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## Hart takes back the crown as UK's best place to live

- Hart in the South East regains top spot from Winchester
- Three out of five of the best places to live are in southern England
- People in Craven, North Yorkshire are the happiest in the UK

The tranquil district of Hart in North East Hampshire has reclaimed the crown as the UK's best place to live for the fifth time in six years, according to the 2017 Halifax Quality of Life Survey.

Hart has catapulted back into the top spot based on residents' health and life expectancy, wellbeing, earnings, employment, a low crime rate and relatively good weather.

However, having such great quality of life would appear to come at a price, with the cost of living in Hart much higher than in many other parts of the UK – and an average house price of £419,231 standing at 8.8 times the average annual pre-tax local income, compared to the national average of 7.3.

Hart moved from 26<sup>th</sup> position last year having improved relative to other local authorities on average earnings, employment rate and in the ONS personal well-being survey, where it also scored strongly compared to 2016.

### What makes Hart such a good place to live?

- Residents feel fit and well with more than nine in 10 (97%) reporting good or fairly good health
- It has the longest average female life expectancy in the UK of 86.7 years, and third longest for males (82.5)
- Hart has one of the highest employment rates with eight in ten (84%) 16-64 year-olds in work and weekly average earnings of £844
- The latest ONS figures indicate adults living in Hart are amongst the most happy, satisfied and content in the UK
- Residents enjoy one of the lowest crime rates in the country
- They also have a relatively good climate with more sunshine (32.5 hours per week against the national average of 29.7 hours)

The Orkney Islands have taken second place, followed by Rutland in the East Midlands, Wychavon in Worcestershire, last year's winner Winchester in fifth place, dropping in three of the four categories in the ONS personal well-being survey but still scoring strongly on employment rate, earnings, good health and life expectancy.

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**Russell Galley, Managing Director, Halifax, said:** “Hart seems to have been offering residents an unrivalled mix of living standards for five of the last six years, seeing employment rates, average earnings and ONS personal wellbeing rankings bounce back after falling from the top spot last year.

“Along with Hart, many areas in southern England score strongly in categories including the labour markets and health. Northern areas tend to perform well on education and benefit from more affordable properties with lower house prices to earnings.”

## **Two thirds of top 50 areas for the best places to live in southern England**

More than two-thirds (35) of the top 50 best places to live in the UK are in southern England, with 17 in the South East, a further nine areas in the East of England, five in the South West and four in London. These areas include Wokingham (6<sup>th</sup>), Waverley (7<sup>th</sup>), Uttlesford (11<sup>th</sup>), Westminster (13<sup>th</sup>), South Oxfordshire (14<sup>th</sup>), St Albans (15<sup>th</sup>) and Chiltern (19<sup>th</sup>).

The remaining 15 are in Yorkshire and the Humber (6), West Midlands (4) the East Midlands (2), Scotland, Wales and the North West (all 1). These areas include the North Yorkshire districts of Craven (8<sup>th</sup>), Richmondshire (9<sup>th</sup>), Ryedale (12<sup>th</sup>), Stratford upon Avon (10<sup>th</sup>), Harrogate (27<sup>st</sup>) and Monmouthshire (32<sup>nd</sup>).

There is a clear distinction in key strengths between areas in the South and the North. LADs in the South are particularly strong in the labour market due to high employment levels and average earnings, on long life expectancy and where adults rate themselves to be in good health. Geography also benefits these areas with more hours of sunshine and less rainfall.

In the North, most areas have relatively better housing affordability conditions with a low house price to earnings ratio. They also benefit from the urban environmental factors such as low traffic flows, crime rates and fewer people per square kilometre – which in turn could explain why they have very low average primary school sizes.

In the ONS personal well-being survey there is less of a distinction, though Craven in North Yorkshire comes out top in three of the four indicators.

## **Orkneys takes second place**

The Orkneys in northern Scotland has retained second place from 2016, a position boosted by the highest employment rate (87.0%) in the UK, with more than nine in 10 adults (96.6%) continuing to enjoy good or fairly good health.

As in previous years, the Orkneys scores strongly on a low crime rate, traffic flows, population density and primary class size. It has highest per pupil spending of £9,662 which is reflected in excellent secondary school exam results. It may be a remote location, but residents appear to be the least anxious and amongst the happiest and most satisfied in the country.

