

Annual Performance Report 2025/26

Orkney Integration Joint Board



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Foreword



We are delighted to present the 2025/26 annual performance report for the Orkney Integration Joint Board. We want to start by acknowledging, and thanking, everyone who works in health and social care, including those in the third sector, for all that they do to support and care for those in our communities. They often go above, and beyond, demonstrating daily hard work, dedication and compassion for the individuals they care for and support.

The aim of this annual performance report is to show what we have achieved and what our challenges were over the last year. You can see updates on the progress of the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2025/26 as well as the actions we are hoping will make a difference to our communities in 2026/27.

As always, our biggest challenge (which is similar across Scotland), remains our workforce gaps. There continues to be nationwide issues in recruiting to positions in many areas of service including social care, dental and allied health professions. It is testament to our existing staff teams across Orkney that we have managed to not only keep services operating but, in many instances, still managed to make improvements which benefits our communities. There is, of course, still much to do and the financial constraints faced by all public sector bodies in the years ahead will be a real test of how we work with our communities and those who need our support.



Joanna Kenny, Chair, Orkney Integration Joint Board, and Stephen Brown, Chief Officer, Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership.

Overview

Integrating health and social care services means people in Orkney get the best possible support and care. This is especially true of folk that need support from both health and social care services, at the same time.

The Scottish Government has set nine National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes in 2015. These show the improvements that joining up, or integrating, health and social care services can make. You can read more about these Outcomes [here](#).

The Outcomes are:

1	People are able to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing and live in good health for longer.
2	People, including those with disabilities or long term conditions, or who are frail, are able to live, as far as reasonably practicable, independently and at home or in a homely setting in their community.
3	People who use health and social care services have positive experiences of those services, and have their dignity respected.
4	Health and social care services are centred on helping to maintain or improve the quality of life of people who use those services.
5	Health and social care services contribute to reducing health inequalities.
6	People who provide unpaid care are supported to look after their own health and wellbeing, including to reduce any negative impact of their caring role on their own health and wellbeing.
7	People who use health and social care services are safe from harm.
8	People who work in health and social care services feel engaged with the work they do and are supported to continuously improve the information, support, care and treatment they provide.
9	Resources are used effectively and efficiently in the provision of health and social care services.

In 2016, the Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership was created. This allowed us to work more closely on delivering the Government's National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes.

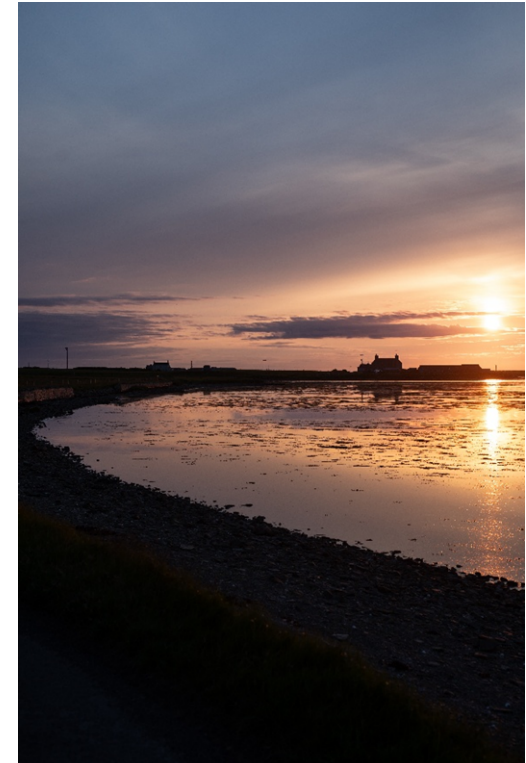
The Orkney Integration Joint Board (IJB) has the job of planning services, providing resources and monitoring how health and social care services perform. The IJB must report to Scottish Government on how services have performed and must produce an Annual Performance Report every year.

You can read more about what the IJB does, along with the people who are members of the IJB [here](#).

Every three years, the IJB must also produce a Strategic Plan. The current Strategic Plan was written in 2025. You can read the Strategic Plan 2025 – 2028 [here](#).

The Strategic Plan sets out the IJB's Strategic Priorities and this annual report shows what progress has been made when measured against these Priorities.

It covers the financial year from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.



