



Orkney
Local Child Poverty
Action Report
2023-2024

Contents

Introduction	3
Fuel Poverty	5
Child Health Indicators	7
Making Ends Meet Survey	8
Question One: How is the Cost of Living Crisis affecting you?	9
Question Two: How is the Cost of Living Crisis Affecting others in the community?.....	10
Question Three: What would you like schools/ the council to do about it?.....	12
Question Four: Have you noticed any changes at home?	14
What we do in Orkney to combat child poverty.....	15
Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022-26: Progress Report	19
Reports from Partner Agencies:	31
Voluntary Action Orkney: The Connect Project	33
Pickaquoy Centre: ActiveLife Budget membership	35
Orkney Foodbank.....	37
NHS Orkney: Health Visitors	39
NHS Orkney: Anchor Report.....	40
Social Security Scotland: Best Start Grants	40
Orkney Islands Council: Scottish Welfare Funds	44
Developing a Child Poverty Strategy	44
Outline Action Plan 2022 – 2026	46

Introduction

Local authorities and health boards in Scotland have a statutory requirement to report on child poverty. In Orkney, we choose to tackle this issue jointly as the Orkney Partnership, producing an annual Local Child Poverty Action Report with our partner agencies. The Cost of Living Task Force is a sub-group of the Orkney Partnership that leads on the child poverty work.

The cost of living crisis is the most severe economic crisis in a generation, and it is disproportionately affecting those in rural areas like Orkney. In 2021, the Scottish Government estimated that the minimum cost of living in remote rural Scotland was between 15% - 30% higher than in urban parts of the UK.

A survey included in this report shows that the majority of Orcadian children are feeling the consequences of the cost of living crisis either at home, or through changes in their community. Children are increasingly reporting feeling cold in their houses and having to change purchasing habits to accommodate the rising prices. Use of the foodbank, which should be the last resort for any family, has increased significantly over the previous year -- over 50% more vouchers are being distributed to a total of 1102 clients. Tackling child poverty is no longer an exercise in prevention, but one of mitigation. Ensuring that children are able to live comfortable, normal lives is a goal that requires urgent action.

National figures included in this report show that Orkney has had an estimated 536 children living in relative poverty in 2022 – 23. This is a decrease from the all-time highs we saw last year of 563, but it is still an increase from the gains we saw during the pandemic through the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment Scheme.

Two years ago, The Orkney Partnership published Orkney's first Child Poverty Strategy which set out our plans to combat child poverty. In this report, we track the progress we have made in implementing our strategy.

Thank you for your interest in our report.



Reporting on child poverty in Orkney

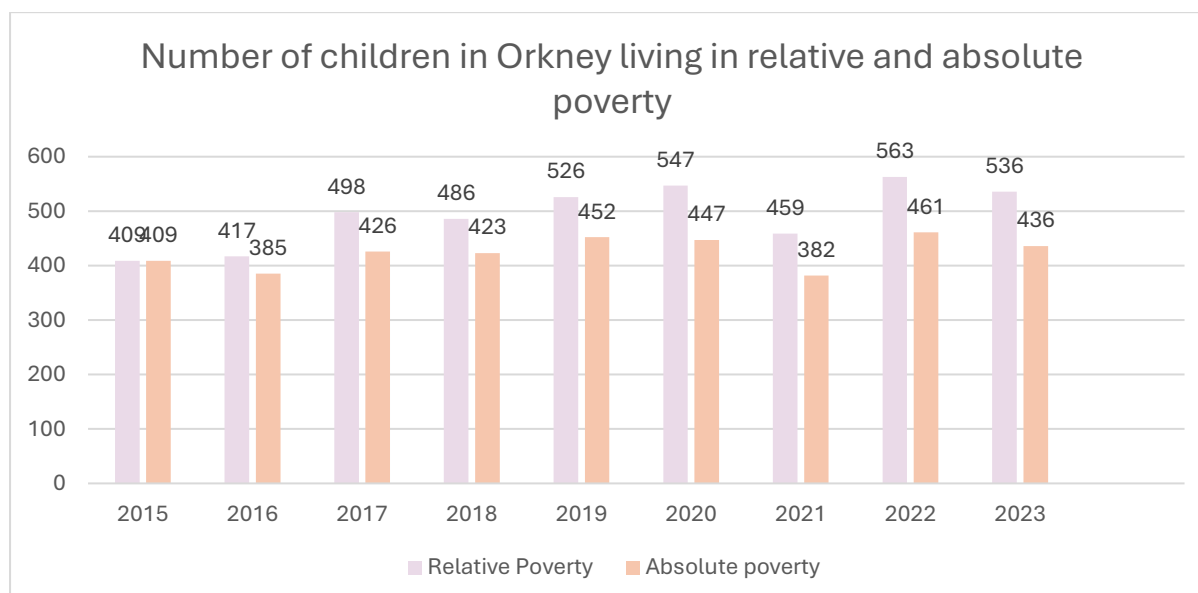
Reporting on child poverty in Orkney is difficult due to the relatively small size of our dataset compared to other local authorities. The data is, at times, so granular that it cannot be published to protect the anonymity of the child in question.

The Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022 – 2026 used figures from the UK Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to understand the percentage of children living in absolute and relative poverty in Orkney.

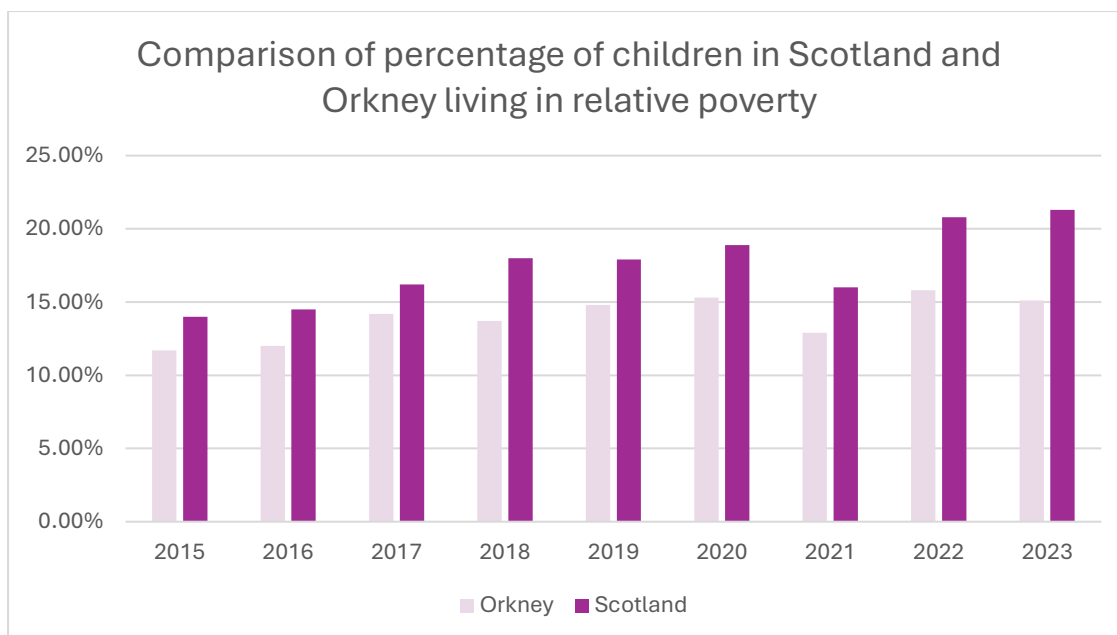
The terms absolute and relative poverty come from the DWP with absolute poverty measuring whether those in the lowest income households are seeing their incomes rise in real terms, and relative poverty measuring whether those in the lowest income households are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole.

Relative poverty	Children in families with incomes less than 60% of the contemporary UK median income.
Absolute poverty	Children in families with incomes less than 60% of the inflation adjusted 2010 – 2011 median income.

The most recent figures available are FYE 2023, where we can see a slight reduction in the number of children in both relative or absolute poverty in Orkney, although we are still not at the low rates we saw just during the Covid 19 pandemic (FYE 2021).



We can also calculate the incidence of poverty in Scotland from the DWP figures to compare with Orkney. Here we can see that Orkney consistently has lower levels of relative poverty than the Scottish average.



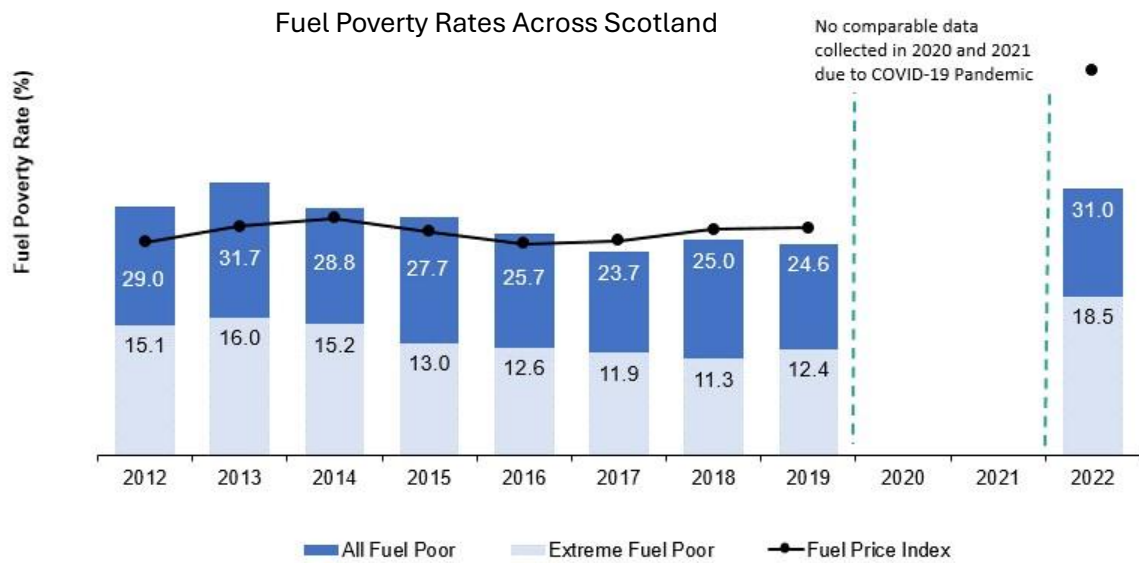
Looking forward, Scottish Government are creating a new poverty measure: the Below Average Resources measure (BAR). The BAR measure will add value and work alongside the current DWP measures. This measure is not yet ready to be included within this years LCPAR.

Fuel Poverty

As explained in the previous LCPAR, the DWP calculation of relative and absolute poverty does not account for the higher cost of living in rural island areas, nor the impact on fuel costs living in an exposed windy region.

