

Housing News

The newsletter of Orkney Islands Council Housing Services.

Issue 83, Spring 2025.



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If you would prefer to receive a digital copy of this newsletter going forward, please email claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk to request the relevant form, or complete the survey enclosed.

Featured Articles

Newsletter preference survey

Housing Services are giving tenants the option to choose how they wish to receive the Housing Newsletter. You can opt to receive your copy as either:

- A paper copy via post or;
- a digital copy online via email.

We are also offering tenants the option to receive information and updates relating to Housing Services online. If you would like to receive Housing Services updates via email, please complete question 2 of the 'Questions' section in the survey.

Your choice

We recognise that some people will prefer to read a paper copy of the Housing Newsletter, this may be due to personal circumstances, or simply by choice. Alternatively, individuals may wish to read the Housing Newsletter online. Opting to receive your copy online is a convenient way to read our newsletter and it helps to reduce the amount of paper we use.

How do I return the survey?

Please complete the survey enclosed with this Newsletter and **return it by Wednesday 30 April 2025** using the freepost envelope provided. If you need help with completing this form, or you require a different format, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer by: -

- telephoning Housing Services on 01856 873 535 - Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (excluding public holidays) or;
- emailing claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk

Please note – if you have completed this survey before and opted to receive the newsletter online, you will continue to do so. If you wish to change your preferences, you can complete the survey enclosed. You can change your mind at any time by contacting our Tenant Participation Officer on the details above.

Sheltered Housing Events!

There has been lots going on at Rae's Close and Lambaness in recent months – both Schemes here in Orkney had a busy time over the Christmas and January period.

Rae's Close said goodbye to one of their wardens just before Christmas. Lynne Robinson had been a warden at Rae's Close for 20 years and is very much missed by the tenants.

The Care Inspectorate carried out a further inspection of Sheltered Housing just after the Christmas period. Evaluations of the service were graded as 'Good' for the 4 services inspected, these include;

- Supporting people's wellbeing.
- Leadership.
- The staff team.
- Care and support planning.

Tenants can request a copy of the full report from Housing Services at the Council by telephoning 01856 873 535 (Mon – Friday 9am to 5pm, excluding public holidays). Alternatively, the report is available for download from the Care Inspectorate website:

www.careinspectorate.com



On December 11th 2024, the tenants and wardens gathered together for a Christmas meal outing to the Kirkwall Hotel. All attendees had a thoroughly enjoyable trip out and despite the extra-large meal portions, everyone returned to the Community Lounge at Lambaness to enjoy some coffee, tea and sweets. Many thanks to Sandra and Val (wardens) for arranging the outing. Some of this outing was funded by money donated by a former tenant's family, - Mrs Wilma Sclater - who is still very much missed by those who knew her.

Radio Teleswitch Service reminder

(this information is correct as of March 2025 and may be subject to change)

Does your home have storage heaters? Do you benefit from off-peak hours as part of your energy tariff? If so, this information may be important to you: –

The Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) will **stop working on 30 June 2025** – to avoid disruptions to your heating and hot water, **you** need to contact your energy provider directly to discuss switching to a smart meter.



Important Announcement

Some energy meters rely on the Radio Teleswitch Service. **This service will stop working on 30 June 2025**

Please contact your energy provider to discuss further.

What is the Radio Teleswitch Service?

Prior to smart meters, energy providers relied on the Radio Teleswitch Service to provide information to certain meters – generally those with off-peak and standard periods. Examples of such meters included those that operated with Total Heat & Total Control or Economy 7. Devices were fitted next to the meters to receive information via long wave signal, such as communicating to the meter when it was an 'off peak' period. Energy used during an 'off-peak' is generally cheaper than energy used at a standard rate. There are still some meters in Scotland that rely on the RTS, however, these meters are no longer being installed. The BBC radio signal that is used to operate such meters is also being phased out.

What's replacing the Radio Teleswitch Service?

The Radio Teleswitch Service is old technology and is becoming costly and difficult to maintain due to the lack of available parts. The RTS will be replaced by smart meters. Similar to the RTS, smart meters will communicate information using their own network.

What are the benefits of smart meters?

There are many benefits to smart meters, these include:

- You don't need to provide regular meter readings to your provider.
- Smart meters provide accurate readings to your energy provider.
- It is easier to track your energy usage & identify where you may be able to make savings.

What do I need to do next?

