particularly to do away with serious pilferage and if share ownership is offered to the workforce John Lewis type involvement may well be developed. Libdem input to policy for the post office future can hopefully bring a new positivism to the party without old style a la Peter Mandelson privatization. I sincerely hope so. A more measured assessment is surely needed.

1. less

2. As bad as ever, but more the result of absences of people serving than excess demand 3. 400yds 4. No

I must say that the only difference I have noticed is the longer queue at the main post office.

The local Post Office in Colney Hatch Lane N10 by Wilton Road has only managed to stay open by the support of the local residents. I usually use this at least twice a month if not more to send record

delivery letters or parcels.

Unfortunately should this be forced to close I would have to walk or take the bus to Muswell Hill 1 mile away and the queues at this Post Office are horrendous especially at the end of the month when everyone is obtaining their Road Tax. Queues are often snaking out of the front door towards Specsavers. Staff are fine but it feels that they have been pushed to sell products to customers such as their credit card, insurances etc.. and this adds to the delays of customers waiting.

My local post office has been the one in Archway Road, near the crossroad at Muswell Hill Road. The excellent - fast and knowledgable - staff are deluged with work after the post office in Highgate Village closed. Saturdays especially the queue runs to out the door.

Post offices, oh post offices!

Before its closure we regularly used the sub post office in Highgate High Street - both for personal and business needs. They were always efficient and queues were rarely more than 5 minutes. Now we use Archway Road. The

staff are very pleasant but totally overwhelmed. There are 2 counters and normally at least 10 people in the line. If one person has complicated transactions they can clog up a counter for 15 minutes, and then everyone is stuck waiting. People regularly give up and leave before reaching the counter. As loads of people go in with cards to collect undelivered parcels/registered letters etc which may not be immediately located, the whole experience is a bit of a nightmare. At Christmas time it was just ridiculous.

There is insufficient capacity to deal with the demand for PO services in Highgate. Whereas once we would pop in whenever we were in the village, now we take it as read that we will need to allow up to half an hour to visit the PO, so store up jobs and go perhaps once a week. The service is much diminished and much less convenient.

Only local one nearby is Archway rd. No right or left turn from southwood lane so parking and turning round on this major road is awkward. Shop is tiny, always queues. Quite near me however, nearer than High st was but just more awkward to use. Easier to go to market Place, HGS. Great post office , but still always queues.

Thank you for following up the closure of our post offices. I live in Dules Avenue in Muswell Hill at the bottom of the hill and used to use The Alexandra Park Road sub post office. Yes I miss it terribly. I now use the Bounds Green sub post office which is a bus ride away.

(I do this when I collect my grand daughters from Bounds Green School as they were unable to get into the nearest school in Rhodes Avenue as my daughter lives just over a quarter of a mile away from it despite the eldest attending the Nursery there - but this, of course is another issue!

However it is important to say that my daughter is very happy with Bounds Green School, where the teaching care and atmosphere is excellent.

My nearest Post Office in in Muswell Hill Broadway and there is always a long queue there, quite often extending into the street. I rarely use this Post Office for this reason, though to get to the nearest sub post office will take me a walk to Alexandra Park Road, then a bus ride which would take about forty minutes - about the same as walking up hill to the Broadway and waiting in a queue at the Main Post Office!

- i definitely use the post office less, now, than two years ago. i have stopped sending packages and anything heavier than a standard letter because I do not have time to walk the 15 minutes into Crouch end and face long queues. I used the Weston Park post office regularly to send mail, obtain forms and buy a range of stamps. I also really appreciated that the local post office fulfilled a real community function for a wide range of people. I find it counterproductive to close down local points of contact, information and help.

Thank you for your e-mail. The loss of the Post Office at Highgate is a great loss for me as now I have to get to Archway by bus to transact any business and at 91 this is difficult.

I moved to Bowes Park a couple of years ago and still don't actually know where my nearest post office is. I've not seen one on my way to work, or driving around. Therefore I use our postal services at work, in Stratford - the queues in the PO there are often too long.

I think Myddleton Road, would be a prime location for a mini post

office; or at least a post box! It's a main thoroughfare to Bowes Park Station and I find it quite odd that I can't post a letter on the way to work in the morning. A good place would be the corner of Whittington and Myddleton. The nearest one is in the opposite direction on Palmerston Road.

I'm sure that won't happen, but just a thought.

So yes, I do use the post office less; generally, because it's such a hassle to get to one.

I often used to go to Alexandra Park to avoid the Muswell Hill queues but now that is not possible and I try to avoid long waits by going to Muswell Hill in the late afternoon (doesn't always work though) On busy days, such as Monday I have seen the queue trailing out of the post office past the old Woolworths. Another ploy is to go to a local post office in Twickenham when I visit relatives there. I certainly use the Muswell Hill Post office less - probably only a few times a year.

I just want to say "hurrah" for the post office in Archway Rd. Highgate which continues happily, rarely with impossible queues, and always cheerful and polite.

The only time that queues are worse is when too many people are having to collect undelivered parcels. These used to go to a sorting office but I think the nearest two have closed or moved so perhaps that is the reason.

I am sure you will have this repeated again and again, but the local post offices having shut has lead to a dramatic increase in the queue at the main post office in Crouch End. I have to post packages for work, and I have measured the average length of time I have to wait now, and it is 25 minutes. I wish we could charge the government for the extra hours spent a week, it might put us into profit !

my nearest post office is muswell hill and there are huge ques into the road and the staff go of to lunch at lunch time which is the busiest time. all letters have to be weighed these days and i am confused about how to judge what stamp to use on anything but the simplest letter. i will do anything to avoid the post and they must be loosing a lot of money for this reason. i have complained but nothing was done. i bought a post office bond and had

to go to the ombudsman to get my money back after the bond had matured and eventually got it back 4 months late and the compensation they gave me was pitiful as i lost a lot of interest that i could have earned if i had invested the money 4 months earlier. i feel cheated and angry. thanks for your interest.

Since the closure of Highgate High St post office I have noticed that the queues at Archway and Highgate Station post offices have lengthened appreciably. As a consequence I try to avoid going to the post office at all as I have young children who cannot tolerate a long wait.

I was devastated when the Highgate post office closed. Highgate is a self-contained village which can meet nearly all one's needs - butcher, chemist, greengrocer, banks - and integral to that was the PO with its kindly efficient staff who knew me well. Although I live in Muswell Hill, I always used the Highgate PO as there were no long queues and there was always some incredibly handy stationery there too.

I go out of my way to avoid Muswell Hill P O - the queues, which were always long, now snake out of the door and one has to devote a ridiculous amount of time to waiting. There used to be a great little PO at the bottom of Cranley Gardens for Muswell Hill but that was axed some years ago.

I have been forced to go to Highgate Station PO - the people are great but it is tiny, scruffy and always has a long queue too.

There is no longer any such thing as 'nipping in' to a local P O - it requires stratgeic planning unless one is to spend an inordinate amount of time in a queue.

I live on The Avenue in Muswell Hill and have been badly affected by the closure of Alexandra Park Road Post Office.

1) I use the Post Office less than I did before and find other ways to send things e.g. courier returns for mail order etc.

2) The queues in Muswell Hill Post Office are a joke - out the door most of the time, and the staff hell-bent on selling you travel insurance and other products instead

of clearing the queue quickly. The staff in the Colney Hatch Lane are very unfriendly and I miss the friendly community feel of the couple who ran AP Road Post Office.

3) Have to take a bus, or park in Muswell Hill (costs money and the traffic wardens are zealots!)

4) 15 minutes longer.

In my view we need a Post Office this end of Muswell Hill and it is a huge loss. Thanks for undertaking this survey!

Yes, we use the post office ,less than we did two years ago.

The queues in the nearest post office are horrendous. We have to go down a hill (Southwood Lane) to get to it in Archway rd and of course up again.

Compared for us just walking into Highgate Village on the flat. However, we never know whether the journey we now make will infact deal with us because of the length of the queue and we are unable to combine our visit with other shopping as we could in the past.

I am not affected at all by the Post Office closures luckily. Here are my response to your questions:-

Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago? YES What are the queues like at your nearest post office? OK How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office? NO Do you have to take one or more buses to get there? NO How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago? No difference as my main Post Office has remained open If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures. NO

The Unforeseen Consequences of the closure of Highgate High Street branch N6.

Our nearest branch now is Archway Road, Highgate, opposite the tube station.

Since the closures it has become very much busier; is very small with space for two serving positions only. The sales floor is tiny and cannot cope during the frequent busy trading periods and is in a deplorable state of repair.

One has to wait outside the front door until a customer exits, before joining the double queue inside. Postal workers on collection have to compete with the public to get access to and from the front door to pick up parcels.

The branch has no ventilation to the street, nor has air conditioning to the sales area; as a result the air is stifling in summer and germ laden in winter.

Do you use the post office **less**, now, than two years ago?
NO

What are the queues like at your nearest post office? **Too often 10 or more minutes**

How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office? **½ mile**

Do you have to take one or more buses to get there? **Can walk or take bus 3 stops**

How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago? **No change**
 If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures. **Not applicable.**

I do use the post office about as much as before but have mostly switched to the one on Colney Hatch Lane which near my mother's house. It takes 20 minutes to walk or 2 buses.

The nearest on Muswell Hill Broadway takes 12 minutes to walk but has horrendous queues - it took me 50 minutes to get my Freedom Pass and on ordinary days queuing takes at least 15 - 20 minutes.

It takes 7 minutes longer than when Alexandra Park Rd. P.O. was open.

Further to the closure of the Post office on Alexandra Park Road, I would comment that the average waiting time in Muswell Hill Broadway post office has increased substantially.

Both Post offices were in equal distance away from my house however I never had to wait at the Alexandra Park Road PO. The minimum time I have had to wait at the Muswell Hill PO is about 45 minutes. The queues are unbelievable regardless of the time of day you go. I once waited 1 and a half hours to post a special delivery item that couldn't wait.

I do not understand the reasoning behind the closure of local post offices when they save local residents so much time.

I am diagonally opposite the main post office in the Broadway. That is the one I have always used in the 56 years that I have been living in Muswell Hill!

Personally therefore, I am not inconvenienced by the closure of the other offices but that does not mean I am unsympathetic to those who have lost the facility of using a sub post office.