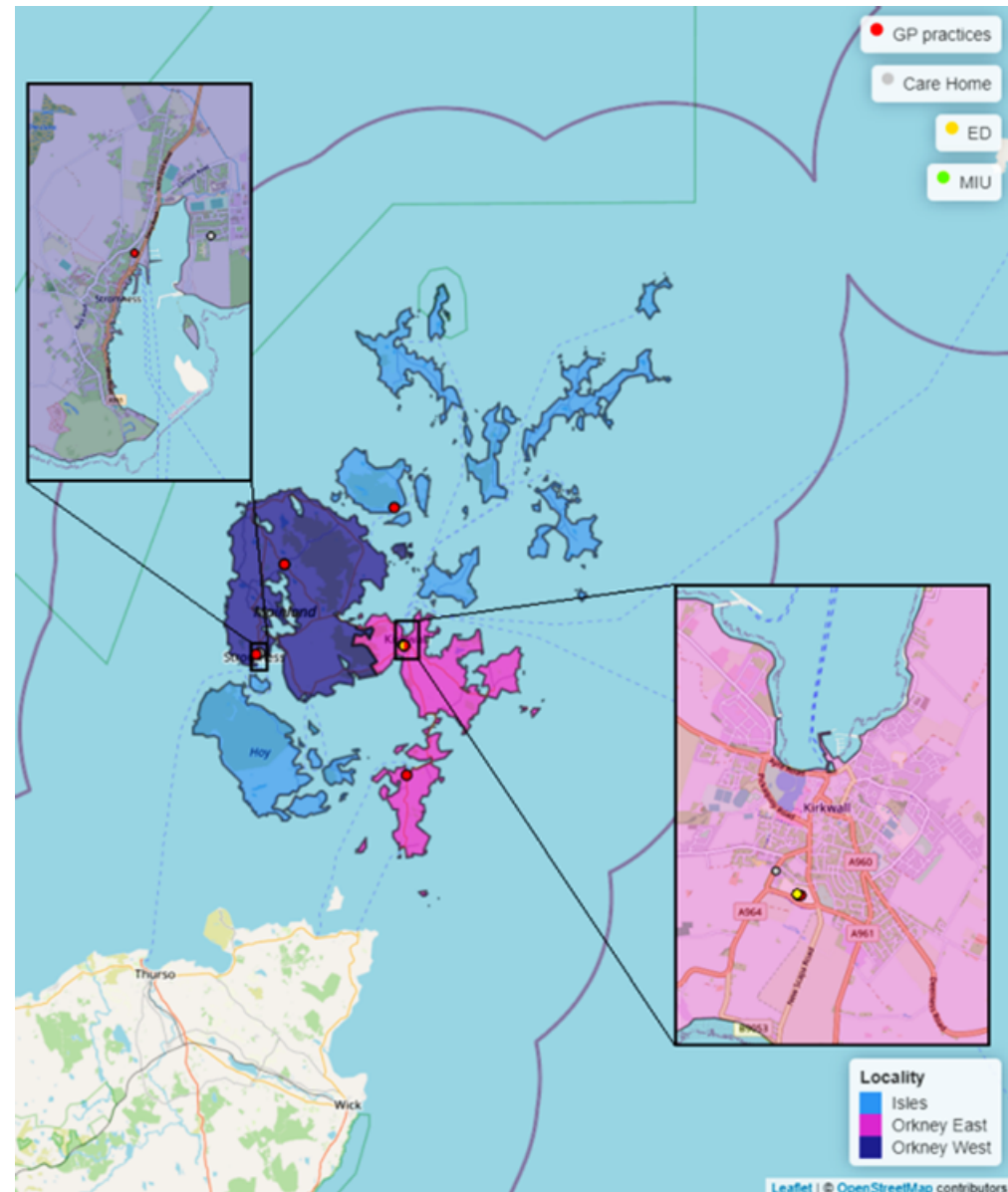
Our Localities

All IJBs across Scotland divide their area into separate localities – Scottish Government ask for at least two. Orkney is currently divided into three localities: the Isles, the West Mainland and the East Mainland, although this will reduce to just two – the Isles and the Mainland – during the coming year.

The tables below give some information about the population of each locality, as well as how they compare against the overall population of Orkney and the rest of Scotland.

Many organisations use localities to plan and deliver their services.

Some figures show as “0”. This is because small numbers sometimes make it possible to identify certain people, which we want to avoid.



* SIMD – Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

** At HSCP and Scotland level, the period is a three-year aggregate (1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024).

Indicator	Type	Period	Isles	East	West	Orkney	Scotland
Lifestyle and Risk Factor							
Alcohol-related hospital admissions per 100,000	Rate	2023/24	325.7	587.4	384.7	493.7	548.5
Alcohol-specific mortality per 100,000	Rate	2019 - 2023	22.2	14.2.	26	19.9	21.8
Drug-related hospitalisations per 100,000	Rate	2021/22 - 2023/24	20.6	46.9	46.9	45.7	181.2
Bowel screening uptake	%	2021 -2023	65.6	71	70.9	70.2	66.4
Hospital and Community Care							
Emergency admissions per 100,000	Rate	2024/25	7,377	8,830	7,701	8,283	10,626
Unscheduled bed days per 100,000	Rate	2024/25	65,276	65,496	59,692	63,569	75,436
A and E attendances per 100,000	Rate	2024/25	13,301	39,344	28,181	32,516	26,915
Delayed discharges (65+) per 100,000	Rate	2024/25	38,192	63,735	42,682	52,517	51,401
Potentially Preventable Admissions per 100,000	Rate	2024/25	1,080	1,509	1,041	1,303	1,694
Hospital Care (Mental Health)							
Psychiatric patient hospitalisations per 100,000	Rate	2021/22 - 2023/24	7.9	124.1	104.3	105.2	216.1
Unscheduled bed days per 100,000	Rate	2024/25	745	10,875	5,425	7,856	18,134

Source - PHS LIST Locality Profile May 2026.

Key Achievements and Challenges Over 2025/26

Achievements and Challenges

Like our colleagues in local authorities, the NHS and other public organisations, up and down the country, we continue to see budgets squeezed, whilst demand for services continues to rise; we are increasingly asked to do more with less.

Increasing Demand

Nonetheless, perhaps the greatest achievement of health and social care services is that people are living longer lives – with Orkney folk often living the longest – and this is something of which we are very proud.

This also means that people often live with a number of health conditions, meaning they rely increasingly on services to help them in their daily lives. For example, our Care at Home service continues to support an increasing number of people, in their own homes.