The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 define a household as being 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 (i.e after housing costs), and if after deducting those fuel costs, benefits received for a care need or disability and childcare costs, the households remaining adjusted net income is insufficient to maintain an acceptable standard of living.”

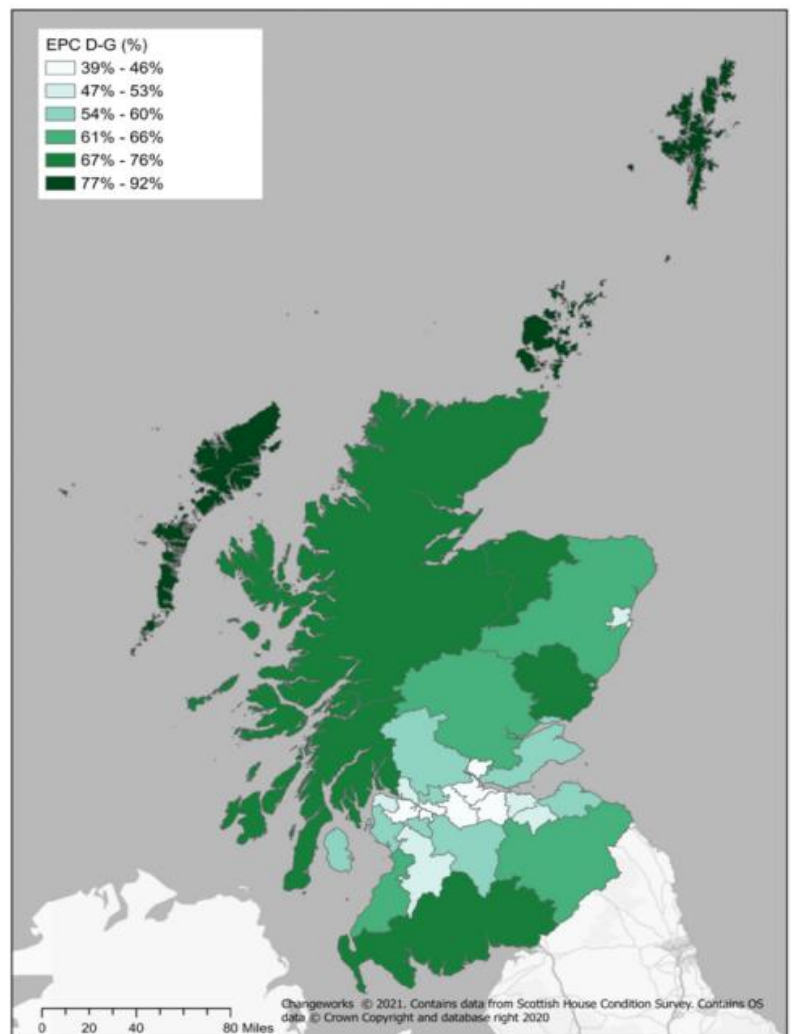
The Scottish Government no longer breaks down fuel poverty statistics by local authority area. However, we do know that in 2017 - 2019, 30.5% of Orkney households were in fuel poverty compared with a Scottish average of 24.4%. Orkney had the seventh highest rates of fuel poverty in Scotland and second highest rates of extreme fuel poverty. Since then, the Scottish average has climbed to 31%, and we can assume that there has been a comparable increase in Orcadian households in this time frame.



Orkney is not connected to the UK mainland gas grid, therefore people living in Orkney (Orcadians) must use more expensive forms of fuel to heat their homes. This results in higher standing charges, with households spending more than their urban equivalent households for the same energy usage. Orcadians either use more expensive electricity to heat their homes, or are reliant on unregulated fuels including oil, LPG and solid fuels. Due to the unregulated market for these fuels, there are fewer protections for householders. Additionally, a greater proportion of households on Orkney use restricted meter tariffs which limit customers ability to switch to more competitive rates.

In Orkney high fuel poverty rates are also driven by the poor energy efficiency of homes, as poorly insulated properties require greater fuel consumption to maintain comfortable temperatures. The Changeworks map shows the high proportion of dwellings in Orkney that have the poorest Energy Performance Certificate rating of D – G.

Since the last LCPAR, Orkney Islands Council has produced a Fuel Poverty



strategy a part of the larger Local Housing Strategy. This document created five key actions to battle high fuel poverty rates:

- Lobbying Scottish and UK governments on the unfair tariffs experience in Orkney.
- Undertaking further analysis of fuel poverty at a lower Orkney Islands geographic area, with annual monitoring and review to enable more targeted action.
- Review information and advice provision for individual households and private landlords on fuel poverty and energy efficiency particularly in areas where fuel poverty is more prevalent.
- Develop a housing net-zero plan for implementation across tenure including taking opportunities for additional funding.
- Work with schools, universities, HIE and local contactors to promote careers and develop the local workforce in repairs, maintenance and energy efficiency works including accreditation in the insulation sector (across housing sectors).

Each of these actions are included in the Local Housing Action Plan with targets and timescales assigned.

Child Health Indicators

Poverty impacts on children’s health, and problems can persist for a lifetime. In previous Action Reports we have monitored a selection of the child health indicators published by Public Health Scotland to see how the health of Orcadian children compares with the Scottish average.

Below is a table of Public Health Scotland health indicators for Orkney. This continues the reporting from previous years with the arrows in the fourth box showing whether the levels have gone up or down since the previous LCPAR.

ScotPHO Health Indicator	Reporting period	Orkney	How did we do?	Scotland	How do we compare?
Healthy Birth Weight 3 year rolling average	2020 – 2023	73.11	↓	84.57	Worse
Child healthy weight in Primary 1 Percentage whose BMI is within the healthy reference range for age and sex	2020/21	73.7	↓	69.8	Baseline
Drug-related hospital admissions, age 11 – 25 3 year rolling average age/sex standardised rate per 100,000	2018/19 – 2020/21	182.55	↓	167.71	Worse

Alcohol related hospital admissions, age 11 – 25 Age-sex standardised rate per 100,000	2018/19 – 2020/21	503.39	↑	255.26	Worse
Young people admitted to hospital due to assault, age 15 – 25 Age-sex standardised rate per 100,000	2019/20 – 2021/22	59.46	↓	79.19	Better
Teenage pregnancies 3 year rolling average per 1000 females age 15 – 19	2019 - 2021	15.17	↑	24.95	Better
Child dental health in Primary 1 Percentage of P1 children with no obvious signs of tooth decay	2022/23	84.69	↓	75.17	Better

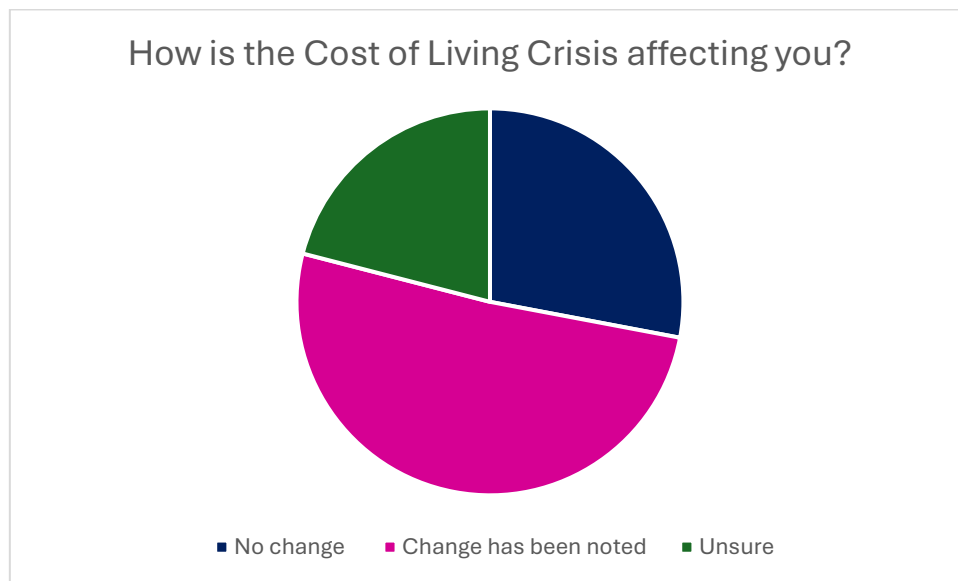
Making Ends Meet Survey

In Autumn 2023, a survey was carried out across four Orkney schools – Glaitness Primary School, Firth Primary, Westray Junior High School, and Stromness Academy – to try and gauge the extent that children were feeling the cost of living crisis.

A short presentation was given at each of the schools which helped to focus children and young people on recent national and world events and encourage children and young people to consider why these events matter to them. They were then provided a QR code to access an online survey and each child filled out this survey anonymously amongst their peers. The age, school and class stage was recorded.

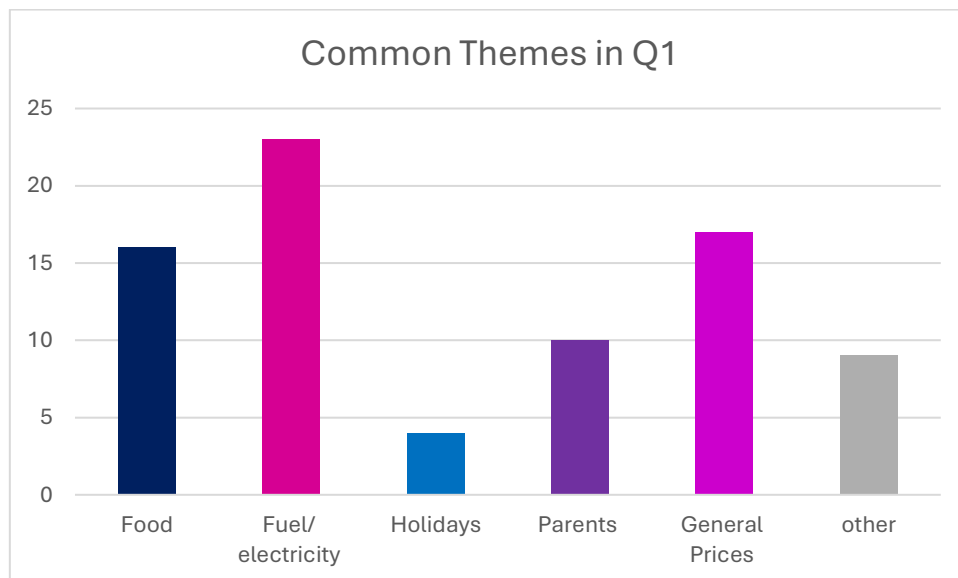
There was 148 responses to the survey: 26 from Glaitness Primary, 24 from Firth Primary, 20 from Westray Junior High School and 68 from Stromness Academy. The children ranged in class stage from Primary 5 to S6.

