



The Orkney Partnership

Orkney
Local Child Poverty
Action Report
2022-23

Working together for a better Orkney

Contents

Introduction	3
Reporting on child poverty in Orkney	4
Children living in relative and absolute poverty	4
Fuel poverty	5
Child health indicators.....	6
What we do in Orkney to combat child poverty	8
Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022-26: Progress report	13
Pockets	14
Prospects.....	15
Places	17
Prevention.....	19
Priorities.....	22
Reports from partner agencies.....	25
Orkney Islands Council: Scottish Welfare Fund	25
Orkney Islands Council: Education	26
Orkney Islands Council: Community Learning, Development & Employability	29
OIC Housing: Support for tenants in social rented housing	31
NHS Orkney: Money Counts.....	32
Voluntary Action Orkney: Young People’s Befriending Project	33
Voluntary Action Orkney: The Connect Project.....	34
Orkney Charitable Trust.....	35
Orkney Foodbank	36
THAW Orkney.....	38
Social Security Scotland – Best Start Grants.....	41

Introduction

Local authorities and health boards in Scotland must report every year on the actions they are taking to combat child poverty. In Orkney, this work is supported by The Orkney Partnership, which brings together the many partner agencies which play a part in our children's lives and wellbeing. The Cost of Living Task Force took the lead on child poverty work during 2022-23.

The last few years have been difficult for everybody, and especially so for families on low incomes. In 2020-21 many households were affected financially by the pandemic, successive lockdowns and job losses, but the mitigating actions taken by local and national governments helped to offset these losses. The Scottish Child Payment began to take effect and data for 2020-21 subsequently showed that child poverty actually fell for the first time in several years. In 2021-22, we started to see economic recovery but rising energy prices reversed those temporary gains.

National figures included in this report show that Orkney had an estimated 567 children living in relative poverty in 2021-22, and the percentage of Orkney's children living in poverty increased to 16%. In 2022-23, the cost of living crisis piled on the pressure and increasing numbers of families found themselves in financial hardship, many of these for the first time. There is no sign of things improving any time soon. If we are to prevent hardship blighting our children's lives and future prospects, we must take urgent action.

Last year, The Orkney Partnership published Orkney's first Child Poverty Strategy, setting out our plans for 2022-26 to combat child poverty. In this report, we track the progress we have made in implementing our strategy. A highlight of our first year was the development of Orkney Money Matters, an integrated referral pathway for anyone in need of urgent cash or money advice. Led by Orkney's voluntary sector, Orkney Money Matters will help us channel immediate support to children, families, young people and anyone else in Orkney who is struggling to make ends meet.

Thank you for your interest in our report.

Craig Spence
Chair, 2022-23
Cost of Living Task Force



Reporting on child poverty in Orkney

Meaningful statistics for local child poverty are not easy to obtain. Published data may be years old and the small numbers in island communities mean that data may be misleading or not released at all due to the risk of identifying individuals. Many data sets have been unreliable, inconsistent or unavailable since the pandemic, because new survey methods had to be adopted and this can change the results.

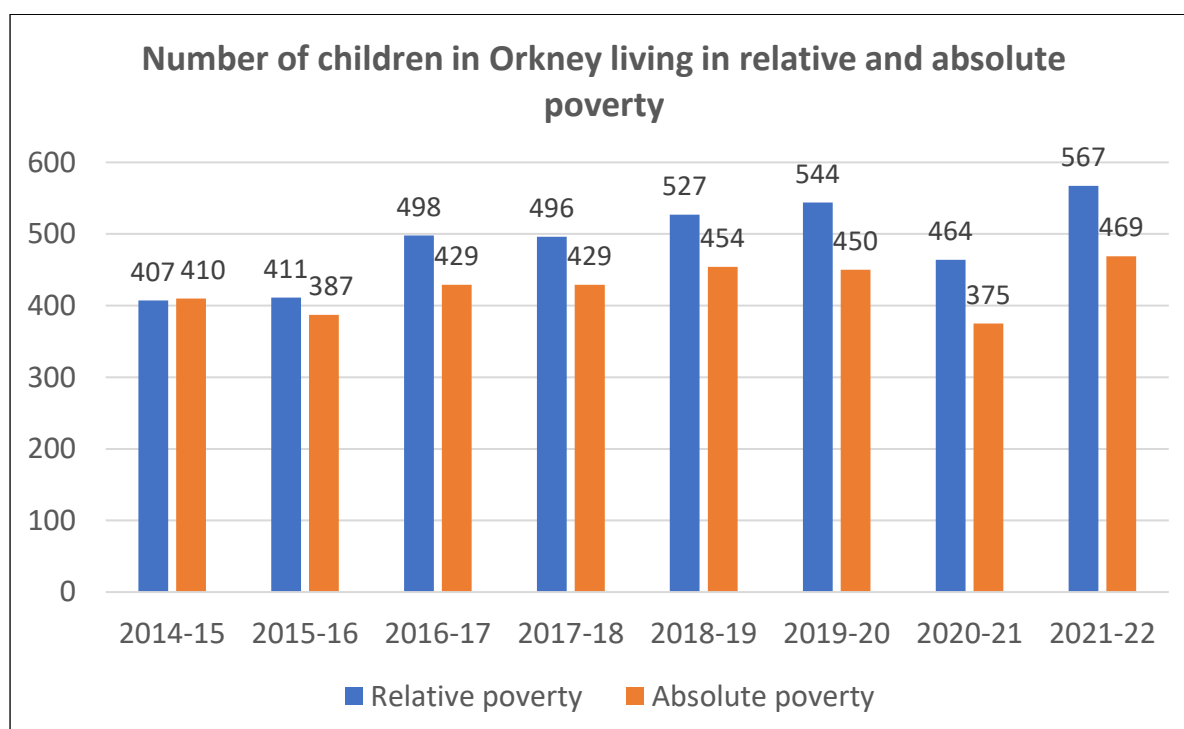
Children living in relative and absolute poverty

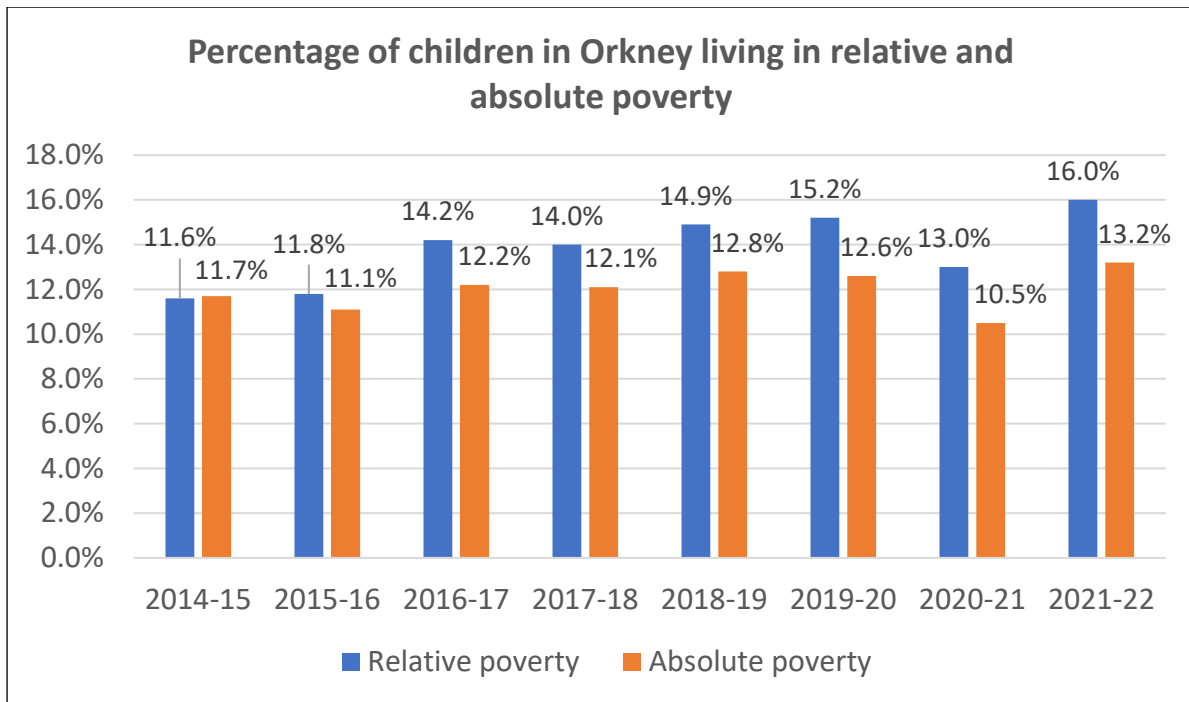
The UK Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) publishes [figures](#) every year for the numbers and percentages of children living in absolute and relative poverty for every local authority in the UK. Absolute poverty is a measure of whether those in the lowest income households are seeing their incomes rise in real terms. Relative poverty is a measure of 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 inflation adjusted 2010-11 median income

