

Orkney's Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020-2021

*Getting it right, for every child:
no child left out; no child left behind*



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Overview

Orkney's Local Child Poverty Action Report for 2019-2020 was published in January 2021 and covered activity up to the end of March 2020. Since March 2020, alongside normal work to support children and families in poverty, partner organisations in The Orkney Partnership have been focused on responding to additional need due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This report therefore highlights the impacts of the pandemic both on the children and families at the heart of this report, and on the organisations themselves.

This report was compiled by the Orkney Partnership's Child Poverty Task Force, which brings together all of the agencies with their logos on the front cover. Hundreds of agencies, community groups and individuals have been supporting children and families throughout the past year, with some of those families experiencing poverty for the first time as a result of the pandemic. Many agencies in the Third Sector have had their resources stretched, some to breaking point, by the demands of responding to this sudden increase in need.

At the same time as writing this report, the Child Poverty Task Force has been developing a Child Poverty Strategy for 2021-23. The strategy, and an accompanying action plan, will set out the context, purpose and aims of our collective work to combat child poverty in Orkney. The Child Poverty Strategy will complement the Children's Services Plan 2021-23 and build on its strategic priority "Overcoming Disadvantage". Synchronising our reporting timelines will allow for better co-ordination of planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and scrutiny, and better partnership working in future.

The present report contains an outline action plan for 2021-22. These actions will be detailed further in the SMART (specific, measurable, assigned, realistic and timely) action plan accompanying the Child Poverty Strategy. This will include further actions arising in response to new policy drivers, opportunities and emergency measures taken to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated socio-economic hardship.

Child Poverty Task Force
June 2021

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020-2021

Impact of Covid-19 on children and families in poverty

The essential measures taken to mitigate the risk of Covid-19 mean that families, children and young people at times in Orkney have not been as visible as usual to the people and services who would normally have a role in supporting them.

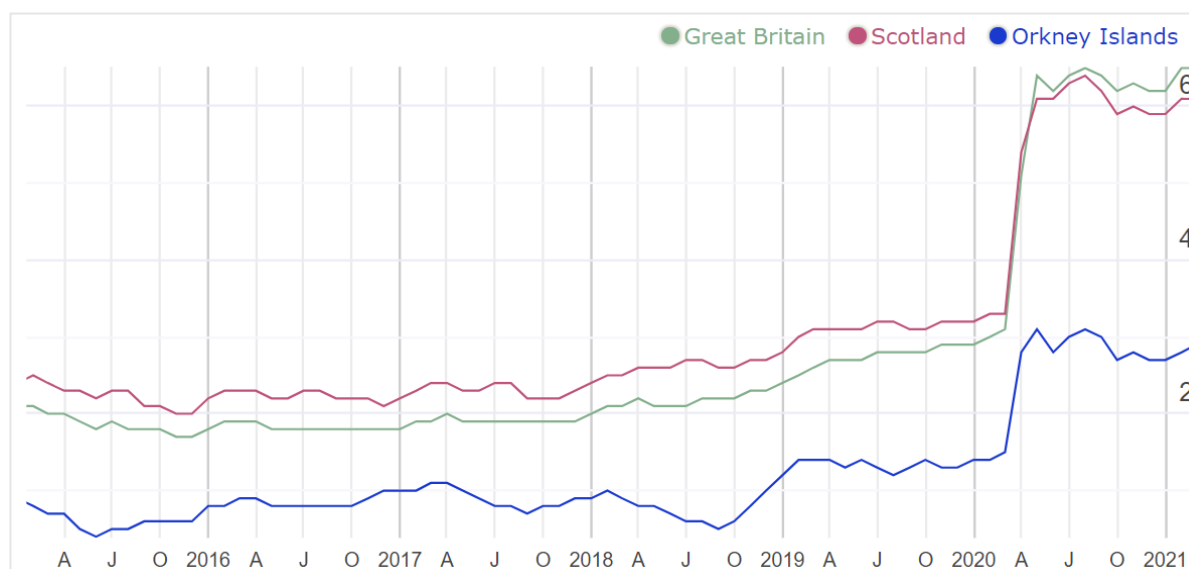
Many families have experienced – and continue to experience – extensive challenges. These may have included a loss of employment and financial insecurity and/or less support and protection with regard to pre-existing vulnerabilities such as domestic abuse, drug and alcohol use, and/or physical or mental health difficulties. This has undoubtedly placed additional strains on the families affected.

We know that these challenges will have a long term impact on families in Orkney. There have of course been some short term policy initiatives, such as money that was given to families to overcome food and fuel poverty as an immediate measure during the pandemic.

As can be seen in Figure 1, at the start of the pandemic, the number of unemployment benefit claimants almost doubled.

Figure 1

Out-Of-Work Benefits, All Claimants 2015-2020 (Source: Nomis¹ 06/05/2021)



Although some businesses were eligible for emergency grant support, many businesses (27%) furloughed staff, or ceased trading. Orkney's high proportion of microbusinesses, with many individuals working part-time in several occupations, meant that some people received no government support.

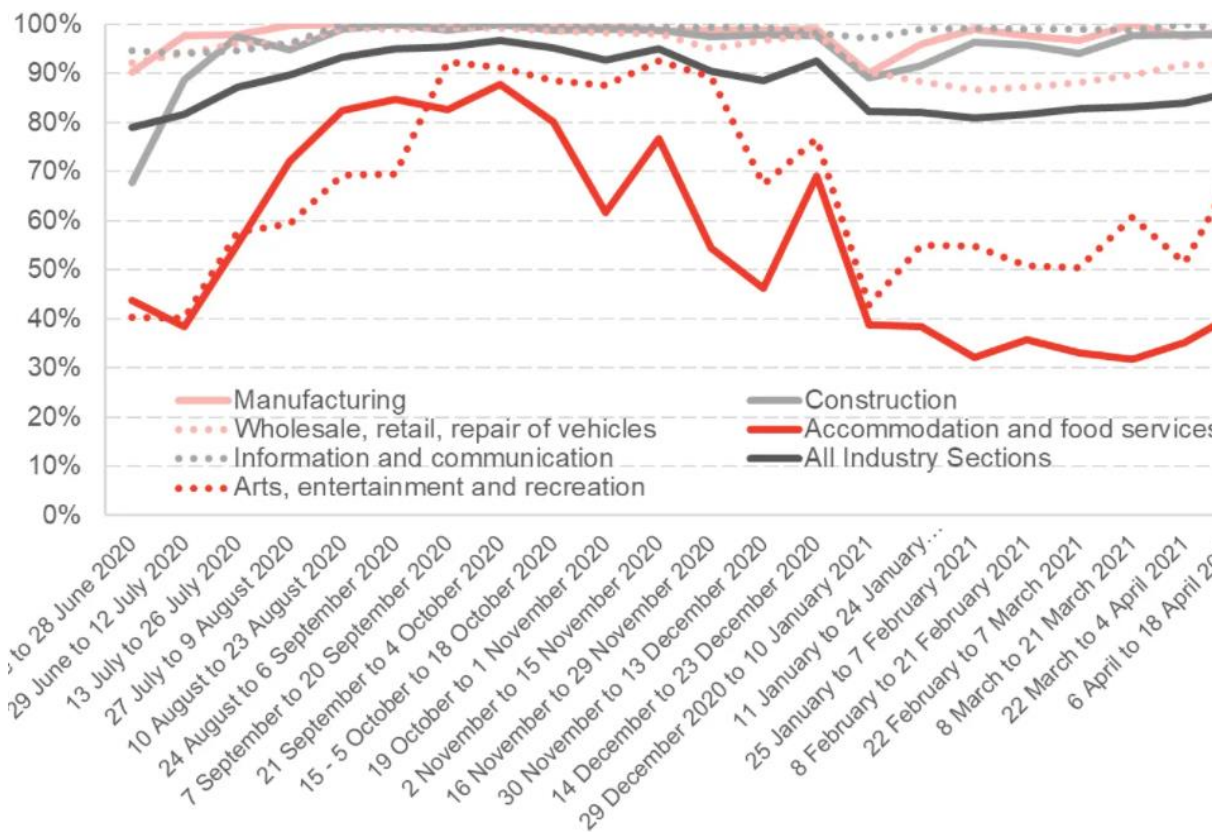
¹ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/imp/la/1946157427/report.aspx?#wab>

Although access to food stabilised, economic impacts increased with sudden unemployment and furlough, and extra costs resulting from lockdown, hygiene requirement, shielding and social distancing measures. Travel restrictions, especially for families on the isles, meant their grocery prices were higher than normal because of having to use their local isles shops², and those who needed food deliveries had extra charges to meet. Budgets were again stretched beyond the means of disadvantaged families, especially hard on those with reduced incomes and increased food prices. As the pandemic continued, more families experienced hardship for the first time and needed information and help to access support networks and services.

Across Scotland, accommodation & food services and the arts sectors had the lowest shares of businesses trading with just 41% and 71% of businesses trading respectively. Orkney's economy is very dependent on tourism, so the closure of accommodation, food and recreation businesses hit particularly hard, with greater impacts on self-employed and seasonal workers. People whose income relies on summer tourism continue to be badly affected.

Figure 2

Share of businesses currently trading, Scotland, 7 June 2020 – 18th April 2021³



² OIC stepped in to support these families – see table item 56 on p30

³ <https://fraserofallander.org/latest-data-on-the-scottish-economy-update-4th-may-2021/>

The Highlands & Islands are likely to take longer to recover than Scotland based on:

Greater impacts to date	Higher proportion of micro-businesses	Higher proportion of self-employed – especially across some of the hardest hit sectors (construction, distribution hotels and restaurants)	Greater proportion of businesses in sectors likely to be slowest to recover
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Recovery is still not likely till 2023, based on:

- Ongoing disruption to overseas visitors and visitor spend, which sustains a disproportionate number of jobs in the region;
- The composition of the Highlands and Islands and its dominance of localised service-based firms, where consumer confidence is likely to remain fragile longest;
- The dominance of small and micro-businesses, those remaining at greatest risk.

⁴The Impact of Covid-19 on The Highlands & Islands, September 2020

Impact of Covid-19 on Partner organisations

Partner organisations were hugely impacted by the pandemic, with many front line staff focused on implementing national strategies for Covid-19 protection and support, and some taken from normal working to support the emergency response. It became more difficult for services and support to reach disadvantaged families and children, and for those families and children to access the help they needed.

By the end of the reporting year on 31 March 2021, although the ongoing crisis had put huge pressure on service provision, partner organisations had worked exceptionally hard to meet the needs of families and children at particular disadvantage as a result of the pandemic. The Care for People Group, one of the Local Resilience Partnership's new emergency response groups, co-ordinated emergency provision for children and families while the Orkney Coronavirus Community Support Hub, based at the Pickaquoy Centre, was set up to support those at high risk and shielding at home

Virtually all of Orkney's public and third sector agencies played a role in supporting the emergency response. Community Resilience Groups and local support networks on the isles were co-ordinated variously by the Community Councils, Isles Development Trusts, Community Wellbeing Co-ordinators, the Orkney CV Mutual Aid Group (on Facebook) and other community associations.

⁴ <https://www.hie.co.uk/media/9646/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-highlands-and-islands.pdf>

Background/Context

What is Child Poverty?

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation defines poverty as:

“when a person’s resources are well below their minimum needs, including the need to take part in society.”

Measuring poverty accurately is difficult due to the factors that can impact on individual circumstances. A commonly used definition in Scottish and UK government policy is:

“someone is living in poverty when they live in a household with less than 60% of median income, adjusted for household size and type.”⁵

Rates of poverty vary between different groups and there are some segments of the population that are more vulnerable than others. In Scotland, poverty is significantly highest among families with children. Mitigating the impacts of this and improving long term outcomes for these children, particularly in respect of educational attainment, is critical in addressing future levels of poverty. Within this, certain families will be more at risk of poverty, such as families with a disabled child or adult, lone parents, young mothers, larger families, and/or minority ethnic families.

The risk of poverty is much higher among people living in workless households than those where one or more adults are in work. Paying for housing, whether rent or mortgage payments, is the single biggest cost for many households. The cost of housing therefore has a significant impact on the resources that people have left over to meet their other needs.

Being in work is, however, no guarantee of protection from poverty. Many families in poverty are working, the issue being the scope to access employment which offers income to meet the needs of the family. Almost 1 in 4 children in Scotland (24%) were living in relative poverty in 2017/18. While the risk of poverty is higher for children who live in families where no adult is in paid employment, two thirds of children in relative poverty in Scotland live in families where at least one parent is working.

While economic factors are often the primary determinant of individual or household poverty, these can also be underpinned or exacerbated by other dimensions of social inequality, such as differences in power and opportunities, as well as discrimination on the basis of gender, race, disability, age, sexuality or religion.

There are also complex but clear links between poverty and poor health outcomes. Health inequalities exist to varying degrees throughout Scotland. They are defined as unfair and avoidable differences in people’s health; across social groups and

⁵ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/poverty-costs-uk-£78-billion-year---jrf-report>

between different population groups (NHS Health Scotland 2015)⁶. They represent thousands of unnecessary premature deaths every year in Scotland. The gaps between those with the best and worst health and wellbeing in Scotland still persist.