Question One: How is the Cost of Living Crisis affecting you?



- 73 respondents answered that they had noticed a way that the cost of living was affecting them.
- 40 respondents answered that they had seen no change to their lives due to the Cost of Living Crisis.
- 30 respondents answered that they were uncertain if the Cost of Living crisis was affecting them.

Of the 73 respondents who answered that the Cost of Living crisis was affecting them, these five general themes were prominent:



- Changes to food purchasing habits and the general increase in food prices was mentioned by sixteen children, with many families making the switch to non-branded foods.

“we have to carefully consider what we are buying”

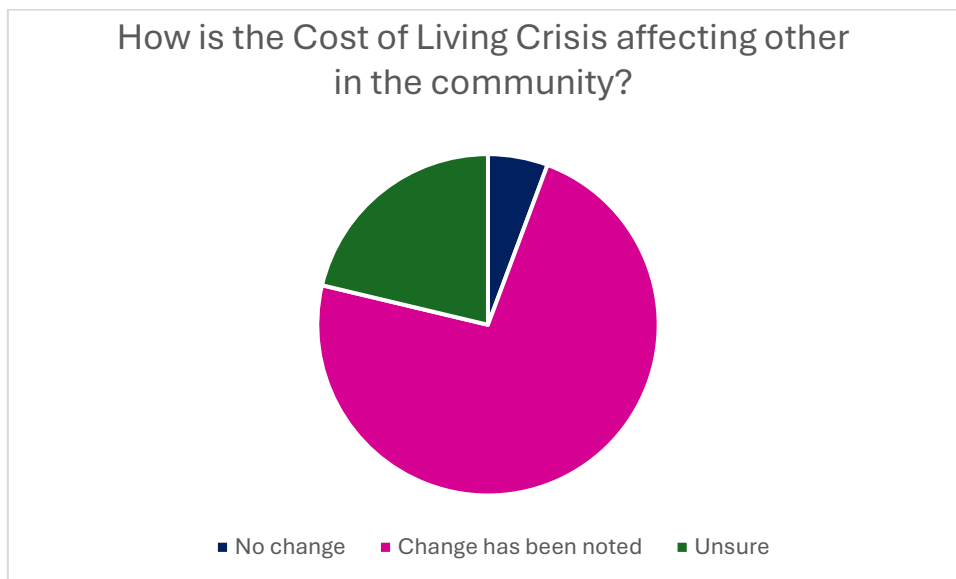
- Changes to fuel and electricity consumption were mentioned 23 times. This includes answers about cold houses, the heating being put on less, and lights being switched off more.
- The Holidays were mentioned four times, either in the context of less trips off-island or the cost of Christmas decorations etc.
- Parents being more stressed or less present was mentioned ten times.
- General price increases and changes in purchasing habits (excluding food related purchases) was referenced by seventeen different respondents.
- The other section includes young people who were struggling to afford to learn to drive, or having to save more money to afford university.

“[it’s] colder than normal”

“dad has to take on extra jobs so we don’t see him much now and he’s always stressed”

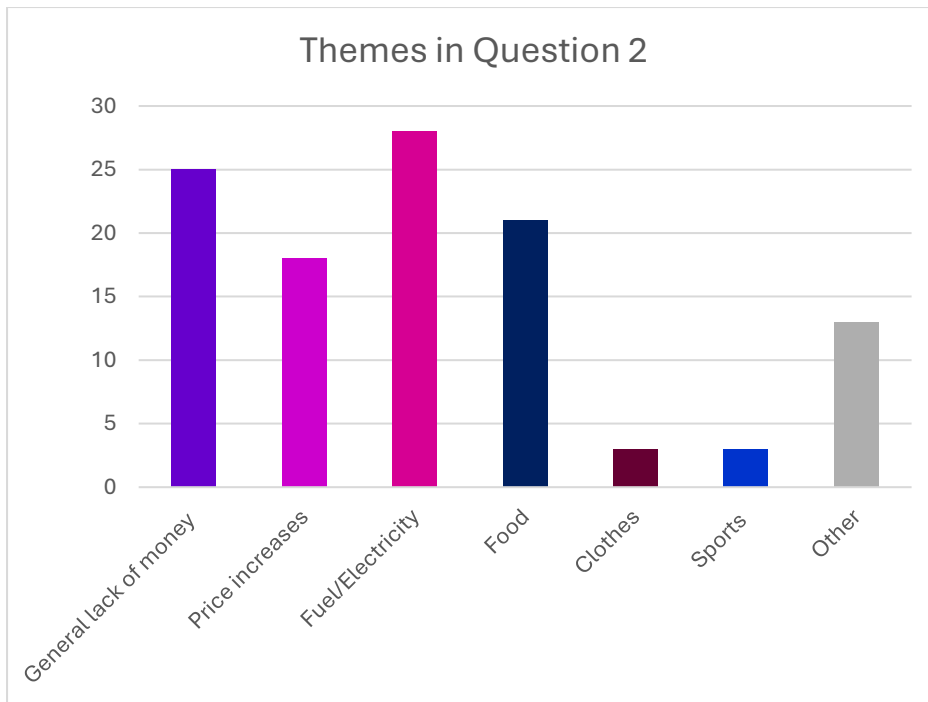
Question Two: How is the Cost of Living Crisis Affecting others in the community?

Here, children were encouraged to think of others in the community – their friends and neighbours – and whether they had seen any differences in their lives. More respondents to this section reported that they had noticed a change in their communities than responded that they had noticed a change at home:



- 103 respondents noticed the cost of living crisis affecting others in the community
- Eight reported no impact on others in the community
- And thirty were uncertain as to whether the cost of living crisis had effected others in their community

In line with responses from section one, some of the key themes in the 103 responses that noticed change in the community was price increases, fuel and electricity costs, and food-specific price increases. A more general lack of money was also commented on by children.



- Of the 103 respondents who noticed the cost of living crisis affecting others in their community, 25 answers involved a more general lack of money
- Eighteen respondents referenced general price increases and how it is affecting shopping habits
- Twenty-eight respondents referenced fuel and electricity prices when answering how the crisis was affecting the community
- Twenty-one respondents referenced food prices and changing eating habits, with four respondents specifically mentioning the foodbank
- Three respondents talked about being unable to buy clothing
- Three respondents answered that there was a change to sports and leisure facilities, including that pools were kept colder than they had previously been
- Thirteen respondents mentioned more unique issues that may be facing others in the community or could not be categorised.

“everything is more expensive”

“...people are not able to heat their homes. People don’t get paid enough as everything has become more pricey but people’s wages have stayed the same.”

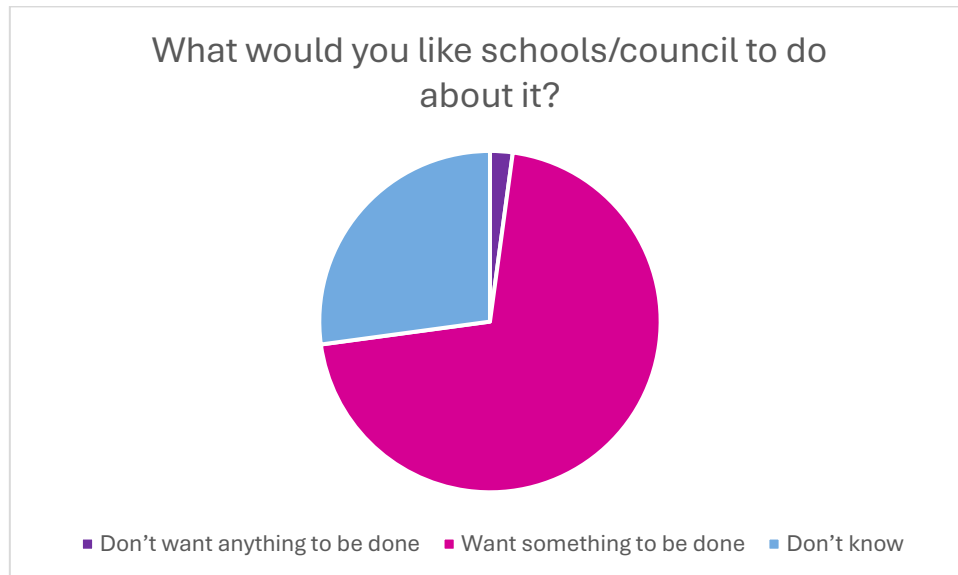
“people don’t eat as much”

“people are struggling to buy food for the week.”

Overall, the children and young people who responded to the survey showed a lot of empathy to others in the community who were feeling the squeeze of the cost of living crisis. They also showed a remarkable awareness of the issues that were facing others.

Question Three: What would you like schools/ the council to do about it?

A lot of children were unsure how to answer this question, with the responses much broader and harder to categorise than other questions. However, respondents were fairly united in that they believed that the council and schools *should* be doing something to mitigate the cost of living crisis, even if they weren't certain what that would look like.



Looking at the above graph, we can see that only three respondents did not want the schools or council to intervene.

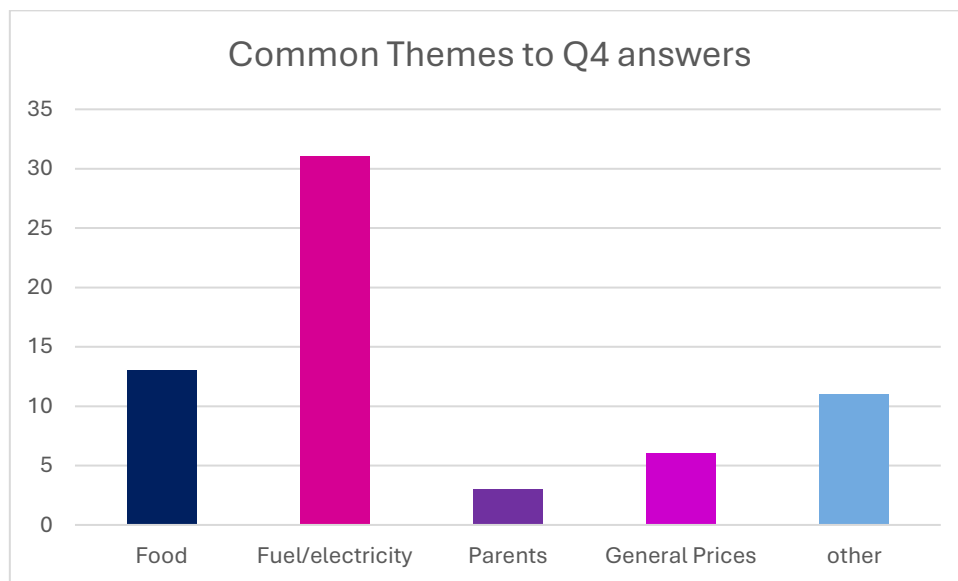
- Ninety-nine respondents wanted something to be done and had suggestions of what needed to be done.
- Thirty respondents answered that they did not know and were uncertain.
- Three respondents answered that they did not want anything to be done by schools or the council.