For those unable to live at home anymore, our residential care facilities provide 24/7 care and support. Our new Kirkwall care home, Kirkjuvagr House, is now complete and is expected to welcome its first residents towards the end of the summer 2026. Situated just above The Pickaquoy Centre, and named after the Old Norse name for Kirkwall, Kirkjuvagr House is a state of the art facility that will provide superb accommodation for our frail and vulnerable folk.

We are also using technology to tackle demand and ensure we are as efficient as possible. For example, our colleagues use meeting apps to attend meetings, where this is appropriate, reducing the need to travel. We are also improving existing technology, with more than 60% of Telecare users having been upgraded from analogue to digital systems.



Recruitment

Our greatest challenge remains the recruitment and retention of our workforce. This is not just an Orkney problem; health and social care partnerships right across the country - and beyond – struggle to recruit and retain staff. There is no doubt, however, that, like our colleagues in the other island groups, we feel this pressure acutely here.

One example is the number of days people are having to spend in hospital, when they are ready to go home, has increased another unwelcome consequence of the challenges we have around recruitment.

Our greatest challenge remains recruitment.

We have tried many things to tackle this. One example is our strategic partnership with the Open University, where a number of people have progressed through the Social Work sponsorship scheme, with two successfully securing a placement in the last year.

Despite these efforts – and those in the summary, below – we continue to rely on our agency colleagues to ensure that we can maintain health and social care services for folk in Orkney.

Highlights

Some of the other highlights from the last year include:

- The Council's "Growing A Sustainable Social Care Workforce" project has seen an increased interest in care posts with one service successfully filling all posts for the first time in many years.
- In partnership with UHI Orkney, the Introduction to a Career in Care, six-week course, continues to attract candidates, with all students guaranteed an interview within a care setting. Some 24 students have completed the course within the last year.
- We have made good progress in recruiting to the Community Nursing team, which has seen the vacancy rate reduce from 50% to 15%.
- We continue to grow our Public Dental Service with two trainee dental nurses recruited recently a role that allows the postholder to earn as they learn.

- Whilst challenges remain around funding and recruitment, the IJB approved the use, in principle, of the fourth wing of Hamnavoe House as a short breaks facility.
- We have successfully supported several young people to return home to Orkney from placements in mainland Scotland.
- Completion rates for Community Payback Order's varied across Scotland in 2024/25 whereas Orkney saw their completion rate improve to 97%.
- Colleagues have worked with Public Dental Services and General Dental Services over the last year and are increasingly confident about the ability of General Dental Services to open registration for NHS patients in the near future.
- Colleagues from the Orkney IJB, NHS Orkney and Orkney Islands Council have developed something called 'The Routemap to Reform for Public Services in Orkney' and have submitted this to Scottish Government.
- The Suicide Prevention Task Force developed a Suicide Prevention Action Plan for the period 2025/26.

Orkney's completion rate for Community Payback orders increased to 97%.

Our Strategic Priorities

We are now in the second year of our Strategic Plan, which lays out the priorities for community health and social care services.

The plan includes six Strategic Priorities, which the IJB believes best address the health and social care issues in Orkney. The six priorities are:

- 1. Tackling Inequalities and Disadvantage.**
- 2. Early Intervention and Prevention.**
- 3. Unpaid Carers.**
- 4. Supporting People to Age Well.**
- 5. Community Led Support.**
- 6. Mental Health and Wellbeing.**

You can read the plan [here](#).

As in previous years, a selection of our services were asked to tell us about what has been happening during the past year, and we have included their contributions in the following sections.

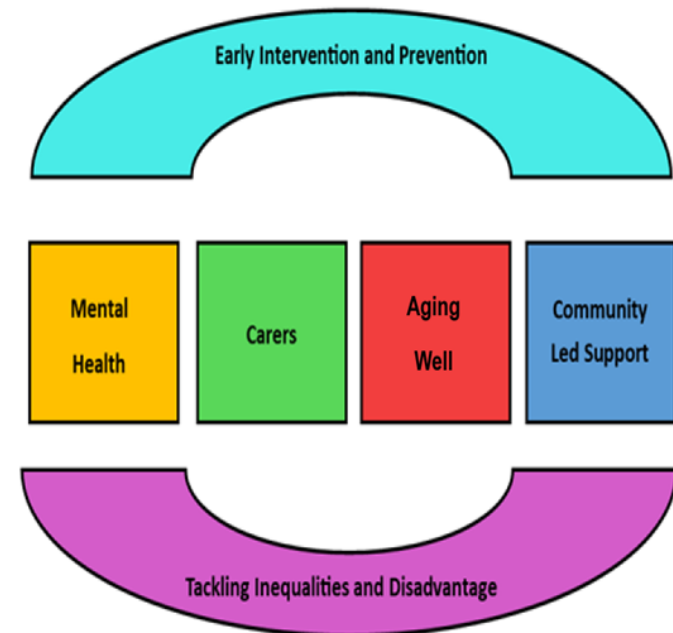
But this is not exhaustive: there are many, many teams, throughout NHS Orkney, Orkney Islands Council and the third sector, who deliver vital community health and social care services daily across Orkney.

The Performance Management Framework 2026 – 2028 (and now aligned with the review date for the current Strategic Plan) helps the IJB to assess the effectiveness of the Orkney HSCP and, especially, whether it is achieving the objectives highlighted in the Strategic Plan.

We also have a Delivery Plan to help us measure our progress in delivering the Strategic Plan. Each Strategic Priority includes Milestones: these are things we must do if we are to deliver our objectives. These Milestones each include at least one action, sometimes several actions, with each describing how we will know if we have achieved the declared Milestone. We call these actions Measures or Outcomes.