My answers to your specific question are:

1. No.
2. They seem to be perpetual. On a Saturday morning in particular it is not unusual to see the queue extending back beyond the 99p store.
4. No
5. No different
6. Personally, I have not been affected.

Post Office

We continue to be severely inconvenienced by the taking away of our local Highgate Post Office.

1. We used to walk to the Post Office. Now we have to take a bus and takes overall an extra 40 minutes.
2. The queues are invariably longer. The Archway post office is tiny, with only two counters and caters for everything from car tax to issuing Freedom passes besides the usual mail matters. Thus it is always congested and always slow. e.g. at Highgate, the longest we would have to wait was around 15 minutes. At Archway, we have had to wait 45 minutes on more than one occasion. To make Archway feasible, the Post Office needs to triple the space and the no. of counters open.
3. As a result of the points made above, we definitely use the post office far less.

To re-open the Highgate post office would undeniably benefit everyone including the Post Office.

Just a brief response, the queues at my local post office are always very long nowadays, snaking far out of the doorway at lunchtimes, I have waited an hour before. The staff are lovely and helpful but they seem very overworked.

I still use the same postoffice(Archway)- as far as I am concerned entering it fills me with gloom-its like a time warp. Its decepid with long queues and no obvious use of modern tech. How about a different queue for parcel collection from stamp collecting or pensions? How about a bigger post office. Lick of paint? How about different opening hours that reflect peoples work? It just needs to loose the elastic bands and get modernised!

I was a regular user of our very convenient and efficient Highgate High Street Post Office. It's closure was a real blow and disadvantage for me as it was convenient, very friendly and helpful service, close to other shops I am using and easy to walk to. Now my nearest Post Office is in the Holloway Road.

First of all to get there I have to walk down a steep hill (no bus) and worse - I have to climb up it again on the way back - which for older people is real trouble. Once you get there - there are ALWAYS enormous queues - very slow service - not very friendly - no chair to sit on while waiting. in other words it has become an effort to get there. one thinks twice before using a Post Office at lall or to write letters - it is cheaper to phone. I cannot understand why such a conveniently placed Post Office. in the middle of a busy village with great use also for all the shops - had to be closed - in favour of one in a busy trafficky street. not in a shopping area. with little space inside and with queues which sometime extend for several meters into the street.

we are not affected by the closure of post offices, as our local sub-post office remains open (along Colney Hatch Lane); it has always mystified me that the sub post office in Alexandra Park Road was closed whilst my local sub post office remained open; can only assume that the volume of business in the latter was greater; it would be interesting to compare the accounts.

Since the closure of Alexandra Park post office, which was always quick and efficient, we've had to use the main post office on Finchley High Road. It is usually crowded, with queues often extending into the street. You usually have to queue for at least twenty minutes and sometimes much longer. Often only two out of the six counters are manned. I have sometimes tried to orchestrate a protest, but most people in the queue are pretty apathetic. The counter staff invariably blame "staff shortages" and one can only sympathise with them.

Going to the post office has become a nightmare to be experienced as seldom as possible. So please bring back those nice sub-post offices.

The only change that affected me was the closure of Highgate High Stree post office, which I sometimes used on weekdays. I am now largely restricted to using post offices at weekends, but the queues do not seem any longer than before, so there is little inconvenience.

Other than longer queues at my local post office, I cannot say that the closures have really had any impact on me

but it so happens that in my personal case effects are minimal as, in N8 near foot of Muswell Hill, I live in between 3 local offices that are currently spared

On PO's: the closure means I have to go further, drive (or bus), not walk; pay for parking; and queue much more. All in all, an inconvenience

Since the closures of local small sub-Post Offices the Office at Crouch End has become horrendously crowded. It is now common to have to queue right out into the street at busy times and for the wait to be ten minutes or more. I don't use the PO less than I used to do, and I don't think many others do either. The services they offer are more diverse than before and most of them good value, but people get very fed up.

certainly think that the loss of the post office on Ferme Park Road has been a crucial loss in the community, and one that weakens the character of these local shops as a community resource.

I continue to buy my paper from this shop, as I want to help them continue in business. They are friendly, reliable, I trust them and value the brief chat I have with them on these occasions. I feel they play an important part in the networks of knowing people in the local community - something that can be rare in London, but which increases the sense of belonging and hence happiness and sense of safety in the area that you live in.

I now have to travel to Green Lanes post office depot to pick up post that can't be delivered. Because of my and their working hours, the only time I can do this is on a saturday morning. On occasions I have not been able to get there in time to collect an item and it has been returned to the sender. This is inconvenient in the extreme.

I now use the local post office near my work place on week days for sending mail and carrying out other business, and one on Stroud

Green Road on Saturdays. This of course is in a different direction to the Green Lanes depot where I have to pick up post, so I can't do these two tasks in one trip. It is not impossible (a 15 minute walk to both places, or a bus), but is certainly less convenient than the short (2 mins!) journey I had before. Carrying out administrative tasks in my lunch break from work is generally much less easy than doing them on a saturday morning.

I have also heard terrible storys about the problems that elderly people face when unable due to disability to get to banks to pick up their pension that does directly there now, rather than being able to visit the local post office. But I know this is a rather different problem!

Since the closures of local small sub-Post Offices the Office at Crouch End has become horrendously crowded. It is now common to have to queue right out into the street at busy times and for the wait to be ten minutes or more. I don't use the PO less than I used to do, and I don't think many others do either. The services they offer are more diverse than before and most of them good value, but people get very fed up.

Yes I avoid the post office if possible at all costs because since the local one shut, I have to queue standing for up to three quarters of an hour in the local wood green branch to get to the desks. We shuffle forward in a rather unfriendly environment where everyone is in a hurry and annoyed. We no longer send parcels, collect special stamp editions because it is easier to buy a book of stamps at a local shop. We stop buying gifts to send far away because the whole parcel service is a fiasco- not even the till clerks seem to know the actual cost or weight or thickness and depth and size of a humble small package- and therefor we do not send them and send cheques instead. What we will do when cheques are no longer in usage I have no idea because I refuse to buy book tokens etc.. which tie the receiver into buying something they do not necessarily want.

I write fewer letters than I used to because I never know whether they will actually arrive at the destination, so much post gets lost on its way anywhere.

I used to love visiting the local post office and choosing cards for birthdays there. I miss the service which was two hundred percent faster and more useful. I would never dare collect money from the local branch office in Wood Green because there are too many big men hanging about watching every transaction and a total lack of privacy. I suspect if I collected pension there I would be mugged in the high road within a short time space.

Old people are frightened to go there, cannot stand around waiting in the queues and feel intimidated with the lack of security,

nowhere to wait and sit down- why would we use it if we didn't really have to.

Thank God you are continuing to pursue this problem. The way that this last government decided from its ivory tower that 'there was no real demand' for the local post office is scandalous and shows just how out of touch they were.

There is literally never a time when there is not a queue in the Muswell Hill Post Office. Never. Sometimes it stretches outside of the building itself into the street. And who are these people? Only the old, only the pensioners, only those dinosaurs who still use a letter and a first class stamp? Not at all. The demographic is across the board.

Of course older people like to send and receive by mail. It's what they are used to. But these days, thanks to Ebay, thanks to on-line buying of all kinds all of us, from young mums and teenagers to ordinary folk from all walks of life find they need the post-office.

On top of this the post office, usually with at least three windows vacant as staff take a break, aren't in today or are simply short-staffed, continues to market itself as a bank, as a currency exchange centre, as the easiest and best way to licence your car, your TV and what have you in order to bring us in. How bizarre that as one government office thinks of more ways of marketing the post office another is busy closing more down.

Lynne, if the only place where we can return inappropriate on-line purchases, where we can send a parcel across the world and be reasonably confident that it will arrive, where we can post a letter, change currency, get a vehicle/TV licence if we don't happen to be hitched to a computer is the post office, then let's keep it alive, vibrant and a worthwhile service in the community.

Second a few lines on what I think regarding the closure of the local post offices. First of all I should explain that I am nearly ninety one years old and disabled, i.e. I can only walk very short distances and need two crutches to do so safely, without falling. When the programme of closing post offices began, there were three within bus cum walking distance of my home, but I could only park at one of them (with a disabled badge). Since the closure of the only post office which was located in a hardware and general stores shop on Highgate Hill, I have been unable to visit a post office at all, and have to rely on other people to post parcels or registered or recorded delivery letters. I can make no use of other postoffice services There is a pillar box opposite my house, so that ordinary letters are no problem but the purchase of postage stamps can be difficult.

Posting a parcel has become an ordeal. I have to find someone who has reason . to go up the Archway Road to the corner with Southwood Lane, and post the parcel at an office which is on a

red route, where no parking by any vehicle whether with or without a disabled badge is allowed. The alternative is to take a bus down the Archway Road to the post office located in an off street shopping area beside a main road on which no parking at all is allowed to ordinary passengers. I consider these postal arrangements pay no attention whatever to age or disability.

The closure of our local post office has had a dramatic impact on us.

We have a small publishing business based at home. We have a warehousing and delivery contract with a private firm. However, there are always situations when we have to organise a dispatch from the office at home. In the past we were able to send parcels via our local post office; but now we have to use Wood Green, Crouch End or Hornsey Post Office, which necessitates the use of a car or public transport. These branches all have long queues and I was recently asked in one of them if I could bring our parcels before 11 am or after 4 pm because I was clogging the queue of waiting customers. I was at the time spending between £50 and £100 on parcel postage per day, though this only lasted a couple of months. This meant that I had to take time off work at our peak working times (when the phone is busiest) instead of my lunch hour (post office working times are another problem as none are opened in the evenings).

If we had had a local branch, we would have probably used it for far more business deliveries than we do now (only in exceptional circumstances). We used to buy stamps in large quantities for all business use and would simply take letters and parcels over the road to the post office every day at the time agreed with the staff (we had tried hiring a franking machine but it did not work for us as the volume of our post varies enormously throughout the year and the hire was too expensive during "lean" months).

We, like many of our neighbours who work from home or have a small business, are caught in a limbo because we do not produce enough volume of post to make it economical to hire a private delivery firm (or Royal Mail collection and delivery service). Instead we are forced to waste our valuable time (which does affect our business) queuing in a post office while worrying about the parking ticket running out. So, we try to do without and adjust business practice accordingly (avoiding direct sales for example and directing potential customers to retail outfits or Internet book suppliers). This does have an impact on our business, though difficult to quantify.