## Key facts

### Labour Market

- **Employment** after the Orkneys, Stroud (85.9%) and the Shetland Islands (85.5%) have the highest employment rates against the UK average of 73.6%
- **The highest weekly average earnings** are in Kensington & Chelsea, at £1,566 per week (p/w), followed by Westminster (£1,166 p/w), City of London (£1,128 p/w) and Richmond upon Thames (£1,052p/w). The UK average is £655 per week
- **The proportion of adults (16 years and over) with the highest level of qualifications gained** (such as a degree, NVQ level 4 and above or professional qualification) is the highest in the City of London (94.8%), followed by Richmond upon Thames (70.4%), and Wandsworth (69.6%) – all significantly above the national average of 35.2%

### Housing

- **The biggest homes** are in Uttlesford in Essex, Chiltern, South Buckinghamshire and Rutland, which all have an average of 6.4 habitable rooms. The smallest homes are in the City of London, Tower Hamlets, and Westminster (all below 4.0 habitable rooms). The average number of habitable rooms in the UK is 5.5
- Access to **superfast broadband** is measured by the proportion of premises able to receive 5 Mbps (mega bits per second). In over half (56%) of local area districts 95% of premises are able to receive or have access to superfast broadband. They include several areas in Greater Manchester (such as Manchester and Trafford), York, and Belfast in Northern Ireland. Across all areas of the UK, the majority of households have a good level of broadband access (i.e. a download speed of 2Mbps is regarded as the minimum for good broadband service)
- Only one area in the top 250 in the country has an **average house price to earnings ratio** which is equal to the UK historical long-term average of 4.0; Copeland (4.0). The highest ratios are: City of London (14.2), Brent (14.2) and Haringey (13.8). The national average is 7.3

### Urban Environment

- The four most sparsely populated areas are all in Scotland. The Western Isles and Highlands jointly take the top spot for lowest **population density**, with just nine people per square kilometre (pp/km), followed by Argyle & Bute (13 pp/km), Shetland Islands (16 pp/km) and the Orkney Islands (22 pp/km)

At the other end of the scale, the most populated areas per square kilometre are all in

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London: Islington (15,524 pp/km), Tower Hamlets (15,243 pp/km), Hackney (14,396 pp/km) and Kensington and Chelsea (13,061 pp/km). The UK average is 271 pp/km

- The emptiest roads are mostly in Scotland. The lowest **traffic levels** are found in the Western Isles with just 80 vehicles per square kilometre, Highland (108 vehicles/km), Argyll & Bute (137 vehicles/km) and Orkney Islands (147 vehicles/km). The UK average is 9,519 vehicles/km
- Western Isles in Scotland has **the lowest burglary rate per 10,000 people (2.2)**, followed by Orkney Islands (3.7) and the Shetlands (3.9). All are significantly below the national average of 29.7
- Six of the 10 areas with **the lowest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions** are in London. The lowest emissions are found in Tower Hamlets (0.9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita) and Newham (1.0 tonnes), followed by Hackney and Southwark (both 1.1 tonnes). The national average is 1.7 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita

## Physical environment

- **The lowest average annual rainfall** (525 mm) is in Castle Point in Essex. Eight of the 10 driest districts in the UK are in the East of England. The UK average annual rainfall is 869.9 mm
- **The sunniest place in the UK** is the Isle of Wight where residents enjoy an average of 36.9 hours of sunshine a week, above the national average of 29.7 hours per week

## Health

- **The healthiest districts** are all in the South, with Hart and Wokingham both having 97% or more households rating themselves in good or fairly good health. Seven of the top 10 areas are found in the South East, with the remaining found in the East of England (2) and Scotland (1). In the UK as a whole, 94.6% of households rate themselves as in good or fairly good health
- **Life expectancy for males at birth** is highest in Kensington and Chelsea (83.4 years). The UK average is 79.4 years
- **Life expectancy for females at birth** is highest in Hart (86.7 years), three and a half years longer than the UK average of 83.1 years