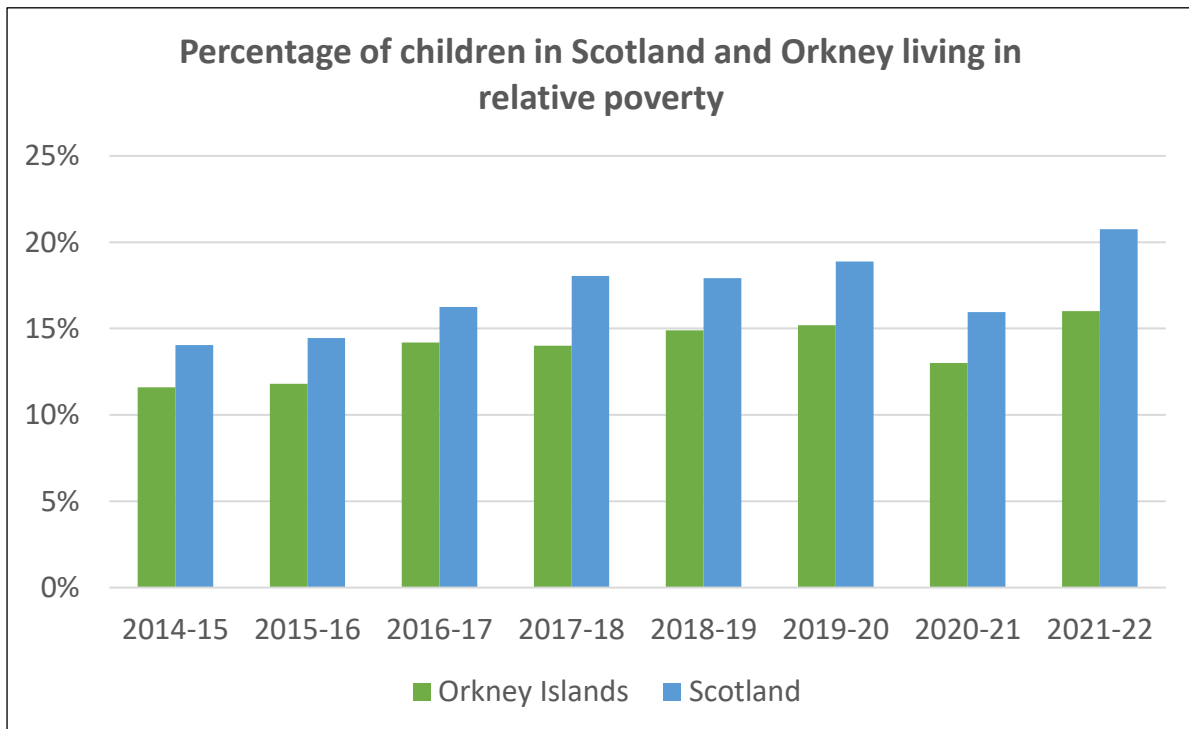
The DWP statistics include only children aged 0-15, due to difficulty in establishing whether 16 and 17 year olds are dependents or not. Incomes are adjusted in the calculation to reflect family size because a larger family requires a higher income to achieve the same standard of living as a smaller family.

The most recent figures available are 2021-22, and we can see at once the impact of the rise in fuel prices during this year on families in Orkney. This offset any improvement in household income due to the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment, and reversed the fall in child poverty we saw in 2020-21.





We can calculate the incidence of poverty in Scotland from the DWP figures, to compare with Orkney, although they do not publish a Scottish average so this should be considered a local estimate only.



Fuel poverty

It might appear that families in Orkney are relatively better off than those in Scotland as a whole. However, the DWP calculation does not take into account the higher cost of living in rural, remote and island areas, or the impact on fuel costs of living in a cold, windy region.

Minimum income standard (MIS) is defined as the income required by a particular type of household for an acceptable standard of living. The Scottish Government has commissioned research from the University of Loughborough to calculate a MIS for Scottish islands, taking into account the higher cost of travel, freight, fuel etc. Scottish Government is exploring the idea of a minimum income guarantee (MIG) in Scotland, and we are interested in the potential for piloting MIG in Orkney as part of our long term strategy to prevent families falling into poverty.

Fuel poverty is a significant cause of hardship in Orkney. A household is defined as being in 'fuel poverty' if total fuel costs necessary to maintain a satisfactory heating regime are more than 10% of the household's net income (after housing costs) and their remaining income is insufficient to maintain an acceptable standard of living. 'Extreme fuel poverty' follows the same definition except that a household would have to spend more than 20% of its net income.

The last available figures for Orkney, from the [Scottish House Condition Survey 2019](#), show that 30.5% of Orkney households were in fuel poverty during 2017-19, compared with a Scottish average of 24.4%. 21.8% of Orkney households were in extreme fuel poverty over the same period, compared with a Scottish average of 11.9%.

The results of the 2021 survey have not yet been published but our partner report from THAW Orkney (on page 38 of this report) includes data on the fuel poverty rates being experienced by their client base in 2022. This shows that of the households seeking help from THAW, couples had an average fuel poverty level of 60% and single parent families had an average of over 100%. Greater than 100% means that a family would need to spend more than they have coming in (after housing costs) to adequately heat their home.

We included a range of other indicators in our Child Poverty Strategy but most have not been updated nationally since its publication. We will report further on these when updated data is available.

Child health indicators

Poverty impacts on children's health, and problems can persist for a lifetime. We monitor a selection of the child health indicators published by [Public Health Scotland](#) to see how the health of Orkney's children compares with the Scottish average. This helps us to assess how effectively our services are working.

The figures in the table below mostly include 2020 and subsequent years, when children's lives and education were disrupted by the pandemic and successive lockdowns. Reduced family income, reduced activity levels and in many cases poorer diet impacted negatively on children's health and the effect of this can be seen in data across the UK, including Scotland and Orkney.

Where our performance has got worse (↓ or ↑), or our children are doing worse than Scotland overall, this can be a warning sign that something is not right and needs more resources devoted to it, or perhaps a change in policy.

ScotPHO Health indicator	Reporting period	Orkney	How did we do?	Scotland	How did we compare to Scotland?
Healthy birth weight 3 year rolling average percentage	2018-21	74.5	Baseline	84.2	Worse
	2019-22	73.3	↓	84.1	Worse
Child healthy weight in Primary 1 Percentage whose BMI is within the healthy reference range for their age and sex	2019-20	77.2	Baseline	76.2	Same
	2020-21	73.7	↓	69.8	Better
Drug-related hospital admissions, age 11-25 3 year rolling average age/sex standardised rate per 100,000	2018-20	120.6	Baseline	162.2	Better
	2019-22	182.6	↑	167.7	Same
Alcohol-related hospital admissions, age 11-25 3 year rolling average age/sex standardised rate per 100,000	2018-21	477.8	Baseline	270.0	Worse
	2019-22	503.4	↑	255.2	Worse
Scottish Housing Quality Standard Households with children in homes that fail the SHQS, 3 year rolling average %	2015-17	35.0	Baseline <i>no new data available</i>	38.0	Same
Teenage pregnancies 3 year rolling average per 1000 females age 15-19	2017-19	12.3	Baseline	29.2	Better
	2018-20	12.8	↑	27.1	Better
Child dental health in Primary 1 Percentage of P1 children showing no obvious signs of tooth decay	2019-20	85.0	Baseline	72.4	Better
	2021-22	86.2	↑	73.1	Better

The comparison colour codes are those used by Public Health Scotland:



Orkney doing better than Scotland



No statistically significant difference to Scotland



Orkney doing worse than Scotland

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 the family. This might be a matter of simply providing information or, if more support is needed, perhaps making an appointment for the family and following it up. A helpsheet listing sources of support with contact details was included with the survey forms issued for the Making Ends Meet survey.¹

The summary table below lists the actions which partner agencies routinely carry out to combat child poverty and mitigate against its effects. Most of these actions are continued from year to year. Further information on many of these actions can be found in the reports from partner agencies on the projects and services they deliver, contained in the next section of this report.