Every three months, we report to the IJB's Performance and Audit Committee on how we are doing and the progress we have made.

This might sound a little complicated, but we have included a table at the beginning of each Strategic Priority description, and this should make it a lot clearer.



Key to Tables	Complete	On Target	Risk of Delay in Completion	Severe Risk of Delay in Completion
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Priority Area 1 – Tackling Inequalities and Disadvantage

The below table shows the progress for the actions contained within the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2025/26.

Milestone	Outcome/Measure	Status	Narrative
We will ensure that all school children across Orkney are able to access a breakfast.	All young people attending school will have access to a free breakfast.		A Brightstar Breakfast, which is a funding initiative supported by Scottish Government for a one year pilot, for six primary schools, is due to commence imminently. 83% of respondents expressed an interest in island communities to be part of the pilot. Discussions continue on the logistical challenges being faced, but most schools are ready to commence.
We will provide annual health checks to those with Learning Disabilities.	We will increase the percentage of Learning-Disabled people receiving annual health checks to 100%.		Historically, there have been challenges with the delivery of annual health checks in the population of Orkney. Following investment by the IJB a new post was created; one of the top priorities being to develop a register of individuals with Learning Disabilities with a diagnosis of Learning Disability registered in each GP surgery in Orkney. As at 31 March 2026, 100% of those individuals have been offered a health check with as significant number then being onward referred for further treatment.

Tackling inequalities and disadvantage is directly linked with all our Strategic Priorities.

We will continue to address this by:

- Making access to services easier for everyone.
- Keeping children, young people and vulnerable adults safe.

Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership.

- Working with our statutory, third sector and community partners to address financial hardship.
- Making sure Orkney is a happy and safe place for everyone.

Most of the previous sections include many examples of services that also fit this priority area.

The Isles

Access to services in the ferry-linked isles can be a real challenge, so we continue to try to bring services to the isles wherever possible.

When this is not possible, we try to arrange Mainland appointments that make travel to, and from, the isles convenient or use technology to avoid the need to travel to Kirkwall or the Scottish mainland.

Improving the Cancer Journey

Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) is a non-clinical support service delivered by NHS Orkney's Public Health department, in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support. The service supports anyone in Orkney affected by cancer, including people with a diagnosis and those close to them, by helping address the practical, emotional, financial and social challenges that often sit alongside clinical care.

Individuals referred to ICJ are offered something called a Holistic Needs Assessment, which helps identify what matters most to them at that point in time. This approach recognises that cancer can impact many areas of life, including financial, practical, physical, spiritual and emotional. Based on the assessment and ongoing conversations with the service user, the ICJ Link Workers develop a tailored support plan and connect service users with appropriate local and national services.

Over the past year, the ICJ service has received referrals from a wide range of health, social care and third sector partners. Support is offered flexibly, including by telephone, video call (Near Me), or face to face, ensuring everyone can access the service across our rural and island communities.



The ICJ service helped 91 people during the last year.

Recently, the ICJ service has expanded beyond cancer to begin supporting people living with long term conditions, starting with cardiac health. This expansion has been supported by Macmillan Cancer Support, showing a shared ambition to extend the benefits of the ICJ service. Referrals are triaged to ensure support is offered first to those with the greatest need,

enabling the service to respond flexibly and equitably. As the service continues to develop, there are plans to further expand ICJ to support even more long term conditions, across Orkney, responding to local need.

During the last year, the ICJ service helped 87 people with a cancer diagnosis and four with a cardiac-related diagnosis.

ICJ is a great example of work that helps reduce inequalities by supporting people earlier, addressing non-medical issues, and helping people make their way through complex systems, at times of real vulnerability.

What Will We Do During the Coming Year?

The below table shows the actions contained within the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2026/27.

Delivery Milestones	Outcome/Measure	Timescale
We will deliver a Brightstar Breakfast Pilot from August 2025 to July 2026 to enable that school children involved in the pilot are able to access breakfast.	Complete a pilot evaluation and share the findings with the Cost of Living Task Force.	31 July 2026.
We will establish a Fuel Poverty Action Plan.	Develop and approve a Fuel Poverty Action Plan.	30 September 2026.

Priority Area 2 – Early Intervention and Prevention

The below table shows the progress for the actions contained within the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2025/26.

Milestone	Outcomes/Measure	Status	Narrative
Implement a partner-approved systems-based approach to Physical Activity.	Deliver update to the IJB in February 2026 to update on progress and outcomes.		Progress has been slow owing to challenges around recruitment. Significant progress is expected once the new Service Manager (Leisure and Culture) is recruited. Progress will be shared with the IJB in the summer of 2026.
Launch a programme to promote healthy lifestyles in schools, reaching 100% of students, by June 2025.	Deliver workshops on nutrition, mental health, and physical activity, in partnership with educators.		The School Health team have a health promotion programme in every school across Orkney, with a different topic for each year group, and have been delivered over the last year. The service will offer sessions around lifestyle topics, to the secondary schools, during this academic year, in addition to health promotion.
Establish a data-driven falls prevention programme, for older people, by June 2025.	Analyse hospital and community data to identify risk patterns and implement tailored interventions.		NHS Falls Prevention classes will continue to be delivered by the Ageing Well Service, following a short pause due to staffing and winter pressures. Funding from endowments has been secured for additional training in Falls Prevention strength and balance classes. This will improve the resilience of community-based programmes (NHS, third sector, and external providers), and support delivery in the outer Isles, where feasible.
Implement a single pathway for neurodevelopmental	Children and families will experience more timely assessments, with longest waits reducing from 101		The single point of entry Neurodevelopmental Pathway has been agreed amongst key stakeholders. Project management and administration support is being confirmed to progress implementation. Additional capacity

Milestone	Outcomes/Measure	Status	Narrative
assessment for children and young people.	weeks to 12 weeks, in line with National Outpatient appointment targets.		will be required to address the significant waiting lists. A piece of work is being undertaken, via two Scottish Government projects, to review the waiting lists to ensure an accurate understanding of local need/numbers requiring assessment and ongoing support. Work is also progressing to support early intervention approaches to supporting children and their families while on the waiting list.