## Education

- **Primary school class sizes** are smallest in Scotland, with nine of the 10 local authority districts with the smallest primary school classes here. Western Isles has the lowest in the UK with 17.3 compared to a national average of 27.0

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- **Six of the 10 areas with the lowest secondary school pupil teacher ratio areas are in Northern Ireland.** The Western Isles has the lowest secondary school pupil teacher ratio of 13.4 compared to 20.8 across the UK as a whole
- **The best GCSE results** in England are in Kingston upon Thames (75.7%) and Trafford (71.4%) Both are above the UK average of 59.5%
- **The highest average school (both secondary and primary) spend per pupil** is in the Orkney Islands (£9,662) – twice the UK average of £4,645

## Personal Well-Being

- **Personal well-being is based on four categories – life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety:**
- Adults (16 and over) in Craven in North Yorkshire have the highest average rating for **life satisfaction** in the UK. Based on a score out of 10, the adults in this area had an average rating of 8.5. The UK average is 7.7
- With a rating of 8.7 (out of 10) adults in North Warwickshire believe what they do in life is **worthwhile**, the highest average rating in the UK. The national average is 7.9
- The **happiest** adults are in Craven, with an average rating of 8.3 – significantly higher than the UK average of 7.5
- Craven again comes out top with adults the least **anxious** with an average rating of 2.0. The average for the UK is 2.9

## Leisure

- Eden in Cumbria has the highest number of pubs per 10,000 adults (28.3) followed by Derbyshire Dales (26.7). The national average is 10.1. Cornwall when has the largest total number of pubs in a local authority – 620
- For the active, Islington is the place to head to for health and fitness clubs, where there are 6.3 clubs per 10,000 people. The national average is 1.4

**Table 1: 2017 Halifax Quality of Life Rankings – the top 50 Local Authority Districts in the UK**

Local Authority	Region	2017 Rankings	2016 Rankings	Movement
Hart	South East	1	26	25
Orkney Islands	Scotland	2	2	0
Rutland	East Midlands	3	28	25
Wychavon	West Midlands	4	3	-1
Winchester	South East	5	1	-4
Wokingham	South East	6	9	3
Waverley	South East	7	17	10
Craven	Yorkshire and The	8	64	56

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	Humber			
Richmondshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	9	33	24
Stratford-on-Avon	West Midlands	10	21	11
Uttlesford	East of England	11	35	24
Ryedale	Yorkshire and The Humber	12	29	17
Westminster	London	13	44	31
South Oxfordshire	South East	14	13	-1
St Albans	East of England	15	8	-7
Tonbridge and Malling	South East	16	14	-2
East Hertfordshire	East of England	17	47	30
City of London	London	18	20	2
Chiltern	South East	19	10	-9
Rugby	West Midlands	20	32	12
Selby	Yorkshire and The Humber	21	52	31
St Edmundsbury	East of England	22	84	62
Mole Valley	South East	23	25	2
Suffolk Coastal	East of England	24	53	29
Purbeck	South West	25	6	-19
Harrogate	Yorkshire and The Humber	26	41	15
Hambleton	Yorkshire and The Humber	27	5	-22
West Oxfordshire	South East	28	11	-17
Lichfield	West Midlands	29	30	1
Harborough	East Midlands	30	46	16
Monmouthshire	Wales	31	37	6
Eden	North West	32	22	-10
Mid Sussex	South East	33	42	9
South Cambridgeshire	East of England	34	7	-27
Richmond upon Thames	London	35	31	-4
Tewkesbury	South West	36	103	67
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East	37	23	-14
Chelmsford	East of England	38	54	16
Chichester	South East	39	70	31

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Babergh	East of England	40	38	-2
Kensington and Chelsea	London	41	55	14
Woking	South East	42	140	98
Maldon	East of England	43	36	-7
Wycombe	South East	44	49	5
Cotswold	South West	45	68	23
Aylesbury Vale	South East	46	50	4
Wiltshire	South West	47	45	-2
Stroud	South West	48	135	87
Test Valley	South East	49	80	31
Lewes	South East	50	72	22