For many people good health is difficult to achieve due to a range of factors. Some of these are out with their control, with experiences and deprivation in early years persisting into adulthood. Nonetheless, behaviour change interventions, aligned to local interventions and supported by policy, can impact upon population health; for example, smoking interventions. Many of these programmes operate across the whole population but, where appropriate, the scale or intensity of those actions should be proportionate to need or disadvantage.

During 2019-20, Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland conducted a Critical Review of Rural Poverty & Social Exclusion with a focus on children and young people. CNS is a partnership which takes a place-based approach to improving outcomes for children, young people and their communities. The review report⁷ was published in November 2020 and will inform future national child poverty priorities.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

The intention of the Child Poverty Act is to 'set targets relating to the eradication of child poverty' as well as making provision for plans and reporting relating to achievement of these targets. The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires the Scottish Government to meet four income-based child poverty targets by 2030 and four interim income targets by 2023, and report on the actions they will take to meet those targets. In addition, the Act places a duty on local authorities and health boards to report annually on what they are doing to contribute to reducing child poverty.

The targets state that by 2030, of children living in Scottish households:

- less than 10% should be living in relative poverty (how many families are on low incomes compared with middle income households)
- less than 5% should be living in absolute poverty (how many low-income families are not seeing their living standards improving over time)
- less than 5% should be living with combined low income and material deprivation (how many lower income families cannot afford basic necessities)
- less than 5% should be living in persistent poverty (how many families live on low incomes three years out of four)

During 2013-2017, 17% of children in Scotland were living in persistent poverty, meaning they had lived in poverty for at least three out of the four years. Children within certain groups have been identified as being at higher risk of poverty, and these have been identified as 'priority groups' within the Scottish Government

⁶ <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1086/health-inequalities-what-are-they-how-do-we-reduce-them-mar16.pdf>

⁷ <https://childrensneighbourhoods.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CYP-Rural-Review-02112020.pdf>

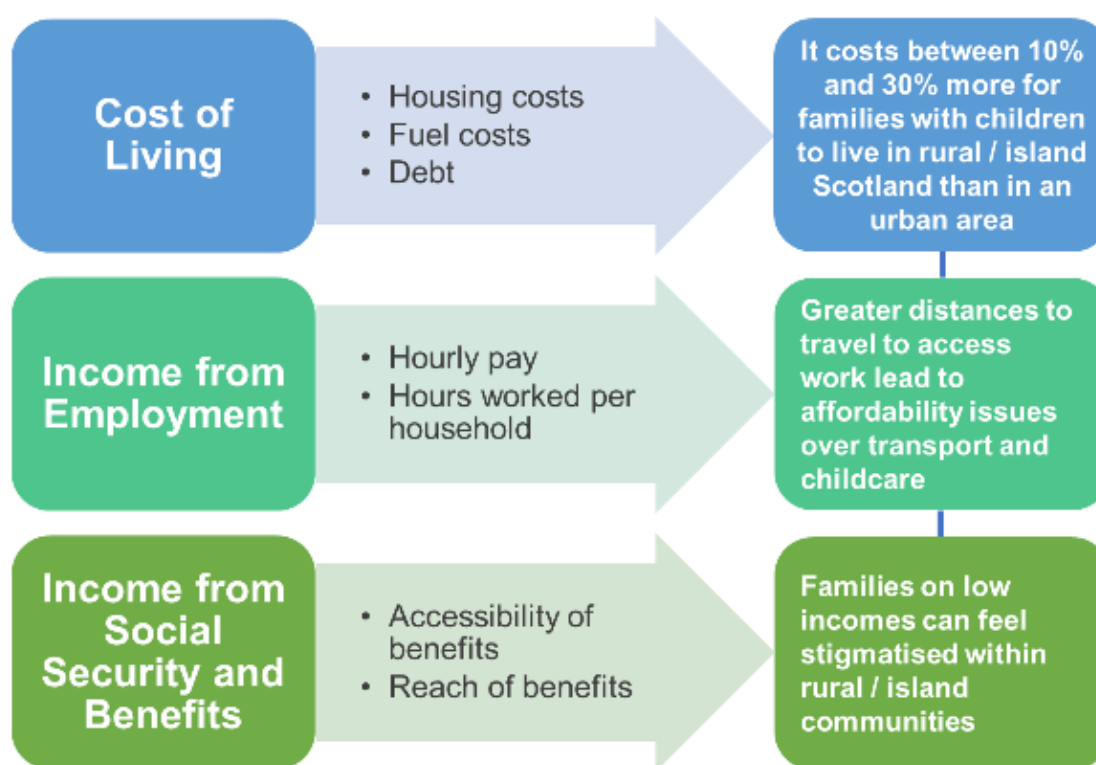
Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan; Every Child, Every Chance (2018-2022)⁸. The Delivery Plan focuses on three main drivers of poverty, which Local Authorities and Health Boards are required to take action against and report on each year.

The local child poverty action report must set out a range of commitments to address the key drivers of poverty:

- Increasing income through employment
- Maximise income from the social security system
- Reducing household costs

It is important while addressing these commitments to take into account the rural/island nature of Orkney and the specific issues that are therefore relevant to our local context, illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3



Our approach has been to:

- Mitigate the barriers created by the additional cost of living
- Ensure that travel opportunities meet the needs of the whole community
- Work towards the expansion of Early Years childcare from 600 to 1140 hours.
- Work in partnership with the community to reduce the perceived stigma of poverty
- Increase community participation and agency of children and young people

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22>

Equality Impacts

The Act also sets out that a local child poverty action report must describe:

“any measures taken during the reporting year, or which are proposed to be taken, in the area of the local authority in relation to children living in households whose income is adversely affected, or whose expenditure is increased, because a member of the household has one or more protected characteristics.”

The Protected Characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. This provision reflects the need to consider whether families with a member or members with one or more protected characteristics may face particular challenges in terms of:

- Being able to access a level of income which can sustain a family
- Having to meet costs linked to one or more family members having one or more protected characteristics, additional to the costs incurred in raising a family.

In Orkney, peripherality is also considered an equality characteristic, with the impact of any new policy on isles residents to be considered alongside the protected characteristics. This requirement was placed on a statutory footing in December 2020 with the coming into force of regulations under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 pertaining to Island Communities Impact Assessment.

An Equality Impact Assessment and an Island Communities impact Assessment will be conducted as part of the preparation for the Child Poverty Strategy 2021-23 to identify any differential impacts on these groups and how they will be mitigated.

Priority groups

Nationally identified priority groups

- Lone Parents
- Families where a member of the household is disabled
- Families with 3 or more children
- Minority ethnic families
- Families where the youngest child is under 1
- Mothers aged under 25

Locally identified priority groups

In addition to the nationally identified priority groups, local partnership working has emphasised the need to include in our plans:

- Families and children with experience of the care system
- Families with children residing on the isles

The impact of poverty on children and families in Orkney

Orkney and its islands are often seen as a rural idyll and much of the available data backs up this view, with consistently high satisfaction rates whenever people are interviewed regarding their quality of life on the islands. The lack of visible poverty can make it more difficult to evaluate the true nature of the problem and therefore the policy and practice necessary to mitigate effectively against its effects.

Rural and island poverty has its own set of characteristics and presents its own set of unique challenges that may not be the uniform experience of poverty across Scotland. Rural households face an increased cost of living between 10% to 30% more than children and families living in urban Scotland, and for those living on islands the premium can exceed 40%.⁹ This poverty is often less visible than in urban areas.

New research by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University¹⁰, for the End Child Poverty coalition, shows the full extent of child poverty across the UK and how it has changed between 2014-15 and 2018-19, before the Covid-19 pandemic. These tables are based on the DWP/HMRC statistics "Children in low income families: local area statistics" (March 2020) combined with information about housing costs at the local level to estimate poverty rates after housing costs. Figure 4 shows 21.9% of children in Orkney and 24% in Scotland overall are living in households with incomes net of housing costs that are below 60% of the median.

Figure 4

Number of children aged 0-15 living in low income households						5-year change
Area	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	
Orkney	691	716	762	757	779	88
Scotland	200,505	209,824	219,912	220,146	220,686	20,181
Percentage of children aged 0-15 living in low income households						5-year change
Area	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	
Orkney	19.8%	20.6%	21.7%	21.3%	21.9%	2.1%
Scotland	22.0%	23.0%	24.0%	24.0%	24.0%	2.0%

Figure 5¹¹ shows the percentage of children in working households, which is higher than the Scottish average but this masks the reality that many of these households will be on low incomes. A key issue in Orkney, notably on the smaller isles, is that people often have to hold down a number of jobs to attain a reasonable income, let alone compensate for the high cost of living on the isles. Orkney has a shortage of

⁹<https://www.hie.co.uk/media/6441/aplusminimumplusincomeplusstandardplusforplusremoteplusruralplus-scotland-plus-plus-plus-policy-plus-update-plus-2016.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty-in-your-area-201415-201819/>

¹¹ Figures 2-5 and 8: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-child-poverty-statistics-december-2019/>

affordable housing, with a lack of both social housing and affordable private housing in the main towns. The housing shortage impacts especially on young people moving into adulthood, with significant waiting lists in Kirkwall for single person dwellings.

Figure 5

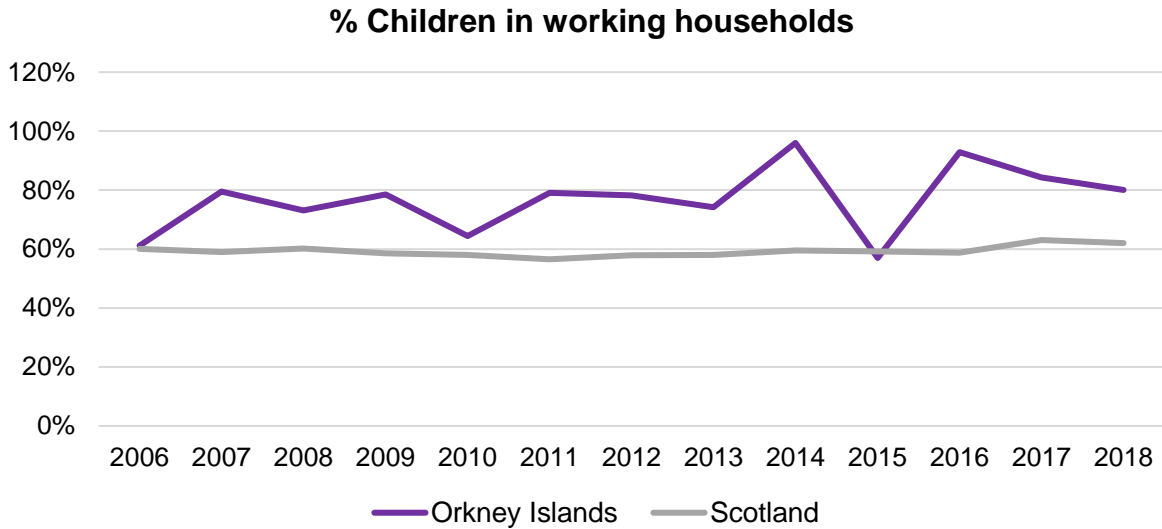
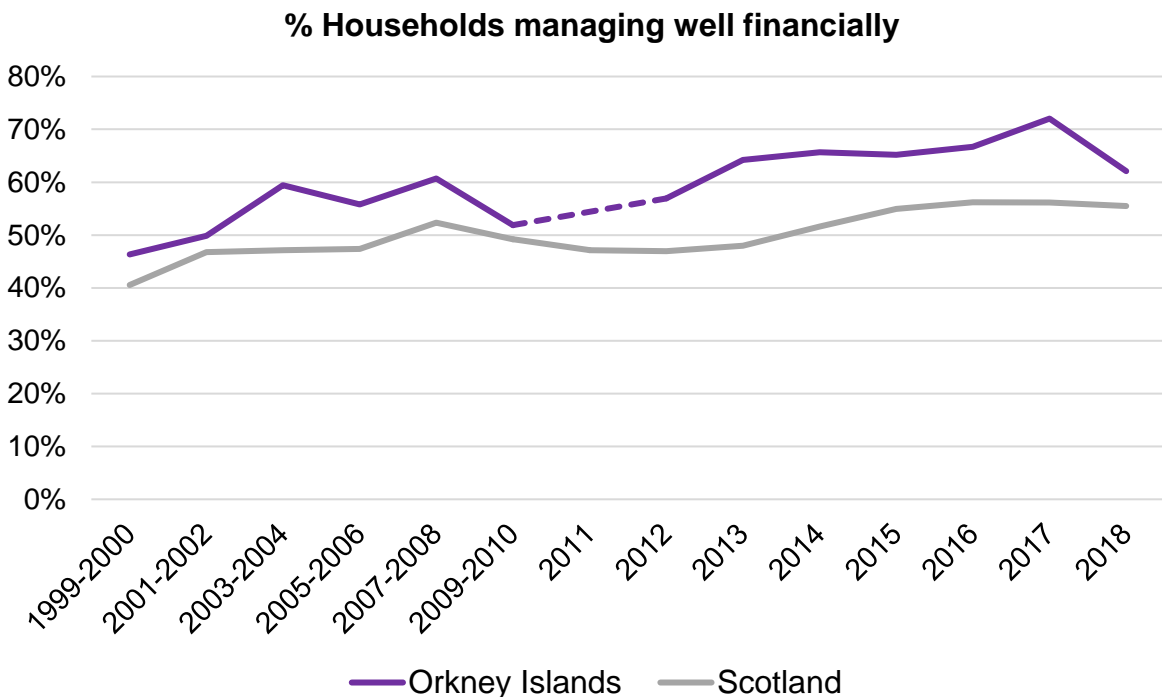


Figure 6 shows that the number of families in Orkney who are managing financially has decreased in recent years. This can be attributed to the increase in cost of living on the islands in comparison to rises in income from wages and benefits. The cost of living in some parts of Orkney in terms of food, fuel and transport can be almost double that on the mainland. The number of residents stating they have access to good public transport facilities is approximately 55% compared with 91% in the rest of Scotland.