Prevention and early intervention are at the forefront of strategies to improve the lives of people in Orkney, as well as reducing demand on community health and social care services. Whatever their circumstances, we want everyone in Orkney to do their best to keep themselves healthy.

Our communities and our local environment are essential to good health, as well as keeping us active and connected.

Vaccination Service

The Spring 2025 COVID Programme saw a slight decrease in the number of invited people receiving their vaccination from 71.2% in 2024 to 67.2% in 2025. This is, however, well ahead of the national average of 60.6%.

We vaccinated 2,356 eligible folk in Orkney, against COVID, in the last year.

The RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) Programme in 2025 invited those turning 75 years for a vaccination. The uptake in this age group was 66%, compared to the Scottish average of 68.4%, although the low numbers invited in Orkney may affect the data.

The uptake of Childhood Immunisations in Orkney remains amongst the highest in the Country, offering some reassurance in a time where the UK has lost its measles-free status.

From January 2026, the UK introduced the MMRV (Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella) vaccine into the childhood range of immunisations, in the place of MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella). It offers the same strong protection, with the added benefit of protection against chickenpox in a single vaccine. This has been rolled out in Orkney and has been received well by

Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership.

parents/guardians. There will be a catch-up programme later in the year for children of three-years four-months, though to six-years, who have not had chickenpox.

Childhood Immunisation in Orkney is amongst the highest in Scotland.

The Vaccination Team is working on a range of initiatives aimed at increasing the numbers of Teenage Immunisations, along with improving Flu vaccination rates amongst health and social care staff. This follows a campaign in 2025 where there was a small increase in flu vaccinations for health care workers, from 37.7% in the previous year to 45.9%, and social care workers, from 10% in the previous year to 12.1%.

Oral Health

The Oral Health Team works with partners throughout Orkney to identify and contact our more vulnerable families. The Childsmile Team regularly visits community groups, including local toddler and young families nurture groups, to provide oral health advice and support.

They regularly team up with partners in the Early Years' Education Team, schools, and through the third sector, including Home-Start and BookBug to contact families.

The National Dental Inspection Programme offers a brief dental inspection from nursery to P7. This currently acts as an opportunity to prioritise children with highest need for dental appointments. The latest report (2025 which you can read [here](#)) continues to show that Orkney has a small group of children with obvious decay experience. Reaching and supporting these children and families, to help improve oral health routines and access dental treatment where required, is a nationally and locally driven priority, and the team will continue to develop the community-based programme of work to reach our families.

No Health Without Oral Health

Oral health is important to general health, and the service works to promote No Health Without Oral Health as a value for all. The mouth and the rest of the body has something called a bidirectional relationship. General diseases can impact our oral health, and poor oral health can worsen underlying health conditions. This includes poorer health for people with diabetes, respiratory illnesses or heart disease. No Health Without Oral Health is an important focus which needs to be well understood. They work throughout the community to challenge culture and spread key oral health messages, attending community events, such as Stromness Shopping Week and visiting groups, such as The Men's Shed.

The service provides oral health products for the local Foodbank on a regular basis and make sure that these are available in schools for any child who requires extra for home. These are also provided to care homes and Hospital wards to support daily oral care, along with training that is provided for staff in good practice in oral care.

The Oral Health Team works throughout the community to challenge culture and spread key oral health messages.

The Public Dental Service is signed up to provide alcohol brief interventions and smoking cessation advice. We are very aware of the impact of life circumstances, and increasingly now the cost of living on health and wellbeing, and we endeavour to make sure that good daily oral care can be easier for everyone.

Access to dental services is an ongoing concern in Orkney as recruitment of dental staff continues to be challenging. Some progress has been made in recruiting dental clinicians in General Dental Service practices, but there are ongoing recruitment issues and efforts in the Public Dental Service. For many families and adults, living in Orkney and not registered with a dentist, they will continue to rely on the Public Dental Service Emergency Service.

Health Visiting

The team continues to deliver a high level of service to the families in Orkney, being one of the only Health Boards offering all contacts face to face, in the home, including the ferry-linked isles.

The infant feeding team includes peer support workers who go above and beyond to help and support new parents, running baby walks and the antenatal workshops held on a weekend along with health staff.

School Health

The School Health Team are going from strength to strength. One of the team was honoured with the Queen's Nurse Award at the end of last year and has represented Orkney school nursing at various conferences around the UK, as well as a self-funded trip to the International School Nurse Conference in Japan!

The team are now running a babysitting course with pupils in the secondary schools. This includes pupils caring for realistic interactive baby dolls that they take home.

The team have also started to run a parenting course for parents of school age children. They have successfully completed one course and have another starting soon.

There are lots of plans for the future to grow the service, including taking this to the isles.