We would also use our local post office much more for private errands than we do now, but it takes far too long to do any kind of business at any of the post offices locally and travel to them is awkward as none are within easy walking distance. We have increasingly stopped relying on

postal services since the closure of our local branch and have adjusted our habits to manage without a post office.

I hope our experience may help illustrate how the closure of local post offices has made us all dramatically reduce our reliance on the Royal Mail (despite the TV advertising).

Having only lived here since September 09 I can only comment on what it is like now. My nearest post office is muswell hill and its a 15 minute walk away. The queues are always coming out of the door when I do visit but I try not to post anything as much as possible as it takes so long. Just a trip to the post office would take at least 45 minutes. Having to go to the post office is always a very last resort!

From 133 Alexandra Park Road (opposite Alexandra Park Library) instead of just crossing the road I would have to travel either to Bounds Green Tube or Muswell Hill Broadway. Either option involves a bus ride, say half an hour including waiting time (not funny in the cold for an old person like me). Muswell Hill at the wrong time is a nightmare, with queues stretching out on to the pavement. The Bounds Green option presents its own hazards because I would have to cross the road at what is a busy junction.

I used to pop into the AP Post Office for photocopying but no more. I used to enjoy chatting with the lovely young family that ran it. This social aspect has disappeared.

I am hugely inconvenienced by the closure of the Ferme Park Road post office. It was a ten minute walk....

now, the nearest (Stroud Green Rd and Crouch End) are a good twenty minutes away from my home on foot.

There is the W5 connection with Crouch End, but there is no direct bus service to the PO in Stroud Green rd.

Queues at Stroud Gn Rd and Crouch End are awful - in Crouch End often stretching out onto the pavement.

I believe these closures are a false economy:

I am now using the internet much more and sending fewer letters and packages than I used to.

Going to the Post Office used to be part of my routine, now it is very rare.

A local Post Office is good for community life - the couple who ran the Ferme Park Rd branch knew everyone,

and were a valued part of the neighbourhood.

As you know I am a director of xxxxx on Archway Road. We used to have a local post office just a few doors away, which was most convenient, but since it closed it is now a trip to the main Archway road post office at Junction Road. This is a bus ride away and at least a fifteen minute wait in a queue for cashier number ??? to be available. There may be 8 stations but you would be lucky if only half of them were operating. Instead of it taking just 5 minutes as before the round trip now takes well over 40 minutes, a time that we can ill afford.

Apart from the closures the amount of misdelivered mail is shameful. About two weeks ago we received mail for 164 and 168. I complained because I was worried that if we were getting the mail for next door, where could our mail be going? Last week I got the answer, a cheque for a considerable amount was delivered next door at 164 and the solicitor who occupies the premises brought it into us. If it was delivered to 168 which is unoccupied it may have gone astray.

There are two classic lies the first is "Of course, I will still love you in the morning darling", and the second and most common is

"The cheque is in the post". Now if the cheque had gone astray, one can hardly believe that it had been posted. This in turn could lead to poor business relations with goods being withheld awaiting the cheque that may never arrive.

The Post office has written and apologised as you can see from their letters of 25th May and 12th June herewith

attached. They have had to use agency postmen due to our regular postman falling ill. It would obviously help if the substitute agency postman went to Kindergarten and was taught to read basic English.

Whatever happened to the country that invented the penny post?

I run my business from home and used to use the Post Office in Alexandra Park Road every day. I bought all our stamps from this Post Office which came to approximately £150 per month.

I do everything I possibly can to avoid going to the PO in Muswell Hill which is now my local PO. I buy all stamps from Viking Direct or the local Londis shop.

The queues at Muswell Hill PO are an absolute disgrace and are often out the door and down the road. They were often like this before the local POs were closed and to have shut down the Alexandra Road PO was ridiculous.

Royal Mail have done nothing whatsoever to relieve the pressure on the Muswell Hill PO despite assuring us that they would.

I attended the consultation meeting that the Royal Mail held locally before our PO was closed. Basically, they lied to local residents and it was obvious they had no intention of listening to anything that we said, therefore I don't believe that the meeting on 5 July is going to be any different.

very much miss the Alexandra Park Rd post office. I live at the palace end of Dukes Avenue, so the walk to the post office on the Broadway is twice as far as it would have been. The small post office also gave a sense of community to that parade of shops - fewer people now have reason to go there, chance meetings don't take place, and I would imagine that it has had an impact on the parade as a whole.

The staff at the big post office on the Broadway couldn't be nicer in my view, but the queues stretch - more often than not - out of the door and along the street. although the staff have tried to come up with ways of speeding things up, I have seen them being on the receiving end of people's frustration and impatience, which is not their fault, and they shouldn't have to put up with that when they are working as hard as they can.

If that post office is to stay, and there's no chance of getting our little one back, then the main one needs to be extended and modernised to meet the increased need - all very shoddy and cheapskate at present.

I am one of the lucky people who still live close to their local Post Office - Bounds Green Post Office was not closed, however the queues there are really stressing at times. Clearly people need to come here from some distance and that makes the queueing that much longer for all of us.

As users of the former Highgate High Street Post Office, my husband and I are really grateful to you for raising this issue again. Instead of the 7 minute walk into Highgate Village, since the closure we are obliged to use the post office in Archway Road which is 25 - 30 minutes walk from where we live. Alternatively, we drive there, as it takes about 20 minutes to walk to our nearest bus stop in Archway Road.

Since the Highgate P O closure, we have to allow as long as 30 minutes per visit to the Post Office depending on the complexity of customer business ahead of us. These days this can range from licensing to currency exchanges, advice-giving and many other useful services. The queue is often doubled up inside the little premises and sometimes even extends outside in the street - regardless of the weather.

I have lived in Ossian Road since 1979 and there was always a local post office at the bottom of Ferme Park Road until recently when it was closed, despite public protest.

The closest post office is now ten to fifteen minutes away, halfway down Stroud Green Road, close to Tesco. The queue frequently backs up to the entrance of the shop.

It is not that I use the post office less- I am still dependent upon the post office- but I find I have to delay posting items which need to be weighed (or special delivery) for up to a week or whenever I can find time to take the trip to the closest post office. If I have to post a work item urgently, this takes a substantial time out of my working day.

But I have no confidence that the post office will take action to restore their former high standards. Until some years ago we had an early morning delivery, followed by a later delivery. Now we have only one and it is in the middle of the day when most people are not at home.

So any large item or package then is sent back to the post office to be picked up- more cars on the road!

And what of values? Once we trusted post office workers. When my brother in law sent some cash to my daughters at christmas it disappeared. When I asked the postman what he thought might have happened he was amazed that I expected cash in an envelope to arrive at its destination- "What do you expect if you send cash?"

Actually- I expected it to arrive!

And the public did protest the closure when it happened, to no avail. The story locally is that the managers responsible for closing were paid handsomely for each post office they closed- is this story true?

I use Bounds Green Post Office fairly regularly and there is nearly always a long queue. Wood Green is even worse and I try to avoid this because the queues are outside the actual Post Office.

Fortunately Bounds Green Post Office is fairly near where I live and I hope this is never closed down, but the two gentlemen who serve you are I would imagine not far off retirement. I just hope if the Post Office does stay open whoever replaces them will perform their job just as well.

From the moment the Highgate Village Post Office closed, the queues at the Office in the Archway Road opposite The Woodman have been impossibly lengthy, often extending for twice the length of the interior and continuing for several yards along the pavement outside. This means that one may have to queue for twenty minutes or more before reaching the counter - a considerable hardship for those like myself (I am 83) who find prolonged standing painful. It also means a huge waste of peoples' time

This was never the case before the Highgate Village Office closed - and I speak as one who has lived in Wood Lane, Highgate, for the past 50 years. It is high time for the Village Office to be re-opened, thus removing the excessive pressure from the Archway Road branch.

I am satisfied with the service that is available from the Post Office at present.

1. Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?

I live in Victoria Road, and used to walk to the Post Office on the shopping parade on Alexandra Park Road. Since its closure, I've tried twice to use the Post Office in Muswell Hill and find that it usually involves a 20-minute wait, with the queue often stretching right outside the building, so I never now use it. I use the Post Office in Colney Hatch Lane instead, where the usual wait is about 4-5 minutes - much the same as Alexandra Park Road used to be, except that I have to drive there.

2. What are the queues like at your nearest post office?
See above.

3. How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office?
It's about 3/4 mile.

4. Do you have to take one or more buses to get there?
As I said, I drive there.

5. How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago?
It probably takes twice as long in the car as it used to take by foot.

6. If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures.

In my own case, I have now discovered a courier firm called MyHermes which comes to my house to collect parcels that I would have taken to the Post Office before. In many ways this is more convenient for me. It's also cheaper. Unfortunately, however, three packages out of 30 have arrived damaged in the last three months and I don't know if this is a problem with my packaging or with MyHermes's handling. It's not a problem I ever had in the days of the Post Office.

Further to what I wrote earlier, I should add that I presume that Adam Crozier was right to insist that the Post Office couldn't continue as it had been, given the level of losses (never publicly disclosed) that it was said to be making. But what sticks in my craw are the continuous self-promotional films and printed materials that one finds in the larger post offices today, boasting of the terrific standards of service that the Post Office now offers. How dare the PO

tell us how good it is, even while we're wasting time having to queue up for an inferior service.

I live by the Middle Lane roundabout and my nearest post office is very conveniently located on Hornsey High Street 200 yards away.

I usually use the post office on a Saturday morning and the queues are sometimes out the door. The post office has recently installed a cash machine, with no charge, which is brilliant if the Tesco's one goes down.

The people who run the post office are very courteous and there is a real community atmosphere. The staff often act as advocates for the older people when they are completing their travel forms or various other applications. This is an invaluable service as some older people can, understandably, become very confused with the bureaucracy they are faced with.

Post Office's are vital for those facing social isolation as they offer a friendly and trusted environment. I am very proud of our local post office and would fight for its place on our high street.

I used to use the post office all the time, I knew the people who ran it, it was friendly, convenient and informative. Since the post office closure using any post office has become a complete nightmare, the queues are just horrendous, when I am forced to use them I usually give up before I manage to get to the counter and find an alternative method to carry out my business.