Due to the broad and varied answers to this question, creating a meaningful graph was more difficult. Instead, we elected to create a word map to highlight what children and young people were talking about the most:

Question Four: Have you noticed any changes at home?

- The response to this question was fairly evenly split, with 71 respondents reporting no changes at home.
- 67 respondents reporting changes at home due to the cost of living.
- And five responses that could not be classified (either they were unsure, or they did not understand the question).

Of the 67 respondents who reported changes at home, four common themes were apparent, with fuel and electricity costs being far and away the most referenced change at home:



- Of the 67 respondents who reported changes, there was 13 references to changes in food prices and food purchasing habits.
- Fuel and electricity were far and away the most referenced changes at home with 31 (46%) of respondents referencing it. This includes switching off the lights more, heating being turned off, and three respondents talked about changing from heaters to a wood-burning fire to save money. Children being colder was a common issue throughout this survey.
- Parents being more stressed or less present was referenced three times.
- General price increases and changes to purchasing habits was reported 11 times.
- Other includes respondents who wrote only to confirm that there were changes, as well as responses that couldn't be classified.

“we buy cheaper food and its colder”

“we don't have heating on at home”

“dad isn't around as much”

“not as many activities”

What we do in Orkney to combat child poverty

All support agencies in Orkney refer families to partner agencies where they might be able to provide additional services, resources or assistance to a family.

The summary table below lists the actions which partner agencies routinely carry out to combat child poverty in the community. The majority of these actions are rolling and are continued on from one year to another. Further information on many of these actions can be found in reports from partner agencies.

1	Advocacy services commissioned by NHS Orkney and Orkney Islands Council	CAB Orkney
2	Maximise income by assisting clients to identify and claim their full financial entitlements	CAB Orkney
3	Parent Employability Support for individuals and families to access information, support, welfare, training and employment	OIC (CLDE)
4	Providing and encouraging take-up of free school meals and associated clothing allowances and support grants	OIC (School Catering), OHAC
5	Regular discussions with families about finances, debt, benefits etc. Financial support provided and referrals made to CAB for benefit checks/money advice for those in financial difficulties	OHAC (Social Work); OIC (Housing); OIC (CLDE)
6	Support with Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grant applications, and administering funds	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents); OIC (Revenues and Benefits)
7	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
8	Support for women and children affected by domestic abuse	Womens Aid Orkney
9	Sourcing funding (local and national) to assist families to purchase items, e.g. bicycles	OHAC (occupational therapists, health visitors)
10	Assisting families to apply for Best Start grants	Social Security Scotland, OHAC (Social Work)

11	Financial support for local children in need, including the following grant schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orkney Fund - Bairns Need Nappies - Help from Home - Every Child Should be Warm in Bed - Every Child Deserves a Christmas - Winter Coat Fund 	Orkney Charitable Trust
12	Provision of emergency food to families referred by partner agencies	Orkney Foodbank
13	Community Fridges established in Kirkwall and Stromness to share surplus food donated by retailers and reduce food waste.	Greener Orkney
14	Addressing poor quality housing and fuel poverty through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland (HEEPs:Abs) and Landlord Registration	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services and appointed agents)
15	Providing information and advice on energy efficiency, tariff switching support, assistance with accessing grant funding, advocacy, income maximisation and budgeting support	THAW Orkney
16	Providing direct support to householders in fuel poverty by means of electricity vouchers (including those fulfilled by the Foodbank), Cosy Home Packs and small grants	THAW Orkney
17	Electricity top-ups so those in receipt of food parcels can heat/cook their food	Orkney Foodbank THAW Orkney
18	Support for families on low incomes and/or those going through tough times	Homestart Orkney
19	Community larder boxes, pop-up charity shops, fuel voucher schemes etc. Acting as a link between the community and services, including referrals to the Foodbank from the isles	Island Wellbeing Project
20	Enabling digital connectivity and access to Wi-Fi, laptops and other devices for digitally excluded children and families	OIC (CLDE); OHAC (Health Visitors, School Health, Paediatric therapists)
21	Provision and promotion of free period products available locally, a new online ordering system was piloted during 2021-22	OIC (Building Cleaning) OHAC (Health Visitors, School Health)
22	Supported employment and skills development for adults and young people with a barrier to maintaining employment. Restart Orkney recycles, restores and sells	Employability Orkney with funding and support from

	secondhand furniture and household items and supports new tenants to furnish their property	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services)
23	Funding for starter-packs of essential household items	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services)
24	Housing support for vulnerable families.	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence)
25	Ad hoc essential clothing items for Papdale Halls of Residence pupils	Papdale Hall of Residence staff
26	Distribution of Scottish Government baby boxes to all families with new babies, containing items needed in the first six months	OHAC (Maternity Unit)
27	Support for pregnant women and families with babies and young children	OHAC (Maternity Unit)
28	Hungry Baby service - baby milk, baby food, nappies etc (referred to Health Visitors where child/children under 2 years)	Orkney Foodbank
29	Childsmile - improving children's oral health	OHAC (Dental and Oral Health)
30	Provision of an informal learning programme for young people transitioning out of school	Voluntary Action Orkney (The Connect Project)
31	Supporting the Active Schools Network to increase the number of opportunities for all children to get engaged in sport	OIC & SportScotland
32	ActiveLife Budget Membership scheme offering unlimited access to The Pickaquoy Centre and 11 Council-owned fitness facilities across the islands	OIC & The Pickaquoy Centre
33	Supported Accommodation for homeless young people is provided by the Council in Kirkwall and Stromness. Residents are supported Y People to learn independent living skills, enabling them to sustain a tenancy in the future	Y People; OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services)
34	Provision of school uniform, toiletries and laundry items	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services)
35	Facilitation of Young Scot cards, Youth Achievement Groups and the Orkney Youth Forum	OIC (CLDE)

36	Supporting vulnerable young adults to build confidence and positive relationships while focusing on life and employability skills	Voluntary Action Orkney (The Connect Project)
37	Developing new ways of working (via telephone and online) to engage with service users and deliver services safely	OHAC & OIC (Housing Service)
38	Moratorium on increase of rents within emergency housing	OHAC & OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services)
39	Explore options to ensure dental and wider health services are accessible without barriers of finance	Orkney Partnership Board
40	Money Counts – publication of “Worrying about Money?” leaflet and training for support agencies	NHS Orkney (Public Health), Orkney CAB, Social Security Scotland
41	Young People’s Befriending Project – supporting children and young people from the ages of 8-18 through the provision of a trained Befriender	Voluntary Action Orkney
42	In School Counselling service expanded to make counselling available for all children and young people aged ten and over, both face to face and online	OIC (Schools)
43	The handout of laundry vouchers so families can get bedding and clothes laundered	Orkney Foodbank
45	Provision of necessities for families in need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Laundry vouchers - Electricity top-ups - Children’s holiday meals - Supermarket gift cards 	Orkney Foodbank
46	Breakfast Clubs for children who would otherwise go without	Orkney Foodbank, Orkney Charitable Trust, KGS & Papdale Primary School
47	“A Helping Hand” webpage bringing together sources of help and support for those affected by the cost of living crisis	OIC.

Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022-26: Progress Report

Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022-26: Progress report

In this section we report on how we are doing in progressing the actions we planned to undertake in our Child Poverty Strategy for 2022-26.

Our target outcomes	Short term actions 2022-23	Medium 2022-25	Long term 2022-26
Pockets Every family can make ends meet	Raise awareness of entitlements and maximise family incomes		
	Adopt a 'one stop shop' approach to streamline access to services and new ways to engage		
	Explore with Scottish Government the scope for piloting Minimum Income Guarantee in Orkney		
Prospects Every child has a good start in life	Remove barriers to participation in school trips and experiences		
	Improve take-up of free school meals and associated benefits		
	Remove barriers to participation in family leisure/holiday activities		
Places Every family has a sustainable home	Improve the energy efficiency of new/existing housing in the private and social rented sectors		
	Extend more employment opportunities to the isles		
	Explore options to apply the benefits from wind power developments to reduce home energy costs		
Prevention Future generations can escape from poverty	Promote good employment practice, flexibility and fair pay, and their benefits to employers		
	Increase the capacity of Orkney's advisory agencies		
	Explore people-centred strategies for local development such as Community Wealth Building		
Priorities No child is left behind	Make inter-island ferry travel affordable to children and families on the ferry-linked isles		
	Improve the availability and affordability of wraparound childcare/after-school provision		
	Prioritise early financial support for families at risk, to avert crisis and family breakdown		

Pockets

Every family can make ends meet

“Pockets” is about ensuring people get the benefits they need and are entitled to, supporting people to take up work and working with employers to boost productivity and pay. Longer term, we are interested in exploring social reforms such as Minimum Income Guarantee which could potentially eliminate child poverty for good.

Raise awareness of entitlements and maximise family income

Who’s doing it?

Voluntary Action Orkney and Community Consulting are leading this action on behalf of Orkney Money Matters and NHS Public Health. CAB Orkney is the designated entry point in the Orkney Money Matters referral pathway for families needing financial assistance.

How is it being resourced?

The extra staff capacity needed within partner agencies for Orkney Money Matters is being financed through an initial grant of £350,000 in LACER funding provided by Orkney Islands Council. CAB has been commissioned through the Local Employability Partnership to provide income maximisation, welfare and debt support to individuals identified under 'No One Left Behind' (including the Parental Employability Support Fund).

Timescale

Short Term, 2022 – 2023

How did we do?

Coverage was secured on Radio Orkney during early January 2023 with Thaw, CAB and others, together with a phone-in event. Messages were drawn together on different websites including the new A Helping Hand page on the Council website. In 2022-23, 52 households were assisted resulting in a total client financial gain of £54,591. We aim to increase this gain in future years. As of 18th August 2023, A Helping Hand has received 2718 views by 2208 people.

Adopt a ‘one stop shop’ approach to streamline access to services and new ways to engage

Who’s doing it?

Voluntary Action Orkney and Community Consulting are leading this action on behalf of Orkney Money Matters and NHS Public Health. Key third Sector partners include CAB Orkney, Blide Trust and THAW Orkney.

How is it being resourced?

The extra staff capacity needed within partner agencies for Orkney Money Matters is being financed through an initial grant of £350,000 in LACER funding provided by Orkney Islands Council. The project will run a pilot to March 2024 and additional staff have been recruited to Third Sector partners.