All of the actions in this list address one or more of the key poverty drivers:-

- Income from employment
- Income from social security entitlements and benefits
- The cost of living

What we did in 2022-23 to combat child poverty		Lead 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 (Community Learning, Development and Employability)
4	Providing and encouraging take-up of free school meals and associated clothing allowances and support grants.	OIC (Schools 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 (Community Learning, Development and Employability); OIC (Revenues and Benefits)

¹ <http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/communityplanning/documents/makingendsmeetsupport-sources-02-08-21.pdf>

What we did in 2022-23 to combat child poverty		Lead agencies
6	Support with Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grant applications, and administering the funds.	OIC (Revenues and Benefits); OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)
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.	Women's 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 (HEES 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

What we did in 2022-23 to combat child poverty		Lead agencies
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 mifi, laptops and other devices for digitally excluded children and families.	OIC (Community Learning, Development and Employability); OHAC (Health Visitors, School Health, Paediatric therapists)
21	Provision and promotion of free period products available locally.	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 secondhand furniture and household items and supports new tenants to furnish their property.	Employability Orkney with funding and support from OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)
23	Funding for starter-packs of essential household items.	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)
24	Housing support for vulnerable families.	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)
25	Ad hoc essential clothing items for Papdale Halls of Residence pupils.	Papdale Hall of Residence staff

What we did in 2022-23 to combat child poverty		Lead agencies
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 Services and Health Visitors)
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 & 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 health and 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, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)
34	Provision of school uniform, toiletries and laundry items.	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)
35	Facilitation of Young Scot cards, Youth Achievement Groups and the Orkney Youth Forum.	OIC (Community Learning, Development and Employability)
36	Supporting vulnerable young adults to build confidence and positive relationships while focusing on life and employability skills.	Voluntary Action Orkney (The Connect Project)

What we did in 2022-23 to combat child poverty		Lead agencies
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 available for all children and young people aged ten and over, both face to face and online.	OIC (Schools)
43	Breakfast clubs for children who would otherwise go without.	Orkney Foodbank, Orkney Charitable Trust, Kirkwall Grammar School, Papdale Primary School.
44	“A Helping Hand” webpage bringing together sources of help and support for those affected by the cost of living crisis.	Orkney Islands Council

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, 2022-23

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 at 18 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 Orkney Money Matters project is creating a referral pathway for individuals experiencing financial insecurity or destitution, bringing together all relevant services and support. This is supported by shared communications, including a leaflet and website.

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, 2022-26
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.

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.
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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 with school photographs, a verruca sock for swimming, reading overlays, ear defenders and travel to school activities. The fund is available to any child, whether or not 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?

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

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.

Remove barriers to participation in family leisure/holiday activities

Who's doing it?

The Pickaquoy Centre and the Council offer 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?

In 2022-23, 608 Orkney residents took out or renewed a Budget Membership to ActiveLife. A total of 8,054 activity sessions at 50p a time were taken up at the Pickaquoy Centre through the scheme, including 592 Soft Play sessions.

During 2022-23, the Council's Leisure team has been developing a Physical Activity and Wellbeing Strategy which is scheduled for consideration by the Council in November 2023. The strategy will address financial inclusion. We will report further on the Strategy in our 2023-24 Local Child Poverty Action Report.

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 into account 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 the 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?

This action is being followed through in the Council's statutory Fuel Poverty Strategy, Heat Strategy and Energy Efficiency Strategy, all of which are in development. 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.

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 because 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?	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Increase the capacity of Orkney's advisory agencies

Who's doing it?	Voluntary Action Orkney and Community Consulting are leading this action on behalf of Orkney Money Matters.
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.
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

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.

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

Who's doing it? The Orkney Partnership's Sustainable Development Delivery Group is leading partnership work on Community Wealth Building.

How is it being resourced? The Orkney Partnership'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 co-operatives 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 is 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

Orkney Islands Council: Scottish Welfare Fund

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 and Community Care Grants.

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.

Crisis Grants in Orkney	2021-22	2022-23
Accepted	40	72
Rejected	55	60
Total Applications	100	132
Proportion Accepted	42%	55%
Total Spend this year	£7,315	£9,193
Average award	£174	£127

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 the money to buy essential household items like a cooker or washing machine.

Community Care Grants in Orkney	2021-22	2022-23
Accepted	95	100
Rejected	20	47
Total Applications	115	147
Proportion Accepted	81%	68%
Total Spend this year	£77,324	£66,144
Average award	£823	£661

The acceptance rates for both types of grant are low in Orkney, and there are a number of reasons for this. Sometimes the application form has not been fully completed and when the assessors try to make contact with the applicant, there is no reply. If the form is incomplete, it is counted as a rejected application. Sometimes the problem is one of timing: for example, if someone has lost their job but still has one final wage payment due, a Crisis Grant will be turned down at that time but the applicant might well be eligible later on. The Orkney team is obliged to apply the rules as set by Scottish Government, and people are encouraged to get in touch with the SWF team for advice before applying, to optimise the acceptance rate.

During 2022-23, the team began delivering a series of training sessions to agencies offering front line advice, including Voluntary Action Orkney, THAW Orkney, Orkney Foodbank, Social Security Scotland, CAB Orkney, Blide Trust, Community Link Practitioners, Island Co-ordinators, and Wellbeing Co-ordinators. The team goes through the application form, explains the regulations by which they have to abide, and opens up the floor for a Q and A. To date the training has been very well received and the team is hoping to see this reflected in an increase in the proportion of successful applications in the coming year.

Data for Scottish Welfare Fund expenditure is published annually in July and can be found on the Scottish Government's website here:

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

Orkney Islands Council: Education

Free early learning and childcare

Introduced as part of a Scotland-wide expansion of early learning and childcare, nurseries across Orkney are now offering 1,140 hours of free provision for eligible children, to support working families. The local authority is also working with childminders, who – if in partnership with the local authority – can also offer 1,140 hours of free provision.

As well as 3 and 4-year-olds, eligibility extends to 2-year-olds of parents in receipt of a qualifying benefit. More details are available on the Council website at <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/P/eligible-two-year-olds.htm>

Early Years' Service

The service's Family Team continues to offer support through individual work, group work and nurture groups, by sharing leaflets and by sign posting to services such as Warmworks, Money Matters, CAB Orkney, Orkney Foodbank and the Community Fridge. The team are also able to provide practical advice on a range of matters directly eg accessing a slow cooker, Pickaquoy membership etc. Staff from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB Orkney) attended the service's Nurture Group to improve access for families.

The family team support families to apply for the child disability payment where needed.

Healthy snack and milk money provided by Scottish Government is used to provide a daily snack of fruit, veg and milk for under 5s in registered settings, reducing the need for parents to contribute.

Removal of charges for the core curriculum in schools

In the past, pupils within secondary schools were often asked to cover the cost of materials for practical lessons such as home economics, art and technology. As part of a Scotland wide scheme, the government has provided additional funding to schools to mitigate these costs. While there may still be a need to consider how the cost of any additional activity is covered, the basic core cost will not be something that families have to find.

Free instrumental music tuition

Orkney's Instrumental Service is not big enough to support all learners but it reaches an impressive 26% of the pupil population, one of the highest rates in Scotland. Funding from the Scottish Government continues to support the service's ability to ensure that no charges for instrumental tuition are passed on to the young musicians and their families.

The participation rate of children and young people entitled to free school meals is routinely monitored to ensure equity of access. As well as the intrinsic value of music tuition, participation plays a significant part of growing social capital, which is in itself a positive asset with respect to mitigating the impact of childhood poverty.