I sometimes sell goods on eBay and would always use the post office to post whatever had been bought but since the post office closures it has just become impractical to send anything by royal mail, it just takes too long to get to a counter so I use a despatch service instead.

I did find the post office useful but the closures have forced / encouraged me to find alternative methods of carrying on my life without the post office.

I think they have shot themselves in the foot,

Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?

as little as possible, and I dread it!

What are the queues like at your nearest post office?

30 - 45 minutes in a cramped, airless room. Horrendous. The Archway post office is utterly inadequate and it is hard to imagine how the decision to use it was come to. It

is basically little more than a cupboard, and probably breeding infectious diseases to boot!

How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office?

20 minute walk down a very polluted main road, as opposed to previously a 10 minute journey to Highgate village through the park.

Do you have to take one or more buses to get there?

generally I walk or drive.

How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago?

probably an extra 40 minutes journeying, as the post office is in an out of the way place that I have no reason to visit, whereas before I was in Highgate village anyway.

If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures.

It wastes an awful lot of time for me, and it is a real shame to have no post office in Highgate village. Everyone in Highgate is still lamenting the loss! I still think a positive solution to this problem would be to combine public services such as libraries and post offices in one place, thereby creating more traffic for both.

We are usually out of the house during the working week and therefore any parcels or registered letters are sent back to the post office for collection. This means that we have to collect them or purchase items such as railcards on a Saturday morning before noon. Since the closure, the queue at this time is now enormous with up to half an hour's wait for service even with both tills operating. We only use the post office now for things such as these and this does not represent an adequate service.

I haven't been affected by the closures at all but I am concerned about the business impact it has had at the newsagent on Weston Park (where the post office was).

The post office closures especially Weston Park and Ferme Park Road have affected me quite a bit. I now have to allow about 20-25 minutes to be sure of being served which is very inconvenient when I am only posting one or two items. The queues at Crouch End (which is quite a bit further away than Weston Park) often go out of the

door and *average* waiting time is at least 10 mins, and often more at convenient times like around lunchtime. We were promised extra staff at Crouch End, which hasn't happened - you are lucky if three windows are manned, but in any case the building isn't big enough for such a crowd. The question is, is the PO a public service or not?

Incidentally I notice that several rural post offices - such as the tiny one at Boot in Cumbria, have gone, and altogether these closures have just resulted in a poorer quality of life for everyone.

Loss of local post office is a great inconvenience now since only available post office require walking uphill which is not easy for older people like us or taking the car where parking is not available or difficult. We use post office less now - usually to send packages or to collect packages which were not delivered. Otherwise we do as much as possible over the internet.

The remaining sub-post office shop in Archway Road began to get very busy when the one nearer the Archway Bridge closed down several years ago. Since the one in Highgate Village (Camden side of the High Street) closed more recently, the remaining Archway Road shop has been inundated and it is not unusual for its tiny space to be crowded to an extent that might alarm Health and Safety. Fortunately for us, living nearby, we can stroll past and drop in on the rare occasion when it isn't busy. There are huge hold-ups for residents caused by the traffic in the shop of local commercial and professional businesses using the Archway Road shop in preference to the nearest alternative, the Crouch End post office over a mile away.

I just want to add my own comments on this issue, as a resident of Southwood Avenue, N6, for 15 years.

Although I rarely used the Highgate High St Post Office while it was open, I have noticed that its closure has had a clear knock-on effect at my nearest branch, officially known as 'Highgate Near Station', on Archway Road. This small branch is often packed full of customers in a doubled-up queue, and the two counter staffs there are clearly overworked for hours on end.

The only reason I go into that office now is because I absolutely have to, ie to collect parcels. I spoke to one elderly lady in the queue there recently, and she said she depended on the old Highgate High St branch for this same function. Due to the closure, she not only has to walk much further to collect undelivered

packages, but she has to queue up in a cramped space for often the best part of half an hour. I think the case to reopen the branch at Highgate High St is clear, if only for these site-specific services.

I would also like to direct your attention to this blog entry at the London Review Of Books by 'Roy Mayall', a postal worker.

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2010/06/08/roy-mayall/best-management-talent/>

It is about the obscene salary given to Adam Crozier last year, and how it compares to the earnings of postal delivery staff. That Royal Mail management felt it necessary to close Post Offices to save money, yet still found the funds to give its top execs such outrageous amounts of pay, is clearly amoral and shocking. The sheer greed on show coupled with contempt for personal customers, particularly the elderly, must break some kind of law or code of practice somewhere. And if it doesn't, this state of affairs must be stopped.

We have run a decorating buisness in North London for the past 58 years, the closure of the Post Offices in Highgate Weston Park & Ferme Park affected us severely.

The wait in Crouch end & Muswell Hill PO`s is absolutaly disgracefull it averages a 1 hour loss in working time for us (includes trying to park).

What on earth were you thinking of? closing buisnesses which are obviously profitable not to mention the removal of a public service to OAP`s, does no one care any more?

You are driving the public away from using you , turning buisness away.

We certainly do not use PO`s unless absolutaly necessary now.

My local post office is East Finchley, and I can walk to it.

However, I use it less than in the past because of the queues. They have got rid of the quick counter at which you could buy stamps and small items - shortsighted as presumably they have had a drop in sales of the various goods like envelopes.

There is confusion as to how you approach the foreign currency desk - do you queue in the main queue?

The staff at East Finchley are brilliant, know their product and give good advice; however I think they have to deal with some very fed up customers, and their life must be ghastly.

now try not to use the Post Office if I can help it. It has inconvenienced me that certain post offices have closed.

There is always a queue when I do go - whether it's Muswell Hill or East Finchley (which are the ones I tend to use).

There are always few staff on and the removal of a fast stamp only counter is incredibly frustrating.

I was in Muswell Hill PO last week and a member of staff was standing by the queue asking if we would like any particular products i.e.

selling to us.

As there was quite a queue going nowhere I would have thought that she would have been more productive behind the counter!

Muswell Hill London N10

The post office service on Muswell Hill Broadway is a shambles; even before the closure of the sub-Post Office on Alexandra Park Road, there were always long queues stretching out onto the pavement in all weathers.

The situation has not improved, in fact it has worsened:

all counter staff now appear to be under obligation to upsell requested products or to sell additional products to every customer. This takes more time. Only the PO can calculate how many people are being fleeced by paying for products and services they do not need.

Self-styled queue hosts are unable to provide basic counter services, however long the queues.

Regardless of the length of the queues, at no time are all the counter stations staffed - successful businesses respond to supply and demand;

without knowing what the acceptable breaktime for staff is, it is often the case that, however long the queues, staff can just close their counter position and walk away.

As a local businessman, it is extremely painful to contemplate having to use the post office services for essential mailing requirements (special deliveries,

recorded deliveries etc), waiting time eats into productive work time, all the time.

If any other High Street business operated in this way, that business would have no customers left. The Post Office abuses its monopoly position with this ritual humiliation of its local residential customer base.

You were present at the "consultation meeting" at St Andrews Church hall and you know that it was already pre-determined that the efficient and profitable Alexandra Park Road PO would close. The platitudes offered by the project management policy wonks were an insulting combination of farce and untruth. The people now suffering had voices that were not heard.

*When the Crescent Road Sub-Post Office was closed a few years ago, we were promised that the one on Alexandra Park Road would be 'Safe' - **THEY** lied as you well know.*

Nowadays if we need to use the Post Office at Muswell Hill, for the services that Sub-Post Offices are not able to provide, i.e. vehicle licensing etc., the queue is always out the door, because everyone has to use this office, even for services that were easily and well provided by the Sub-Post Office in Alexandra Park Road. This adds time to a trip to the PO, both in terms of travelling (we now have to take the bus) and by standing for up to thirty minutes waiting to be served! My husband, who has Parkinson's Disease, is not able to walk very far, nor is he able to stand for prolonged periods of time, so trips to the Post Office are a dreaded nightmare as far as we are concerned and something to be avoided if at all possible. So yes, we do use the Post Office much less than before. Vehicle Tax renewed by telephone etc.

I run my own Mail Order business from home and the 'Post Office' is a vital part of the service I provide to my customers. I have started to travel further afield to a Post Office where

- a) I can park to deliver my packages,
- b) don't have to queue for inordinately long periods to purchase post stamps,
- c) can collect the mail from my PO box without the same delays as b!

The inconvenience caused by the closure of our Local Post Office still affects us in both personal as well as business matters.

**Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?
YES.**

What are the queues like at your nearest post office?
 LONG How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest
 post office? 3X AS FAR Do you have to take one or more
 buses to get there? 1 How much longer does it take you to
 get to your nearest post office today, compared to two
 years ago? 15 MINS If you have a local business, or know
 of a local business that has been affected, it would also
 be great to hear how they have coped with the post office
 closures. DON'T KNOW

Yes, I have been affected by post office closures. My nearest post office used to be on Alexandra Park Road. Since it's closure, I now have a choice of the Post Office on Colney Hatch Lane, which is a 10 minute drive away and parking my car can be awkward, so I generally avoid using this one. Another choice is in Muswell Hill, which I avoid at all costs because the queues are always very long and slow moving. The one I now tend to use is in Hornsey, opposite my office, but a 10-20 minute drive/cycle from home. The queues are generally not too long, the staff very helpful and quick to serve customers. As I usually cycle to work, it is awkward to take any parcels on my bike. As a result of the closure of the Post Office on Alexandra Park Road, I do use the Post Office less now and buy my stamps from retail stores such as Sainsburys and WHSmith.

I am lucky to live near a post office which is still open. All the same, the result of the closure of other post offices is that the queues in the remaining offices have increased. I am often very sorry for the staff.

since the closures, my local post office on Archway Road (near Highgate Station) has been at bursting point every time I've tried to go there. Often there are queues of up to 20 people waiting outside in the street! So from my point of view the closures were and remain an absolute disgrace, breaking a public service to boost the bonuses of a few company executives. Hope you can do something about it, congratulations on your election victory and I hope you are finding your time in government productive.

Closing down some of the post offices has been a torture for many people. Two years ago, it was easier to walking in & out of the post office, but now it's a murder. I, personally have been affected by this. The nearest post office to me is the main post office by the Library, which I do not really use because of the endless queues.