Timescale

Medium term, 2022 – 25

How are we doing?

The project commenced in May 2023 and funding has been extended to cover a full year.

There have been multiple successes from the pilot:

- Increased capacity for the delivery partners to deliver vital services and increased engagement across the partnership agencies.
- £100k in Energy Vouchers and £20k in shopping vouchers made available to the community.
- Increased awareness of support beyond the Foodbank such as the SWF Crisis Grants.
- Research, a workshop and action plan developed for Orkney agencies on how to improve take up of the SWF Crisis Grant.

Following partnership discussions, the decision was made that THAW would take on a larger role in Orkney Money Matters, distributing the 'cash-first' funds and leading on outreach and collation of data. The decision was also made to reduce staffing costs to allow for 50% more cash to be available to the community; £90,000 over 18 months. Finally, funding will be allocated to procure an online referral system to resolve referral challenges identifies in the pilot.

Work is currently underway to continue to improve this project and maximise the benefits it gives to the community.

Explore with Scottish Government the scope for piloting Minimum Income Guarantee in Orkney

Who's doing it?

Scottish Government has established a Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) Expert Group to explore options for Scotland. Orkney Islands Council's Strategy and Partnership team are liaising with the MIG Expert Group to advise on island issues.

How is it being resourced?

Officer time is being resourced from existing budgets.

Timescale

Long term, 2022 – 2026

How are we doing?

The MIG Expert Group published an interim report in March 2023. This set out the principles that a MIG should follow and the initial actions needed to prepare the ground. A MIG brings the income of every household up to a pre-defined standard and is made up of a number of complementary parts, from solutions that reduce costs for households to cash and practical support. In year 2, the

MIG Expert Group will continue to refine and focus what form a Minimum Income Guarantee might take in Scotland.

In 2024, officers have met with the team supporting the work nationally and has made Orkney's interest to participate in any potential pilots clear.

Prospects

Every child has a good start in life

"Prospects" aims to improve the life chances of children, enabling them to escape poverty in a sustainable way. This includes supporting child development and educational achievement, supporting families through crisis and encouraging employers to provide family-friendly jobs and opportunities to progress.

Remove barriers to participation in school trips and experiences

Who's doing it?

The Council's Education Service, Parent Councils, Island Development Trusts and Orkney Charitable Trust

How is it being resourced?

Various local initiatives have been supported by Island Development Trusts, Parent Councils et al. Orkney Charitable Trust and a donation provided the initial funds to set up the Papdale School Participation Fund, which is now being managed and topped up by the Parent Council.

Timescale

Short term, 2022 - 23

How did we do?

School/establishment managers were asked to review the impact of the 'cost of the school day' as part of a briefing in December 2022. There has been a specific focus on using local facilities for outdoor education programmes during 2022- 23, in recognition that these can remove barriers to participation, including making the experience more affordable. Where approval has been given for other trips, establishment managers are asked to ensure, through positive engagement with the wider community, that cost is not a barrier. Orkney Charitable Trust partnered with Papdale Parent Council to set up a fund to enable children to participate in activities at Papdale School which their families would otherwise be unable to afford. Since the fund was set up, it has provided assistance to parents with school photographs, a verruca sock for swimming, reading overlays, ear defenders and travel to school activities. The fund is available to any child, regardless of whether they are registered for free school meals. Education Scotland inspected Papdale Primary School and reported in June 2023: "The Parent Council provide a well-considered participation fund. This offers funding to ensure all children can access learning

experiences and opportunities without families incurring additional financial costs." During 2023-34 we will try to roll out the initiative to other schools in Orkney.

Improve take-up of free school meals and associated benefits

Who's doing it?

The Council's Schools Catering service, together with Orkney Health and Care (OHAC)

How is it being resourced?

Free school meals and clothing grants are funded by the Scottish Government. Orkney Islands Council pays additional holiday grants to qualifying families to encourage take-up.

Timescale

Short term, 2022 -23

How did we do it?

Uptake of free school meals was actively promoted in schools and the community, linking this to the payments being made for Christmas from Scottish Government and the Council. A Orkney Local Child Poverty Action Report 2022-23 17 card system for school meals is being rolled out which will mean pupils cannot identify who is getting free school meals. During 2022-23, 1,733 children in Orkney were eligible for free school meals, but we don't at present record how many of these were taken up. The approach to lunchtime in nursery settings has been revised to enable children to be more independent in making food choices, which encourages the uptake of free nursery meals. Current FSM information is being sourced and details will be provided.

Remove barriers to participation in family leisure/holiday activities

Who's doing it?

The Pickaquoy Centre and the Council offered Budget Membership to their joint ActiveLife scheme at a cost of 50p per person per activity, with no up-front subscription cost.

How is it being resourced?

The Budget Membership scheme is funded by the Pickaquoy Trust (for Pickaquoy Centre users) and the Council (for users of 11 health and fitness centres).

Timescale

Short-term, 2022 – 23

How did we do it?

In 2023-24, 831 Orkney residents took out or renewed a Budget Membership to ActiveLife. An increase of 32% year-on-year. A total of 10,582 activity sessions at 50 pence per session were taken up at the Pickaquoy Centre through the scheme, including 4116 swim sessions. The decision was taken at the beginning of the 2024 financial year to increase the price from 50 pence to £1. This is the first increase in price since 2017 and reflects the increased running costs of the Centre. More detail on this action can be found in the Pickaquoy Centre's partner report.

During 2023-24, the Council's Leisure team has been developing a Physical Activity and Wellbeing Strategy which is scheduled for consideration by the Council in November 2024. The strategy will address financial inclusion.

Places

Every family has a sustainable home

The places where people live shape their lives, affecting their job prospects and access to essential goods, services and housing. Policies designed to regenerate communities must address transport availability and accessibility as well as the quality and affordability of housing. We must also take account of the need for a "Just Transition" to net zero, ensuring that the impacts of climate change do not add to poverty and disadvantage in particular places.

Improve the energy efficiency of new/existing housing in private and social rented sectors

Who's doing it?

The Council's Housing, Homelessness and Schoolcare Accommodation service, in partnership with Orkney Housing Association Ltd (OHAL)

How is it being resourced?

Energy efficiency upgrades on social rented housing are funded by the Housing Revenue Account (tenants' rents). Across Scotland, issues are being raised around the ethics of asking the poorest members of society to fund these huge costs and we hope that some Government funding may follow. Private sector homeowners can access the Energy Efficient Scotland: Area-Based Scheme (HEES ABS), available in Orkney through Warmworks, which is means tested. Warmworks will undertake an assessment of their property and give advice as to what their entitlement may be, together with any contribution needed from the householder themselves. In 2022-23, the Council received approximately £2m HEES ABS funding.

Timescale

Medium term, 2022 – 25

How are we doing it?

This action is being followed through in the Council's statutory Fuel Poverty Strategy, Heat Strategy and Energy Efficiency Strategy, all of which are either in development or completed. The Council and OHAL are waiting for Scottish Government to confirm guidance on the energy efficiency standards they need to work to. For new build, that is determined by existing building standards that housebuilders

are obliged to follow, and the Council and OHAL both currently work to the Silver Standard. The focus will be on existing properties, with timescales to be reviewed once the Fuel Poverty Strategy is in place. Work is going on in the background, including pilot projects and carrying out works that will be monitored. Once the plans are in place, this preliminary work will be followed up by larger programmes.

OIC has created the fuel poverty strategy, which is incorporated into the Local Housing Strategy.

Extend more employment opportunities to the isles

Who's doing it?

This action is being led by the Orkney Partnership's Local Equality Delivery Group, which includes representatives from isles development trusts, community councils, the Islands Deal, North Isles Elected Members and other key community planning partners. The Local Employability Partnership and the Strategic Community Learning Group are managed by the Council's Community Learning, Development and Employability team.

How is it being resourced?

Scottish Government funds the Community Based Adult Learning grant scheme. The Orkney Partnership's facilitating partner agencies jointly source resources to support community planning initiatives.

Timescale

Medium term, 2022 - 25

How are we doing?

The Local Employability Partnership encourages partners to provide work based learning opportunities on the isles. During 2022-23, the Strategic Community Learning Group awarded £4,000 of Community Based Adult Learning funding to Westray Learning Centre to help develop their learning/work hub. Following the launch of the Orkney Community Plan 2023-30, this action has been adopted by the Local Equality Delivery Group, which will progress it via Orkney's new Locality Plan.

Explore options to apply the benefits from wind power developments to reduce home energy costs

Who's doing it?

The Council's Enterprise and Economic Growth service

How is it being resourced?

Development activity is being funded from the Council's Strategic Reserve fund

Timescale

Long term 2022 – 26

How are we doing?

Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project encompasses three 28.8MW, six turbine, wind farm developments at

Quanterness in St Ola, at Wee Fea in Hoy and on Faray in the North Isles. All three sites have now received planning permission. In March 2023, the UK's energy regulator, Ofgem, announced a 'minded-to' position to approve the request to install a 220MW inter-connector cable from Orkney to the Scottish mainland, which will help employment and income remain in the county.

The project is forecast to generate around £6m profit per annum, as well as £432,000 a year in community benefits which the Council has already agreed would be paid to community councils. The Council has yet to decide how the majority of the income from the scheme would be allocated, but one consideration would certainly be the mitigation of local fuel poverty. Decisions are not expected soon as the new turbines are not expected to start generating until 2027 at the earliest.

Prevention

Future generations can escape from poverty

Almost anyone can experience poverty during their lifetime, so policies that protect against poverty are important. Unemployment, illness or relationship breakdown can strike at any time. Once in poverty, it is difficult to escape, and hardship can persist for generations.

Promote good employment practice, flexibility and fair pay, and their benefits to employers

Who's doing it?

The Council's Community Learning, Development and Employability team on behalf of Orkney's Local Employability Partnership (LEP).

How is it being resourced?

The No One Left Behind Employer Recruitment Incentive helps people of all ages with the greatest barriers to employment get jobs and stay in jobs. It is funded by the Scottish Government and administered by local authorities. In 2022-23, the LEP allocated £60,000 to provide a minimum of 10 Employer Recruitment incentives.

Timescale

Medium term, 2022 - 25

How are we doing?

During 2022-23, a campaign was conducted to promote employment rights, fair pay and conditions, and Scottish Living Wage accreditation. The Employment Rights & Responsibilities media campaign was followed up by the creation of a Your Rights Booklet, to be distributed through the Local Employability Partnership. The booklet includes

a QR code which directs people to CAB Orkney and ACAS. Posters have been produced for circulation within prominent employment premises. The LEP has developed an employers' information and resource toolkit relating to employment rights and employer responsibilities, which was launched at an employer engagement event at the new Employability Hub in March 2023. In 2022-23 twelve Employer Recruitment Incentives were negotiated and administered across a range of private and third sector organisations in Orkney. Six young people (aged 16–24) and six people aged 25 + were employed, of whom eleven (91%) remain in fair and sustainable work.