Figure 6

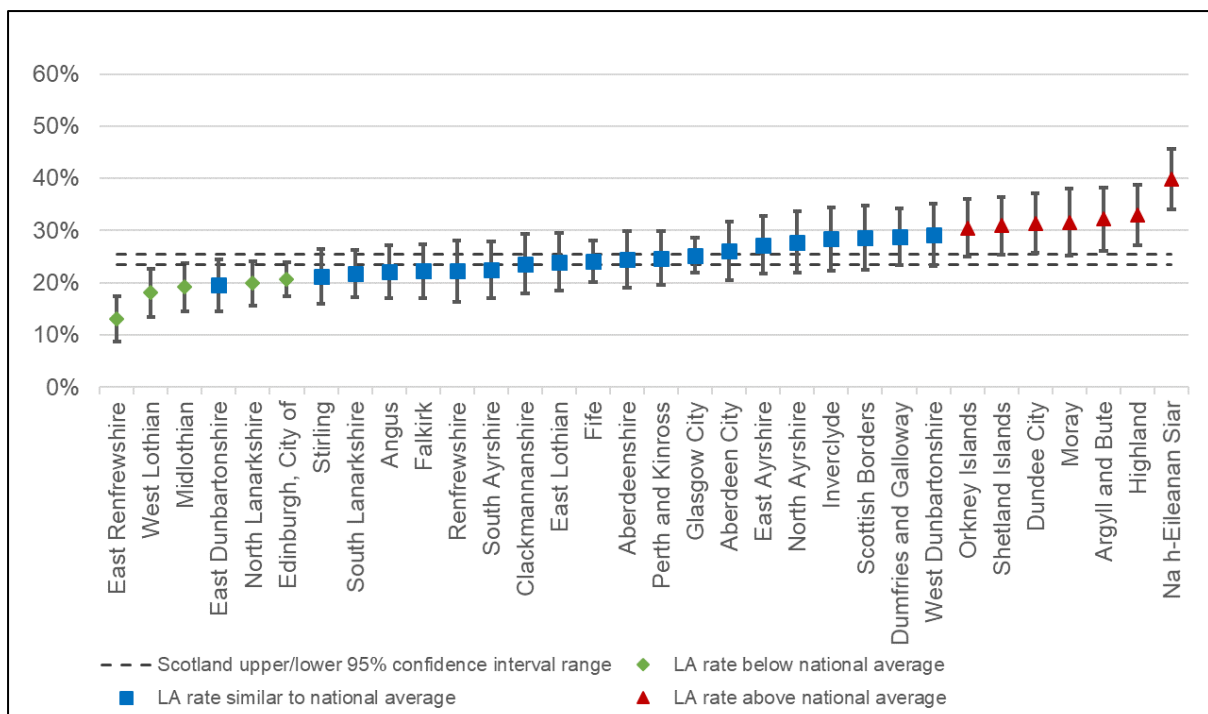


According to the new definitions in the [Fuel Poverty \(Targets, Definition and Strategy\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), a household is in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, total fuel costs necessary for the home are more than 10% of the household's adjusted net income (after housing costs), and if after deducting fuel costs, benefits received for a care need or disability and childcare costs, the household's remaining adjusted net income is insufficient to maintain an acceptable standard of living. The remaining adjusted net income must be at least 90% of the UK Minimum Income Standard to be considered an acceptable standard of living, with an additional amount added for households in remote rural, remote small town and island areas. Extreme fuel poverty follows the same definition as fuel poverty except that a household would have to spend more than 20% of its adjusted net income (after housing costs) on total fuel costs to maintain a satisfactory heating regime.

In February 2021, the Scottish Government published a [new analysis](#) of data from the Scottish House Condition Survey for the three years 2017-19. In the period 2017-2019, the 3-year average fuel poverty rate in Scotland was 24%. Seven local authorities had significantly higher fuel poverty rates than the national average, including Orkney at 31%. Figure 7 shows the local rates and 95% confidence intervals which are quite wide for authorities with smaller sample sizes – Orkney's sample size was 80 households.

Figure 7

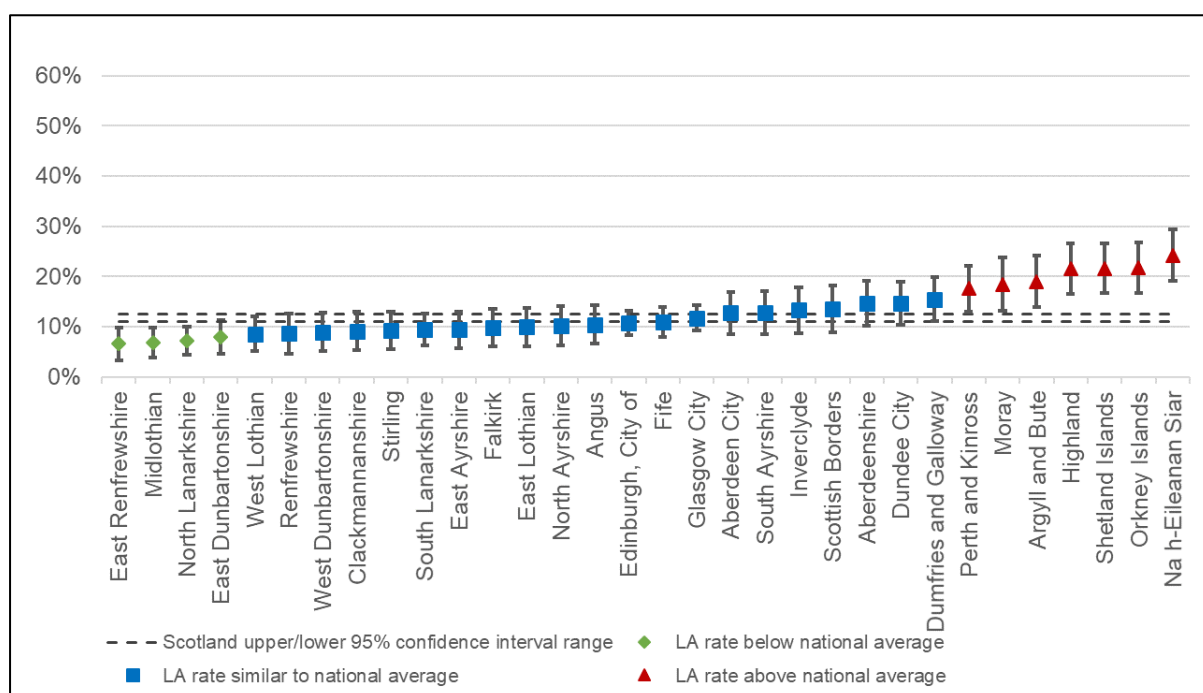
Percentage of dwellings in Fuel Poverty by local authority. SHCS 2017-2019



Across the same period, seven local authorities had significantly higher extreme fuel poverty rates than the national average, with Orkney at 22%.

Figure 8

Percentage of dwellings in Extreme Fuel Poverty by local authority. SHCS 2017-2019



Island and rural local authorities generally had the highest proportion of the least energy efficient dwellings. Figure 9 shows that eleven local authorities had rates above the national average (4%), with the highest being Na h-Eileanan Siar (18%), Orkney (17%), Dumfries & Galloway (15%) and Shetland (14%). These local authorities also had the lowest proportions of properties in the highest efficiency bands. Detached houses and housing which is off the gas grid are more likely to be F or G rated than other housing types.

Where a household is in fuel poverty, the fuel poverty gap is the annual amount that would be required to move the household out of fuel poverty. In the period 2017-2019, the median fuel poverty gap was generally higher in island and rural local authorities and ranged from £440 in Clackmannanshire and Renfrewshire to £1,640 in Orkney, with a national average of £690.

Figure 9

Percentage of dwellings in Lowest Energy Efficiency Bands F or G (SAP 2012) by local authority, compared to Scotland average. SHCS, 2017-2019.

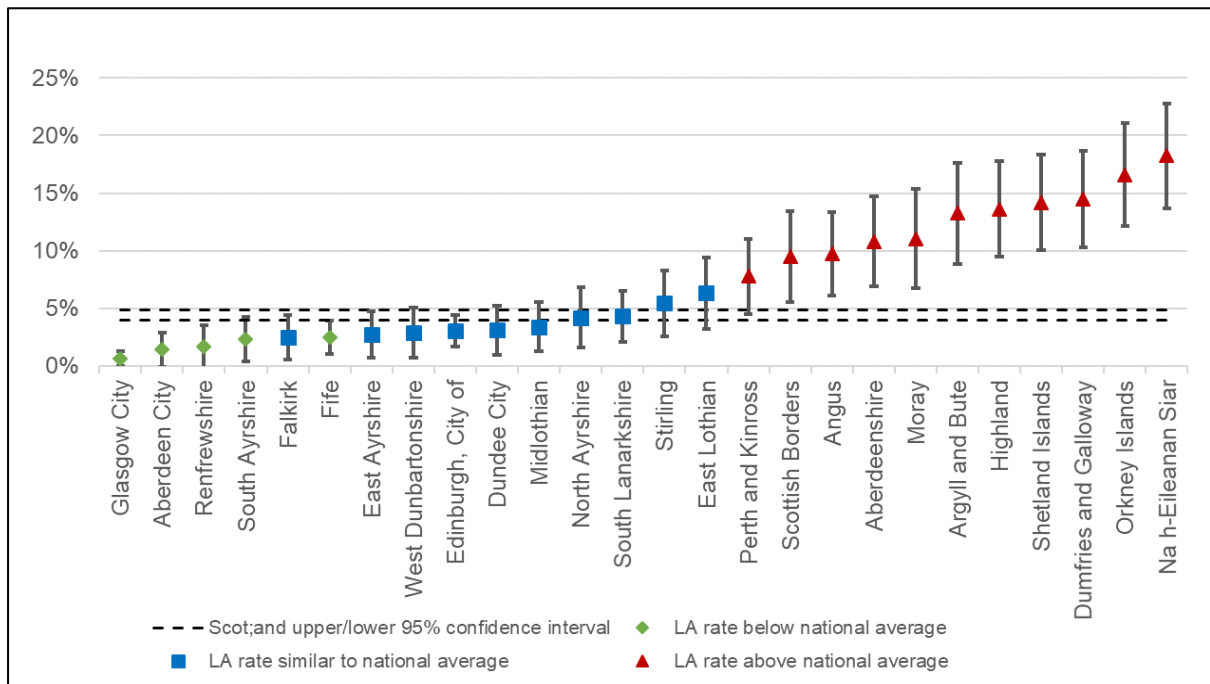


Figure 10 shows the number of lone parents which, although lower than the Scottish average, has risen over the past five years. Lone parents in Orkney are vulnerable due to the nature of the island economy. Poor transport links lead to isolation and are a barrier to employment.