At the moment I buy my stamps from shops to avoid the queue and avoid sending out any parcel that needs to be weight.

My suggestion will be to use shops and corner shops for normal postage as these can be found in every street.

Travel is the main issue. We used to walk to our local post office.

Now we need to travel and go to the nearest post office which would be on Colney Hatch Lane or Bounds Green, a couple of miles away.

I use the post office on Tottenham Lane, which has remained open, while others have closed in Haringey. The effect of the closures was instant - much bigger queues. You now often have to wait more than ten minutes to be served, and it is normal to have the queue extending out the door and down the street, particularly at key busy times.

For some reason this post office was recently redesigned and now there is a completely useless desk and chairs partitioned off on the right side of the queue, and the space for queueing is much narrower. I have never seen anybody actually using this desk to conduct post office business, although now and then exhausted customers sit down there for a short rest while queueing. Seems like a badly thought out idea and a waste of valuable money.

The staff do a very good job under pressure.

I do not have to get buses to get to the Post Office but it is an inconvenience.

I used to go to the Salisbury Road branch which was 5 mins from my work so was able to go in my lunch hour.

That is not possible now. I have to go after work to the one in the shopping city and the queue is unbelievable! You have never seen such long queues and as a consequence of that tempers are very flared to say the least!

I try my best to get certain tasks that the post office used to do elsewhere! It was a terrible decision to close the sub post offices. Pensioners especially and women with small children have to wait in very long queues now and also all the office packages that people bring in take ages. It is especially awful at the end of the month when you have to re-new your car tax.

We run a small business from home and it certainly take us much longer to deal with post these days after the closure on Alex Pk Rd post office. We now either have to get a bus from outside the old post office up to Muswell

Hill Broadway and then queue for up to half an hour at Muswell Hill main PO or go to the sub post office in Colney Hatch Lane which involves two buses, but is not such a long wait in the post office queue.

I estimate that we are spending an extra one and a half hours a week, every week, posting registered and recorded delivery letters now. This means we are away from our place of work longer and are in danger of losing business while not there.

The closure and loss of the excellent service we received for years in the Alex Pk RD PO has hit us quite hard. Please use this information to get us a local post office again.

Many thanks,

We lost our sub post office on Park Road (just a couple of minutes walk away) and it has been inconvenient, but I guess we are fortunate compared to some folk as there is still a sub post office on Hornsey High Street (15mins walk away).

My partner has had some mobility problems over the last six months (now almost recovered) and he really found the lack of the local PO a problem as he couldn't get as far as Hornsey High Street. It must be an ongoing hardship for people with permanent mobility problems, making them more dependent on others and feeling a loss of autonomy.

But the biggest effect has been the horrendous queues when it is necessary to go to a Branch Office. On a couple of occasions I have checked the length of time I have waited and it has been 20 -25 minutes, the queues are often snaking down the road, they are so long! On one occasion I made a point of complaining - not at the people in the local branch - clearly they are not given sufficient staff to manage the service and I am pretty sure this is a higher management decision. I thought these managers should be the ones to get the complaint and feedback for their future planning. I was referred to the PO consumers' complaint on-line service. I wrote and received a vacuous , PR- type reply. I would have done better to put my time to some other use. They would do better to cut this pretence of a complaint service, retrain these workers and put them to help their hard pressed colleagues in the Branch Offices.

Muswell Hill Post Office is an epicentre of local discontent. Local closures have caused previous queues to quadruple in length.

At times waiting time for service can be on average 25 minutes.

This is a daily event and the cause of great anger and unhappiness in the local community, also for those forced by closures to travel distances to execute their Post Office requirements and these often include the old and the infirm.

As few as two counter assistants have been the only possibility of service on frequent occasions. They are frequently the object of hostile complaints.

While waiting in what seemed to be the portals of eternity, the queue is sometimes solicited by a member of the Post Office staff urging it to consider buying other Post Office products. Bed and Breakfast might have been an appropriate example! I asked him with a touch of irony if he would try to set up an appointments system in Muswell Hill Post Office so that at 11.23am one could walk right in to purchase stamps. He blushed.

Is this the best that can be done to meet the needs of our community?

Why should the simple task of posting a letter, for example, be an

endurance test of stamina and mental resilience?

As it stands it is no longer a service - your postal needs surely can better be met

any time of the day in the tinest of villages Outer Mongolia.

It is unacceptable. If the Post Office can't meet the needs of a community

why doesn't it place the whole enterprise into private hands and have done with it?

Everyone knows that this is the way the Post Office has been heading since

it first bought into privatisation.

What is the Post Office waiting for?

It sold out long ago and many communities like our own are paying the unacceptable price of its social and commercial failure.

Dear Lynne,

The lack of a post office in Highgate Village has made it very difficult for me to send items abroad or parcels. In fact I have stopped doing so.

I no longer use the Post Office to get money from my bank card or stamps as I have to walk to Archway or Crouch End which are both too far for me. Instead I buy stamps from a supermarket which means I never get the special covers that I enjoyed sending.

It has made it very hard for myself and my disabled husband. We miss the Highgate outlet and find long queues wherever else we do try and go which is hard as we cannot stand in a line so long.

Both my children are living away from home, my son is at Uni in Manchester & my daughter working in Birmingham. They visit home regularly & always forget things or need things from home. This means that I am a frequent visitor to Wood Green post office at least two or three times a month. I dread the task as I have to go during my lunch hour & I always count the number of people in front of me in the que. 47 people is the highest but it is generally between 35 & 39. There is not a ticket system & often there are elderly people in front of me having to stand between 25-40 mins to get served. There are some seats but I am not sure how it works if you did need to sit down, if you are not able to stand for a long period of time. Sometimes there are two people hovering around the ques ready to help people but they would be better employed behind a till serving, to speed up the service to customers. I have never ever been in when there has not been a big que.

A lot of people seem to need to use it during the lunch period when often several of the tills are closed.

People get very cross & agitated whilst queing for a long time and it can be unpleasant if you are standing near to someone who is expressing their frustration by using bad language and getting angry. The number of counters is not enough to cope with the demand now that it is about the only post office that is open in a large geographical area. I much prefer Muswell Hill PO but cannot get there & back within my lunch break.

Thank you for your email regarding post office closures. I live in Muswell Hill. Without exception, each and every time I go to the post office there, I am met with horrendous queues which in a privatised business would be completely unacceptable. It is not unusual for the queues to spill along the street. It does not help the situation when every member of staff there must engage the public in trying to sell Post office products, leading to even longer waiting times. I have asked for the manager to contact me to register my complaint, but he/she never has. I hope you will find this information useful.

Everyone I know in Crouch End and Hornsey was very upset by the closures and have been greatly inconvenienced since then. For myself, whenever I have to use the post office to send letters, parcels, buy stamps, deal with other matters I have to queue far longer either at the main Crouch End post office or walk an equal distance to

the one on Hornsey High Street/Priory Road, which also has queues throughout the shop.

The local sub post offices were particularly valuable amenities and a lifeline for elderly, more disabled people and those without a means of private transport. I discussed this matter this winter with the elderly couple who until recently lived next door on the ground floor at No. 9 Church Lane, N8 (she was disabled with a stroke and he was increasingly infirm with cancer; after he died she had to go into a home). He had to walk all the way, with great difficulty, to deal with post and his finances at the branch in Tottenham Lane or the one in Hornsey.

Moreover all our friends have missed the friendly staff who were associated with the smaller local post offices which have been so peremptorily closed without consultation with local people.

I do use the post office less since my local sub-post office in Ferme Park Road, N4 closed down. I also rarely use the newsagents shop where the post office had its premises, or indeed the other nearby shops as I have little need to go to that area, which is a great shame.

I am in-between 3 post offices now, although I don't always use these.

Last week I used the post office in Crouch End and was pleasantly surprised that there was no queue, although one soon formed. I walked there (I'm trying to increase the amount of exercise I take), it is quicker to drive but then there is the additional problem of parking.

It does take me much longer to get there than before and usually entails some sort of planning, rather than just 'popping in'.

It hasn't affected me that much as I drive and can always park near the PO in Hornsey High St. I do not use the main one any more as the queues have become horrendous.

I have been irritated by the absence of the Highgate PO but I didn't use it all that often so I cannot complain. The queues in the Archway Road one

can be daunting but the owners are so pleasant and helpful one sort-of forgives it and at least you can park in the Archway Road nearby during the middle of the day. Crouch End is our regular and they have managed pretty well keeping the queues down (5 - 10 minutes wait) so that we have not been too irritated. We are surprised not to have been more troubled.

I work at Muswell Hill Post Office and the queues have got longer due to the closure of these small Post Offices and due to this a lot of pressure for us. Its not fair on us or the customer to have to wait for so long and some are so fed up that they say they have waited for more than twenty five mins and due to this sometimes they can be rude to us.

My local PO is Archway Road, Highgate Station; I am lucky that I only have to walk for about five minutes to get there.

But oh, the queues! That tiny building is only too often stuffed with people, and the queue can stretch outside as well. The staff are good-humoured and unflappable, and do their best.

But with only two guichets, there is a strict limit to the speed with which we can be attended to.

It does seem to me that the situation has got very much worse since the closures.

Good luck with your dossier!

I was lucky because the post office I use on Queen's Parade has remained open. I hope this will continue.

I used to use the post office on Ferme Park Rd at least once a week just a couple of minutes away from my front door - my nearest is now in Stroud Green high street and is approx 15-20 mins walk or a short bus ride away. I have only been to the post office about half a dozen times in the last year now. I have stopped using ebay because it is simply too much hassle to post things now. The queues are always unbelievable whenever I get there which just adds to my dislike in going now.

Bring it back please - there must be many people who feel like this.

Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago? YES

What are the queues like at your nearest post office? DREADFUL. AVERAGE
WAITING TIMES 15 TO 20 MINS

How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office? 3/4 MILE

Do you have to take one or more buses to get there? NO

How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago? 15 MINS

If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures - AS WE USED TO USE OUR LOCAL POST OFFICE EVERY DAY. IT MEANT WE ALSO SHOPPED LOCALLY TO SUPPORT OUR LOCAL SHOPPING PARADE. IT HAS BEEN A FALSE ECONOMY BY THE PO TO CLOSE OUR LOCAL OFFICE AS NOW WE EMAIL EVERYTHING TO OUR CUSTOMERS WHEN ONCE WE WERE HAPPY TO USE THE POST.

long queues in east finchley - a real pain!