Speak to your energy provider directly –

If you have not yet spoken to your energy provider, it is important that you **contact them as soon as possible** to discuss a smart meter installation and your energy tariff. Please

note that Housing Services is not involved in the process of upgrading to smart meters. Your energy provider is responsible for handling the switch over.

What if I choose not to upgrade to a smart meter?

If you don't switch to a smart meter, you may find that your electricity supply is affected once the signal is turned off -this could disrupt your heating and hot water. There will also be no way to tell your energy provider how much energy you have used. This could lead to higher bills and charges for energy that you haven't used.

Issues relating to smart meters

Smart meters should work across the majority of Orkney, however, there may be some areas where they don't. There are also some issues relating to the availability of smart meters in certain areas of Orkney along with the network connection. Despite these issues, it is still important for you to contact your energy provider to request a smart meter and begin the process as soon as possible. This will give you more time to deal with any issues that may arise before the 30 June deadline.

Changes to the energy price cap

From 1 April – 30 June 2025

What is the energy price cap?

The energy price cap ('price cap') was introduced in January 2019 and is set by Ofgem. Ofgem stands for the 'Office of Gas and Electricity Market' – the independent energy regulator for Great Britain. The price cap applies to domestic customers on a default energy tariff and covers those who pay via direct debit, credit, and pre-payment meters. The price cap applies to England, Scotland and Wales and is calculated using 'a typical domestic consumer with medium usage'. (Ofgem)

It is important to note that the price cap does not place a limit your annual energy bill. There is **no upper limit** to what you may pay, the more energy you use, the higher your bill will be. The price cap places a limit on the amount that energy suppliers can charge consumers **per unit** of energy used. It also places a limit on the daily standing charge. A standing charge is the daily fee you pay for being connected to the electricity grid. As Orkney is not connected to the mains gas supply, charges relating to gas do not apply.

Price change – 1 April 2025

The energy price cap is reviewed every three months by Ofgem. During this review, Ofgem set the price limit for how much energy suppliers can charge customers per unit of energy, along with the daily standing charge. From 1 April until 30 June 2025 the price cap will increase by around 6% for the average household on a standard variable tariff.

From 1 April 2025, the energy price cap for typical households on a standard variable tariff, paying via direct debit will be around:

	Price per unit	Daily standing charge
Electricity	27.03p per Kilowatt hour (KWh)	53.80p per day

(this information is correct as of March 2025)

Please note, the rates you pay for your energy usage may vary and will depend on what type of tariff you are on. Please check with your energy provider to determine what rate you are paying for your energy usage.

Information and updates (Housing Services)

Complaints and compliments

The information we receive from complaints is used towards improving the service we provide.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with Housing Services. The complaint may be regarding the standard of service, our action, lack of action or the standard of someone who has acted on our behalf.

Examples of complaints

There are many things a person may wish to complain about, including:

- The failure to provide a service;
- Poor quality or the standard of service;
- The conduct or treatment by a member of staff or third-party contractor (except where there is an arrangement for the contractor to handle complaints themselves).

Who can make a complaint?

- Someone who uses our services;
- The representative of someone who makes a complaint on their behalf, i.e. a relative or advocate (written consent is usually required).
- Someone who has requested our services and;
- An individual who is directly affected by our services.

When you make a complaint, please include the following information:

- Your full name and address.
- As much detail as you can about the complaint.
- What you feel has gone wrong.
- How you would like us to resolve the matter

Complaints procedure:

You will be notified of the person who is dealing with the complaint. There are two stages to our complaints procedure: --

Stage 1: Frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where the service was provided. This may include an apology, explanation, and/or an action to resolve the matter. We will give you a decision at stage one within 5 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If we are unable to resolve the complaint at stage one, we may recommend that you proceed to stage two, the investigation stage. You may choose to do this immediately, or sometime after.

Stage 2: Investigation

Stage two complaints deal with complaints that cannot be dealt with at stage one, or complaints that require a detailed investigation. We aim to provide a full response to the complaint within 20 working days. If the investigation will take longer than 20 days, we will notify you of this.

How do I make a complaint?