Figure 10

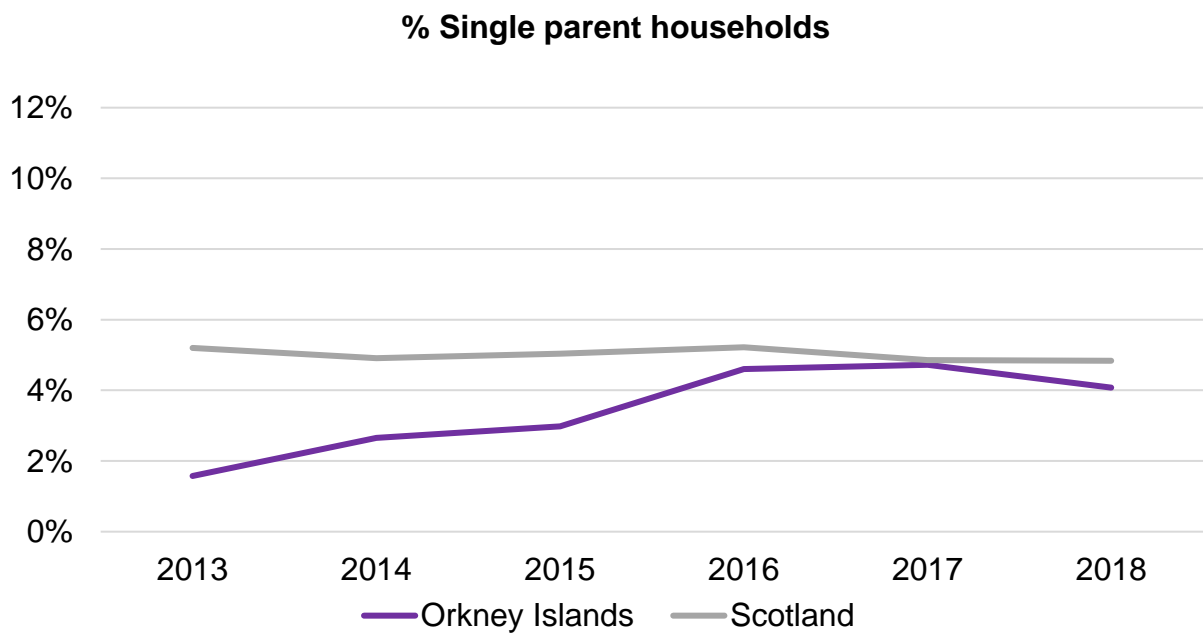
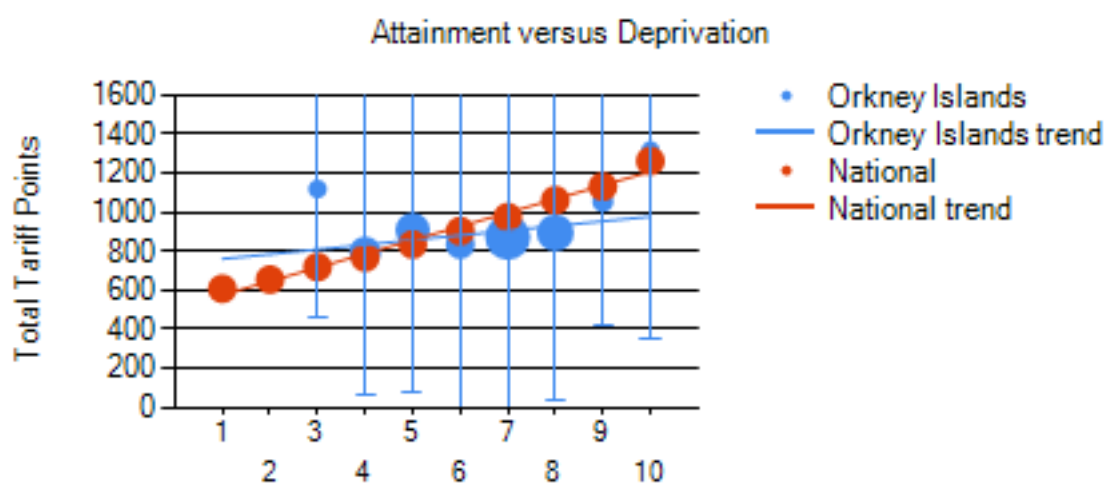


Figure 11

Tackling disadvantage by improving the attainment of lower attainers relative to higher attainers



National attainment figures for 2018/2019 show that in Orkney, there appears to be no significant relationship between the Scottish Index of multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and attainment. The attainment gap in Orkney is low giving a near horizontal line. Further consideration is perhaps needed to link more relevant measures of deprivation in Orkney to attainment.

Health/wellbeing and poverty are often closely connected. It is useful to consider some health markers to paint the picture of health in Orkney, compared to the national levels. Figure 12 shows a selection of indicators from Public Health Information Scotland¹², comparing Orkney with the Scottish national average. It shows that in Orkney there are some distinctive challenges compared with the national picture. Orkney has fewer children of a healthy weight at birth but by Primary 1 is slightly better than the Scottish average. Alcohol-related hospital admissions are nearly twice the national average, while drug-related hospital admissions are not far below the national average, with the caveat that both of these measures may be skewed by small numbers. It should also be noted that there have been delays in updating some of these indicators nationally due to the pandemic and the reporting periods are not always comparable.

¹² https://scotland.shinyapps.io/ScotPHO_profiles_tool/

Figure 12

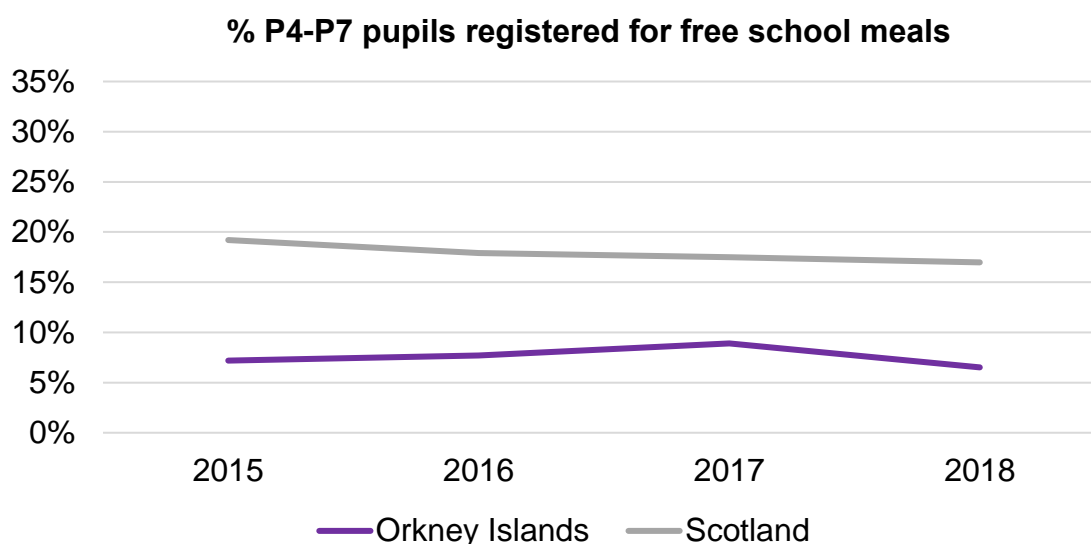
ScotPHO Health indicator		Orkney	Scotland	Period	Measure
Healthy birth weight		75.2	84.1	2017-18 to 2019-20	3 year rolling average %
Child healthy weight in Primary 1		85.5	83.7	2019-20	% as used for clinical management and planning individual interventions
Drug-related hospital admissions, age 11-25		127.5	142.9	2016-17 to 2018-19	3 year rolling average age/sex standardised rate per 100,000
Alcohol-related hospital admissions, age 11-25		523.2	271.9	2017-18 to 2019-20	3 year rolling average age/sex standardised rate per 100,000
Households with children in homes that fail the Scottish Housing Quality Standard		35.0	38.0	2015-17	3 year rolling average %
Teenage pregnancies		11.7	30.5	2016-18	3 year rolling average per 1000 females age 15-19
Percentage of P1 children showing no obvious signs of tooth decay		88.5	71.5	2018-19	%

How Orkney compares with Scotland (not all differences are statistically significant)

Worse than Scotland Better than Scotland

Figure 13 shows lower than Scottish average levels of free school meals take-up, much lower than it should be in Orkney in terms of the levels of family and child poverty. This could be related to the stigma attached to poverty which is often more pronounced in rural and island communities. Addressing this discrepancy is a key element of the partnership and multi-agency approaches that Orkney is working on.

Figure 13



In the last year, across the different sectors, children in Orkney were in receipt of free school meals as shown below. The Council paid cash in lieu of free school meals during lockdown periods, at a rate of £3 per child per day. Almost all families requested these payments to be made direct to their bank account.

Cohort	Number	Percentage
Early Learning Centre	22	6.4%
P1-P7	178	11.5%
S1-S6	98	7.8%
Total	298	9.5%

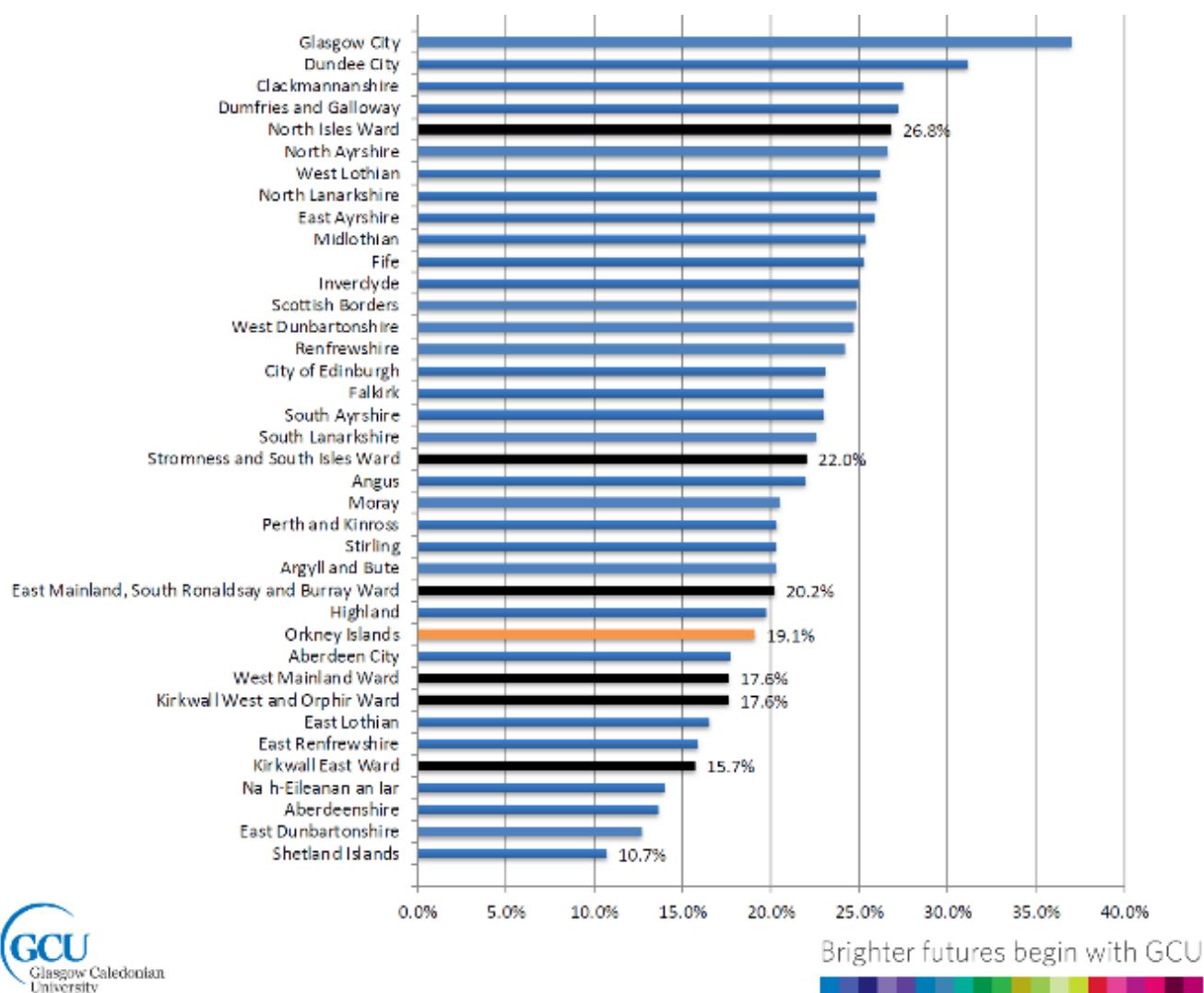
Scottish Government paid a 2020 Christmas grant of £100/child to families in receipt of free school meals, to which the Council added an additional £100/child. Uptake of the Christmas Grant increased applications for free school meals by 21 families (16.3%) with 34 children (13.8%) with 152 grants given out. There was also an increase in free school meals applications when an Easter grant was offered, to 160 grants. Families accessing these payments during holidays in the academic session 2020-2021 were as follows:

Period	Number of families	% of applicants	Number of children	% of total children
October Holidays	118	100%	232	7.3%
Christmas Holidays	148	100%	279	8.9%
Easter Holidays	158	100%	295	9.4%

Figure 14, supplied by Glasgow Caledonian University, shows the percentage of children who live in families with limited resources, defined as combined low income and material deprivation. Orkney’s individual electoral wards are compared with Orkney as a whole, and with other local authorities in Scotland.

Figure 14

Percentage of children living in families with limited resources in Orkney electoral wards / Orkney / other local authorities in Scotland



There is a striking disparity between Orkney’s most and least deprived wards. It is notable that the ferry-linked isles, both north and south, are the two most deprived wards. There is a strong correlation here with SIMD 2020 findings for relative deprivation by datazone, listed below in Figure 15.