In 2023 – 24, major steps were taken by partners to move towards real living wage accreditation. Both OIC and VAO have either achieved real living wage accreditation or are in the process of doing so shortly. The Community Wealth Building subgroup has met with members of Living Wage Scotland to better understand the process of becoming accredited for both real living wage and real living hours, and how to help our private sector partners to seek accreditation.

Increase the capacity of Orkney’s advisory agencies

Who’s doing it?

Voluntary Action Orkney and Community Consulting were leading this action on behalf of Orkney Money Matters. Many of these roles will now be led by THAW.

How is it being resourced?

Orkney Money Matters is being financed through an initial grant of £350,000 in LACER funding provided by Orkney Islands Council. The Trussell Trust has granted additional financial inclusion funding to Orkney Foodbank to employ two new Financial Inclusion Advisors based in CAB Orkney.

Additional funding for the cash-first funds has also been identified through the reduction of staffing costs – allowing for 50% more cash to be available to the community.

Timescale

Medium term, 2022 – 25

How are we doing?

As part of the Orkney Money Matters advice-and-cash first pilot, significant funding has been secured for distribution to Orkney financial inclusion advice services. The new staff include two Money Matters Links Workers within CAB and at least one Energy Advice Support Worker within THAW. In addition, CAB have funded two additional Benefit Advice Workers. All staff were recruited by end of March 2023, and training commenced in April 2023.

Last year, a successful application was made to the Scottish Government Cash First Fund to continue the project on until September 2025.

Since then, Orkney Money Matters has achieved successes:

- Increased capacity for delivery partner to deliver vital services and increased engagement across the partnership agencies.
- £100k in Energy Vouchers and £20k in shopping vouchers made available to the community.
- Increased awareness of support beyond the Foodbank such as the SWF Crisis Grants.
- Research, a workshop and action plan developed for Orkeny agencies on how to improve take up of the SWF Crisis Grant.

However, areas for improvement of Orkney Money Matters have been identified, with a new proposal being submitted to the Scottish Welfare Fund that would simplify the OMM structure. This new proposal has been successful, and Orkney Money Matters now awaits the Offer Letter.

Explore people-centred strategies for local development such as Community Wealth Building

Who's doing it?

The Orkney Partnership's Community Wealth Building Group is leading partnership work.

How is it being resourced?

The Orkney Partnerhsip's facilitating partner agencies jointly source resources to support community planning initiatives

Timescale

Long term, 2022 – 26

How are we doing?

Community wealth building (CWB) is a people-centred approach to local economic development, which seeks to direct wealth back into the local economy and places control and benefits into the hands of local people. It can be described as an approach that does not redistribute wealth but pre-distributes wealth. Integral to CWB is support for small and medium sized local businesses, including cooperatives and social enterprises, upskilling people to access new opportunities and fairer employment practices, all of which support wages and reduce poverty.

Many agencies in Orkney already implement policies which embody CWB principles, for example the Council's Sustainable Procurement Policy which enables small local suppliers to bid for school meal contracts, the Business Improvement District in Kirkwall, and locally owned wind turbine developments. In February 2023, the Partnership

held a workshop to consider the scope for CWB to add value to local development plans and initiatives. Potentially, CWB might also help to resolve such longstanding issues as market failure in the meat supply chain, residential care and nursery provision. CWB has since been adopted as a guiding principle in both the Orkney Community Plan 2023-30 and the Council Plan 2023-28.

Priorities

No child left behind

The Scottish Government has identified six types of family which are more likely than others to experience poverty:

- Lone parent families
- Families with an adult or child with disabilities
- Families with 3 or more children
- Minority ethnic families
- Families with the youngest child aged less than 1
- Families with a mother aged under 25

Orkney's Child Poverty Strategy recognises two additional local groups at higher risk of hardship:

- Families with experience of the care system.
- Residents of the ferry-linked isles.

Make inter-island ferry travel affordable to children and families on the ferry-linked isles

Who's doing it?

Orkney Islands Council's Transport team is leading this action in partnership with Scottish Government and community planning partner agencies in the Cost of Living Task Force.

How is it being resourced?

Scottish Government provides revenue funding for Orkney's internal ferry fleet

Timescale

Medium term, 2022 – 25

How are we doing?

On 31 January 2022, the Scottish Government's Young Persons' Free Bus Scheme came into effect and everyone in Scotland who is under 22 or a full-time student can have their National Entitlement Card updated to permit free bus travel everywhere in Scotland. But in Orkney, our buses may actually be ferries, and the Council has been actively lobbying Scottish Government to extend the scheme to include free ferry fares.

The Community Learning, Development and Employability team are in discussion with National Youth Agency officials including Young Scot, Youth Link and the Children's Commissioner. A Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP) for Orkney was invited to the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero Energy & Transport Committee where they raised the importance of free ferry travel on islands in line with free bus travel in rural areas.

Meanwhile, the Schools team has been actively promoting the online application process to Orkney's under 22 year olds to maximise uptake.

During 2022-23, Orkney Ferries fares were frozen at the reduced rates implemented in June 2021, when adult passenger and vehicle fares were cut by 38%. The rates were frozen again in June 2023 to last until spring 2024, in line with Orkney's external ferry services. A 25% discount applies for elderly and disabled passengers and 50% for under 22s. Children under 5 do not need a card and already travel free on buses and ferries.

The cost of travel by ferry to attend medical and dental appointments has been considered before by the Partnership, without a resolution, and will be looked at further by the Cost of Living Task Force. Increasingly, NHS advice is now available digitally via their virtual consultation system "Near Me", but for many types of care (such as dentistry) there is no alternative to a face-to-face appointment and a lengthy journey which to some is unaffordable.

Improve the availability and affordability of wraparound childcare/ after-school provision

Who's doing it?

The Council's Schools team is leading on the construction of new nursery premises in Kirkwall. The Community Education, Development and Employability team led the provision of training for childminders.

How is it being resourced?

During 2022-23, the Council was awarded £1.5m from the Scottish Government's Islands Infrastructure Fund (part of the Islands Programme supporting the National Islands Plan) towards the total project cost of £2.52m for a new nursery in Kirkwall, with the remainder being funded by the Council.

Timescale

Medium term, 2022 – 25

How are we doing? Orkney Islands Council is building new nursery premises to accommodate the council-run Willow Tree Nursery. Plans have been approved for a 51-place nursery to be built adjacent to Orkney College, facilitating future training and practical experience in early learning and childcare for college students. The construction contract was awarded in March 2023 to local firm Orkney Builders Ltd and the nursery is expected to be ready to open in autumn 2024. During 2022-23, CLD Employability Services ran a Childminding qualification and training course for 10 individuals. There are now 6 additional newly qualified childminders offering childcare provision across Orkney.

Prioritise early financial support for families at risk, to avert crisis and family breakdown

Who's doing it? Orkney Health and Care's Children and Families social work team, in partnership with the Orkney Charitable Trust and other agencies.

How is it being resourced? Providers include Orkney Charitable Trust, the Scottish Welfare Fund and Orkney Foodbank.

Timescale Medium term, 2022 – 25

How are we doing? Financial stressors are discussed with families during the initial assessment period. The team helps to optimise the financial benefits available to families at risk, provides referrals to Orkney Foodbank and has partnered with Orkney Charitable Trust, who offer grants for household goods, white goods and financial support. Team meetings have included reflective discussions on the impact of the cost of living crisis and associated stressors for Orkney's children and families, particularly families in crisis and those going through the child protection process.

Reports from Partner Agencies:

**Voluntary Action Orkney:
Young People's Befriending Project**

The Young People's Befriending Project support young people aged 5-18 by matching them to a trained volunteer Befriender. Our Befrienders are



caring and thoughtful people who are invested in bringing out the best in their young people and building an intentional trusting relationship with them. Our young people and their Befrienders meet in their pairs once a fortnight to take part in activities they choose together such as swimming, beach walks, baking, crafting, sports, the list is endless. Over these sessions the volunteer's aim is to offer support and encouragement, introduce new activities, build the young person's confidence and self-esteem and offer real friendship to them. Time and time again we see that this support can bring real lasting difference to a young person's life.

Young People

We have had 11 young people matched and receiving support from a trained volunteer through 1-1 Befriending in the last year. 5 of these are new matches created within the year and the other 6 are matches that are ongoing and have been meeting regularly for several years.

We have had around 17 young people on our waiting list at some point in the last year. They have all been assessed by the Project Coordinators and then either matched to a volunteer, still awaiting matching, or have left the waiting list for other reasons. In the past year we have set up a group event for the young people on our waiting list to meet up every term and get to know each other and the Project coordinators. We also invite our newly trained volunteers who are waiting to be matched along to these sessions to get to know the young people and build connections.

Volunteers

There have been 11 volunteers matched to young people offering support over the last year. 5 new volunteers have trained and are at various stages of the matching process. 3 of our volunteers who have previously supported a young person through Befriending have now gone on to be matched to another young person. And this year we also recruited our first volunteer to help support our waiting list activity sessions.

Quotes

From parents:

"Lovely to see her grow and wonderful for her to associate with another adults out with the family that has supported her and helped her grow into a confident young lady"

"Darren(Befriender) has a fantastic connection with young Cameron(young person)"

"Susan has been super at doing activities that Ashley really loves. Susan has been really good at communicating with us and Ashley enjoys her company."

From young people:

" I like how she's so easy to talk to about anything"

When asked how Befriending helped you- "Gained confidence by gaining skills during activities. Gained happiness by choosing range of different activities."

"it's good to have a personal friend and I look forward to it all week. I'd recommend it to anyone else."

"Nice, friendly, smiley and laughs a lot. Feel happier when I've been with them (Befriender)"

Case Study

Sarah and Alaina (names have been changed)

Alaina was referred to the Project at the beginning of the year. She was a young lady who had recently transitioned to secondary school and was finding that she was becoming more and more isolated from her peers – she has Down's Syndrome and found it difficult to participate in the activities and clubs that her peers enjoyed.

She was matched to Sarah, a young volunteer in her 30's who's energetic and enthusiastic personality was a wonderful fit for Alaina. They hit it off immediately, and after a wobbly first session working each other out, they have gone on to enjoy a wide range of activities in the community together – swimming, falconry, baking, crafts, games, and story writing. They have grown a trusting and caring friendship in a relatively short amount of time. At her most recent review, Alaina commented 'I really like Sarah, she's the best.' Alaina's family also said 'Sarah has been super at doing activities that Alaina really loves. Sarah has been really good at communicating with us and Alaina enjoys her company' Sarah has been a really good match for Alaina.' Alaina's family is also now planning a move away from the island and Sarah's consistent friendship through this next transition will be a great support to her.