I frequently use the Post Office in East Finchley.

It used to be a well run Post Office until the refurbishment last year.

The kiosk was removed and was replaced with a desk and chairs behind a screen advertising the financial facilities offered at the Post Office. For the first few weeks after the refurbishment a Financial Manager bombarded the customers with a constant sales pitch.

Due to the removal of the kiosk the queues have increased to a ridiculous level and most days they are out of the door.

This is because regardless of what you need whether it be one stamp or a replacement drivers licence you have to queue.

The kiosk was invaluable as it provided a quick service providing stamps, lottery tickets, envelopes etc.

I visited the post office on Tuesday 15 June and waited 35 minutes before being served.

Despite there being 7 desks there were only 2 staff serving the customers.

Many customers queried the lack of staff whereby the manager Paul Whiskin stated that there were no more staff

available. Of course he ignored the ever increasing number of customers waiting and did not help out.

This seems to be a constant problem at this branch - not enough staff and their general attitude is one of disregard towards the customers.

I do not want this branch to close but I do want their attitude to change and I want the kiosk back as do 90% of the customers instead of a desk and two chairs behind a screen!!

I use the Archway Road Post Office. There is always a long queue. An average waiting time can be anything from 5 to 10 minutes. I feel extremely sorry for elderly people or people with small children or babies in buggies. It is a small and shabby post office but it's the only one for miles.

My nearest post office is that at Wood Green, however I always used to go to that in Alexandra Park Road to avoid having to stand in a seemingly endless queue as always is the case in Wood Green. Now that the Alexandra Park Road branch is closed, I go to a perfectly delightful Post Office in a huge thatched barn in Greenstead Green, where I never ever queue.

Obviously I cannot just go to the Post Office when I want to, but save whatever I have to do until I visit north Essex - I am lucky in being able to do this. My point is that it is heartily unfair that it is always Londoners who are forced by the government to subsidise rural dwellers. There is no way in which the population of the area around Greenstead Green could compare with even a tiny fraction of that of the Wood Green/Alexandra Palace area, and yet London post offices are closed, presumably because Londoners are supposed to be able to find another Post Office by public transport, not easy for those far from a bus route, pushed for time, working, or elderly.

The very least the Post Office should do is increase the number of people serving in mammoth branches like Wood Green, and train it's staff to be more efficient.

Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?
 - About the same What are the queues like at your nearest post office? - Can be very long depending on time of day
 How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office? - approx 1 mile Do you have to take one or more buses to get there? - 1 bus or walk How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago? - 15-20 minutes If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures.

*A: I have now switched to "Highgate Near Station" or "Upper Holloway" (which I believe is a "Crown" Post Office)
 I only used Highgate High street to get a cancellation on my stamp on news it would close. I use Post Offices more for that I collect stamps and like to obtain circular postmarks (cancellations) rather than "wavy lines" of the standard machine printed post mark. Also, I have started to write "important" letters (e.g. personal cards, University post) by hand again (away from e-mail) therefore use the Post Office MORE. This is ONLY because Royal Mail's strikes, that induces mistrust - deliveries were unreliable or got lost - appear to have finished. Whilst I still don't get all my post regularly, it seems to arrive again (eventually) and therefore, I feel that I can also post letters or books to friends and family. Post Office usage is complex and trust in that it actually delivers is vital. The other element is the price of Postage. If too dear, people will stop using Post Offices, as email and e-cards are free.
 Also, further /or any privatisation of Royal Mail would leave Post Offices stranded, as I would **not** trust a private company with my mail. They would only be interested in maximising profit. The **only** alternative to the current Royal Mail, which is a prestigious brand (!), that I was to accept is a Post office/ Royal Mail, that is owned by the people by issuing every Council Tax payer **one** share, with NO option of selling it. So there would be some 40 million shares for approx 40 m Council Tax payers, (with each share costing e.g. £3.00 to the individual), raising £120million immediately, and shares representing nothing but a real people's Royal Mail (nothing would change, and Royal Mail would stay public).*

What are the queues like at your nearest post office?

A: The queues at "Highgate Nr Stn" can be quite long (I had occasions with more than 30 people waiting and a queue

forming throughout AND outside the office. But the staff there are formidable and very helpful and great and make up by their expertise. The Crown Office on Junction Road can be really busy with queues of probably well over 60 people at times

How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office?

A: 7 minutes' walk ("Highgate High Street" was actually further away for me) or 2 minutes' bicycle ride

Do you have to take one or more buses to get there?

A: one bus (route 263) that calls at BOTH the local office (Highgate Nr Stn and the Crown office)

How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago?

A: Unfortunately for your study, I have less travelling time as I do not have to go UP the steep Hill and then 1/4 DOWN again first. My local office should have probably always been "Highgate Near Station".

If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures.

A: N/A (All I know businesses use Highgate Near Station and it seems to work)

Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?

Yes

What are the queues like at your nearest post office?

Terrible

How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office?

Too far

Do you have to take one or more buses to get there?

Yes

How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago?

4 times as long at least

We had a successful ebay shop selling women's clothing which we had to close when the post office closed. It just became impractical for us to pay £1.20 for a bus to take one dress which we sold for £15 to the post office

on Stroud Green Road, queue up for half an hour to post it, then take another bus for £1.20 back again. So the business is closed. The shop no longer exists. We sell wholesale only and every time we take an order it is a massive hassle taking the boxes down to Stroud Green post office. It's been a nightmare since they closed the post office near us.

The Closure of the Salisbury Road Post Office which was a 2 minute walk from me has made quite an impact on me, As Part of my own run company I send out reminder notices and other correspondences to my customers as well as sending items, The Salisbury Road office was a very quick service, 2 mins there maybe 5 mins queue (rarely) and 2 mins back, So i could do what I needed in 10 minutes, Now the only local office is the main one on the High Road which is also a few mins walk away however the queues are horrid on average i'm queuing for 30 mins most of the time it is longer, and the queue runs longer the office can hold and often goes out the door, I usually have to allocate an Hour to post my mail compared to 10 mins.

Following the closure of th Highgate High Street Post Office the queues at the Highgate Station Post Office (which I have always used) have got much longer.

There are still only 2 serving positions (as before) and it is difficult to see where they could put more. The premises continue to be grubby and cramped. I am surprised that anyone would want to work under such conditions.

I moved to London from the Netherlands two years ago and have been very unimpressed with the post office service in the UK. In Amsterdam I used to regularly pop in to a post office on my way to work or during my lunch hour - there were lines but I was generally out within 15 minutes. In London it's a whole different story and I now avoid going to post offices. The lines are way too long and one can never guarantee whether it will take 30 minutes or an hour to do something simple. Part of the problem seems to be that the post offices here do a lot more than just deal with post related issues - so you might end up standing behind someone who spends ages arguing over a benefit payment or something similar when all you want to do is post a package. I would say these

should be handled by separate businesses but I realise that's not something that can be changed overnight. Anyway, you said you didn't want long stories so in a nutshell I'll just say that I view going to a post office in London as a painful task to be avoided where possible. Instead of it being a minor inconvenience it becomes something one has to plan well in advance so it doesn't clash with anything else one might want to do within an hour of the visit.

POST OFFICE

We had a local post office in Palace Gates Road London N22. All the local people including myself used it regularly to post letters and buy stamps etc.

As somebody married to a foreign national with relatives in various European countries, I used the post office regularly and so did my wife. We would send letters, congratulation cards, parcels for family and friends in the UK and abroad.

Now we have to travel all the way to Wood Green or Muswell Hill - this takes **1/2 hour** on foot, and there is no direct bus to Muswell Hill - because incredibly, the next nearest post office in Alexandra Park Road was also closed! This was a disaster for the local vet Mina Afshari of **Alexandra Park Vets** because she needed that post office to send in her blood samples to the laboratory daily - and it impedes her practice!

The postmaster told us a year before closure that he had been consulted about closing, but that was holding out for more money - they only offered him some £60,000 to 'retire' but he did not consider it was enough money! We thought he must be mistaken - surely they could not negotiate with him without a proper consultation first as to whether it should be closed?

But the 'consultation' a year later was a total sham, very short, just around/after Christmas, and despite a long list of signatures handed in to the hardware shop in Crescent Road, and despite letters to the PO written by myself and my wife, we never even received a response!

Of necessity, we now use the PO much less than we used to - we simply have not got the time to travel to Wood Green or Muswell Hill every time, and the queues there are horrendous. This is a shame and has an adverse effect on our relationship with our family and friends.

I'll answer your questions specifically below, but first comments on post office management:

- Royal Mail says the market has changed, and it has dramatically. Far fewer letters are sent, but any shopkeeper will tell you that far more is bought by mail-order, ebay etc requiring parcels posted.
 So what do Royal mail do? They make it easy to send letters, the shrinking market, and, by closing post offices, they make it extremely difficult to send parcels.
- Royal Mail has advantages others would die for: brand loyalty, no VAT, no congestion charge, outlets marked on maps for instance but are closing the outlets.
 There is none near Euston Station where not only do I work but there is a captive market of the thousands of people who transfer between train, overground, underground and bus and do not have the opportunity to go out searching for a Post Office.
 Could they not recognise this, and that railway stations have to be manned although ticketing has become more automated with Oyster Cards etc and combine with Network Rail, TfL etc to have post offices with internet connections at stations?
- Incidentally, Royal Mail has closed their own Railmail tube which had taken a third of the former mail vans off the street and have built new distribution centres without connecting them to it. A strange way to treat their loyal customer base when not adding to but reducing congestion has been the need, not least in view of the EU prospective fine for air pollution levels.
- Royal Mail need to assess what people need post offices for and what they could additionally use them for.
 For mail it is selling stamps, having a franking machine, a set of scales and a set of 'windows' to pass small and large letters together with collection of items too large to go into a letter box and a place for postmen to leave undelivered items. These do not require the facilities or space of a traditional post office. They could easily be accommodated in a normal newsagent or stationer.
- A way of maintaining a service while reducing the accessibility of Post offices would be for all postal rates to be recognised multiples of the standard 1st and 2nd class stamps for small and large letters that are available elsewhere. You need a spreadsheet (copy attached) to work it out for yourself. In times past it was simple, 1.5d per letter and 1.5d per 2 ounces that is 3d for 2 ounces, 4.5d for 4 ounces etc. You

only needed simple mental arithmetic and some 3d and 1.5d stamps and no need to find a post office.