Figure 15

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD 2020) rankings and corresponding household incomes for datazones in Orkney

Data Zone	Location	Overall SIMD 2020 rank	Overall decile 2020	Lower quartile household income	Mean household Income	Upper quartile household income
S01011821	Kirkwall - Pickaquooy	1,995	3	£13,202	£27,665	£36,627
S01011827	Hoy, Walls & Flotta	2,097	4	£10,915	£24,092	£31,307
S01011831	Stronsay, Sanday & North Ronaldsay	2,476	4	£12,354	£25,674	£33,566
S01011822	Kirkwall - Town Centre	2,679	4	£14,125	£29,352	£38,940
S01011830	Shapinsay, Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre	2,710	4	£15,161	£30,587	£40,254
S01011824	Kirkwall - The Meadows East	2,749	4	£13,943	£30,876	£41,800
S01011820	Kirkwall - Glaitness Road & Hornersquooy	3,074	5	£14,729	£34,474	£46,610
S01011832	Eday, Westray & Papay	3,153	5	£13,123	£27,604	£36,556
S01011804	Stromness - South	3,187	5	£15,239	£32,734	£43,753
S01011808	Firth	3,402	5	£18,273	£37,753	£50,105
S01011828	South Ronaldsay	3,421	5	£15,969	£34,307	£45,863
S01011819	Kirkwall - South	4,336	7	£14,788	£30,833	£41,204
S01011829	Burray	4,356	7	£20,895	£41,094	£54,104
S01011813	Holm	4,373	7	£21,412	£42,433	£56,600
S01011823	Kirkwall - KGS & Bignold Park	4,412	7	£17,039	£36,474	£48,449
S01011810	Harray	4,434	7	£18,945	£38,175	£50,365
S01011809	Orphir	4,446	7	£20,655	£39,834	£52,300
S01011825	Kirkwall - Papdale West	4,471	7	£17,314	£35,743	£47,441
S01011814	Holm East, Toab & Deerness	4,607	7	£21,139	£40,849	£53,943
S01011812	Evie, Rendall & Gairsay	4,790	7	£20,558	£41,212	£54,840
S01011817	St Ola - West	4,836	7	£20,719	£41,422	£54,711
S01011826	Kirkwall - Harbour and North	4,851	7	£19,226	£38,188	£49,974
S01011811	Birsay & Dounby	4,902	8	£20,168	£39,741	£52,667
S01011806	Stromness - Outer Town	4,911	8	£19,093	£38,916	£51,152
S01011815	Tankerness	4,977	8	£21,532	£43,412	£57,938
S01011818	Kirkwall - Holm Road	5,263	8	£18,129	£38,884	£52,062
S01011807	Sandwick and Stenness	5,424	8	£21,943	£43,139	£57,183
S01011805	Stromness - North	5,566	8	£16,724	£35,085	£46,288
S01011816	St Ola - East	5,616	9	£26,740	£50,836	£66,972

Figure 15 shows the correlation between SIMD 2020v2¹³ data and household incomes¹⁴, supplied by CACI Paycheck data.

There are 6,976 datazones in SIMD 2020, with the most deprived being no. 1 and the least deprived no. 6976. A decile corresponds to 10% of datazones. Orkney does not have any datazones in the most deprived 20% in Scotland but due to the

¹³ Corrected release see <https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/>

¹⁴ The applicable copyright notices for CACI data can be found at https://www.caci.co.uk/sites/default/files/imce/Copyright_and_Third_Party_Notices.pdf

disseminated pattern of poverty in Orkney, there will be individuals and families in all areas experiencing multiple deprivation.

Income reflected by CACI Paycheck is gross household income from all sources including earnings, benefits and investments. The table shows average (mean) household income overall for each datazone, and average (mean) household incomes for households in the bottom quartile and top quartile, a quartile being a quarter or 25% of households.

Orkney's most deprived datazones are heavily skewed towards the ferry-linked isles and certain areas of Kirkwall, and this is reflected in the income data. The Orkney Partnership selected the ferry-linked isles for its first Locality Plan 2018-21¹⁵, addressing socio-economic inequality.

Looking at individual domains within the SIMD, no fewer than 14 of Orkney's 29 datazones are among the most deprived 10% in Scotland for 'Access' (to services) with a score of 698 or less, with Hoy, Walls & Flotta scoring only 12. This measure evidences the poverty drivers illustrated in Figure 1.

¹⁵ <http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/communityplanning/index.asp?pageid=681664>

What we did in 2020-2021 to combat child poverty

Much of the work done by the Partnership is ongoing but Covid-19 has impacted disadvantaged families and children more than usual, and affected the ability of supporting organisations to help them. Covid-19 restrictions caused difficulties for all partner organisations and some Third Sector agencies have struggled to maintain their own income. It is possible that the support they offer to mitigate child poverty will be unavailable on similar terms in future.

All agencies and partners had to adapt, scale up and enhance services as far as possible to offer more support to families who are struggling with pressures exacerbated by the pandemic and associated economic and social issues. New ways of working were adopted to engage with families and children and to deliver services safely, for example switching from face-to-face meetings to telephone and online interactions. Staff also needed training, support and equipment to work remotely.

Actions planned for 2020-2021 and foreseen in the 2019-2020 report had to be modified to take account of pandemic restrictions, and new actions to mitigate the effects of the pandemic were put in place by Partners to meet the needs of frontline staff, families and children in particular difficulty, and the wider community.

The Covid-19 emergency impacted directly or indirectly on most actions taken by Partner organisations during 2020-2021, with increased demand for support due to loss of income, increased costs of living and other social constraints resulting from lockdowns. Partners reported increased need for advice services, financial and practical support, and support for children.

At the time of writing this report we do not have the means to collate budgetary information on the total resource dedicated by partner agencies to combating child poverty. This will be addressed in the forthcoming Child Poverty Strategy, Meanwhile the volume and variety of activity can be ascertained from the table below.

Local abbreviations: Orkney Islands Council (OIC); Orkney Health and Care, (OHAC)¹⁶ is a partnership between Orkney Islands Council and NHS Orkney, aiming to improve and develop social care, community health and wellbeing; Community Learning & Development (CLD); Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau is CAB Orkney; Voluntary Action Orkney (VAO).

¹⁶ [OHAC - Orkney Strategic Plan 2019 - 2022](#)

	What is the action that has taken place?	Who carried out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) was it addressing?
ADVICE & ADVOCACY			
1	Advocacy services	Advocacy Orkney CAB Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security
2	Assistance with benefit checks	CAB Orkney	Income from social security Cost of living
3	Assisting clients to identify and claim their full financial entitlements	CAB Orkney	Income from social security Cost of living
4	Parent Employability Support Supporting individuals and families access information, support and essential services including welfare, training and employment.	CLD Employability	Income from employment Income from social security
5	Providing one-to-one support, advice and signposting Gathering and sharing insights on the needs of island communities with strategic partners	Island Wellbeing Project – a partnership between Voluntary Action Orkney and the Development Trusts of Hoy, Shapinsay, Stronsay, Sanday, and Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
6	Ensuring access to council funds, free school meals and clothing allowances	OHAC (Early Learning and Childcare)	Income from social security
7	Ensuring access to free national health services e.g. Minor Ailments and continence products	OHAC	Cost of living
8	Lobbying and prompting services providers to improve standards of living e.g. housing	OHAC	Cost of living
9	Regular discussions with families about finances, debt, benefits	OHAC (Social Work)	Cost of living
10	Signposting and referrals to THAW, CAB, Foodbank, Orkney Charitable Trust, and other partner agencies	OHAC	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living

	What is the action that has taken place?	Who carried out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) was it addressing?
11	Referrals to CAB for benefit checks/money advice for people in financial difficulties	OHAC & OIC (Housing staff)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
12	Signposting to services such as mental health services, Coronavirus Community Hub, etc.	OHAC & OIC (Housing staff)	Cost of living
13	Child Poverty data gathering and analysis	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
14	Support with Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grant applications	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
15	Holistic advice service Assisting clients to identify and claim their full financial entitlements. Information circulated to families via schools and Facebook page to raise awareness of the benefits available and encourage local people to get in touch for a benefit check.	CAB Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security
16	Support for individuals and families to manage relationships, improve mental health and reduce substance use plus onward referrals to other services e.g. CAB, Women's Aid	Relationships Scotland - Orkney	Income from social security Cost of living
17	Support for women and children affected by domestic abuse	Women's Aid Orkney	Cost of living
FINANCIAL SUPPORT			
18	Assisting families to apply for Best Start grants	OHAC (Health Visitors, School Health, Maternity unit)	Income from social security
19	Sourcing funding (local and national) to assist families to purchase items, e.g. bicycles	OHAC (Social Work)	Cost of living
20	Financial support for local children in need including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General fund 	Orkney Charitable Trust	Income from employment Income from social security

	What is the action that has taken place?	Who carried out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) was it addressing?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help from Home Scheme • Bairns Need Nappies • Every Child Deserves A Christmas grant scheme • Supporting Christmas presents 		Cost of living
21	Funding for the electricity vouchers fulfilled by the Foodbank, and directly	THAW Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
FOOD POVERTY			
22	Referrals to Foodbank	OHAC & OIC (Housing staff)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
23	Foodbank fulfilled 574 vouchers, supporting 768 adults, 594 children (total 1362 people)	Orkney Foodbank	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
FUEL POVERTY			
24	Combating Fuel Poverty through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
25	Electricity top ups – so those in receipt of food parcels can heat/cook their food	Orkney Foodbank	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
26	Cosy Home Packs and small grants	THAW Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
27	Processing of electricity top ups for Orkney Foodbank	THAW Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
28	Provided information and advice on energy efficiency, tariff	THAW Orkney	Income from employment

	What is the action that has taken place?	Who carried out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) was it addressing?
	switching support , assistance with accessing grant funding, advocacy, income maximisation and budgeting support		Income from social security Cost of living
29	Providing support to householders in fuel poverty to heat their homes	THAW Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
HOUSING & HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT			
30	Support for families on low incomes	Homestart Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
31	Community larder boxes, pop-up charity shops, fuel voucher schemes etc Acting as a link between the community and services e.g. supporting Orkney Foodbank with referrals from the islands	Island Wellbeing Project	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
32	Enabling access to IT computers etc for families	OHAC (Social Work)	Cost of living
33	Reminding clients about the free period products available locally	OHAC (Health Visitors, School Health)	Cost of living
34	Addressing poor housing	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
35	Funding for starter-packs of essential household items	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
36	Funding of Restart Orkney	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
37	Housing support for vulnerable families	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security

	What is the action that has taken place?	Who carried out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) was it addressing?
			Cost of living
MOTHERS & BABIES			
38	Provision of baby boxes	OHAC (Maternity unit)	Cost of living
39	Support for pregnant women and families with children	OHAC (Maternity Services and Health Visitors)	Cost of living
40	Hungry Baby service - baby milk, baby food, nappies etc (referred to Health Visitors where child/children under 2 years)	Orkney Foodbank	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
41	Childsmile – improving children’s oral health	OHAC (Dental & Oral Health)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
YOUNG PEOPLE			
42	Informal learning programme for young people transitioning out of school	The Connect Project (VAO)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
43	Active Schools	OIC & SportScotland	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
44	ActiveLife Budget Membership	OIC & The Pickaquoy Centre	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
45	Provision of school uniform/toiletries/laundry items	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
46	Young persons’ Supported Accommodation	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security
47	Young Scot cards Youth Achievement Groups Orkney Youth Forum	OIC (Community Learning and Development Team)	Cost of living

	What is the action that has taken place?	Who carried out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) was it addressing?
48	Supporting vulnerable young adults , helping them build confidence and positive relationships while focussing on life and employability skills	The Connect Project (VAO)	Income from employment Income from social security
DIRECT RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC			
49	Circulated support information to families via local schools and Facebook to raise awareness of the benefits available	CAB Orkney	Income from social security Cost of living
50	Community Resilience Funding to purchase products to provide over 430 families across Orkney with packs	OIC (Community Learning and Development Team)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
51	Family Activity Packs - working with the West Mainland Youth Achievement Group and Firth Youth Club to apply for	OIC (Community Learning and Development Team)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
52	Mobile Top Ups £10 top-up vouchers available to all young people in Orkney	OIC (Community Learning and Development Team)	Income from employment Income from social security
53	Adapt, scale up and enhance services as far as possible Welfare checks by Housing Officer via telephone during lockdown to ascertain that tenants were coping and referrals made to services if required	OHAC & OIC (Housing staff)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
54	Critical Childcare Holiday Hub 5 weeks July – August. Providing childcare when school provision was not available, allowing key workers to continue delivering essential services	OIC	Income from employment Cost of living
55	Child Holiday Meals – for children missing out on school meals during periods of lockdown	Orkney Foodbank	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
56	Free School Meals lockdown cash payments	OIC	Income from employment