Voluntary Action Orkney: The Connect Project

The Connect Project supports vulnerable young adults to build confidence and positive relationships while focusing on life and employability skills.

Our young people may be missing from school, unable to engage with other services or be struggling with health or disadvantage which is exacerbated when the family is struggling financially. There is often a cyclical effect on the family with parents and carers unable to take paid employment due to the needs of the children and the children increasingly affected by the stress within the family.

The most need is often those young people who are facing multiple barriers. Within the family they may have experienced family break down, domestic violence, poor mental health, family with drug and alcohol difficulties, be on the Autism spectrum, have health or learning difficulties, have caring responsibilities and/or live in remote rural locations. We have families experiencing homelessness and others cutting back on visits to mainland and food shopping because of rising costs

Connect provides a range of activities and personalised support at no cost to the young people or families with the aim to see them more confident, skilled and connected to their community. It starts with the needs and strengths expressed by the young people and build ambition and direction at a manageable pace for them. We have seen more young people expressing a need for a physical place that feels 'safe and secure' for them and provides consistent relationships they can trust in order for them to feel relaxed and be able to make plans. The nature of the activity matters less than feeling they are wanted and understood.

There can also be a poverty of opportunity for young people from ferry linked islands or off main transport routes as there is no subsidised housing (or halls of residence) for them to access further education. Physical distance or communication difficulties can sometimes be overcome by our online engagement but we also work with individuals who find working online difficult or impossible and run small groups to build their confidence and skills with other people and widen their support network. The remote location also disadvantages them within the labour market as the low-skilled seasonal work that they may have been able to access is impossible to access.



We have to do a lot more planning and budgeting around increasing costs alongside increasing demand. We need to be creative to meet the needs of our young people as we want them to feel they are always moving forward and overcoming the issues that hold them back. We never want any young person to feel a lack or any stigma and we provide everything from breakfasts, a shirt for a job interview, suitable clothing and footwear to access the outdoors and travel costs in order for them to not let any aspect of poverty hold them back from achieving wellbeing and reaching their potential.

Young People Involvement

In 2023 to 2024 we received referrals from Skills Development Scotland, Kirkwall Grammar School Guidance and Learning Support departments, Stromness Academy, UHI Orkney, Social Work, The Ukrainian Refugee Coordinator, family and self-referrals

When helping our young people to plan their individual programmes and targets we consider their personal preferences for communication and meetings, always ensuring accessibility and inclusivity.

Programme elements are created through personal interests of our young people. Where possible our young people have roles within Connect to plan and lead on activities.

Our service users are involved with local young people's forums and action groups, with support if required.

We collect feedback from young people, their families and referring partners, to evaluate and improve our service.

In response to surveys 100% of young people were happy with their time at Connect and believe they have improved in confidence. Responding referrers were also happy with the input Connect had contributed to the overall support package being built up around the young person.

Families who have responded are pleased with the engagement of their young person and "can't thank Connect enough for support during this time".

Feedback allows disenfranchised young people and families to inform local and national services and policy making.

Quotes

One of our referral partners said:

"I feel the Connect Project is a valuable and much needed resource for our islands."

From a family/carer:

"Connect gave us a lifeline when there was nothing else they would engage with"

From young people:

“When I come [to Connect] it’s like you are really happy to see me.”

“[I like coming to Connect] because I know you and I like [other Connect young person] and I like what we do and if I wasn't there it would be difficult for you to do the heavy lifting at the gardening because I'm the strongest.”

“I like [Connect worker] because I know she likes me, but I didn't like [Connect worker] so much because sometimes when we were out, she would ask me how I was, and I said 'I'm fine. I'm not a baby. I want to stay at Connect until I get a job and they will help me.’”

Case Study

We have a lovely young person who has left school, is unable to sustain a further education place and has learning disabilities alongside systemic family difficulties.. They are extremely low and feeling down about themselves. They recently had a hospital stay due to an overdose. Connect is the only project they have been able to engage with at all and we have started building relationships with them and family. They have come along to our gardening project, are setting goals of areas they want to improve in and like coming to us. Already this young person is feeling more comfortable and knows there is a place and people who will support and listen to them and work for them to be safe and happy. We know that we have already achieved a lot for that young person from feedback from them and their family however we are seeking to build on what they have achieved and we hope that the young person will continue to grow in skills and confidence and we will see a different picture in a year or so.

Pickaquoy Centre:
ActiveLife Budget membership



ActiveLife Budget membership is a means-tested membership, that gives qualifying individuals access to a broad range of health and well-being activities for only 50 pence. The cost per activity has since increased in the new financial year to £1. To be eligible for ActiveLife Budget membership, an individual must be in receipt of one of the following:

- Income support
- Pension Credit
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Employment Support
- Universal Credit
- War Disability Pension
- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Attendance Allowance

- Carers Allowance

Overall intake of ActiveLife Budget members:

Budget Memberships	
New Adult	344
New U3	41
New U5	48
New U18	195
Total New	628
Renewed Adult	113
Renewed U3	9
Renewed U5	13
Renewed U18	68
Total Renewed	203
Total Members	831

These total 831 members used the centre 10582 times, excluding swimming admissions which totalled 4116 swims. This is an estimated savings of £14986 in swim sessions alone.

Overall Usage (ALB)	
Adult	7379
Junior (U18)	3203
Total Usage	10582

Swimming Admissions (ALB)	
Adult	2411
Junior (U18)	1705
Total Usage	4116

ActiveLife Budget also allows children whose families may not typically be able to afford swimming lessons for their children access to lessons. Learn2Swim lessons at the Pickaquoy Centre are paid by most families in a lump sum at the start of a term at a cost of £5.80 per lesson. In a ten week term, this is a cost of £58.00. This can be a significant amount of money for families who are already struggling, especially if the family has multiple children. ActiveLife budget reduces this cost to 50 pence per session, for a total cost of £5.00. This allows children to participate in lessons alongside their peers.

Swimming Lessons (ALB)*	
Apr- Jun 23	30
Aug – Oct 23	52
Oct – Dec 23	55
Jan – Mar 24	64
Total Bookings	201
Total Usage	1557

*includes all levels from adult & baby-club ready and ASN sessions

1557 children's lessons were delivered at the ActiveLife Budget price. This saved families £8252.10 over the course of a year.

Orkney Foodbank

Orkney Foodbank supports families in a variety of ways:



- laundry vouchers so families can get bedding in particular laundered.
- emergency food - as per attached report
- electricity top ups so folks in receipt of food can heat their food – ongoing.
- we now include baby food, nappies in parcels as when required rather than referring to Boots to get items as we found clients weren't always going. All under 2-year-olds are automatically referred to the Health Visitor so they can follow up with the family
- breakfast clubs – we helped with the provision of certain food items to help facilitate the creation of breakfast clubs.
- we had hardship funds available from small grants we secured which allowed us to provide extra items that no other funding stream was available for - such as shoes, warm bedding, microwave beanies, oodies etc
- we provide child holiday meals where folks who struggle to make ends meet in the school holidays can get a full parcel.
- we provide supermarket gift cards so clients can purchase fresh food and other items we do not supply (we put cash to any island clients unless they specifically request gift card).

Main referrers to the Foodbank– top 15

	2023	2022	2021
THAW	240	123	54
CAB	107	72	93
Housing & Homelessness	68	64	65
Adult Social Services	63	29	40
OHAL	45	18	30
Mental Health Team	29	39	33
Blide Trust	41	19	6
Right There	21		7
Womens Aid	33	36	39
Advocacy Orkney	22		10
Ola Health Visiting	25	9	14
Home Start	16	18	7
Children & Families	16	12	16
Skerryvore	26	23	16

Stromness Surgery	19	14	
Relationship Scotland		10	
Criminal Justice		12	7

The number of referrals and vouchers delivered have increased significantly within the last year. The number of vouchers distributed in 2023 was 861 to a total of 1783 clients. In 2022, the number of vouchers distributed was 566 to a total of 1102 clients – an increase of 52%.

This increased referral rate has led to increased stock levels, and while there has been an increase in donations it cannot match the current need. Orkney Foodbank therefore is increasingly supplementing their donations with purchased food:

Stock in during 2023 – 23585.46 kgs

- Donations 15311.17Kgs
- Purchased 8274.29Kgs (35.08%)

Stock in during 2022 - 17062.95kgs (purchased 3981.96kgs – 23.34 %)

Stock in during 2021 – 18858.11kgs ((purchased 2086.69kgs – 11.07%)

Stock out during 2023 – 23189.79 Kgs

Stock out during 2022 – 17654.53 kgs

Stock out during 2021 – 15748.03Kgs

Alan and the volunteers who actually man the Foodbank are to be congratulated for actually weighing in and out such significant amounts of stock that has meant we have been able to fulfil every voucher sent on to the Foodbank. It is no mean feat to have managed this process.

The employment of Kate as our Support Worker has also meant we are able to increase the communication with each client to better understand their personal circumstances and whether we can offer additional support through the Hardship and Winter Warming Funding we have been able to secure.

Linda coming on Board to support the team and Alan through Stock purchasing and wider admin duties is also very welcome and has made a significant difference to Alan, Marion and myself in particular.

During late summer of 2023 it was apparent our increased activity and the increase in purchasing we were undertaking was putting a significant pressure on our finances despite the generous donations we received on monthly or ad hoc basis from the local community. We temporarily suspended electricity top ups and reduced our supermarket gift card allowances whilst we secured additional funding through grants.

We were delighted to secure Trussell Trust, Cooke Aquaculture and OIC Crisis Grant Funding as well as some generous donations from private and corporate donors which meant we could reinstate the previous gift card level as well as recommence electricity funding. It should be noted though that the level of electricity funding has been reduced along with a reminder our electricity top up is for heating/cooking food and no to deal with underlying fuel poverty – we refer clients to THAW Orkney for the wider fuel poverty support as this is their area of expertise.

NHS Orkney: Health Visitors

As health visitors we still have the worrying about money leaflet which we can share with families that require support.



Other support that has been offered includes:

- signposting families to Scottish Government website and CAB for benefit advice.
- supporting families to apply for child disability payment and to ask for support to complete the application form which is available locally.
- conversation about around money worries at antenatal visit and check in with this at other visits too.
- sign posting families to Money Matters Orkney
- referring families to OIC for community care grants
- referring families to Orkney charitable trust for every child deserves a bed and Christmas Fund
- some staff have been successful in obtaining grants for white goods to help families in poverty such as washing machines
- there have also been 3 successful grants from the Orkney Children's Trust
- some of the team have applied for grants from specific organisations such as Buttle trust, grocery Aid which provide support to victims of domestic violence and to children who have experienced trauma, for hardship grants
- the team routinely have had conversations with families about lifestyle choices such as smoking and how they can save money and improve their health by stopping smoking and signposted to NHSO for smoking cessation help and advice.