Narrowing the poverty related attainment gap

Refinements introduced to the way in which schools collect and analyse data (about the progress, achievement and attainment of children and young people) have helped to establish a more reliable description of the 'attainment gap' across our schools. Work to further develop, and focus, the impact of the Pupil Equity Fund to reduce this gap is underway. It is anticipated that the publication of both qualitative and quantitative outcomes over the course of the next school year should be possible.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

EMA is aimed at 16-to-19-year-olds from low-income households who are participating in non-advanced learning in school/college or at an approved learning centre. It is also available to those who are home-educated.

The aim is to increase participation and retention in post-16 education, with young people being able to choose from the same learning opportunities, regardless of background or circumstance.

EMAs are payments of £30 per week, normally paid fortnightly in arrears, dependent on attendance and conduct. Across all sectors (Secondary Schools, Orkney College, Activity Agreements and Home Education) the uptake for 2022-23 was 70 students.

Free school meals

The approach to lunchtime in nursery settings has been revised to enable children to be more independent in making food choices, which in turn encourages the uptake of free nursery meal offer.

The Scotland-wide rollout of free school meals continued with P4s becoming eligible in August 2021 and P5s in January 2022. The Council issued a reminder to parents in July 2022 to get in touch to find out whether they were eligible for free school meals and associated benefits in the form of clothing grants and cash payments for holiday food. Parents were encouraged to register, even if their children were included in the universal provision, to be sure of receiving the associated benefits.

The Council maintains records of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, but we do not record whether or not eligible pupils take up their entitlement. Nursery pupils are eligible for a free meal if they stay for a whole session (both morning and

afternoon) but not if they only attend for one of the sessions (either morning or afternoon).

All Primary 1-4 pupils were eligible for universal free meals throughout the year, and Primary 5 were eligible from January 2022. Primary 6 and above were eligible if in receipt of qualifying benefits. The numbers eligible in total during 2022-23 were:

Nursery (All pupils eligible when attending for a whole day)	488
P1 (All pupils)	202
P2 (All pupils)	197
P3 (All pupils)	220
P4 (All pupils)	214
P5 (All pupils from January 2022)	240
P6	34
P7	23
S1	34
S2	18
S3	25
S4	20
S5	17
S6	1
Total	1,733

In-School Counselling

During 2021-22, Scottish Government funding of £166,000 was allocated to Orkney schools to make counselling available for all children and young people aged ten and over. As well as the appointment of Counsellors, additional capacity to support the service has been created in the Junior High Schools, where the possibility of needing to provide aspects of the service via video-link is more likely.

The Counselling team continue to offer pupils at Kirkwall Grammar School and Stromness Academy access to In-School Counselling, both face to face and online if required. As an 'in-school' service, the team are visible, known, and accessible. The team is yet to achieve full capacity and continues to seek appropriately skilled and qualified staff to join the team.

The counselling team remains aware of the on-going cost of living challenge being faced by families. Those who were previously coping financially are not doing so now. Examples include pupils reporting poor sleep due to less food available at home. The team has also encountered examples of hidden poverty among previously better-off households, where (for example) single parents work in relatively well-paid roles.

As the service evolves and matures, how it supports and compliments other services across Orkney can be explored in more depth and detail. Our expectation is that by managing the relationships between services, for example the Schools Guidance Teams, In-school Counselling Services and Orkney's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), referrals, help and support can be at the earliest stage possible, in order to mitigate long term and harmful impacts.

Removing barriers to participation in school trips and experiences

All establishment managers have been asked to review the impact of the '[cost of the school day](#)' as part of a briefing in December 2022. The toolkit itself has been refreshed by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and a further reminder to establishments and teams will be issued in August 2023.

There has been a specific focus on using local facilities for outdoor education programmes during 2022-23 in recognition that these can remove a range of barriers to participation, including making the experience more affordable.

Where approval has been given for other trips, establishment managers have been asked to ensure, through positive engagement with the wider community, that cost is not a barrier.

A number of positive relationships with, for example, islands development trusts, has resulted in a range of some positive and successful outcomes for all children and young people. In some schools, Parent Councils have been instrumental in establishing and sustaining these approaches. (An example of this would be the Papdale School Participation Fund).

Orkney Islands Council: Community Learning, Development & Employability

The Council's Community Learning, Development & Employability Service provides a wide range of services which support people – both directly and via partner agencies – to improve their family's income and prospects.

Income maximization

During 2022- 23, the Local Employability Partnership, through OIC, procured income maximisation support services from CAB Orkney for individuals identified under No One Left Behind, Scottish Government's strategy for employability support. Through this route, 191 individuals were supported, resulting in client financial gain of £235,107 made up of previously unclaimed benefit entitlements.

Skills and employability support for parents

The CLD Employability team has worked during the year with 31 parents within identified groups. Each parent has been allocated a designated Employability Keyworker and supported to co-produce a bespoke Individual Development Plan, working towards identified personal goals etc. Fifteen parents have gained a recognised and accredited qualification and fifteen have moved into employment.

The CLD Employability team and Youth Services have worked in partnership with social work and health colleagues to plan, develop and deliver a 'Young Parents' group. This group meets weekly, and sessions are developed in collaboration with the families who attend. The sessions are focused on health and wellbeing together with developing confidence and skills to support future transitions. Four parents attend regularly along with their four children.

The CLD team have worked in partnership with Homestart and the CLD Youth and Family Learning officer to plan and run an eight-week 'Food with Friends' Course, focusing on healthy meal preparation, skills development and cooking on a budget. As part of this course four parents gained an accredited Food Hygiene certificate.

The CLD Employability team worked in partnership with the Yard Nursery to plan and run a free ‘Funday Sunday’ event. This focused on outdoor and family learning opportunities and the promotion of support/information/services available locally.

One of the biggest barriers to entering employment, identified through talking to parents and partners, was lack of affordable childcare. The CLD Employability team have worked in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association, Business Gateway, the Care Inspectorate and local training providers to plan, coordinate and deliver a Childminding Course for local parents. Six individuals completed all aspects of the course and are now registered childminders. This program was funded through No One left Behind as agreed by the Local Employability Partnership. Going forward, CLD Employability is working with the Scottish Childminding Association, Business Gateway and other local delivery partners to promote and deliver a future course aimed at upskilling individuals and increasing local childcare provision.

Skills and employability support for young people

A Transitions Planning group has been established to ensure young people at risk of not making a positive progression from school are identified, and appropriate provision explored, at the earliest opportunity. Partners include Skills Development Scotland, CLD and Employability, Schools, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and Third Sector partners.

The purpose of the group is to coordinate and deliver support to meet the young people’s needs and support young people to make informed decisions and positive and sustainable future transitions. The most recent participation rate figures published by Skills Development Scotland indicate that the number of young people participating in education, training or employment has increased by 2.2% compared with the same period in 2022. Orkney’s participation rates are consistently among the best in Scotland.

Participation rates of 16-19 year olds in education, training or employment

	Orkney May 2022 %	Scotland May 2022 %	Orkney Dec 2022 %	Scotland Dec 2022 %	Orkney May 2023 %	Scotland May 2023 %
Participating	92.40	90.70	93.70	90.50	94.60	90.80
Not participating	3.20	4.90	3.40	4.70	2.90	5.20
Unconfirmed	4.40	4.40	2.90	4.80	2.50	3.90

The CLD Employability Support team have worked with 39 young people identified under ‘No One Left Behind’ as requiring support to make positive progression towards learning/training and employment. This has been through a variety of bespoke and holistic programmes and one-to-one support. Each young person has a designated Employability Keyworker and is supported to co-produce an Individual Development Plan, working towards identified personal goals and targets. Of all those involved:

- 14 young people progressed to Employment, including 2 Apprenticeship opportunities.

- 1 young people made positive progression to Further or Higher Education
- 11 young people gained a recognised qualification.
- 3 young people engaged with a work experience opportunity

Promoting good employment practice

CLDE leads the Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022-26 action to “Promote good employment practice, flexibility and fair pay, and their benefits to employers”.

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 is developing 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.

‘No One Left Behind’

During 2022-23, the LEP allocated £60,000 to provide a minimum of 10 Employer Recruitment incentives. 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.