Source: Halifax December 2017

**Table 2: Local Authority District with the best quality of life in each region in 2017**

Local Authority	Region
Hart	South East
Rutland	East Midlands
Uttlesford	East of England
Wychavon	West Midlands
Westminster	London
Purbeck	South West
Craven	Yorkshire and The Humber
Monmouthshire	Wales
Orkneys	Scotland
Eden	North West
North Down & Ards	Northern Ireland
Northumberland	North East

Source: Halifax December 2017

**Table 3: Local Authority District with the best quality of life in each category in 2017**

Group	Variable	Local Authority District	Region
<b>Labour</b> (UK average is 73.6%)	<b>Highest employment rate: 87.0%</b>	Orkney Islands	Scotland
(UK- £655 per week)	<b>Highest gross weekly Earnings: £1,566</b>	Kensington and Chelsea	London
(UK – 35.2%)	<b>% of adults (16+) with highest qualification gained: 94.8%. This includes graduate and post postgraduate degrees, NVQ level</b>	City of London	London

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	4 and above, and professional qualifications.		
<b>Housing</b> (UK – 5.5)	<b>Highest average number of rooms in house: 6.4</b>	Uttlesford Chiltern South Buckinghamshire Rutland	East of England South East  South East East Midlands
(UK – 97%)	<b>Largest % of houses with central heating: 100%</b>	East Ayrshire	Scotland
(UK – 7.3)	<b>Lowest House price to earnings ratio: 4.0</b>	Copeland	North West
(UK – 94%)	<b>% of households with more than 5Mbps: in 56% of LADs, 95% of premises have broadband speed in excess of 5Mbps</b>	Newcastle Liverpool Leicester Norwich Brent Southampton	North East North West East Midlands East of England London South East
<b>Urban environment</b> (UK- 271 per sq/km)	<b>Lowest Population density per sq km: 9</b>	Western Isles Highland	Both Scotland
(UK- 9,519 cars/km)	<b>Lowest traffic flows per square km: 80 cars /km</b>	Western Isles	Scotland
(UK-29.7 per 10,000 people)	<b>Lowest burglary rate per 10,000 population: 2.2 per 10,000 people</b>	Western Isles	Scotland
(UK – 1.7 tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> emissions per capita)	<b>Lowest Total Consumer CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions: 0.9 tonnes per capita</b>	Tower Hamlets	London
<b>Physical environment</b> (UK – 869.9 mm per year)	<b>Lowest average annual rainfall: 525mm</b>	Castle Point	East of England
(UK- 29.7 hours per week)	<b>Highest average weekly sunshine hours: 36.9 hours</b>	Isle of Wight	South East
<b>Health</b> (UK - 94.6%)	<b>Highest % of residents in good health: 97.4%</b>	Hart	South East
Male life expectancy (UK - 79.4 years)	<b>Longest Male life expectancy at birth for males: 83.4 years</b>	Kensington and Chelsea	London
Female life expectancy (UK - 83.1 years)	<b>Longest Female life expectancy at birth for males: 86.7 years</b>	Hart	South East
<b>Education</b> (UK- 27.0 pupils per	<b>Lowest average number of pupils in primary school class: 17.3</b>	Western Isles	Scotland

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class)			
<b>Secondary Education</b> (UK – 20.8 pupil to teacher)	<b>Lowest secondary school pupil – teacher ratio: 13.4</b>	Western Isles	Scotland
<b>Secondary Education Exams</b> (UK- 59.5%)	<b>Highest % of 15yr olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade including English &amp; Maths: 84.4% (in Scotland % of 15yr+ olds with 5 or more SCQFs A-C grade including English &amp; Maths)</b>	Western Isles	Scotland
<b>Per pupil spending (primary &amp; secondary) – (UK- £4,645per pupil)</b>	<b>Highest per pupil spend: £9,662</b>	Orkney Islands	Scotland
<b>Personal Well Being</b> (UK- 7.7 from 10)	<b>Highest Life Satisfaction rating out of 10: 8.5</b>	Craven	Yorkshire & the Humber
(UK- 7.9 from 10)	<b>Highest Worthwhile rating out of 10: 8.7</b>	North Warwickshire	West Midlands
(UK- 7.5 from 10)	<b>Highest Happiness rating out of 10: 8.3</b>	Craven	Yorkshire & the Humber
(UK- 2.9 from 10)	<b>Lowest levels of Anxiety rating out of 10: 2.0</b>	Craven	Yorkshire & the Humber
<b>Leisure</b> (UK-10.1 per 10,000 people)	<b>Number of pubs per 10,000 population: 28.3 per 10,000 people</b>	Eden	North West
(UK-1.4 per 10,000 people)	<b>Number of fitness &amp; Health clubs per 10,000 population: 6.3 per 10,000 people</b>	Islington	London