Their current school nurse student qualifies in August which will then mean the team is fully staffed although they are currently going through a restructure to build in a specialist looked after children/team lead role into the service.

Paediatric Occupational Therapy

The team is now fully staffed since a new member started in September. The team have reviewed their current services and are looking at what opportunities they can achieve in the near future and the longer term.

Recently they held a webinar entitled 'Working together to support sensory processing' which was attended by both parents and professionals. Following positive and constructive feedback, the team plans to do further sessions.

Children and Young People (CYP) Speech and Language Therapy

GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child) is at the heart of everything the service does. They continue to prioritise strong partnership working which ensures that children are involved in the decisions that affect them. Relationship building with families and other professionals underpins this. They continue to raise awareness of the profession, and the important role speech and language therapists play in Orkney for individuals, families, the CYP workforce and CYP communities. An example of effective multi-agency working has been embedding SCERTS (State Council of Educational Research and Training) into planning for children and young people. You can read more about SCERTS an educational and therapeutic framework used to support autistic children, [here](#).

The team continues to develop services for all CYP with speech, language and communication difficulties, as well as eating/drinking difficulties.



GIRFEC is at the heart of speech and language therapy services.

A recent service improvement is the development of the enquiry line, accessed by telephone and email. This has significantly improved access to the service and their ability to provide earlier support to families and professionals. They offer conversations where parents/professionals are listened to, and supported, via signposting and personalised targeted supports. This enables the service to be helpful at an earlier stage in the child's Speech and Language Therapy.

They also continue to expand their work with other services, promoting environments that enable all children to thrive and develop speech, language and communication skills for meeting their potential in life.

ICON

The ICON programme is an evidence-based program used by health and social care workers to help parents cope with infant crying: Infant crying is normal, **C**omforting methods can help, **O**k to walk away and **N**ever ever shake a baby.

ICON seeks to reduce the incidence of traumatic head injury in babies and young children. The ICON programme has been rolled out across Orkney, with training provided to all GP practices, maternity staff, children's health teams and social workers. It is also part of all antenatal workshops with new parents.

Neurological Services

Our neurological services give service users named points of contact for people who are affected by Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Motor Neurone Disease (MND) and Parkinson's Disease (PD). These services offer comprehensive assessments and reviews, to guide plans for treatment, care and support. This approach makes sure decisions are made with the service user and their family or carers.

This also allows the service to identify opportunities for:

- Improved symptom management.
- Reduction of risks.
- Early intervention.
- The reduction or avoidance of hospital admission.

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- Ways to support people to live as meaningful a life as possible.

Teamwork and communication with other services and agencies (both local and national) is key to this approach.

Local professionals are working with colleagues to develop courses of treatment and support for conditions other than MS, MND, and PD which will follow the national guidelines for Neurology and Rehabilitation. This work will help services to identify any areas where improvements are needed and, furthermore, will support services in their efforts monitoring their performance against established standards.

What Will We Do During the Coming Year?

The below table shows the actions contained within the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2026/27.

Delivery Milestones	Outcomes/Measure	Timescale
We will implement GIRFE tools across Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership community services.	By March 2027, GIRFE (Getting It Right for Everyone) processes — including Team Around the Person (TAP), My Life Plan documentation, and agreed care coordination steps — will be implemented across all core Orkney Health and Care community services, building on the early pilot work and ensuring that GIRFE tools are used consistently in day-to-day practice to support coordinated, person-centred care.	31 March 2027.
We will identify support for drug and alcohol for children and young people.	Scope out and develop specialist drug and alcohol support for children and young people under the age of 18.	31 March 2027.
We will develop and implement an Early Language and Communication Strategy for Children.	Prioritising support for early years speech, language and communication in line with the Scottish Government Early Years Speech Language and Communication Action Plan.	31 December 2026.

Delivery Milestones	Outcomes/Measure	Timescale
We will implement a single pathway for neurodevelopmental assessment for children and young people.	Children and families will experience more timely assessments, with longest waits reducing from 101 weeks to 12 weeks, in line with National Outpatient appointment targets.	31 March 2027.
The new Public Protection webpages to accompany the Growing Up In Orkney webpages will be published.	The new Public Protection Webpages will go live.	31 September 2026.
We will improve registration for Orkney residents for NHS dental services.	Continue to develop professional and operational relationships with General Dental Services with a view to monitoring dental capacity and improve recruitment.	31 March 2027.

Priority Area 3 – Unpaid Carers

The below table shows the progress for the actions contained within the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2025/26.

Milestone	Outcome/Measure	Status	Narrative
Hold a second Orkney Unpaid Carer Conference.	Hold the conference before the end of 2025.		The second Orkney Carer Conference took place on Thursday, 27 November 2025.
Offer an assessment to all unpaid carers seeking support and measure that number.	Increase the number of carers offered an assessment from 33 in 2022, to 60 by the end of 2025.		Carer assessments are now offered to all unpaid carers seeking support, as a matter of course. Determining the number of assessments offered has proven difficult, with current systems unable to properly capture these figures. The number of completed assessments in 2025 was 21; however, services believe this figure to be significantly higher. The number offered is higher still, but the inability of systems to capture this information is preventing this figure from being accurately reported. Efforts are ongoing to identify how systems can capture this information as a matter of course.
Prepare and publish a dedicated Young Carer Strategy.	Young Carer Strategy will be approved and published, by March 2026.		The initial draft of this document is currently the subject of consultation and input from the Crossroads Orkney Young Carers' Group. Once this is complete, it is anticipated that the finished Strategy will be ready for publishing. Securing young carer input is proving more difficult than originally anticipated. However, it is expected that this work will be complete very shortly.