The health visiting team have made 29 referrals to the foodbank for 2023

Antenatally, all families can register for a Baby Box, which has everything needed for a new baby. It's a universal provision as are the BookBug bags from The Scottish BookTrust. [Scotland's Baby Boxes - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot/scotland-baby-boxes)

The team also signpost to multiple grants and payments, including the Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, The Scottish Child Payment, MoneyHelper and Turn2Us.

NHS Orkney: Anchor Report



In 2023/24, NHS Orkney published a strategic plan to outline how it will fulfil its duties as an anchor organisation. An anchor institution is a non-profit or public-based entities which is unlikely to relocate, has a strong influence in the local community and is connected to the local population. It is recognised that these organisations can have large assets that can support wealth building within the local community. NHS Orkney can act as anchor institutions through practices relating to a number of areas which relate to child poverty. These include:

- Improving access to employment opportunities within Orkney and supporting the health and wellbeing of NHS Orkney's staff through good employment conditions and positive work environments which can impact on child poverty through the provision of good work opportunities locally.
- The procurement and commissioning of more local goods and services from anchor institutions such as NHS Orkney supports the local economy, providing wider social benefits which can impact child poverty.
- NHS Orkney using its capital and estates to support broader social, economic and environmental aims can potentially support the mitigation of the impacts of child poverty locally.
- Ensuring services are designed and delivered in a way which is responsible to the environment but also reduces inequalities to increase reach and benefit to disadvantaged communities mitigates some of the impact of child poverty on health chances.

As anchor institutions have a role to play in community wealth building and reducing the impact of child poverty in Orkney, it will be important for all the anchor institutions in Orkney to work in partnership over the coming years to ensure this work can have the largest impact for the local community.

Social Security Scotland: Best Start Grants



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Social Security Scotland was set up by the Scottish Government to deliver a social security system for the people of Scotland based on the values of dignity, fairness and respect. We deliver benefits for people with children under 16, disabled people, carers, young people entering the workplace, people who need help paying for a funeral and to help people heat their homes.

Local Delivery is a service for clients provided by Social Security Scotland, with teams of specially trained Client Support Advisers based in every Local Authority across Scotland, including Orkney.

Client Support Advisers support new and existing clients to access our benefits in a way that works best for them and importantly, at a time and place that is convenient for them. We offer a range of support to suit people's needs – we offer appointments in clients' homes, at local community venues, by video appointment or by telephone.

Five Family Payments

- [Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment](#) – one off payment of up to £754.65 from 24 weeks in pregnancy up until a baby turns 6 months for families who get certain benefits.
- [Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment](#) – one off payment of £314.45 when a child is between two and three years and six months for families who get certain benefits.
- [Best Start Grant School Age Payment](#) – one off payment of £314.45 when a child would normally start primary one for families who get certain benefits.
- [Best Start Foods](#) – a pre-paid card from pregnancy up to when a child turns three for families on certain benefits to help buy healthy food
- [Scottish Child Payment](#) - £106.80 every four weeks to help towards the costs of looking after each child under 16 for families who get certain benefits

Disability Benefits

- [Adult Disability Payment](#) - extra money to help people who have a long-term illness or a disability that affects their everyday life. It replaces Personal Independence Payment people in Scotland previously delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- [Child Disability Payment](#) - extra money to help with the costs of caring for a child with a disability or ill-health condition. It replaces Disability Living Allowance for children in Scotland that was previously delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Carer Benefits

- [Carer's Allowance Supplement](#) – an automatic payment made twice a year to people who get Carer's Allowance through the Department for Work and Pensions on certain dates each year.

- Young Carer Grant - an annual payment of £383.75 for people aged 16, 17 or 18 who care for people who get a disability benefit for an average of 16 hours a week or more.

Heating Benefits

- Child Winter Heating Payment - a £251.50 payment to help families of a child on the highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance for Children to heat their homes.
- Winter Heating Payment - A yearly payment to help people on low-income benefits who might have extra heating needs during the winter. The payment for winter 2023/24 is £55.05.

Other Benefits

- Funeral Support Payment – money towards the costs of a funeral at a difficult time like this for people on certain benefits who are responsible for paying for a funeral.
- Job Start Payment – £314.45 for 16- to 24-year-olds who have been on certain benefits for six months or more to help with the costs of starting a job.

More information on Social Security Scotland benefits can be found here:

[Benefits - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot/benefits)

	Reporting Period	Number of Applications	Payments
Pregnancy and Baby Payments	1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023	55	£12,819
	Total since launch	370	£70,615
Early Learning Payment	1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023	15	£3,887
	Total since launch	320	£52,840
School Age Payment	1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	15	£4,236
	Total since launch	280	£50,454
Best Start Foods	1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023	75	£11,925
	Total since launch	605	£65,553
Scottish Child Payment	1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023	105	£763,675

	Total since launch	780	£1,302,705
Young Carer Grant	1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023	5	
	Total since launch	20	£5,087
Job Start Payment	1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023		
	Total since launch	55	£7,036
Funeral Support Payment	1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023	5	£4,840
	Total since launch	50	£45,317
Carers Allowance Supplement	Total Eligible Carers in financial year 2023/2024	235	£115,000
	Total since Sept 2018	395	£700,000
Adult Disability Payment	1 April 2023 to 31 January 2024		
	Total since launch	405	£1,926,100
Child Disability Payment	1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023		
	Total since launch	120	£1,337,010
Child Winter Heating Payment	Payments issued to 31 March 2023	60	£13,000
	Total since launch	135	£28,000
Winter Heating Payment	Payments made up to April 2023	1075	£53,500

[Social Security Scotland - Statistics](#)

Carer Support Payment launched in Perth and Kinross, Dundee City and Na h-Eileanan Siar (Western Isles) on 20th November. The benefit is replacing Carer's Allowance, currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions, in Scotland.

Carer Support Payment will be available in more areas from later in 2024 and across Scotland by Autumn 2024. More information is available at mygov.scot/carers-support-payment

Orkney Islands Council:
Scottish Welfare Funds



ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

The Scottish Welfare Fund provides assistance to people who are on benefits or a low income. The Council administers the fund on behalf of the Scottish Government and provides two types of grant:

- Crisis Grants provide a safety net in the event of a disaster or emergency, for example a fire or flood, facing a gap in your income because of redundancy or change in work, losing all your money, or having to visit a sick child in hospital. You may be given money or another form of support, for example, a voucher, fuel card, travel ticket or furniture.
- Community Care Grants provide help to leave care and live on your own, or to continue living in your own home, for example if you are about to leave care, after being in hospital or in prison, or don't have money to buy essential household items like a cooker or washing machine.

Data for the Scottish Welfare Fund expenditure in 2023 – 24 will be published late July 2024 and can be found on the Scottish Government's website:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-welfare-fund-statistics-annual-update>

Community Care Grants 2023 – 2024 in Orkney	
Accepted	101
Rejected	37
Total Applications	138
Proportion Accepted	73%
Total Spend this year	87,883.95
Average Award	870.14

Crisis Grants 2023 – 2024 in Orkney	
Accepted	108
Rejected	65
Total Applications	173
Proportion Accepted	62%
Total Spend this year	17,045.00
Average Award	157.82

Developing a Child Poverty Strategy

In developing a Child Poverty Strategy for Orkney Orkney's Child Poverty Task Force has now produced four Local Child Poverty Action Reports, for 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. A shortcoming noted in successive LCPARs has been the absence of a coherent strategic framework for the joint planning and implementation of future action to combat child poverty, and the monitoring and reporting of progress. Consequently, during 2021-22, the Child Poverty Task Force developed a Child Poverty Strategy for Orkney, with a planning period of 2022-2026. This

matches the planning period of the second national child poverty delivery plan, Best Start Bright Futures.

Orkney's Child Poverty Strategy is linked with our Children's Services Plan 2023-2026 through the latter's key priority of 'Reducing Poverty and Disadvantage.' This theme sets our child poverty work in the overall context of barriers which may prevent a child getting the best start in life, but which can be overcome with appropriate intervention.

Our strategy describes the impact of poverty on children and shows how the experience of Orkney's children and families compares with Scotland. It summarises the output to date from the "Making Ends Meet" consultation and considers what we can do locally to meet the needs identified by the survey. The strategy was adopted by the Orkney Partnership Board on 29 June 2022, and all partners made a commitment to do everything they can to combat child poverty in Orkney.

Orkney's strategy incorporates elements of the Scottish Government's national strategy for child poverty, adapted for local circumstances. The national framework has three themes: Pockets, Prospects and Places. To these, Orkney has added Prevention and Priorities.

Pockets aims to maximise the financial resources of families on low incomes.

Prospects aims to improve the life chances of children and young people.

Places aims to improve housing and regenerate disadvantaged communities.

Prevention aims to prevent the long-term persistence of poverty.

Priorities aims to focus attention on especially vulnerable children and families.

The Cost of Living Task Force considers each of these policy drivers in detail and developed a plan for action with five big ambitions to combat child poverty in Orkney: Our outline action plan sets out the actions we will take to meet immediate need and to address the longer term prevention of child poverty in Orkney.

Outline Action Plan 2022 – 2026

Our target outcomes	Short term actions 2022-23	Medium 2022-25	Long term 2022-26
Pockets Every family can make ends meet	Raise awareness of entitlements and maximise family incomes		
	Adopt a 'one stop shop' approach to streamline access to services and new ways to engage		
	Explore with Scottish Government the scope for piloting Minimum Income Guarantee in Orkney		
Prospects Every child has a good start in life	Remove barriers to participation in school trips and experiences		
	Improve take-up of free school meals and associated benefits		
	Remove barriers to participation in family leisure/holiday activities		
Places Every family has a sustainable home	Improve the energy efficiency of new/existing housing in the private and social rented sectors		
	Extend more employment opportunities to the isles		
	Explore options to apply the benefits from wind power developments to reduce home energy costs		
Prevention Future generations can escape from poverty	Promote good employment practice, flexibility and fair pay, and their benefits to employers		
	Increase the capacity of Orkney's advisory agencies		
	Explore people-centred strategies for local development such as Community Wealth Building		
Priorities No child is left behind	Make inter-island ferry travel affordable to children and families on the ferry-linked isles		
	Improve the availability and affordability of wraparound childcare/after-school provision		
	Prioritise early financial support for families at risk, to avert crisis and family breakdown		