Employer Recruitment Incentives play an important role in supporting those with the greatest barriers to employment, to enable them to obtain and remain in sustainable employment. The Employer Recruitment Incentive has been developed to integrate and link fully with existing employability and skills programmes and is available to use as a contribution to the additional costs of recruiting and sustaining eligible individuals in employment.

Employers can apply for funding to help with the costs of recruiting and employing someone who fits the eligibility criteria for the fund. The scheme can provide up to £6,000 for newly created jobs or vacancies. Employers who are successful in applying to the fund receive the money direct.

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 (16–24-year-old) and six people over 25 + were employed. Two of the opportunities for young people were Modern Apprenticeships.

Of the 12 people who were employed through the incentive, eleven (91%) remain in fair and sustainable work.

OIC Housing: Support for tenants in social rented housing

New research from the [Scottish Housing Regulator](#) highlights the significant and worsening financial difficulties being experienced by tenants across Scotland. At the time of the survey, in the early months of 2023, a quarter of respondents said they were not managing well financially. Increased food and energy costs were the biggest contributors to financial difficulties, with nine in ten respondents citing energy costs as the main factor contributing to difficulties in heating their home. Nearly all respondents were concerned about their future financial circumstances.

OIC Housing carried out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey last year, which provided some corroborating information about the impact the pandemic has had on household finances. As yet we have no data from Orkney tenants on the cost-of-living crisis specifically, as the survey was carried out prior to the widespread impact of the crisis.

OIC Housing and OHAL organised joint Tenant Participation Pop-up Events across various locations on Orkney Mainland, and also jointly hosted a Cost-of-living event last year ([Cost-of-living crisis – support and advice offered at upcoming event in Orkney](#)). The general consensus coming back from the community is that almost everyone is struggling in some way, and most are cutting back on spending at least somewhere.

Organisations such as CAB Orkney and Social Security Scotland provide OIC Housing with updates that may be of interest to tenants, i.e. information on changes to benefits. This information is communicated to tenants via a Housing Services Newsletter, which is usually released quarterly.

An upcoming Newsletter will be focusing on energy efficiency and reducing condensation. It will also contain information signposting tenants to organisations which can assist with these matters, such as THAW.

NHS Orkney: Money Counts

'Worrying About Money?' cash first referral leaflets are co-designed as straightforward resources for people facing money worries or financial crises, and their support workers, to quickly see which local agencies are best placed to help with available cash first options. The aim of this work is to reduce the need for charitable food aid by helping people access any existing financial entitlements and advice on income maximisation as a cash first response to food insecurity. Since June 2020, the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) has collaborated with local stakeholders to publish leaflets covering over 70 local authorities in Scotland, England and Wales.

'Money Counts' was originally developed by the Highland Money Counts Partnership, who kindly gave permission for its adoption and adaption for delivery in Orkney. Adoption and adaptation were completed collaboratively by Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Social Security Scotland, NHS Orkney Public Health and other community partners.

'Money Counts' training in Orkney commenced in February-March 2022 and helps frontline workers and volunteers to best use the leaflet to support people struggling with money worries or financial crisis. The first block of 'Money Counts' training was delivered in February and March 2022. In total there were eight training sessions delivered to 50 participants who represented a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations in Orkney.

Due to the level of interest in this training, a second block of training sessions was delivered between May and October 2022. Eighteen sessions were delivered to 76 attendees during this block. Initial evaluation from both training blocks suggests that the training has increased the confidence of the participants in engaging in conversations about money worries, and has supported the knowledge and use of the 'Worrying About Money?' leaflet across organisations in Orkney.

Voluntary Action Orkney: Young People's Befriending Project

The Young People's Befriending Project is now in its 15th year. This year has seen us offer 1-1 Befriending support to 12 young people through the tailored support of our team of volunteer Befrienders. The young people's ages ranged from 9-16, with some matches just beginning and some young people being supported for their 4th year.



Our Befrienders have given hundreds of hours of their time to our young people, working to grow their self-esteem and confidence, increase their resilience and coping skills, build a steady and reliable friendship with them, and help them to engage in new skills and hobbies.

Our volunteer team continues to offer high quality support to the young people we care for, as evidenced by the most recent reviews conducted throughout the year which reported that:

In the most recent Project reviews, 100% of young people told us that their Befriender was 'someone they could trust' and was someone who 'made them feel important and worth listening to'. 100% of our young people also told us that their confidence had increased, and their general feelings of happiness had increased because of their befriender.

Here's what some of our young people, their parents and our volunteers had to say about what they enjoy about Befriending (all names have been changed).

It has made my life so much better because it feels like I haven't just got someone that takes me to places for fun, but it feels like I've gained a real friend. I'm very happy to have him as a friend.

Young person talking about their volunteer

Graham is a very calming influence, always smiling, very engaging and has built a very strong relationship with Ben, who always looks forward to his time with him.

A parent talking about their son's Befriender

Having a Befriender has helped me meet new people, try new things and has grown my confidence.

Young person talking about the benefits of their match

Befriending has been great – not only has it made a difference to the young person, but I also feel it has impacted my life greatly and built up my confidence.

Volunteer's experience

Case Study – Martha and Rosa

Martha and 11-year-old Rosa are a new match that started this year. Rosa has quite a complex disability so we knew that she would need a special Befriender who could support her and enable her to join in safely with activities in the community. Martha is a volunteer who has a sibling with a similar disability as Rosa so had a wealth of experience to bring to the match.

Martha and Rosa hit it off from their first meeting and have built a mutually beneficial relationship together. They take part in various activities within the community from soft play to pottery to board games and coffee dates. Martha really enjoys her time with Rosa and knows that she is making a difference to her life, and Rosa sings Martha's praises and has already reported a rise in confidence and self-esteem since her match began only a few months ago.

Voluntary Action Orkney: The Connect Project

The Connect Project is an early intervention project that offers young people aged 15-21, who face barriers to learning and engaging in the community, access to a flexible and person-centred learning/training programme, through a strength-based approach. The Connect Project works with partners in Health, Education, Social Work, Skills Development Scotland and the Voluntary Sector, prioritising wellbeing needs and life skills development.



Our referral partners:

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

Our families and carers:

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

Our young people:

Connect still helped me after I left – to make sure I was ok and so I knew I could always ask them for help if I needed to.

I'd never met a person from another country (except England) before I came to Connect and now I have. I never thought I'd be ever doing that.

Sometimes it can be noisy but not bad-noisy, the fun kind when you know you'll be ok.

I was nervous about coming but when I came in it just felt right. I give Connect a thumbs up.

My memory is bad and they made photobooks for me so I could see what I had done. I liked showing that to my mum.

They tell me I'm eating too much sugar – I think they are wrong.

I would not have gone to college if Connect hadn't encouraged me – I didn't think I would manage but I have.

You knew I would be all right – how did you know that when I didn't know it?

They asked me what colour my front door was – it was unexpected – but now I know that this type of question can come up in conversations. I will be ready if it does again.

Over the past year the Connect Project team have engaged with 24 young people through a range of activities which have included regular group sessions, remote outreach, in person one-to-one sessions, and alongside community partner delivery in shared programmes. We have seen some of our young people move onto positive destinations and all have become more involved in their community.

Orkney Charitable Trust

Orkney Charitable Trust raises and distributes funds to help people under 25 who live in the Orkney Islands. OCT funds are available to young people in times of ill health, disability, hardship or disadvantage. OCT's income relies completely on grants and donations, with less than £500 spent in 2022-23 on overhead costs.



From June 2022 to June 2023, OCT granted £48,000 to Orkney families and young people, made up of:

- 'Coats for Kids' grants – supported 73 children in need of a warm coat - £2,900.
- 'Every Child Deserves a Christmas' £60 Grants supported 371 children - £22,260.
- £25 'Cosy Christmas Day Heat and Cook Grant' was given to every household that applied for our Christmas grants.
- 'Bairns Need Nappies' provided £1,900 of nappies to help parents and their peedie folk.
- 'Help from Home' supported families traveling south, for NHS appointments, £1,500.
- £50 "Get Ready for Summer" Grants – supported 107 families - £5,350.
- Provided bespoke support for bereaved families.
- Start funded a Participation Fund within Papdale School.
- Promoted activities and opportunities that might help families.
- Bought bedding, beds, mattresses, supported families in crisis, general grants.
- £18,250 of external funding brought into Orkney, including Scottish Sea Farms, CORRA Foundation and CLLD Grant.