Milestone	Outcome/Measure	Status	Narrative
Deliver an Unpaid Carer-Friendly policy for staff employed by OIC.	Prepare and publish an OIC Unpaid Carer-Friendly policy by the summer of 2025.		A policy has been drafted and considered by the Council's Corporate Leadership Team. The consultation process with Unions is ongoing and it is hoped the policy will go to a future meeting of Human Resources Sub-committee. The process has taken longer than anticipated.
Begin training frontline workers throughout statutory and third sector organisations, making them "carer-aware".	Undertake training of at least 100 frontline workers by the end of March 2026.		Suitable training modules have been identified and officers are working to have the introductory video included on learning platforms. This short video will equip staff to be "carer aware" and will enable rapid training of a large cohort of staff, including all frontline care staff. Officers have determined the launch of the new video will likely see more success and, crucially, more views, if this is launched concurrently with the Council's Support for Carer Friendly Policy. It has, therefore, been decided to delay the launch of the video until the Policy is approved by the Council's HR Sub-committee. The video will be launched to NHS Orkney colleagues at the same time. This Milestone has been carried forward to the new Strategic Plan Delivery Plan.
We will reach more people delivering care to family or friends, who have not sought carer services, and measure that number.	Increase the number of unpaid carers contacting Crossroads Care Orkney, for support, from 78, in 2022, to 150, by 2026.		There were 96 new contacts in 2026 which represents an increase of 23%, but is well short of the goal of 150. It is anticipated the recent appointment to the new Carer Lead role in late February 2026, will significantly increase this figure in coming years, as well as the Carer Awareness training and the introduction of the Council's Carer Friendly Policy. Consequently, this Milestone has been carried over to the new Delivery Plan.

Some Facts and Figures:

800,000	The estimated number of unpaid carers in Scotland ¹ .
30,000	The estimated number of young carers in Scotland ² .
3 out of 5	The number of us who will become carers at some stage in our lives ³ .
£52.4 million	The estimated value of care delivered by unpaid carers in Orkney.
300	The approximate number of carers known to support services in Orkney.
3,000	The estimated number of unpaid carers in Orkney.

The support given by unpaid carers in Orkney is estimated to be worth £52.4 million.

¹⁻³ – Carers UK.

Unpaid Carer Conference 2025

A second Unpaid Carer Conference was held in November 2025. With the first conference having focused upon celebrating the role of unpaid carers, the second conference focussed on the services and support available to carers in Orkney.

With support from across the statutory and third sectors, as well as input from key stakeholders, including our young carers. Post-conference feedback was largely positive, with many people reflecting that they were unaware of the scope and breadth of services available locally.

However, attendance was just under 100, down on the 2023 conference. Some feedback indicated more of a reluctance to venture out in November, so future editions of the conference will be held in the late spring/summer.

Carer Assessments

Everyone that we identify as a carer is automatically offered an assessment. However, our systems struggle to properly capture this information.

The number of assessments recorded in the 2025 calendar year was 21; however, we think this figure is a lot higher. We also know the number of assessments offered is higher still, but our systems are not recording this accurately.

To try and tackle this, we are working with our teams to ensure that changes are made to our electronic record system to properly capture this information, and we have included this as one of our goals over the coming year.

Young Carer Strategy

A first draft of a dedicated Young Carer Strategy was prepared some months ago.

We are very keen to make sure that young carers are involved in the preparation of the Strategy, so we have been trying for some time to get input from the Orkney Young Carers' Group. This has not been as easy as we hoped.

Nonetheless, officers are currently working with the Orkney Young Carers' Group to make sure that our young carers help to create a strategy that is relevant to them.

It is important that young carers help us to write the Young Carer Strategy.

Once this is complete and approved, we expect to publish the Strategy very shortly afterwards.

Orkney Islands Council's Unpaid Carer Friendly Policy

We learned from the two Unpaid Carer Conferences that many unpaid carers are concerned about how they can hold down a full-time job whilst caring for a loved one. Many told us that whilst their employers are supportive, they feel uncomfortable asking for the time off which they sometimes need in their working hours and at short notice.

We are keen to promote the benefits of having a carer friendly workplace policy but, as the largest employer in the county, we felt it was important that Orkney Islands Council have a dedicated carer friendly policy themselves.

We have been working with our colleagues from the Council's Human Resources department to draw up a policy that includes the flexibility needed by employees with caring responsibilities. A draft has been prepared and is currently with Union representatives for comments.

Like several other Milestones, this process has taken much longer than we originally thought. Nonetheless, the final draft is expected to go before the Council's Human Resources Sub-committee in May 2026, for approval, and we hope to publish and promote the policy shortly afterwards.

Training Frontline Workers

We have learned that many unpaid carers simply do not know about the support available to them. The best opportunity to help those who are not currently looking for help and support is when our frontline workers, and the workers of our statutory and third sector partners, are with service users (in their homes, at school, or anywhere else that staff are face to face with people in Orkney).

Becoming “carer aware” is relatively straightforward; a basic understanding of who unpaid carers are, what support is available to them, and where to get that support, will allow anyone dealing with the public to help carers get the support they need.