You can make a complaint by:

- Emailing complaints@orkney.gov.uk
- Telephoning 01856 873 535 (Mon – Friday 9am to 5pm, excluding public holidays).
- Visiting customer service in person at School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY.
- Visiting our website and completing the online form: www.orkney.gov.uk/your-council/complaints-compliments-and-feedback/complaints-procedure/

Compliments

We also welcome compliments from tenants and service users relating to the service we provide. If you have had a positive experience of our service and are pleased with our service, you may wish to provide us with a compliment. If you would like to leave a compliment, please telephone: 01856 873 535, or write to: Complaints, Compliments & Feedback, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY.

Rent consultation results

Councils who rent residential property are required to have a separate Housing Revenue Account. The majority of the income to this account comes from rent payments, Housing benefit subsidy and Universal Credit (housing costs), etc. The money from this account is used for new build projects and for maintaining and improving existing Council properties.

Local authorities are required by law to consult with their tenants on any proposed rent increase. A tenant consultation relating to the proposed increase to Council Housing rent levels was conducted in December 2024. All tenants of Orkney Islands Council were provided with a



letter, a survey and a freepost envelope to return their completed survey. Tenants were asked for their feedback on the proposed rent increases for the next 3 years:

- 4% in 2025/26
- 4% in 2026/27
- 2.5% in 2027/28.

Tenant consultation results:

A total of 896 surveys were sent out to tenants and 67 of these were returned. This equated to a 7% response rate. Tenants were asked for their views on the proposed rent increase for the next 3 years and these are the results of that survey: –

Year	Return rate	Rise	Agreed	Neither agreed nor disagreed	Disagreed
2025/26	7%	4%	34%	40%	24%
2026/27	7%	4%	33%	37%	28%
2027/28	7%	2.5%	45%	25%	28%

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey – we appreciate your views and value your opinion.

Rent increase

The Education, Leisure and Housing Committee met on 5 February 2025. After considering the results of the consultation, members voted to increase the Council House rent by 4% for 2025/26 and 2026/27 and 2.5% for 2027/28. One of the main reasons for the rent increase is the requirements imposed by the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing.

A comparison to other local authorities

In 2024/25 one Scottish local authority chose to freeze rent levels, whilst the remaining 28 local authorities raised rent prices. The average increase across all local authorities in Scotland was 3.89%.

What do I do now?

As a local authority, we are required to provide you with at least 28 days' notice of the rent increase. Orkney Islands Council provided Council house tenants with a letter notifying them that the increase would take effect on **Monday 31 March 2025**. The letter also outlined how much tenant's rent would be increasing by.

You will need to ensure that you are paying the increased amount from 31 March 2025. You can pay your rent in a number of ways, including:

Standing order –

If you pay your rent by standing order, you will need to amend to amount payable to cover the recent rent increase. Please remember, the increase to your rent applies from April 1st 2025.

You should receive a rent notice that informs you of the increase that is being made to your rent. You should have also received a standing order mandate enclosed with your rent notice - you can use this mandate to set up a standing order. If you choose to pay your rent via standing order, the rent will be paid directly from your bank account. Alternatively, you can set up a standing order through your internet banking. When doing this, you will need the information of the account that you are making your rent payment to. Rent to Orkney Islands Council is made payable to the following account:

Bank – Royal Bank of Scotland, 1 Victoria Street, Kirkwall, KW15 1DP.

Account name – OIC Rent Collection

Sort code – 83 24 07

Account number - 00233800

If you choose to pay your rent via other means, you will need to make sure that you are paying the new and increased amount. You can pay your rent online using your credit or debit card by visiting www.orkney.gov.uk. Alternatively, you may choose to pay by either:

Telephone - by calling the Council on 01856 873 535 extension 2905. (Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, Wednesdays 10am-5pm, excluding public holidays) Remember to have your credit or debit card to hand when doing so.

In person - by visiting the Council Offices in Kirkwall or Stromness during office hours.

By post – If you are paying your rent via post, be sure to use cheques. **Do not send cash in the post.** Cheques should be made payable to Orkney Islands Council and should be posted to - Council Offices, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1NY. Please include your reference number on the reverse of the cheque.

Struggling to afford your rent?

Speak to us

Your rent is a priority bill and it is important to keep up to date with payments. If you are struggling to make payments, please contact us as soon as possible to discuss your options.

Seek support

If you are of working age and have a low household income, you may be eligible for the 'Housing costs element' of Universal Credit – this payment can be used towards the cost of your rent. If you are of state pension age and have a low household income, you may be eligible for Housing Benefit. The Council also manages the Discretionary Housing Payments Scheme, you may be eligible for this if there is a shortfall between the cost of your rent and the amount of Housing Costs element of Universal Credit / Housing Benefit you receive.