	What is the action that has taken place?	Who carried out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) was it addressing?
	Parents of all children entitled to free school meals were paid £3 per child per day to buy meals during school closures.		Income from social security Cost of living
57	Scottish Government's Food Fund - using OIC's allocation of £99,000, weekly payments of £5/person to all isles residents during the first lockdown to offset higher isles shop prices	OIC	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
58	Welfare checks to all council tenants during COVID-19 lockdown to ensure tenants had appropriate support	OHAC & OIC (Housing staff)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
59	New ways of working to engage with service users and deliver services safely Housing Service moved most interactions with service users to telephone and online. This has worked relatively well and staff have adapted well to this change in working practice.	OHAC	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
60	Ad hoc essential clothing items for Papdale Halls of Residence pupils	Papdale Hall of Residence staff	Cost of living
61	All Papdale Halls of Residence pupils provided with one-off pack including facemasks & hand gel	Papdale Hall of Residence staff	Cost of living
62	Adapt the Child Contact Centre to enable children to have Covid-safe contact with parents they no longer live with. Face-to-face, safe and socially distanced contact was maintained throughout most of the pandemic (temporary suspension during first lockdown)	Relationships Scotland Orkney	Cost of living

Reports from Third Sector partner organisations

Orkney Foodbank

Orkney Foodbank has provided food and other provisions, and support to pay for electricity (in order to be able to heat/cook the food), over 2020-2021 to:

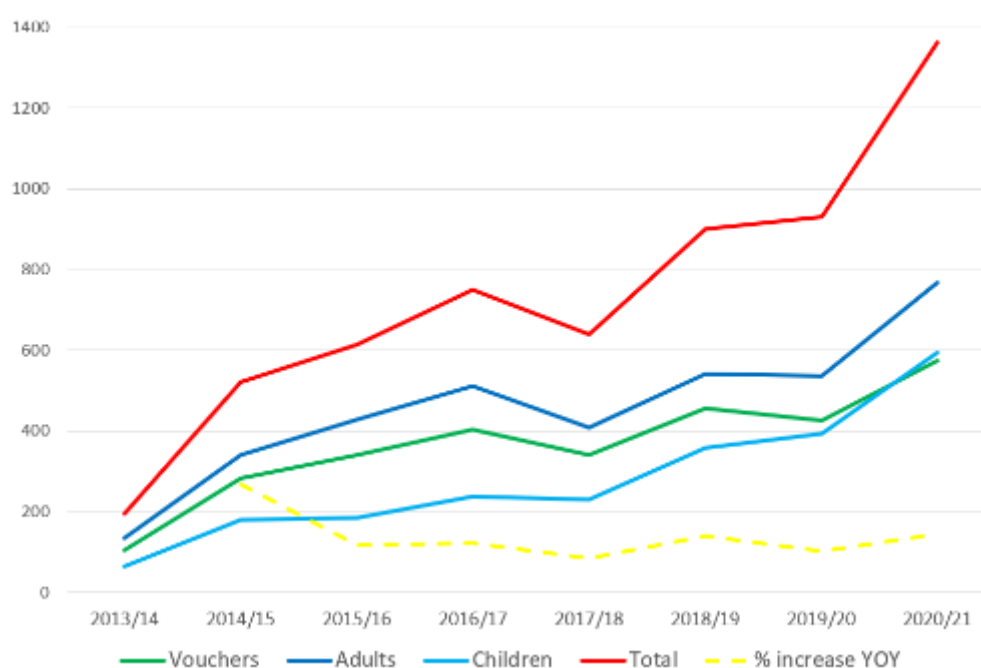


- 768 adults
- 594 children
(1362 people in total)

The total number of vouchers used this year = 574 vouchers.

The number of people needing our support increased by 146 % from 2019-2020. – this table and graph show a sharp rise during 2020-2021 and a steady increase year-on-year.

	Vouchers	Adults	Children	Total	% people increase YOY
2013/14	104	135	65	195	
2014/15	284	342	180	522	268
2015/16	342	430	185	615	118
2016/17	404	513	238	751	122
2017/18	342	408	231	639	85
2018/19	457	541	359	900	141
2019/20	427	538	394	932	104
2020/21	574	768	594	1362	146



THAW Orkney

THAW's mission is:

to work for households in all Orkney communities to reduce levels of fuel poverty and achieve affordable warmth



Summary of activity

THAW Orkney's support to fuel-poor households during 2020-21 has escalated from 2019-20 when around £6000 of emergency electricity support was provided, to a total of over £50,000 of support for electricity, oil and solid fuel.

Support for families with children during 2020-21 includes:

- Emergency electricity, solid fuel or oil: £10,5050.38
- Scottish Government Home Heating Support Fund: £8,838.81
- Benefits/Income Max: £10,007
- Cosy Home Packs: £5200

At least 262 children were supported during 2020-2021, in families as follows:

No of Children	Clients
Not specified	95
0	276
1	55
2	30
3	17
3+	24

Report for 2020-2021

Over £320,000 has been secured by THAW Orkney in the past year to help folk throughout the islands with their energy costs, maximise their income, or improve their heating systems in a bid to make their homes more affordable to heat.

In a year dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and the associated impact on jobs and income, over £50,000 of emergency electricity vouchers, grants to help to clear energy debt, or Warm Home Discount has been secured by THAW Orkney as folk struggled to heat their homes or have electricity to cook food.

The charity, based in Kirkwall but with staff working from home across Orkney, has found help for over 1000 new or existing clients in the past 12 months, with the

majority of these coming during the first lockdown period and then over the past winter.

Over 130 Cosy Home Packs have been issued to folk in this time, which include thermal blankets, hats and gloves, oil-filled radiator, low-energy bulbs, thermal mugs, and a damp trap. Items such as draught excluders, hot water tank jackets or chimney balloons can also be included as required.

The most significant increase the staff team has seen is in emergency electricity vouchers. In the financial year 2019-20 THAW Orkney issued vouchers worth just over £6000. This year that figure is £28,868 for vouchers alone. Added to that is over £2500 of awards from the Fuel Bank Foundation's heat fund, which paid for oil tank fills or solid fuel for clients, and almost £4000 of Warm Home Discount secured for clients.

But the most phenomenal boost for folk has come through the Scottish Government's Home Heating Support Fund, which has allowed us to secure over £26,000 of awards for some of our most vulnerable clients in just one month. This was a £4 million fund announced by the Scottish Government in late February, with the statement that no household should suffer in fuel poverty or have to ration fuel to get by. As it closed on 31 March, it has been a focus of our work in the past month, and to great effect, clearing debts for clients and giving them a bit of breathing space on their energy bills.

This fund recognised that awards could be made to any households in remote, rural, or island communities, to reflect the higher energy costs that we face.

The significant increase in demand for support has come as folk have spent longer periods at home - either furloughed or working from home - and as families have had children at home when schools and nurseries have been closed. This all adds to energy usage and costs, and electricity prices continue to rise far ahead of income, hitting folk hard.

Referrals to THAW Orkney during the year have come from Orkney Foodbank, for whom THAW Orkney now administers electricity vouchers to help folk cook the food they receive, and other agencies including Orkney Islands Council (OIC), Orkney Housing Association Ltd (OHAL), NHS Orkney, Orkney Health and Care, Orkney Citizen's Advice Bureau, Women's Aid Orkney, Macmillan, CLAN, Orkney Blide Trust, Home Energy Scotland, Orkney Care and Repair, YPeople, and Homestart as well as over 200 self-referrals.

Clients come from all housing tenures, including homeowners, OIC tenants, OIC emergency housing tenants, OHAL tenants and sharing owners, private rented tenants, and those life rented in properties.

Many of the new clients have required additional support, making full use of THAW Orkney's Community Support service, which works closely with other agencies including the pilot Community Link Practitioners based in GP practices.

THAW Orkney's Welfare Support service has seen significant income gains for clients throughout the year, including over £40,000 of Attendance Allowance secured, over £18,000 of Personal Independence Payments, £10,000 of Employment and Support Allowance, £7500 of debt written off, along with Council Tax reductions of over £2000.

At the same time as offering these frontline services to clients, THAW Orkney has again administered the SSE-funded Aiming Beyond Cancer programme, delivering 22 heating systems and 37 energy efficient white goods to clients who have an active cancer diagnosis. These clients are referred to THAW Orkney by CLAN and Macmillan, and by GP practices, as well as some self-referrals.

The THAW staff team - like so many other organisations - transformed from office-based to working from home, in Birsay, Papa Westray, Shapinsay, Deerness, and Kirkwall, with minimal staff in the office.

One client responding to a staff member after receiving a Home Heating Support Fund award said "you're my guardian angel who has literally changed my life. Makes me so happy and safer to know the electricity debt has gone. It's so lovely having a guardian angel."

Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau

We offer a holistic advice service which includes income maximisation, benefit take up and assistance with debt issues.

We offer a full benefit check and assistance to claim any relevant benefits identified by this check. We provide a full debt advice service if required an assistance with employment, tax etc. We represent clients in court who are facing eviction action and assist with Simple Procedure cases (previously known as Small Claims). We encourage other agencies to refer clients to us for assistance and many clients also self-refer.



During 2020-2021 we carried out some worked targeted at increasing household income for families. This involved providing local schools with information on the financial benefits and entitlements available for families which was distributed to all parents and guardians. We also regularly used our Facebook page to raise awareness of the benefits available and encouraged local people to get in touch for a benefit check.

In 20/21 our benefits advisers recorded Client Financial Gain (financial entitlements secured for clients) of £1,702,106.43. Assistance with claiming disability benefits is one of our key areas of work, during 2020-21 we recorded £727,348 of CFG relating to ill health/disability benefit claim for those of working age and £41,051 in benefits and entitlements for children including Child DLA and the new Scottish Child Payment.

Island Wellbeing Project

The Island Wellbeing Project is a partnership between Voluntary Action Orkney and the Development Trusts of Hoy, Shapinsay, Stronsay, Sanday, and Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre.



We work to improve the health, economic and social wellbeing of island residents. We provide one-to-one support, whilst also developing new groups, projects and relationships to build the long-term capacity of the community.

The project employs five coordinators who use the 'I.N.C.A' approach:

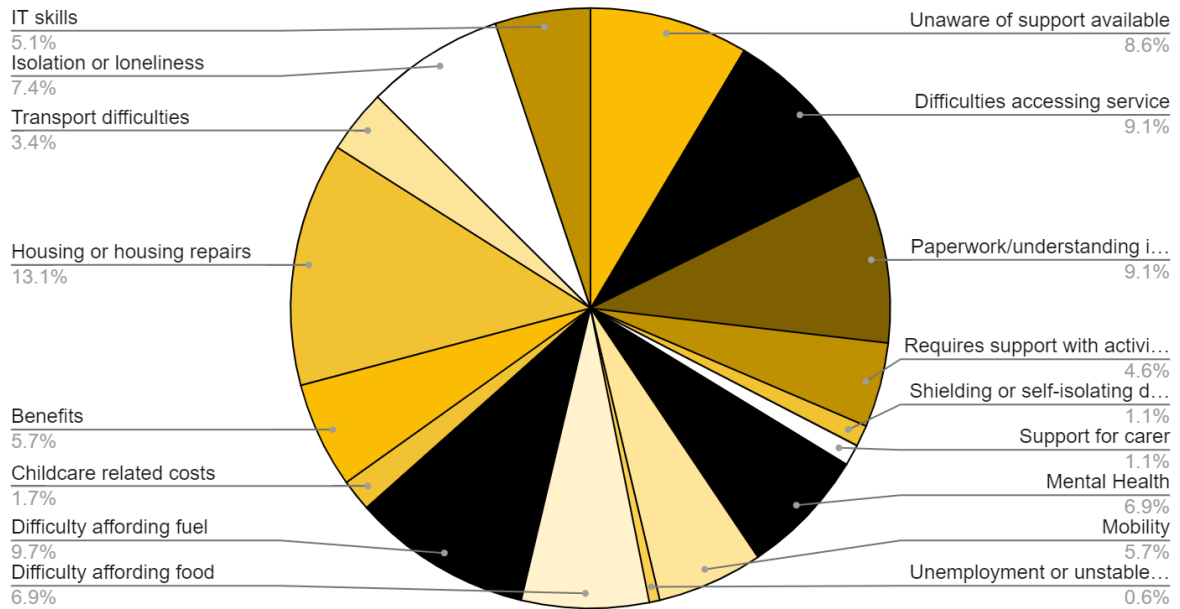
- **Innovator:** Developing new groups, projects and ways of working with mainland providers (e.g., community larder boxes, pop-up charity shops, fuel voucher schemes)
- **Navigator:** Providing one-to-one support, advice and signposting
- **Connector:** Acting as a link between the community and services (e.g., supporting Orkney Foodbank with referrals from the islands)
- **Advocate:** Gathering and sharing insights on the needs of island communities with strategic partners

Projects and groups with a focus on alleviating poverty in 2020-2021:

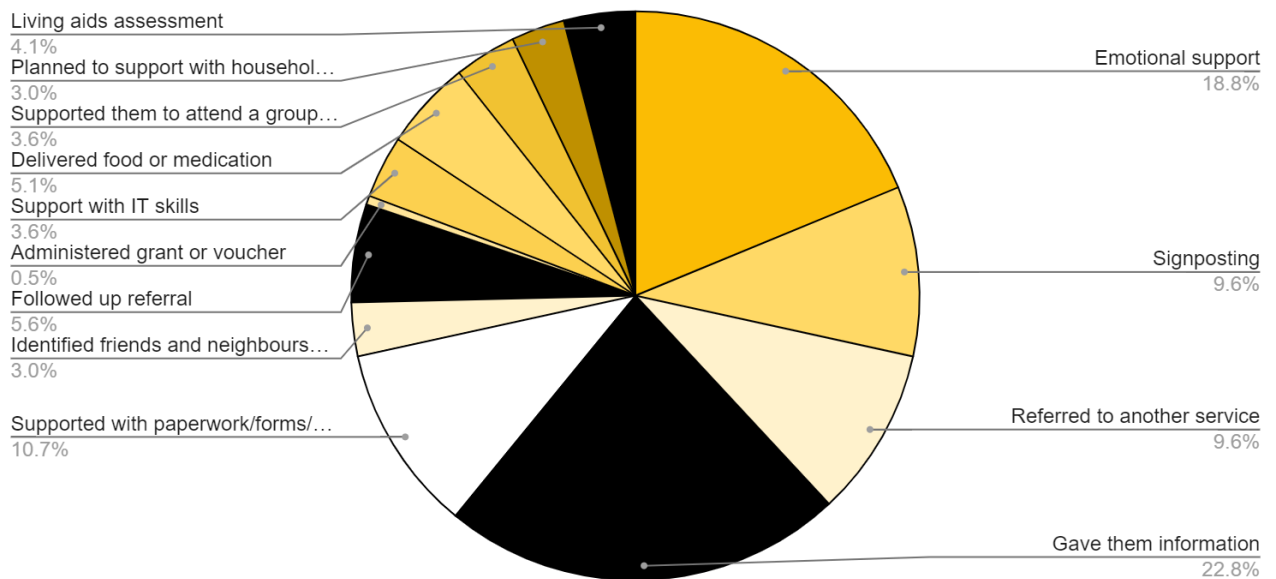
Project	Where	Details
Tackling period poverty	All isles	Sanitary products made available free of charge across the isles and on the ferries.
Covid Grocery Boxes	Shapinsay	Grocery boxes made available to those facing food insecurity as a result of higher cost of living.
Cast Affs	Shapinsay	Charity shop which makes cheap clothing, homeware, crockery etc. available to residents unwilling or unable to travel to the mainland. All profits redistributed to groups on the island.
Community Larder Scheme	Hoy	Grocery boxes made available to those facing food insecurity as a result of higher cost of living.
Information and support Hub	Hoy	Drop-in centre created for people to come with any personal issues, including difficulties accessing benefits, affording food or fuel, or finding services.
Christmas Meal Delivery	Hoy	Free hot meal delivered to any household that wanted it.
Clothes Zone	Hoy	Appointment only sessions which provides children clothes free of charge to those who need it
Community Support Fund	Hoy	Grants available to those struggling with the cost of living
Community Pantry	Sanday	Container full of food stocked by shop, available for residents to use

Peedie Larder Box scheme	Stronsay	Partnership with local growers to provide fresh fruit and veg
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Reasons for support (uncategorized)



Support provided



OIC Critical Childcare Holiday Hub

The Holiday Hub ran from 3 July to 7 August 2020, providing childcare over a 5 week period when school provision was not available, allowing key workers to continue delivering essential services. Key workers were identified as those who were helping to support us through the challenges presented by the pandemic.



The Hub, which operated within Papdale Halls of Residence, also provided spaces for children requiring support over this period. Provision for these children was increased over the 5 week period as and when slots became available.

Although numbers attending varied from 10-20 each day, approximately 40 young people in P1 to S2 age range and their families benefited from the service.

The Hub operated for 10 hours each day and was staffed by members of the Council's CLD Service, Active Schools Service, and support/teaching staff from Papdale Primary School. Activities on offer included team games, climbing, archery and bushcraft. Children also had full access to the wide range of recreational facilities within the Hub.

From the word go, Council staff worked tirelessly to make the provision available on an extremely tight time scale and although authorisation was given by the Government to end the provision a week early, the Council stood by its commitment to continue this valuable provision until August 7th.

Parents and carers of children attending the Hub were extremely grateful for the service and voiced their personal thanks to staff on many occasions.



"To everyone. Thank you for being the best club ever."

"Thank you for everything at the holiday hub. The girls enjoyed every minute. Plus it has allowed me to do my job as a staff nurse."
(Parent)



The Connect Project VAO

The Project is an informal learning programme to support vulnerable young adults after school and help them build confidence and positive relationships while focussing on life and employability skills with the goal to support them into the next steps that are right for the young person and a positive sustained transition.



Young people referred to connect have come with a variety, and often multiple, disadvantages. All these are recognised as reasons that affect a young person's life chances and ability to move out of and not move into economic disadvantage and poverty.

Needs of young people:

- Care experienced; childhood trauma; experience of food and fuel poverty; experience of family break downs; homelessness and joblessness.
- Physical and mental ill health, involvement in the justice system
- Learning difficulties and disabilities, social and emotional communication difficulties, isolation within the community.

The relationships built through the programme help us uncover and work with issues such as family neglect, suicidal ideation and homelessness that become issues for our young people and there is a level of trust that may exist from being outside statutory services that allow us to support, link with partner agencies and be flexible in our approach that helps.

Many issues within Orkney can remain hidden because of geography and social stigma and poverty and the lack of opportunities it leads to can be insidious in its effects on young people and vulnerability. Many people can be unaware of the difficulties others face with comments such as “everyone in Orkney has access to a car” or “there are lots of opportunities for young people in Orkney” that show a complete lack of awareness of aspects of lack of family support, transport, money for subscriptions, uniforms, lessons, entry as well as social discomfort within peer groups that can be insurmountable barriers.

Connect has been a point of stability and support in the lives of many young people. It has been extremely challenging already for the young people at this time of COVID and it will take time to rebuild confidence, socialisation and communication. However, it would have been even harder had they not had a regular pattern of support in their lives at this time so they will be far more able and willing to move forward and access any opportunities as and when we can. We can help to recognise where existing problems have been exacerbated by the current situation and how we can support young people.

Case Studies of Young people supported by Connect

Case Study B

B was referred to the Connect Project in March 2019, via the school and Skills Development Scotland. This young person was indicating that they may go to college at a later date but needed some support to build their personal skills prior to making any next stage progression.

B started at Connect in April 2019 at the age of 16, they had left school. **B** was very quiet and withdrawn and struggled in medium to large groups, they were most comfortable in small groups of 3 or 4 others. They had very low self confidence and self-esteem. Their experience at school had not been positive with instances of bullying and being segregated from the mainstream to be in a group of 'low achievers' as defined by the school. **B** had been repeatedly told by the school that they were too stupid to continue at school, which they had come to accept as their truth. **B** was also diagnosed as dyslexic. **B** had a challenging home life and also disclosed that a person they had looked to as a mentor had been lost to them through suicide

On starting at the project, **B** was given a key support worker and encouraged to join in with activities. **B** had a negative dialogue about themselves and was convinced that they could not do anything well. **B**'s body language was self-deprecating keeping their hood up, head down and not making eye contact and very little communication with others. The support staff worked with **B** and encouraged their participation. The staff also used positive framing to help to move away from the negative self-beliefs. As **B** continued to be involved in the project they found things that they enjoyed doing and started to slowly grow in confidence. This displayed in their body language; not keeping their hood up, voluntarily joining in group activities and talking to others.

As their participation at the Connect project continued **B** decided that they didn't want to go to college but wanted to work instead. The staff supported **B** with employability skills and supported volunteering. They took part in a great range of projects to benefit the community. As **B** continued to grow in confidence they became a much brighter person and an integral part of the group. They received a Youth Team Award for their participation in a project to clear the paths and walkways of a local nature reserve.

In October 2020, **B** moved into their own accommodation at the local Y People supported premises in Kirkwall. **B** is continuing to be supported by the Connect project and Skills Development Scotland both with their confidence and in looking for work. Once the pandemic restrictions are lifted **B** will begin supported work experience at a local work project and will move into employment when they are ready.

Case study C

C started with Connect after finishing at school at age 16. They were care experienced and had some difficult early memories of life with their mother with a history of familial alcohol and domestic abuse. They had not enjoyed school for

many reasons including bullying and did not consider the possibility of staying on because “I was too stupid”.

C lacked self-confidence, spoke very little and also felt quite isolated in the community. They had previously had a group of friends who had become quite anti-social and involved in activities that they had become uncomfortable with. Taking a step back from them, they had been verbally and physically attacked, had their home egged and felt they had no option but to stay at home by themselves. They didn't have a lot of trust as “people don't care” and had little positive aspirations.

They started the Connect programme and attended regularly for the full programme of a range of activities. They enjoyed the learning through 'doing' and being able to take part in opportunities around the community. Support staff encouraged them to explore what interested them and found they enjoyed creative writing, Viking culture, art and working with animals.

C gained more confidence, began offering their opinion more and were involved in choosing and planning activities. They had positive relationships with the staff and other young people taking on a leadership role at times.

C recorded a thank you speech for a team to receive a Youth Award which was being delivered through an online live event instead of in person. This was a huge step forward in their confidence knowing that the speech would be viewed by hundreds of people. In Connect photos you can see a progression from them blocking their face from the camera, frowning or making a face, to smiling and being more comfortable in pictures.

When lockdown came in 2020 it affected their stated aim of a move into the workplace for **C** and they had conversations with their key-worker about the options available. They decided to apply to college and although nervous prepared with their key worker for the interview. They were accepted for a place on an employability skills course.

They kept in contact with the Connect staff and other young people, took part in activities and also found time in lockdown to develop their creative writing - submitting fan-fiction and working on art and sharing it with us.

Due to limited contact and changes due to govt. guidance the college course is operating on a one week in/one out programme for attendance. **C** has continued at their discretion to keep in touch with Connect, asked questions regarding coursework, taken part in some activities and have taken up the offer of studying Viking History in an online course so they “won't be bored”.

Their time with Connect has allowed them to grow in confidence and maturity and feel more prepared and less anxious about what the future will hold for them.

Homestart Orkney

Many of the parents in the families supported by our service are either on a very low wage, or are not working: predominately due to health issues, but also there are those who are caught in a cycle of poverty, and there is a family history of unemployment.



During 2021-21, as with many services, our support to families changed overnight when the nation went into lockdown. Volunteers and staff remained in regular contact with supported families, and we continued to receive referrals. Despite, and in some instances because of, restrictions we supported those affected by poverty in the following ways:

- Advising on financial assistance from other sources eg Social Security Scotland
- Sourcing additional grants to distribute to those affected by the pandemic, whose income had reduced as well as those already receiving benefits

Additionally, our staff team also supported families by:

- Distributing grants received for those affected by Covid-19 pandemic
- Applying for 'Every Child Deserves a Christmas' grants from Orkney Charitable Trust for eligible children
- Assisting families in accessing other services, such as THAW Orkney, for further assistance and advice with heating
- Applying for food vouchers from Orkney Foodbank for those families who struggled to afford meals for their children while schools/nurseries were closed, and those who would have struggled regardless of the pandemic
- Compiled and distributed activity packs to families
- Sourced and distributed outdoor clothing and toys so as children could enjoy outdoor play
- Distributed donations of toys/books/clothes (acting more as an intermediary)
- Worked as intermediary to ensure those children learning from home had suitable devices to enable them to do so (via contact with relevant services)
- Applying for grants for specific, essential, household items, such as cookers, etc

We continued to offer weekly Group Support sessions online during the pandemic and initial lockdown. After moving into Tier 1 (and subsequently Tier 3), we have been offering indoor Group Support, following national guidance. Many of those who attend our Group Support often struggle to attend mainstream groups, due to anxiety and also not being able to afford some of the activities on offer, or indeed to travel to participate.

We have also been able to offer face to face support to families, with volunteers meeting with families in public spaces and, in some instances, within family homes. These meetings and support all follow national guidance in terms of Covid

Priority groups we have worked with include:

- Lone parents
- Families with a disability
- Families with 3+ children
- Minority ethnic families
- Families with the youngest child aged under 1
- Mothers who are under the age of 25
- Families with children residing on the isles
- Families with experience of the care system

Orkney Charitable Trust

Orkney Charitable Trust raises and distributes funds to help people under 25 who live in the Orkney Islands. Our funds are available to young people in times of ill health, disability, hardship or disadvantage and are open to all.



- **Orkney Fund** – responsive to families needs when the most
- **Bairns Need Nappies** – working in partnership with NHS Orkney Health Visitors & Midwives, we help with the supply and cost of nappies for people who need some help providing these for young children in Orkney.
- **Help from Home** – aims to provide financial support to local families who require it when a child, or young person, needs treatment in a hospital out-with Orkney.
- **Every Child Deserves A Christmas** – to help reduce festive inequalities and bring some Christmas magic to Orkney children where a little help is needed. Also supporting Christmas presents with the Salvation Army.