- The consultation over the Highgate High Street closure was a costly waste of time. What results came in other than against closure? Why was our money wasted?

In Albany Street NW1 the post office was closed but another has now reopened (see below): I would love to know why.

- A few years ago Royal Mail believed that people posted letter last thing in the afternoon and first thing in the morning, whereas the obvious truth is that they post in the evening some in time for the last collection and some to wait the first collection the following day. Even so they do not put on the boxes where you might catch a later collection if it is nearby but outside the same Post District. Again please see my attached schedule that can get post delivered a day or more earlier than otherwise. Why does Royal mail not provide this information?
- Royal Mail also has the benefit of 2nd class post all dealt with in sociable working hours and 1st class at a premium keeping their facilities in use and overheads down 24 hours a day, 6 days a week. This does rely upon collection after normal office hours and delivery reasonably early in the working day. Time was that collections at District Post offices in London were 9:00pm and for delivery in London the next 00:30am. Now the collection is not later or at least significantly later than at the boxes, and deliveries are later than before, late morning at my office in Euston.
- For some reason Royal mail deliver and collect Monday to Saturday. Sensible would be to collect Sunday evening to Friday evening and deliver the following days Monday to Saturday.

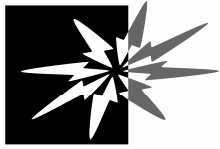
If I post a 1st class letter outside my house in Highgate at lunchtime on Saturday it is not collected until Monday and delivered to my office in Euston, 4 miles away, not much if at all before lunchtime on Tuesday: 3 whole days later.

1. Do you use the post office less, now, than two years ago?
Yes, because there is none convenient and queues are long.
2. What are the queues like at your nearest post office?
See 1 above.
3. How far do you have to travel to get to your nearest post office?
I have either to make myself late by interrupting my journey to work and go to Kentish Town the morning after I needed the Post Office, or

I have to go to Albany Street, about 20 minutes to get there and back, and the most convenient (least inconvenient) to my office in Euston.

4. Do you have to take one or more buses to get there?
No, I have to walk either to Albany Street from Euston Street, or to Highgate Station from Highgate Village. In either case there is no direct bus route.
5. How much longer does it take you to get to your nearest post office today, compared to two years ago?
About 15 minutes.
For letter not delivered to my office I have to go at least as far but in the opposite direction where there is a collection office but no post office.
6. If you have a local business, or know of a local business that has been affected, it would also be great to hear how they have coped with the post office closures.
My business in Euston relies upon:
 - * My spreadsheet (attached) of how to pay for larger and/or heavier items with stamps available locally, and***
 - * hanging around the post box at the time of the last collection so as to be able to hand in items too large for the slot.***

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Haringey Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE on 05 July 2010

Report Title. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11**

Report of: **Councillor Bull – Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

Contact Officer : Trevor Cripps – Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Email: Trevor.cripps@haringey.gov.uk

Tel: 020 8489 6922

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: Information & decision

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To identify an indicative work programme for 2010/11 for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny. Topics selected must contribute to the achievement of the outcomes and priorities set out in the Haringey's Council Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 1.2 To determine the issues that the Committee would like reported to it during the municipal Year.
- 1.3 To initially agree the topics from the list at Appendix C, for which the Committee will establish in-depth "task and finish" Scrutiny Review Panels, in addition to scrutinising the Council's budget proposals.

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member (if necessary)

2.1. N/A

3. State link(s) with Council Plan Priorities and actions and /or other Strategies:

- 3.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Programme is to help the Council and its partners to achieve Council Plan priorities, especially of delivering excellent customer focussed, cost effective services to local people.

4. Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to maintain a lead scrutiny role for the Haringey Strategic Partnership Theme Boards as detailed at Appendix B, and that the nominations as detailed at Appendix C be adopted for this year.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the Overview and scrutiny Committee receive the reports detailed in Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATION 3

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commission one topic for in-depth review from each theme board area from the shortlist of topics shown at Appendix C, as well as Budget scrutiny.

5. Summary

5.1 This report sets out the reports which could be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee over the next municipal year and a number of topics which could be subjected to more detailed review by Scrutiny Review Panels.

6. Chief Financial Officer Comments

6.1 This report does not give rise to any immediate financial implications. However, it should be noted that reports for future scrutiny reviews must contain proper and detailed financial implications as appropriate in respect of the proposals being considered so that Members are quite clear about the budget and cost implications as part of the decision making process.

7. Head of Legal Services Comments

7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has powers to scrutinise decisions taken in the discharge of the Council's "executive" and "non-executive" functions and to make reports and recommendations to Cabinet and full Council. This includes making reports and recommendations on matters relating to health services and other matters affecting the Borough or the well being of its inhabitants. The work programme for Overview and Scrutiny Committee's is a matter for local choice.

8. Head of Procurement Comments

8.1. N/A

9. Equalities & Community Cohesion Comments

9.1 Scrutiny has a strong community engagement role as the review process embodies many of the engagement activities above. Scrutiny as a matter of routine **informs**, e.g. all meetings and documents are open to local people; **consults**, e.g. scrutiny develops a dialog with local people to inform its recommendations, it also identifies and engages with hard to reach groups as part of reviews; **research** e.g. scrutiny gains knowledge and helps to identify the services needed by local people, **collaborates**, e.g. scrutiny, by involving local people and developing consensus helps to identify a shared way forward.

9.2 Scrutiny will contribute to the process of community engagement by:

- Encouraging local councillors to use the new power where members can ask for local government issues in their area to be put on O&S Committee agenda.
- Having special Committee meetings which are solely concerned with local and community issues, to which local people and councillors are invited.
- Where appropriate linking scrutiny to area based working and area based scrutiny.
- Hold more meetings in appropriate community settings.

9.3 The greater engagement of the community in scrutiny activities and general local meetings would also help to develop Councillors' role as "community champions". It is essential if this is to happen that all non executive members fully engage in the scrutiny process.

9.4 Furthermore all task and finish scrutiny reviews will give specific consideration to equalities and community cohesion issues.

10. Consultation

10.1. N/A

11. Service Financial Comments

11.1. None directly as a result of this report.

12. Use of appendices /Tables and photographs

12.1

Appendix A - Reports the Committee has indicated its wish to receive.

Appendix B - Scrutiny Lead roles and responsibilities in relation to HSP Theme Boards.

Appendix C - Matrix of HSP Theme Board/Lead Councillor/Topic for Scrutiny/Sustainable Community Strategy.

13. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Council Plan
Sustainable Community Strategy.
LGPIH Act 2007
Police and Justice Act 2006 (as amended).
“Councillor Call for Action” - Guidance
Local Area Agreement.

14 Report

14.1 In previous years the OSC has agreed and largely delivered on an annual work programme. This has helped:

- Improve the link between scrutiny’s work and the Council’s improvement agenda
- Ensure scrutiny contributed to achieving outcomes that benefit the community
- Improve the co-ordination, management and continuity of work both at OSC and its reviews and investigations.

14.2 The Committee’s powers to scrutinise are very wide and it is for scrutiny members to decide what items they want in their work programme and how they intend to carry out scrutiny exercises through the year.

Proposals for the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/11

14.3 The purpose of the programme is to carry out a scrutiny of the outcomes and activities of the council and its partners and to identify areas which could be subjected to more detailed scrutiny. To enable the Committee to do this it should continue to receive reports on the following:

- i. Performance reports although they should be more focussed on Local Area Agreement targets and Haringey Strategic Partnership priorities.
- ii. One off reports on matters of national or local interest or concern.
- iii. Issues arising out of internal and external assessment or audit which would be of interest to scrutiny members. This could include items identified in self assessment reports or matters about which an external assessor has expressed concern.
- iv. Issues on which the Haringey Strategic Partnership, the Cabinet or officers would like the Committee’s views or support.
- v. Reports on strategies and policies. In the past these have tended to be reported to Committee at the commencement of the strategy. This is too late for the Committee to influence the strategy and too early to monitor it. It is suggested that this area of scrutiny could be improved if the Partnership, the Cabinet and directors were asked each year to supply a forward plan of policies and strategies which are under development.
- vi. Progress reports on implementing previous scrutiny recommendations which had been accepted by the Cabinet or appropriate Executive body. Once again

these reports could be used to demonstrate the Council's willingness to improve and so should be given a higher profile than at present.

14.4 A typical Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda would therefore consist of:

- A Cabinet Member Question Session (Two Cabinet Members attending or the Leader of the Council).
- Performance reports.
- Issues for information.
- A report following up a past review or a final in-depth report from a commissioned task and finish scrutiny review panel.

TOPICS FOR DETAILED SCRUTINY

14.5 In addition to the more regular work, the Committee is able to commission a number of "task and finish" Scrutiny Review Panels, to look at chosen topics in-depth.

14.6 Scrutiny Review Panels require a high level of commitment from the Members who serve on them. It is proposed that the size of scrutiny panels be flexible and that they ideally consist of between 4 and 7 Members drawn from each of the political parties. Each scrutiny panel will be Chaired by a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the rights and position of statutory co-optees will not be affected.

14.7 Each year officer's have prepared a list of topics for more detailed scrutiny which have been identified from the following sources:

- Suggestion made by councillors, officers and members of the public
- Subjects identified by the Committee in previous years
- Issues of concern which have been identified during the year
- New legislation, white and green paper, statements of Government policy etc
- Items identified from performance reports or one-off reports to the Committee.
- Internal or external audit and/or inspection.

14.8 All suggestions can be clearly identified with Sustainable Community Strategy themes and priorities and be identified to a HSP theme board. As far as possible Theme Board Chairs, Cabinet members and Departmental Directors have been involved in the development of the work programme.

14.9 The Committee will pick topics for in-depth review so each Overview and Scrutiny Committee member will initially chair at least one scrutiny review panel, plus they sit as a member on another panel as well as undertake budget scrutiny, which they will do as a Committee.

14.10 The Committee has identified a short list of possible topics for more detailed review and it is attached at Appendix C.