For more information on the help and advice that may be available to you, please visit our website – www.orkney.gov.uk/helpinghand. Please note, an eligibility criteria may apply for some of these services. You can also get free independent money advice from the Orkney Citizens' Advice Bureau. You can visit their website at -

<https://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/CAB/>. Alternatively, you can visit them in person at 6 Bridge Street, Kirkwall, KW15 1HR.

Abandoned Vehicles

Orkney Islands Council receives around 100 reports of potential abandoned vehicles each year. During the investigation process, most owners of such vehicles either remove the vehicle, or provide an acceptable explanation that demonstrates that their vehicle has not been abandoned.

There is no specific definition of an abandoned vehicle, but it can be described as a vehicle that has been disowned, and the owner no longer wishes to keep it. In most cases, it has become waste.

The following factors may be taken into consideration when deciding if a vehicle is potentially abandoned:-

- It is untaxed.
- It hasn't been moved for some time.
- It is in poor condition i.e. flat tyres, broken windows, mouldy inside, wheels have been removed etc.
- It is full of rubbish.

If an authorised Council Officer determines that a vehicle may have been abandoned, a request is placed to the DVLA to find out the details of the registered keeper. The keeper will be contacted and asked about their intentions regarding the vehicle.

If the keeper does not provide a reasonable account for the status of the vehicle and it remains in situ, a Notice will be fixed to the vehicle requiring its removal. The landowner/occupier will also be contacted and may object to the removal of the vehicle. If the vehicle is not removed within 15 days and the landowner has not lodged an objection, the Council will arrange removal and disposal and will recharge certain costs to the registered keeper.

Vehicle owners have obligations for keeping registration details up to date via the V5 form or logbook provided by DVLA. In Orkney, especially in relation to "island" cars, keeper details are not always updated at the point of sale. If the vehicle is subsequently reported as abandoned, it is the registered keeper that will be held responsible and recharged. It is therefore very important to ensure that the logbook is completed properly.

Please note that reporting a potentially abandoned vehicle to the Council may not always result in it being removed.

If you would like advice on how to dispose of a vehicle that has reached the end of its usable life, or if you would like to report an abandoned vehicle, contact Environmental Health at Orkney Islands Council on 01856 873535 or env.health@orkney.gov.uk

Water safety testing

As a landlord, Orkney Islands Council (OIC) are obligated to carry out water safety risk assessments of all our properties. This helps to minimise the risks associated with water supply systems. The risk assessments will be carried out by the Environmental Testing Services (ETS) between March 2025 and 2028 and will be carried out by Environmental Testing Services, (ETS). ETS have successfully tendered to carry out our domestic water safety risk assessments.

The aim of these assessments is to check our properties for any potential water safety risks and work to minimise those risks. Where a risk is identified, simple and effective physical control measures will be implemented to remove or minimise that risk.

Your Housing officer will contact you by letter in advance of the assessments taking place at your home. ETS will be in contact with you regarding access to the property 2 weeks in advance of their visit.

ETS will require access to each property for approximately 1-2 hrs. ETS's assessment will include recording water temperatures at each hot and cold-water outlet. Where present, ETS will also assess the condition the following items;

- Cold water storage tanks;
- Hot water storage tanks and boiler;
- Little used water outlets (used less than once / per week);
- Dead legs and redundant pipework &;
- Shower Heads.

ETS will contact you directly to arrange a home visit. During their visit they will undertake a brief tenant questionnaire. The information captured on the tenant questionnaire will form part of the assessment. It will help to establish various details regarding the occupants and water use within the property.



Where potential risks have been identified as a result of the assessment, OIC will take remedial actions to remove / reduce that risk.

We kindly ask for your cooperation in allowing ETS access to your dwelling.

Tenant Participation

Join our Armchair Panel!

The Armchair Panel

Now recruiting...





Housing Services are looking for tenants of Orkney Islands Council to join the Armchair Panel!

As a landlord, Housing Services are required to consult with tenants and other stakeholders on matters that may affect them. The Armchair Panel provides tenants with a way to share their views and thoughts with their landlord from the comfort of their own home and in a way that suits them. Members of the Panel can choose the preferred method of engagement ranging from online methods, to paper based or telephone.

If you would like to find out more, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer, Claire Pritchard on:

Telephone: 01856 873 535 (Tue – Wed 8:30 am – 5:30pm excluding public holidays).