Case study: Papdale School Participation Fund

Orkney Charitable trust was keen to support the cost of the school day, and was aware many of the families they support were within the catchment area of Papdale School. The school were very aware of the rising cost of the school day and the cost of living crisis, and knew that children sometimes were not

participating due to cost. The Parent Council was moving towards supporting families and the school with its improvement plans, around attainment and experiences, away from the traditional fundraising role.

Orkney's Child Poverty Strategy 2022-26 contains an action to "Remove barriers to participation in school trips and experiences". Orkney Charitable Trust, Papdale School and the Parent Council decided to put it into effect.

All partners came together and discussed the possibility of setting up a Papdale School Participation fund. This fund would be ring-fenced by the school, and used at the discretion of senior management to be available for any child where there might be a financial barrier. Orkney Charitable Trust would provide the initial funding and match fund a donation, the school and parent council would fundraise to ensure sustainability, and donations would also be accepted from external funders and grants. The school would report usage at each Parent Council Meeting.

An agreement was drawn up which agreed the principles of the fund to be:

- **Vision** – Every child at Papdale School will develop into confident and successful learners and will be able to participate in all activities and opportunities provided by the school.
- **Aim** – To ensure every child attending Papdale School can participate in all activities, striving to ensure that no child is excluded from these activities on financial grounds.
- **Purpose** – To ensure that money is never again a barrier to any child at Papdale being able to participate fully, be included and supported to access opportunities which help them fulfil their potential.

The fund is now available to be used for such things as P7 Buddy tops, items for out-door activities, field trips, cost of out-door activities, cost of school trips, swimming items, head lice treatment etc; as well as items which can be reused by the school such as swimming towels, rucksacks, water-proofs, pack lunch boxes etc. Since the fund was set up, it has provided assistance with school photographs, verruca socks for swimming, reading overlays, ear defenders, and travel to school activities.

Orkney Foodbank



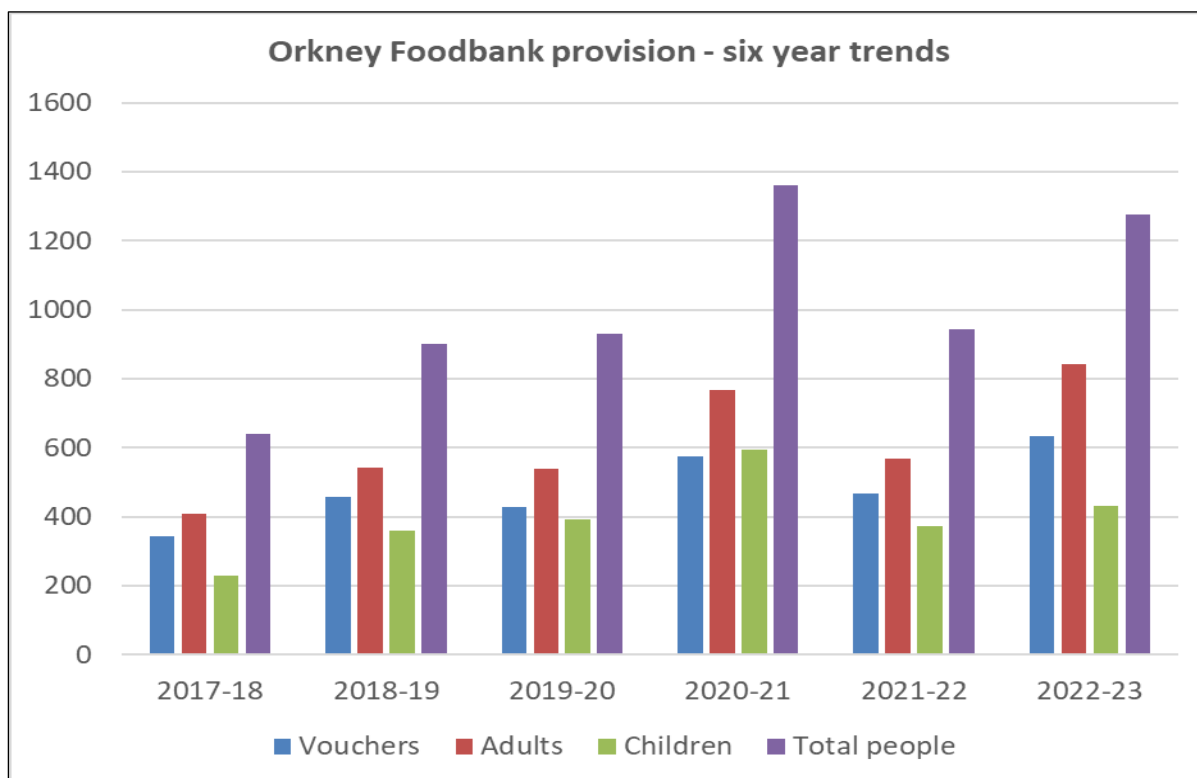
Orkney Foodbank supports families in a variety of ways:

- Food parcels are issued to households with children as they are referred to us.
- We issue child holiday meals, which comprise a foodbank parcel for the total number in the household where they struggle to provide enough food during school holidays.
- We have partnered with Kirkwall Grammar School and Papdale Primary School to provide breakfast for children who would otherwise go without.
- All children under 2 are automatically referred to the health visiting team.
- If any young child is needing baby milk, nappies or baby food we contact the parent to check what is required, purchase it and add to the parcel.

- Where young children need nappies, we refer to health visitors who link with Orkney Charitable Trust to get them a month's supply.
- At Christmas we make sure all families with children are referred to Orkney Charitable Trust to benefit from the Christmas grant.

Demand increased by 35% in 2022-23, compared with 2021-22. During 2022-23 we provided food parcels to feed 1,275 people (633 vouchers) of which 432 were children. 748 were classified as having "low income" as reason for referral (345 vouchers). This compares to 2021-22 when we provided food parcels for 942 people (468 vouchers) of which 374 were children. 324 were classified as having "low income" as reason for referral (154 vouchers).

The figure below shows trends over the past six years. The peak demand in 2020-21 reflects the first year of the pandemic. A number of factors contributed to the fall in 2021-22, including economic recovery, the further rollout of free school meals and the Scottish Child Payment. In 2022-23 we see the effects of the cost of living crisis wiping out those gains and pushing many families back into food insecurity.



During winter of 2022-23 Orkney Foodbank also ran a warm home scheme and issued warm bedding, flasks, electric blankets and the like – this was hugely successful and the issue of these basic items made a significant difference to many households.

THAW Orkney

THAW's mission is:

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



This year THAW had a 6-month period with severely restricted funding and staffing. Even so, THAW's energy support to fuel-poor households only slightly reduced to a total of £107,745 from Apr '22 - Mar '23, as compared to £120,603 during 2021-22.

Total support for families with children was £38,499, including energy support:

• Electricity vouchers/debt support	£16,819	276 awards
• Home Heating Advice fund	£10,402	15 awards
• Fuelbank Foundation Heat Fund	£1,142	2 awards
• Warm homes discount	£450	3 awards

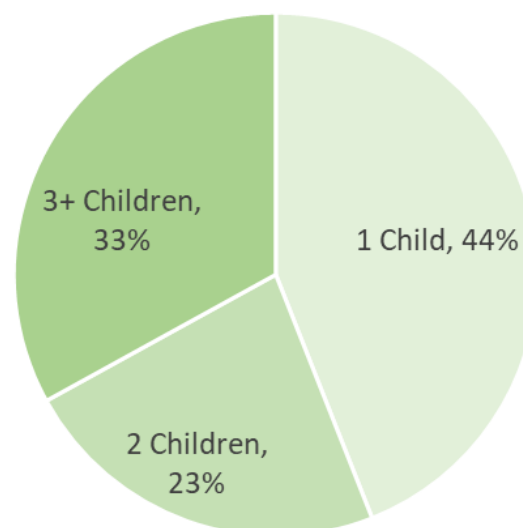
And other wider support:

• Cosy Home Packs	£5,330	53 awards
• Tesco vouchers for food/other items	£1,890	31 awards
• White goods	£1,249	4 awards
• Orkney Charitable Trust grants	£660	4 awards

Although there have been fewer awards made since last year, THAW have provided a higher amount of electricity voucher support and created funds for energy debt support through Orkney Money Matters and white goods through British Gas Energy Trust funding.