14.11 To be effective and provide positive evidence to the assessment process, it is essential that in each scrutiny review the following issues are addressed:

- How has the community been involved/ consulted on the service provision?
- What is provided?
- Why and for what purpose?
- Does it fulfil its purpose if not why not?
- What is the cost, Is it cost- effective, i.e. does what is provided offer value for money?
- Are there any gaps or duplications in service provision?
- Are there any other improvements that could be made?
- What are the prospects for future improvement?
- What opportunities and obstacles exist to support partnership working?

14.12 The essential aim of each scrutiny exercise will be to demonstrate that the area being scrutinised is evolving and is responsive to changing circumstances (i.e. it is improving).

Performance Management Reports

The Committee has indicated its wish to receive the following reports:

- The Council Performance Monitoring Reports - 3 monthly
- The Council Budget Monitoring Report – 3 monthly
- Joint Area Review Action Plan update
- Exam results – Annual Report
- Decent Homes progress report - 6 monthly
- Homes for Haringey Performance report – 6 monthly
- Annual report on performance of Registered Social Landlords
- Annual report on the Crime and Disorder Partnership
- Children’s Safeguarding reports
- Housing Inspection report
- HfH Inspection report
- Adults – CQC Self Assessment

The Committee has indicated its wish to receive reports on the following

Reports on Policy and Strategic Developments

- ✓ Well Being strategic framework
- ✓ Sustainable Community Strategy
- ✓ Volunteering strategy/3rd sector strategy and delivery plan
- ✓ Short term supported housing and rough sleeper strategy
- ✓ Transforming social care
- ✓ Allocations and Lettings policy

One – Off reports on issues of interest

- ✓ Haringey Forward plus
- ✓ Asset management
- ✓ Houses in multiple occupation
- ✓ Use of consultants
- ✓ Youth service
- ✓ Flow of section 106 money

Updates on Previous Scrutiny Reviews

- Waste collection Recycling and disposal
- Post Office Closures
- School Exclusions
- Support to young people at risk of substance abuse
- Stroke prevention
- Social care transport
- Animal welfare

Urgent Reports

Occasionally events occur which necessitate an urgent report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Whilst clearly such reports can not be planned the need to allocate sufficient time for consideration of unforeseen events needs to be allowed for in the committees work programme.

Appendix B

Overview and Scrutiny Lead roles and responsibilities - HSP Theme Boards

The purpose of Scrutiny

To help the Partnership to achieve its objectives by identifying areas where there is not fast enough progress towards achieving excellence and to carry out scrutiny which identifies what needs to be done to improve the situation.

To be successful scrutiny should not be duplicating work carried out by the partnership but should be providing an independent objective view of what needs to be done to improve the quality and cost effectiveness of services provided to local people.

Role of the Lead

In relation to the Theme Board which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member is Lead the Member has a role to:

- Chair “task and finish” reviews on topics which fall under the Theme.
- Build a strong working relationship with all members of the board, being fair and open with all partners and agencies being treated equally.
- Promote the role of Overview and Scrutiny within the membership of the board;
- Attend the quarterly board meetings as appropriate;
- Have an overview of the Local Area Agreements which the board is leading on, their performance, and action which the board is proposing to take with regards to exception reporting;
- Feed back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on:
 - areas where scrutiny could add value;
 - key issues arising within the board’s remit which the committee should be made aware;

In relation to Budget Scrutiny the Lead should consider:

- Whether the budget proposals sufficiently reflect the priorities of the Theme Board; and
- What impact any efficiencies may have on the delivery of priorities of the Theme Board

The role of Scrutiny Theme Leads is **not** in duplicating Cabinet or shadow roles and responsibilities.

Appendix C

SUGGESTIONS FOR IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY REVIEWS – ALIGNED TO HSP THEME BOARD

<u>HSP Theme Board</u>	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Topic for Scrutiny</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Strategy Outcome</u>	<u>How review could contribute to outcomes</u>
Children’s Trust	Councillor Ejiofor	Provision for children with Special Educational Needs	<p>Economic vitality and prosperity shared by all</p> <p>NI 103 Special Educational Needs – statements issued within 26 weeks - excluding exemptions</p> <p>NI 103b Special Educational Needs - statements issued within 26 weeks - including exemptions</p> <p>Performance Green at February 2010</p>	<p>Establish how robust practice is and whether recommendations can be made to improve.</p> <p>Cllr suggestion</p> <p>A review will provide valuable evidence on what we are doing in this key area</p>
		Involving young people on decisions that affect their lives	People at the Heart of Change	<p>Assisting the Children’s Trust in meeting its statutory obligations to take into account the views of children when developing the CYPP.</p> <p>Children’s Trust suggestion</p>
Well-being	Councillor Winskill	Joint local commissioning	<p>People and customer focused</p> <p>People at the heart of change</p>	The Commissioning framework for health and well-being sets out the eight steps that

<u>HSP Theme Board</u>	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Topic for Scrutiny</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Strategy Outcome</u>	<u>How review could contribute to outcomes</u>
	(<p>health and social care should take in partnership to commission more effectively.</p> <p>A review could assess Haringey progress against this and make recommendations for further work.</p> <p>Chair of Well-Being Partnership Board and Cabinet Member suggestion</p>
		Poly-systems	<p>People and customer focused</p> <p>People at the heart of change</p>	<p>Contribute to the poly-systems plans ensuring a seamless service across the whole pathway including health, social care, benefits, employment etc based on local needs.</p> <p>Feed into the North central London review</p> <p>Well-Being Partnership Board suggestion</p>

<u>HSP Theme Board</u>	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Topic for Scrutiny</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Strategy Outcome</u>	<u>How review could contribute to outcomes</u>
Enterprise	Councillor Basu	Getting people off Incapacity Benefits and back to work	Number of people on incapacity benefit for more than six months helped into sustained work (2007-2010 stretch target) (Ongoing negotiation; targets TBC).	To contribute to the LAA target NI153 where the risk factor is high and delivery is weak. To ensure that the support mechanisms are in place to get long term claimants back into work
		Haringey Guarantee	Number of registered Haringey Guarantee participants with a completed better off calculation Enterprise Board – Significant Risks HSP Enterprise Board key risks. The risks are based upon the LAA targets, which have been included below for information: i. NI153 – Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods iii. Stretch (1) – Number of people from the worst twelve wards supported into sustained work iv. Stretch (2) – Number of	To provide an evaluation of the role of the Haringey guarantee in achieving the target of 718 people onto the scheme To analysis the Council’s approach to achieving results around the skills agenda. To contribute towards getting those furthest from the labour market back into sustained work

<u>HSP Theme Board</u>	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Topic for Scrutiny</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Strategy Outcome</u>	<u>How review could contribute to outcomes</u>
			people on Incapacity Benefit for more than 6 months supported into sustained employment	
Better Places	Councillor Browne	Carbon capture and management	A cleaner Greener Haringey NI185 - CO2 reduction from local authority operations	<p>The Council has a challenging target of reducing carbon emissions by 40% by 2015 an in depth review may assist the Council;</p> <p>Contribute to meeting NI 185 (annual emissions from corporate services)</p> <p>Assess the Councils current and future performance in reaching 40% carbon reduction by 2015 (gap analysis)</p> <p>Identify best practice from other local Authorities to inform local carbon reduction strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in schools (which account for a significant part of corporate emissions) Corporate buildings Corporate/

<u>HSP Theme Board</u>	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Topic for Scrutiny</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Strategy Outcome</u>	<u>How review could contribute to outcomes</u>
				<p>contractor travel</p> <p>Help to identify how effectively carbon reduction plans and priorities are communicated across the organisation</p> <p>Identify how Council departments and individual staff are supported in contributing to local carbon reduction objectives.</p> <p>Help identify how the role of new technology may contribute to reducing carbon emissions targets (i.e. green fuel technology)</p> <p>Provide guidance for effective and efficient operation of sustainable investment fund and sustainable investment school fund.</p> <p>Better Places board suggestion</p>

<u>HSP Theme Board</u>	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Topic for Scrutiny</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Strategy Outcome</u>	<u>How review could contribute to outcomes</u>
		Community Transport	<p>People and Customer focused</p> <p>Healthier people with a better quality of life</p>	<p>A review of community transport provision for elderly and disabled residents should encompass door-to-door transport, community transport and hospital transport services. Help improve efficiency and economy of patient transport services (as specified in Patient Transport Bill)</p> <p>Help improve coordination and integration of local transport services for elderly and disabled people</p> <p>Help improve the nature and quality of community transport services available to local residents</p> <p>Provide an opportunity to work directly with Haringey LINK (who have expressed an interest in looking at one aspect of community transport)</p>

<u>HSP Theme Board</u>	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Topic for Scrutiny</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Strategy Outcome</u>	<u>How review could contribute to outcomes</u>
Safer Communities	Councillor Newton	Services, resources and activities that prevent children and young people becoming involved in youth crime, including gang crime.	LAA target NI111 ; First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17 (green). LAA NI 15 - No. of recorded most serious violent crimes (red)	Recommendations on how partners may develop further and improve diversionary activities available for this group of young people. From hard to reach review scrutiny review Link to Cllr suggestion
		Fear of Crime/Confidence in Police and LA in tackling ASB and crime	LAA NI21 : Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police (place survey data).	Recommendations to the CDRP on how better to improve the perception of Haringey as being safe and therefore contributing to the achievement of the relevant LAA and Police targets.
		Substance abuse	NI40 : Number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment (red).	Recommendations on how interventions by the Council and its partners could be made more effective and, in particular, the future resourcing of such work.

<u>HSP Theme Board</u>	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Topic for Scrutiny</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Strategy Outcome</u>	<u>How review could contribute to outcomes</u>
Integrated Housing	Councillor Alexander	RSL's working in Haringey, performance of estate management and estate cleanliness.	Healthier people with a better quality of life	Comparison with HfH, identify best practice, improved service to residents
		Moving on - routes and flows of residents out of temporary accommodation	Healthier people with a better quality of life	

<u>HSP Theme Board</u>	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Topic for Scrutiny</u>	<u>Sustainable Community Strategy Outcome</u>	<u>How review could contribute to outcomes</u>
Cross cutting	Councillor Bull	Parking	Overview of parking policy and the introduction of CPZs. Look at issues of consistency in policy and operation,. Review appeals criteria.	Borough wide approach