Email: claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk

Please note – you must be a Council house tenant of OIC and be over the age of 18 to join the Armchair Panel.

Other methods of Tenant Participation

There are many other ways that you can engage with Housing Services, this includes:

- Becoming a member of the Residents' Panel.
- Staying up to date with news and information contained in the Housing Newsletter.
- Following the Housing Services Facebook Page – www.facebook.com/OlChousingServices (Please note, you will need a Facebook account, internet access and a suitable device to access our Facebook Page).
- Completing one of our surveys.

Benefits, support & further information

Check your eligibility for pension credit

Pension credit is available to individuals of state pension age on a low income. It is extra money to help with your living costs.

You may still be entitled to pension credit if you have other income, savings or own your own home. Entitlement to pension credit may mean that you are entitled to other benefits, such as a council tax discount, help with dental treatment and housing benefit, etc.

Eligibility

To qualify for pension credit, you must live in England, Scotland or Wales and have reached state pension age.

Individuals from the EU, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland or Lichenstein need settled or pre-settled status under the EU settlement scheme to be eligible for pension credit. For most individuals, the deadline to apply was 30 June 2021. However, you may still be able to apply.

If you have a partner, you must include them as part of your application. A partner can be your husband, wife or civil partner. It also applies to someone you live with as a couple.

Your income is taken into account when determining whether you will be eligible for pension credit. If you have a partner, their income is also taken into account. You may be entitled to pension credit if:

- Your weekly income is up to £218.15, and you are single.
- Your joint income is up to £332.95, and you have a partner.

Please note, if your income is higher, you may be entitled for pension credit if you are disabled, or if you care for someone.

What counts as income?

The following will count as income when assessing eligibility for pension credit:

- State pension;
- Other pensions;

- Most social security benefits such as Carer's Allowance and;
- Earnings from employment and self-employment.

Not all benefits count as income. When determining eligibility for pension credit, Attendance Allowance, Pension Age Disability Payment and Housing Benefit, etc are not taken into account.

What about savings?

If you have £10,000 or less in savings or investments, this will not affect the amount of pension credit you receive. If you have over £10,000 in savings, every £500 over £10,000 counts as £1 income per week.

How do I apply?

For more information, or for help with applying for pension credit, or to discuss whether you may be eligible, contact the Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau on –

Telephone: 01856 875266 between 10am and 2pm, Monday to Friday to arrange an appointment.

You can find the application form by visiting www.gov.uk, or you can telephone the Pension Credit Claim Line on 0800 99 1234.

Let's Talk Money - How to get your finances back on track after Christmas

For many, Christmas is the most expensive time of year, and it can be challenging to get your money back on track.

If this has left you with large credit card debts to pay off or overdraft fees, or facing the reality of buy now pay later, you're not alone.

As part of the multi-agency Let's Talk Money initiative, here are some tips from the Citizens Advice Bureau here in Orkney to help you get back on track financially after the festivities.

Update your budget

Household expenses have risen, and even small price increases all add up. Review your budget at the start of the year as this will help determine your monthly disposable income more precisely.

Set reasonable goals

If you wish to pay off your debts this year or save a sum of money, setting these goals at the start of the year is ideal. To ensure you achieve them, it's important that they are reasonable and realistic. Examine your finances closely and keep track of what expenses your income must cover and what you should do with any additional income.

Organise your repayments

The New Year is the best time to review your debts, including credit card debt and small loans. Start by listing all your current loans, their interest rates, and repayment terms. If there are no 0% offers available, focus on paying off the debts with the highest APRs (annual percentage rate) first, especially credit card debt.

Explore cheaper alternatives

Check out comparison websites to find less expensive options and better deals. Consider switching to a lower cost supermarket.

Job opportunities

If there's no chance of a pay rise, January and February are often excellent times to explore new job positions. Or perhaps a second job is manageable and could help bolster your household income.

Maximise your income

For some extra income to help you get your finances back on track, you can sell any items that you no longer need or have any use for. This can go into your savings or go towards helping you pay off any expenses. Make sure you are getting all the benefits you may be entitled to – Citizens Advice can help with this process.

Plan ahead

After evaluating your budget, you're already in the planning mode, but why stop there? It is time well spent to prepare for events that you know will cost you money this year. You'll be less likely to have to use credit to pay for gifts if you have money set aside for them.