THAW simplified voucher distribution through digital tools, including trialling the use of Tesco vouchers for fresh food and other goods. Foodbank energy and fresh food vouchers were then taken in-house by Foodbank during early 2023, allowing greater focus on energy efficiency for the now fully staffed THAW team.

At least 178 children (down from 296 last year) were supported during 2022-2023, with at least a third of families supported having 3 or more children (see right).



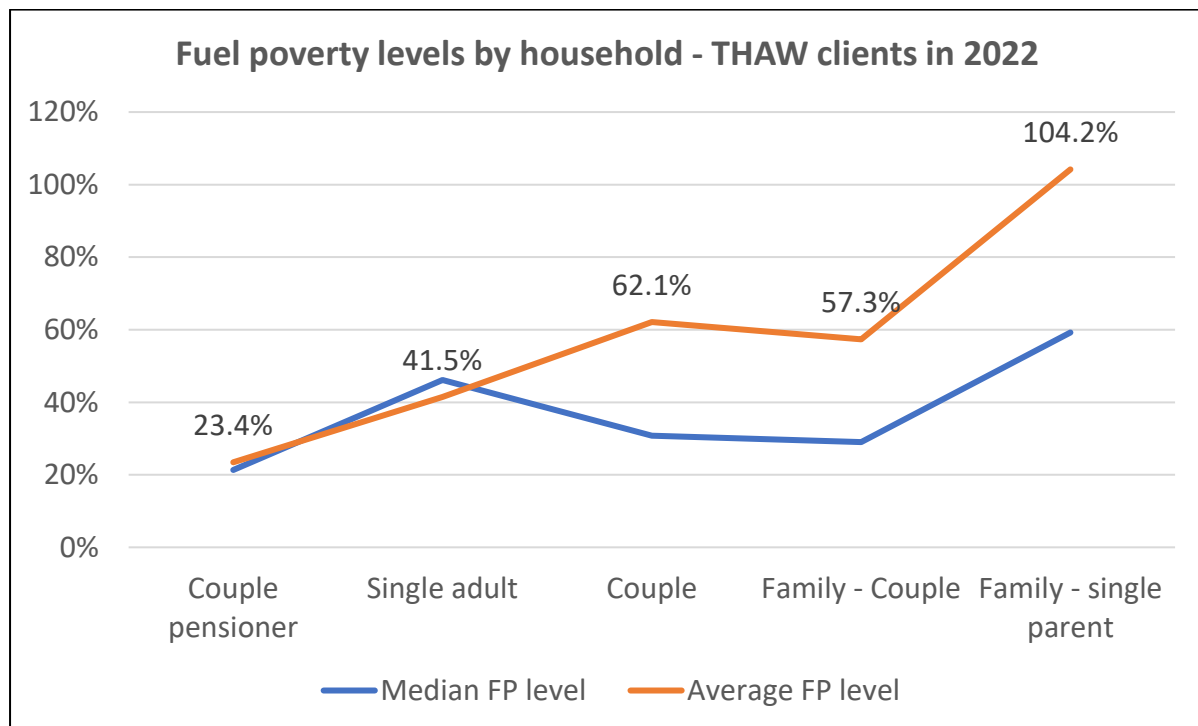
We increased provision of energy advice from 37 to 57 families as well as visited at least 12 family households to provide home energy efficiency surveys and higher levels of support.

We expect the 2023-24 report to show higher provision due to increased staff capacity as well as the greater need shown since April for energy support.

Fuel poverty levels in THAW client families in 2022

Of those clients assessed by THAW within 2022, the median fuel poverty level for a couple with at least one child is 30%, rising to 60% for single parent families.

However, there is great variance between clients, with a significant number of families at much higher levels of fuel poverty. This gives rise to an average fuel poverty level of 60% for couples and an average over 100% for single parent families. Greater than 100% means that a family would need to spend more than they earn (after housing costs) to adequately heat their home.



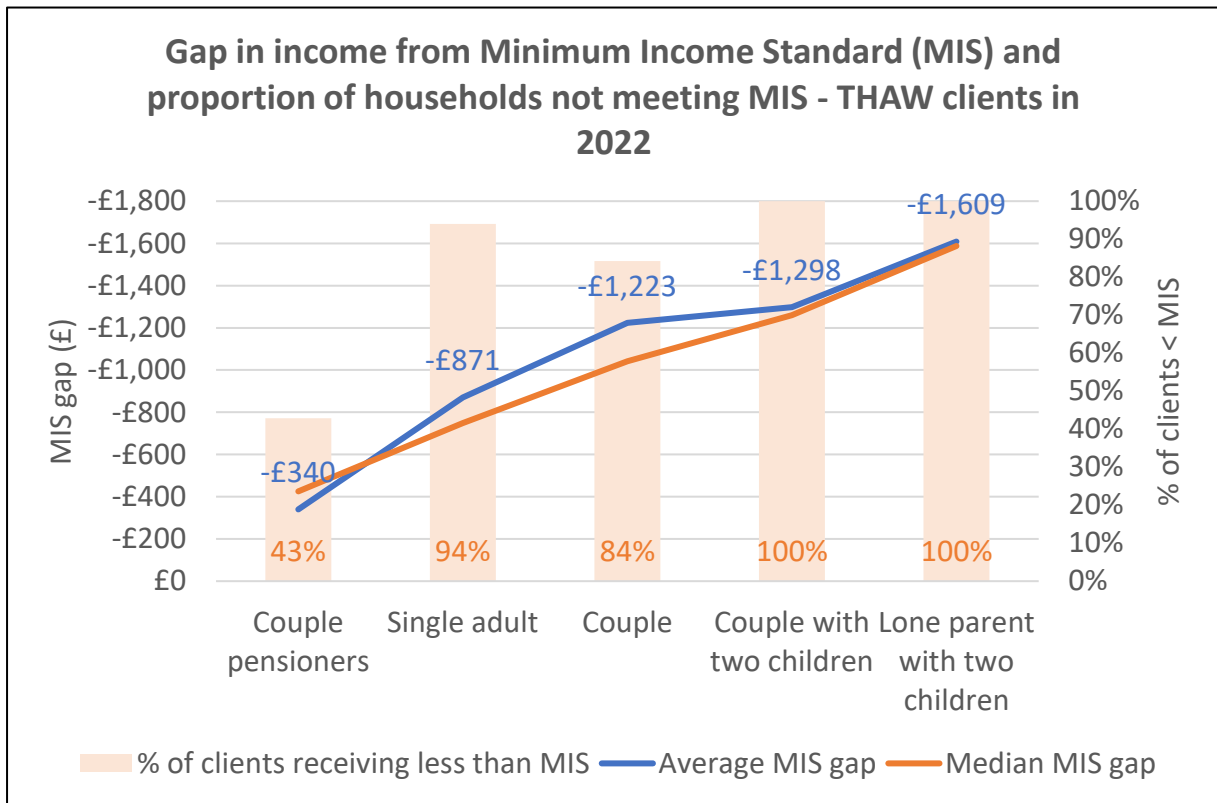
Minimum income standard of THAW client families in 2022

Minimum Income Standard (MIS) is modelled annually by Loughborough University to provide an estimated minimum spend across multiple areas (food, energy, housing etc.) to achieve an acceptable living standard. The standard is written into the Scottish definition of fuel poverty, such that household must be below MIS in order to be deemed fuel poor. However, it also provides a method to assess gaps in income required to reach an acceptable living standard.

A rural MIS has been created to consider the additional expenses required in remote rural areas; this has not been used as it has not been updated since 2016, but also because income levels are already well below the national MIS.