We gave out more than £11,000 in Spring 'helping hand' grants in May 2021, using a £3,000 grant from Youth Scotland, working alongside families using the Food Bank and THAW.

Community Learning & Development Orkney

- Parent Employability Support
- Mobile Top Ups – 2020-2021
- Orkney Youth Forum
- Family Activity Packs



Parent Employability Support

At a strategic level the newly established Local Employability Partnership will have a wider membership and a remit for longer term planning, coordination and delivery of the employability agenda in Orkney and ensuring NOLB principles to service delivery are developed and maintained across provision. Parent Employability Support will be an agenda item so provision can be coordinated and targeted to those most in need with the overarching target to reduce child poverty within the local community.

CLD Employability team have met with various Statutory and Third sector partners including early years, housing, and health to discuss support and identify potential families/ parents who would benefit from employability support. All partners have referral forms and have agreed to engage with highlighted families to progress referrals for support.

Exploring potential of working within early years settings once this can happen to have a regular presence in Early Years setting to build relationships with and support parents.

The CLD Employability team has worked with various partners across sectors to identify individuals and families on low incomes that have little or no access to digital connectivity and devices. We received 26 referrals and submitted a bid to Connecting Scotland for 26 devices which was successful. The devices were distributed in January and have support individuals/families access information, support and essential services including welfare, training and employment. Employability Support information leaflets were distributed with each device and the Employability team have offered one to one bespoke support to individuals who have requested it. After talking to parents during this project we are currently working with Learning Link to develop and deliver a series of digital literacy sessions to meet parents needs including basic set up, setting up emails, online banking, internet safety etc.

CLD Employability team have met with HomeStart Orkney to explore potential for art-based consultation project with families to gather their lived experience and views which could feed into the Child Poverty Plan. Also discussed was the potential for the CLO work with Homestart volunteers to provide informal training re Social Security Scotland Benefits, Confidence to Cook and personal budgeting resources. This would increase their knowledge and confidence when working with families.

The CLD Employability Team are working with WhoCares Scotland colleagues to plan and deliver holistic and bespoke programme of activities/opportunities for young people and families with care experience. The group will be supported to look at collective advocacy opportunities that could feed into various strategic plans and service design.

The CLD Employability team has established links with the new Enhancing Wellbeing Project Manager based at Voluntary Action Orkney and who is responsible for coordinating the Wellbeing Coordinators on 4 of the ferry-linked isles. We are working with the team to establish specific needs identified on the islands for parents/ families and the wider community and how we can potentially work in partnership to ensure support and provision is provided to meet needs of individuals and communities.

Mobile Top Ups – 2020-2021

It became apparent that as young people were accessing school work and other youth work activities at home that often access to wi-fi was poor or where they were using mobile data this was limited and expensive.

Therefore, CLD Youth Clubs applied to Youth Scotland for funding to support with this. This funding provided the opportunity for young people to apply for a free £10 top up to enable them to stay connected.

The vouchers were made available to all young people in Orkney, who, after completing a short application form, would be issued a £10 top-up to their mobile phone to keep in touch and stay connected.

Many areas of Orkney have poor broadband service, and this allowed young people to stay connected using their mobile device 4G without the worry of cost or poor connectivity. The Top-Up scheme allowed 90 young people, some applying more than once, to stay connected where they may otherwise not have.

“We have very poor internet connection where we live and these 2 x £10 vouchers for the girls have supported them to continue online use on their mobile devices for a period of time (a month). The process was very easy and straightforward with effective and quick communication.” A parent

Orkney Youth Forum

Orkney Youth Forum is a group of young people who come from across Orkney to address issues that are relevant to them. The group is supported by a member of OIC CLD team, who also supports the 2 elected Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP's) whom are also members of this forum. The forum is open to young people across Orkney aged 12-25 years old. There are currently 14 young people who regularly attend meetings from across Orkney.

Lockdown forced us to facilitate more sessions online rather than face to face and as a result of this the Youth Forum has grown and have started meeting more regularly via MS Teams. The meetings are better attended online than they have ever been on the past, with approximately 10 members attending on a regular basis. The forum has also attracted a number of new members, although not necessarily ready to put on their camera or contribute to the discussions, they have indicated that they enjoy being part of this group and hope to be able to contribute to the discussions more soon.

Since the start of the pandemic the forum have been involved in a number of discussions/projects and have met with numerous key partners. They have been involved in shaping 'Orkney's vision for Children and Young People, gave their feedback to a Child and Young People Healthy Weight questionnaire and have met with MSP's in parliament to discuss employability and career opportunities, amongst a plethora of others.

Family Activity Packs

The Community Resilience Fund was established by Orkney Islands Council, through hardship Funding from the UK Government, to support, among others,

'Vulnerable isolated people and families, particularly those living in remote rural areas, families where a parent or both parents have lost employment or children living in poverty'.

The CLD team worked with the West Mainland Youth Achievement Group and Firth Youth Club to apply for this funding to purchase products to provide over 430 families across Orkney with Family Activity Packs full of interactive ideas for the whole family. Packs included: pens, pencils, paper, glue, scissors, colouring sheets, story books, recipes, puzzles, board game, outdoor games, seeds, upcycling ideas, time capsules, information from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, online Safety from Police Scotland and information on Youth Accreditation Programmes such as Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards.

Through working in partnership with schools across Orkney we were able to identify the young people and families in most need of receiving an Activity Pack. With support from local hauliers, the packs were transported to the Outer Isles and the CLD team delivered to mainland schools who distributed the packs to their families on our behalf.

These packs were gratefully received from families from across Orkney. Especially in such an uncertain time for families and for children, it gave them a nice surprise and some focus for the children to receive some free resources to take some time out for themselves away from the fact that they were not able to do their normal routines, such as attend school.

“My children are ages 6 and 16. It was great for the 6 year old and fire safety for all. We used the materials to make cards for birthdays and being able to adjust the skipping rope to suit any age was great. It was well thought of and a super surprise.”
Parent

“Just wanted to say a big thank you from my daughters. The activity packs are a big success!”

Outline action plan for 2021-2022

Many actions already in train will continue. New actions are being planned, including using the Scottish Government's Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF). This fund aims to deliver a more flexible and user-based model of employability, supporting our ambition to reduce child poverty. PESF provides support for service users both in and out of employment and will help service users to access or progress in employment, improving their own and their family's circumstances with the aim of ultimately reducing child poverty rates.

	What is the action that is continuing for 2021-2022?	Who is carrying out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) is it addressing?
ADVICE & ADVOCACY			
C1	Advocacy services Advocacy Service commissioned by NHS Orkney and Orkney Islands Council	TBC following a tender process but currently CAB Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security
C2	Assisting clients to identify and claim their full financial entitlements	CAB Orkney	Income from social security Cost of living
C3	Assistance with benefit checks	CAB Orkney	Income from social security Cost of living
C4	Parent Employability Support Supporting individuals and families access information, support and essential services including welfare, training and employment	CLD Employability	Income from employment Income from social security
C5	Ensuring access to council funds, free school meals and clothing allowances	OHAC	Income from social security
C6	Ensuring access to free national health services e.g. Minor Ailments, continence products	OHAC (NHS Orkney)	Cost of living
C7	Signposting and referrals to THAW, CAB, Foodbank, Orkney Charitable Trust, and other partner agencies	OHAC	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C8	Regular discussions with families about finances, debt, benefits	OHAC (Social Work)	Cost of living
C9	Lobbying and prompting services providers to improve standards of living e.g. housing	OHAC (Social Work)	Cost of living

	What is the action that is continuing for 2021-2022?	Who is carrying out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) is it addressing?
C10	Referrals to CAB for benefit checks/money advice for people in financial difficulties	OHAC & OIC (Housing staff)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C11	Signposting to services such as mental health services, Coronavirus Community Hub, etc	OHAC & OIC (Housing staff)	Cost of living
C12	Support with Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grant applications	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C13	Child Poverty data gathering and analysis	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C14	Holistic advice service Assisting clients to identify and claim their full financial entitlements.	CAB Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security
C15	Support for individuals and families to manage relationships, improve mental health and reduce substance use plus onward referrals to other services e.g. CAB, Women's Aid	Relationships Scotland - Orkney	Income from social security Cost of living
C16	Support for women and children affected by domestic abuse	Women's Aid Orkney	Cost of living
FINANCIAL SUPPORT			
C17	Sourcing funding (local and national) to assist families to purchase items, e.g. bicycles	OHAC (Occupational therapists, Health Visitors)	Cost of living
C18	Assisting families to apply for Best Start grants	OHAC (Social Work)	Income from social security
C19	Financial support for local children in need including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General fund • Help from Home Scheme • Bairsns Need Nappies 	Orkney Charitable Trust	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living

	What is the action that is continuing for 2021-2022?	Who is carrying out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) is it addressing?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every Child Deserves A Christmas grant scheme • Supporting Christmas presents 		
C20	Funding for the electricity vouchers fulfilled by the Foodbank, and directly	THAW Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
FOOD POVERTY			
C21	Referrals to Foodbank	OHAC & OIC (Housing staff)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C22	Foodbank	Orkney Foodbank	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
FUEL POVERTY			
C23	Combating Fuel Poverty through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C24	Providing information and advice on energy efficiency, tariff switching support, assistance with accessing grant funding, advocacy, income maximisation and budgeting support	THAW Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C25	Providing support to householders in fuel poverty to heat their homes	THAW Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C26	Cosy Home Packs and small grants	THAW Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living

	What is the action that is continuing for 2021-2022?	Who is carrying out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) is it addressing?
C27	Electricity top ups – so those in receipt of food parcels can heat/cook their food	Orkney Foodbank	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C28	Processing of electricity top ups for Orkney Foodbank	THAW Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
HOUSING & HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT			
C29	Support for families on low incomes	Homestart Orkney	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C30	Community larder boxes, pop-up charity shops, fuel voucher schemes etc Acting as a link between the community and services e.g. supporting Orkney Foodbank with referrals from the islands	Island Wellbeing Project	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C31	Enabling access to IT computers etc for families	OHAC (Health Visitors, School Health, Paediatric therapists)	Cost of living
C32	Reminding clients about the free period products available locally	OHAC (Health Visitors, School Health)	Cost of living
C33	Addressing poor housing	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C34	Funding of Restart Orkney	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C35	Funding for starter-packs of essential household items	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living

	What is the action that is continuing for 2021-2022?	Who is carrying out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) is it addressing?
C36	Housing support for vulnerable families	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C37	Ad hoc essential clothing items for Papdale Halls of Residence pupils	Papdale Hall of Residence staff	Cost of living
MOTHERS & BABIES			
C38	Provision of baby boxes	OHAC (Maternity unit)	Cost of living
C39	Support for pregnant women and families with children	OHAC (Maternity Services and Health Visitors)	Cost of living
C40	Hungry Baby service - baby milk, baby food, nappies etc (referred to Health Visitors where child/children under 2 years)	Orkney Foodbank	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C41	Childsmile - improving children's oral health	OHAC (Dental & Oral Health)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
YOUNG PEOPLE			
C42	Informal learning programme for young people transitioning out of school	The Connect Project (VAO)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C43	Active Schools	OIC & SportScotland	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C44	ActiveLife Budget Membership	OIC & The Pickaquoy Centre	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living

	What is the action that is continuing for 2021-2022?	Who is carrying out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) is it addressing?
C45	Young persons' Supported Accommodation	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security
C46	Provision of school uniform/toiletries/laundry items	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C47	Young Scot cards Youth Achievement Groups Orkney Youth Forum	OIC (Community Learning and Development Team)	Cost of living
C48	Supporting vulnerable young adults , helping them build confidence and positive relationships while focussing on life and employability skills	The Connect Project (VAO)	Income from employment Income from social security
CONTINUING IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC			
C49	New ways of working to engage with service users and deliver services safely Housing Service moved most interactions with service users to telephone and online. This has worked relatively well and staff have adapted well to this change in working practice.	OHAC & OIC (Housing staff)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
C50	Moratorium on increase of rents within emergency housing	OHAC & OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services)	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living

		Who is carrying out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) is it addressing?
NEW ACTIONS FOR 2021-2023			
N1	Explore passporting of benefits to reduce the bureaucracy and perceived stigma for families having to make multiple	OHAC	Income from social security

		Who is carrying out the action?	Which poverty driver(s) is it addressing?
	applications for benefits to which they are entitled.		
N2	Explore implications of new Scottish Government policy on universal free school meals for P4 and P5 pupils due to take effect during 2021-22. This may have the unintended effect of excluding families from linked benefits.	OIC	Income from social security Cost of living
N3	Winter project of kids and coats	Orkney Charitable Trust	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living
N4	Seek to ensure dental and wider health services are accessible without barriers of finance	The Orkney Partnership Board	Income from employment Income from social security Cost of living