Orkney CAB Manager, Alison Gunn, said: "If you are struggling to make your money last or you're worried about how you'll pay your bills, then come and talk to our money talk team advisers. If you are in debt and don't know what to do, get in touch and we can assist with making a plan.

"The worst thing folk can do is bury their head in the sand and think that it will all somehow disappear. Taking those first steps on the debt road to recovery can be difficult, but also a huge relief people tell us.

"Remember you are not alone; many people have found themselves in financial difficulties - there is lots of local and national support available – but, you have to seek out that help."

To take those first steps towards clearing your debt, contact the Citizens Advice Bureau Monday to Friday on 01856 875266 or email bureau@orkneycab.casonline.org.uk

The Bureau, Anchor Buildings, 6 Bridge Street, Kirkwall is independent and offers free and confidential advice from trained volunteers supported by professional advice.



Organisations that can help with debt and money

These organisations are supported by the Scottish Government and can help with information about debt and money. They will not charge you for advice and information.

- Advice Direct Scotland: online and live chat advice for people in Scotland - <https://www.advisedirect.scot/>
 - Christians Against Poverty: online and in person advice <https://capuk.org/>
 - Citizens Advice Scotland: in person advice at your local Citizen's Advice Bureau or on the phone through the Money Talk Team (0800 028 1456) - <https://www.cas.org.uk/>
 - National Debt Line: online and telephone advice about debt (0808 808 4000) - <https://nationaldebtline.org/>
 - StepChange Debt Charity: online and telephone advice about debt (0800 138 1111) - <https://www.stepchange.org/>
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Free school meals and clothing allowance

What are 'free school meals'?

Free school meals provide an eligible child with a free school lunch. Eligibility depends on a number of factors, including your household income and your child's age, etc.

Eligibility

Pupils will automatically receive a free school lunch during term time if all the following apply:

- They are in primary 1-5 and;
- They attend a local council OR Scottish Government run school.

Your financial circumstances do not affect your child's eligibility if they are in p1-5.

It is important to note that children who attend independent schools or are home schooled are not eligible for free school meals during term time.

Free school meals after Primary 5

Pupils in P6 or above will need to meet certain eligibility criteria to remain eligible for free school meals. You can find more information on the eligibility criteria in the section below.

What is 'clothing allowance'?

Clothing allowance is awarded to eligible families on a low income. It is to help with the cost of clothing and footwear and is paid once every academic year. How much you get depends on the age of your child:

- £120 for primary children.
- £150 for secondary children.

Clothing allowance is not available for preschool or nursery age children.

Who is eligible for free school meals and/or clothing allowance?

Children in your household can get free school meals and/or clothing allowance if you receive any of the following:

- Universal credit (where your monthly income is no more than £796).
- Income based job seekers allowance.
- Income based Employment and Support Allowance.
- Income support.
- Child tax credit (but not working tax credit) and your yearly income is less than £19,995.
- Both child tax credit and working tax credit and have a yearly household income of up to £9952.

If your child is 16-18 years old and receives benefits in their own right, they can also claim free school meals.

What if I don't receive benefits or tax credits?

You can also apply for free school meals if:

- your immigration status means that you cannot get government help or;
- you are still awaiting your first universal credit notice.

If any of the above apply, you can contact Orkney Islands Council to discuss in more detail.

If you meet the eligibility criteria for clothing allowance and your child is in p1-5, you should still complete an application form to receive the Clothing Allowance grant.

How do you apply for free school meals and/or clothing allowance?

Applications can be made at any point during the school year, but they will not be backdated. A fresh application must be submitted every year - one application is suitable for all the children in the household, even if they attend different schools within Orkney.

You can apply online by visiting the following website: www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/education-and-learning/grants-emas-and-bursaries/school-meals-and-clothing-allowances/

If you would prefer a paper copy, or if you would like assistance in completing your application form, please contact the team at:

Free School Meals and Clothing Allowances, Education, Leisure and Housing, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1NY.

Telephone: 01856873535 extensions 2422 / 2416.

Websites

www.mygov.scot/primary-school-meals

Check if your family is eligible for financial support

- *Social Security Scotland*

We understand that families across Scotland are always juggling the rising cost of living. Social security is financial support that any one of us could need at any point in our lives. Social Security Scotland delivers 15 benefits for families, low-income households, disabled people, people of State Pension Age and carers; and is on track to deliver their 16th benefit this Spring.