We have seen a short video that covers all aspects of identifying unpaid carers and what support they can get, which is currently available on YouTube. We had expected to have launched this video on the Council’s learning platform, by now. However, we decided to launch this at the same time as the Council’s Carer Friendly Policy which, we hope, will give the video maximum exposure. We will then do the same with colleagues at NHS Orkney.

Increase the Number of Carers Seeking Support

Increasing the number of people looking for support in their role as an unpaid carer, has been a priority of ours for some time. We know of around 300 people who are unpaid carers. However, we believe that the actual number of unpaid carers in Orkney is likely to be nearer 3,000. This means, of course, that around nine out of ten unpaid carers are not getting the help and support that they are entitled to.

It is estimated that there are more than 3,000 unpaid carers in Orkney.

To try and tackle this, we have produced regular publicity campaigns on social media, in the paper and on the radio to highlight the vital role played by our unpaid carers and, most of all, to raise awareness of carers. This work has been supported by Crossroads Care Orkney, who regularly visit faith and social groups to talk about unpaid carers.

What Will We Do During the Coming Year?

The below table shows the actions contained within the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2026/27.

Delivery Milestones	Outcome/Measure	Timescale
We will establish how PARIS can capture if a Carer Assessment has been offered to an unpaid carer and implement this change.	Upgrade PARIS to capture when a Carer Assessment has been offered to an unpaid carer.	31 March 2027.
Prepare and publish a dedicated Young Carer Strategy.	Publish the Young Carer Strategy.	30 September 2026.
Deliver an Unpaid Carer Friendly Policy for staff employed by Orkney Islands Council (OIC).	Prepare and publish an OIC Unpaid Carer Friendly Policy.	31 August 2026.
Begin training frontline workers throughout statutory and third sector organisations, making them “carer-aware”.	Undertake training of at least 100 frontline workers.	31 October 2026.
We will reach more people delivering care to family or friends, who have not sought carer services, and measure that number.	Increase the number of unpaid carers contacting Crossroads Care Orkney, for support, from 96, in 2025, to 110.	31 March 2027.

Priority Area 4 – Supporting People to Age Well

The below table shows the progress for the actions contained within the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2025/26.

Milestone	Outcome/Measure	Status	Narrative
Improve our preparedness for the analogue to digital switchover to ensure that our telecare services are fit for purpose.	We will increase the percentage of service users using digital from 26.5% to 60%.		The service now has less than half of its service user cohort with analogue equipment in situ (54.5% with digital and 45.5%, with analogue) and the service is continuing with the progression of all service users having digital equipment before June 2026. The service reached the milestone of 60% in March of 2026. As all new service users now receive digital equipment, this figure will continue to rise.
We will use projected need data to determine and agree the most appropriate use of the currently unutilised wing of Hamnavoe House.	A plan for how the fourth wing in Hamnavoe House will be commissioned, will be available with costings.		A report was presented to the February 2026 meeting of the IJB. The fourth wing will be commissioned as respite once both financial and human resource is in place.

Milestone	Outcome/Measure	Status	Narrative
Individuals who are referred for a social work assessment will receive this in a timely manner.	Reduce the outstanding social work assessments from, 59 (as at 31/03/25) to 25.		Adult Social Work continue to receive a significant number of referrals daily. Each referral continues to be screened by the duty social worker and added to the Duty Desk (waiting list). Unless there are an Adult Support and Protection or Adults with Incapacity element, referrals are discussed, updated and where possible allocated at the weekly huddle meeting. The average figure of those in the community awaiting an assessment over a 12 week period, at the last update in March, was 34.5. Over the latest 12 week period, this has increased. The waiting time for assessment had reduced from almost 8 weeks to 6 weeks, at the last update, but is now around 8 weeks. These figures are subject to regular fluctuation as capacity within the team, not to mention the number and complexity of referrals varies.
Further improve access to Care at Home provision.	Increase the number of service users in receipt of Care at Home by 5%. from 171 (as at 31/03/25) to 180.		As previously mentioned, the number of service users, at any one time, is variable due to numerous factors. However, the service has robust capacity management and waiting list protocols in place to ensure any capacity that does become available is re-allocated timeously. The service currently has 175 individuals in receipt of care at home provision. Although we have not achieved the target of 180 service users it is important to note that 15 individuals require two carers at each visit and a further 61 individuals are in receipt of more than 10-hours care per week.

Delivery Milestones	Outcome/Measure	Timescale
Establish a digital Ageing Well Hub.	In partnership with older adults and carers, establish a digital Ageing Well hub that provides self-management tools and signposting, by December 2026.	31 December 2026.
Reduce the number of individuals who are on the Waiting List for a new care at home package across the communities of Orkney.	Reduce the number of individuals who are waiting on a new care at home package, residing in the communities of Orkney, from 42 individuals by 15%.	31 March 2027
Have a fully digital Telecare/Community Care Alarm Service.	Transition all remaining individuals with analogue Telecare/Community Care Alarm equipment to have the service 100% digitally operational.	31 March 2027.
We will improve the proportion of care services graded 'good' (4) or better in Care Inspectorate inspections.	The proportion of care services graded 'good' (4) and above will increase from 92.1% in 2024/25 to 95%.	31 March 2027.
We will initiate and conduct a review of the Social Care model to make it more attractive as a career.	Approve the Social Care Project Initiation Document.	30 June 2026.
The successful transition from St Rognvald House to Kirkjuvagr House.	Residents will move to their new home.	30 September 2026.
We will look to attract people into a career in Social Care.	Host a social care recruitment event/open day at Kirkjuvagr House.	31 July 2026.