Source: Halifax December 2017

## ENDS

### Note to editors:

The Quality of Life index aims to quantify where living standards are highest in the United Kingdom by ranking local performance across a range of indicators covering the labour market, the housing market, the environment, education, health, personal well-being and leisure. The index has been produced at a local authority district level.

The quality of life reading for each local authority has been created by summing scores across 26 variables within 8 broad groups.

Each local authority district is given a score out of 10 for each variable contained in the index. Scores within each of the broad groups are averaged and then the seven group scores are summed to create an overall quality of life score.

<sup>1</sup> The British Beer & Pub Association represents Britain's brewers and pub companies, members account for some 96% of beer brewed in Britain today, and own more than half of the nation's pubs. These members are from international brewers, to market-leading managed pub companies, the nation's largest tenanted pub companies and historic family brewers.

<sup>2</sup> health clubs and leisure centres covers commercial health & fitness clubs and the other local authority leisure centres, local authority swimming pools with gyms and universities with access for the public. Source: Leisure intelligence analysis supplied by John Turner Leisure Marketing Limited t/a Leisure Lists.

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See separate technical note for more information on methodology of index and data sources

Group	Variable	Period covered
<b>Labour</b>	Employment rate %	Jul 2016-Jun 2017
	Gross weekly Earnings £s	April 2017 (up rated by average weekly earnings index to September 2017)
	% of adults(16+) with highest qualification gained	2011 Census data
<b>Housing</b>	Number of rooms in house	England & Wales 2011 ONS Census Data Scotland – Housing Conditions Survey 2009/11 Northern Ireland November 2017 Halifax data
	% of houses with central heating and sole use of bathroom	England & Wales 2011 ONS Census Data Scotland – housing Conditions Survey 2009/11 NI – Halifax Data to October 2015.
	House prices to Earnings ratio	12 months to October 2017
	Broadband speed is based on % of premises able to receive 5Mbit/s (mega bits per second)	OFCOM 2016
<b>Urban environment</b>	Population density per square km	2016 – ONS
	Traffic flows per square km	2016
	Burglary rate per 10,000 population	British Crime Survey 2017; Northern Ireland 2016
	CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions per tonne per capita	2015 Department of Energy and Climate Change (covers period 2005-2015)
<b>Physical environment</b>	Average annual rainfall mm	Met Office Average 2009/2013
	Annual sunshine hours	Met Office Average 2009/2013
<b>Health</b>	% in good or fairly good health	2011 Census
	Life expectancy at birth for males	England, Wales & Scotland 2013/15; Northern Ireland 2011/13
	Life expectancy at birth for females	England, Wales & Scotland 2013/15; Northern Ireland 2011/13
<b>Education</b>	Number of pupils in primary school class	England and Wales 2017, and Northern Ireland 2015/16; Scotland 2016
	% of 15yr+ olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade or Scottish equivalent including English & Maths	2015/2016
	Average state school (primary and secondary) spending per pupil	England 2017, Scotland 2015/16 and Wales 2017/18; NI 2013/14 – 2015/16
	Secondary school pupil teacher ratio	England 2016 (adjusted class size data), Wales 2016, Scotland 2015/16 and Northern Ireland 2016/17
<b>Personal Well-Being</b>	Life Satisfaction	April 2016-March 2017 ONS
	Worthwhile	April 2016-March 2017 ONS
	Happiness	April 2016-March 2017 ONS
	Anxiety	April 2016-March 2017 ONS
<b>Leisure</b>	Number of Pubs	2016 British Beer and Pub Association
	Number of Fitness & Health clubs	2016 Leisure intelligence analysis supplied by John Turner Leisure Marketing Limited t/a Leisure Lists

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