Benefits for families

If you're receiving Universal Credit, tax credits or other qualifying benefits, you could be entitled to five family payments:

- [Scottish Child Payment](#),
- [Best Start Foods](#),
- [Best Start Grant – Pregnancy and Baby Payment](#),
- [Best Start Grant – Early Learning Payment](#) and
- [Best Start Grant – School Age Payment](#).

These payments are only available in Scotland and are there to support families with the cost of caring for children and young people.

[Scottish Child Payment](#) has supported hundreds of thousands of families with the cost of raising a family. It is a weekly payment of £26.70 that people can get for every child they look after who's under 16 years of age. Social Security Scotland are urging people to check if they might be eligible for Scottish Child Payment and to apply today.



Additional support available

If someone receives Scottish Child Payment, and their child meets the age criteria, Social Security Scotland will automatically pay Best Start Grant [School Age Payment](#) or Early Learning Payment. Early Learning Payment of £314.45 is a payment to help with the costs of early years education when a child is between 2 years and 3 and a half years old. The School Age Payment of £314.45 is paid around the time a child is old enough to start primary school and can be spent on anything the child needs at this stage.

[Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment](#) is available for expectant parents, after 24 weeks of pregnancy to help prepare for baby's arrival, or after the baby is born. The Pregnancy and Baby Payment of £754.65 is for the first child, with £377.35 for any subsequent child.

Best Start Foods provides pregnant people and families with children under the age of three, who receive certain benefits, with a minimum of £5.30 a week via a pre-paid card to

buy healthy foods. The payment doubles from birth until a child turns one, to support breastfeeding mothers or help with the costs of providing first infant formula milk.

There are higher payments available for people who have been granted refugee status or are living in Scotland under a resettlement scheme. Additional support is also available for people who were forced to leave their home due to domestic abuse.

Check what benefits you're entitled to and apply online at mygov.scot, by post or over the phone by calling Social Security Scotland free on 0800 182 2222.



[Information in other languages](#) is available and an interpreter can be arranged if people need support to apply for benefits.

Greener Orkney Community Fridge

Greener Orkney's Community Fridge Project offers surplus food to individuals, free of charge. One of the primary aims of the Project is to limit the amount of food waste going to landfill. The Community Fridge is located in Stromness and Kirkwall. Greener Orkney's Community Fridge receives donations of surplus food from many local organisations on a regular basis. Anyone can pop along to the Community Fridge, although please be aware, that the supply is sometimes limited. Regular updates are posted on their Facebook page with information on the food that is available – www.facebook.com/greenerorkneycommunityfridge



Locations:

- 26 Bridge Street, Kirkwall
- 116 Victoria Street, Stromness

Opening times:

	Kirkwall – 26 Bridge Street	Stromness – 116 Victoria Street
Monday	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Tuesday	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Wednesday	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Thursday	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Friday	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Saturday	12:00 pm – 2 pm	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Sunday	Closed	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Office contact details

Housing Management:

Telephone: 01856873535.

Email: allocations@orkney.gov.uk

Homelessness and Advice:

Telephone: 01856873535.

Email: homeless@orkney.gov.uk

Homelessness Out of Hours Service:

If you require emergency housing outside regular office hours, please telephone 07921582962. An alternative is to contact Police Scotland on 101 and ask for Kirkwall Police Station.

Write to us:

Housing Services, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY.

Emergency Duty Worker Service:

This service can be accessed by telephoning the Balfour Hospital on 01856888000 and asking to speak to the Duty Social Worker.

Out of Hours Repair Service

The out of hours service is for emergencies only. Emergencies are defined in the tenants' handbook. The staff on standby will act in a supportive manner and help any caller.

Where the caller genuinely needs immediate technical guidance or an emergency repair to be carried out, this service is included within the tenants' rent, and no further charge is due.

If the caller has called where there is obviously no emergency, then Housing Services will decide if there is a charge to be made.

Recharges will reflect the cost of providing the callout service as well as an abortive charges by workmen.

If you need to contact the out of hours service in an emergency, call 01856873430.

If you lose your keys and call our out of hours repair officer, we will charge for this. You may wish to consider keeping a spare set with a friend or relative who you can trust.

Homelessness Service

If you require immediate emergency housing outwith office hours, please telephone the mobile number 07921582962. An alternative is to contact Police Scotland on 101 and ask for Kirkwall Police Station.