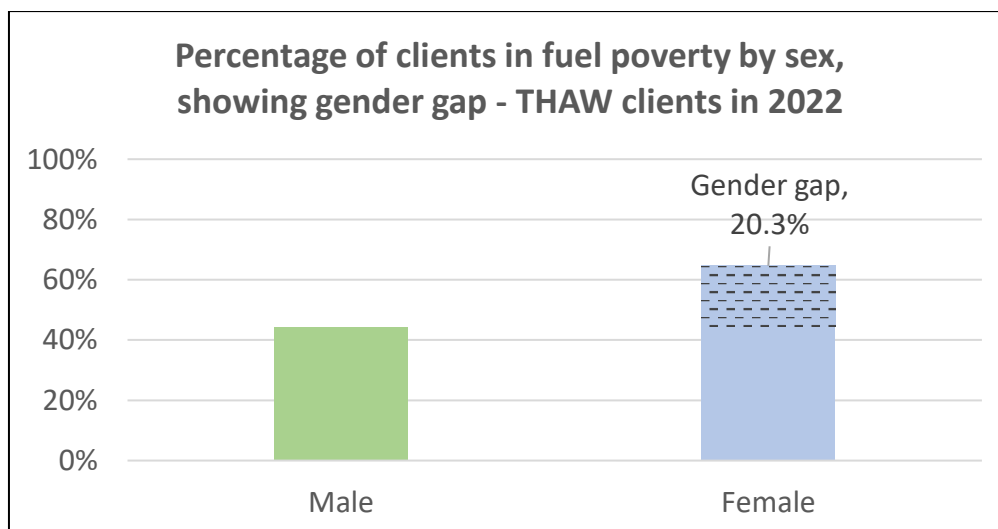
Compared to the national MIS, both on average and as a median, single parents with two children are receiving £1,600 less than the MIS and a couple with 2 children are receiving almost £1,300 less than the MIS. None of the families assessed were earning enough to meet the MIS and only pensioners had a positive median income; however all demographics may be below MIS if a rural premium was included.

The MIS considers the income required to adequately heat households, so it is likely to be high locally due to high energy costs and low energy efficiency of properties.



Gender gap for all THAW clients in 2022

The gender gap between male and female THAW clients is over 20%, meaning that female clients are on average 20% further in fuel poverty. Taken across all clients, this may also highlight interactions of gender inequalities with child poverty.



Social Security Scotland – Best Start Grants

Social Security Scotland is responsible for administering a number of benefits that have been devolved to Scotland. Currently, Social Security Scotland administers thirteen benefits, eight of which are brand new. The Scottish Government's package of five family benefits for low income families, administered by Social Security Scotland, is now worth up to a maximum of over £10,000 by the time a family's first child turns six – and £9,700 for second and subsequent children. The benefits include:

[Carer's Allowance Supplement](#) is an extra payment of £270.50 paid twice a year for people in Scotland who get Carer's Allowance on a particular date.

[Best Start Grant](#) is a package of three payments that will give extra money to families on certain benefits or tax credits during the early years of a child's life.

- [Best Start Grant – Pregnancy and Baby Payment](#) is a one-off payment of up to £707.25 from 24 weeks in pregnancy up until a baby turns six months for families who get certain benefits. This goes up to one if you've taken over looking after a child, such as if you've adopted. You get £707.25 for your first child or £353.65 for any subsequent child.
- [Best Start Grant – Early Learning Payment](#) is a one off payment of £294.70 when a child is between two and three years and six months. People can still apply if your child is not taking up a place at nursery.
- [Best Start Grant – School Age Payment](#) is a one off payment of £294.70 for eligible families around the time a child normally starts Primary 1. People can still apply if they are deferring school entry.

[Best Start Foods](#) provides a prepaid card for families to help buy food for children under three or during pregnancy. It replaced the UK Government's Healthy Start Vouchers in Scotland.

[Funeral Support Payment](#) is a payment available to people in Scotland, who are on certain benefits or tax credits, and need support to meet the costs of a funeral.

[Young Carer Grant](#) is a yearly payment of £359.65 for young carers aged 16 to 18 who live in Scotland and care for people for an average of 16 hours a week or more.

[Job Start Payment](#) is a one off payment of £294.70 for 16 to 24 year olds, or £471.50 if you are the main carer of any children, who have been out of work and on certain benefits for six months or more to help with the costs of starting a job.

[Child Winter Heating Assistance](#) is a payment of £235.70 to help disabled children and young people and their families with increased heating costs over winter.

[Scottish Child Payment](#) is a benefit unique to Scotland of £100 every four weeks to eligible families and carers to help towards the costs of looking after each child under 16. There are no limits on the number of eligible children supported by the Scottish Child Payment.

[Child Disability Payment](#) provides support for the extra costs that a disabled child might have, whether mental or physical disabilities. People can apply for Child Disability Payment for a disabled child under 16. Social Security Scotland will continue to pay Child Disability Payment until the child is 18.

[Adult Disability Payment](#) is extra money to help people who have a disability or long-term health condition that affects their everyday life.

[Winter Heating Payment](#) is a yearly payment of £55.05 to help people on low income benefits who might have extra heating needs during the winter. It replaces the Cold Weather Payment from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and has the same eligibility requirements.

Best Start grants in Orkney 2022-23	Reporting period	Number of applications	Total value of awards
Pregnancy & Baby Payment A one-off payment of £642.35 for a first child or £321.20 for a second or later child.	1 Mar 2022 to 31 Mar 2023	75	£11,851
	Total in Orkney since start date 10 Dec 2018	315	£57,796
Early Learning Payment A one-off payment of £267.65 if your child is between 2 and 3½ years old.	1 Mar 2022 to 31 Mar 2023	75	£11,130
	Total in Orkney since start date 29 April 2019	230	£48,943
School Age Payment A one-off payment of £267.65 if your child is around school starting age.	1 Mar 2022 to 31 Mar 2023	55	£10,385
	Total in Orkney since start date 1 June 2019	260	£46,218
Best Start Foods A pre-paid card to buy healthy food for anyone eligible who is pregnant or has a child under 3. Payments range from £18 - £36 every 4 weeks depending on the age of the child.	1 Mar 2022 to 31 Mar 2023	150	£17,225
	Total in Orkney since start date 14 Aug 2019	525	£53,628
Scottish Child Payment A weekly payment to eligible families for every child under 6 years of age which was increased in Nov 2022 to under 16 years of age. Up to 31 March 2022 the payment was £20, from 14 Nov 2022 it increased to £25.	1 April 2022 to 31 Mar 2023	365	£416,940
	Total in Orkney since start date Feb 2021	685	£540,200

Best Start grants in Orkney 2022-23	Reporting period	Number of applications	Total value of awards
Young Carer Grant Is a yearly payment of £359.65 for young carers in Scotland. To be able to get Young Carer Grant, you must be 16, 17 or 18 years old.	1 April 2022 to 31 Mar 2023	10	£326
	Total in Orkney since start date Oct 2020	20	£3,714
Jobstart Payment helps with the costs of starting a new job. £294.70 or £471.50 if you are the main carer of any children. You must be between 16 to 24 years old.	1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	10	£1,185
	Total in Orkney since start date Dec 2020	55	£6,882
Funeral Support Payment helps pay for funeral costs if you live in Scotland.	1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	10	£9,204
	Total in Orkney since start date March 2021	45	£42,191
Carers Allowance Supplement is paid two times a year to those in receipt of Carers Allowance	Total Eligible Carers in 2022/2023	April: 215	£53,000
		Oct: 205	£51,000
Adult Disability Payment is extra money to help you if you have a disability or long-term health condition that affects your everyday life.	Launched August 2022	225	£234,400
Child Disability Payment provides support for the extra costs that a disabled child might have.	Launched November 2021	90	£551,070
Child Winter Heating Payment is a payment to help disabled children and young people and their families with increased heating costs over winter.	Winter 2022/2023	60	£13,000
	Total	135	£28,000
Winter Heating Payment is to help people on low income benefits who might have extra heating needs.	Winter 2022/2023	1,075	£53,500

Social Security Scotland work in close partnership with organisations across Orkney to maximise the take-up of these benefits. Clients can book in-person meetings with our Client Support Advisers at home or in their local community, at a time and location that suits them best, face-to-face, by video call or by phone. Our Client Support Advisers have supported a number of clients at home across Orkney including in Shapinsay and Sanday.

More information is available from: [Social Security Scotland - Benefits](#) and [Social Security Scotland - Social Security Scotland statistics: publications](#)