



Working together to make a real difference

Strategic Planning Group

Minute | 12 November 2025 | 1500 | Teams

Present: Cllr Rachael King (Chair), Stephen Brown, Willie Neish, Shaun Hourston-Wells, Callan Curtis, Morven Brooks, Ruth Lea, Deborah Langan, Graham Lindsay, Wendy Lycett, Lynda Bradford, Darren Morrow, Helen Sievwright, Diane Young, Lou Willis, Drew Mayhew and Stephanie Johnston (notes)

Apologies: Ryan McLaughlin, Morven Gemmill, Danny Oliver, John Daniels, Scott Robertson and Davie Hall.

1. Welcome and Apologies

Rachael welcomed everyone to the meeting and the apologies were noted.

2. Minute from the Previous Meetings

The minutes from 2 July and 2 September were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Following a query from the July meeting, it was agreed that an update from the Scottish Ambulance Service recent work at the next meeting. It was also agreed to have a future session on Public Sector Reform. **Action:** Stephanie.

3. Strategic Priorities Progress Tracker

Updates were provided on three of the Strategic Priorities: Mental Health and Wellbeing, Supporting People to Age Well and Unpaid Carers.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

It was advised that the Suicide Prevention Action Plan has been published and work has commenced on the actions. Work continues to progress on MORSE, however there is now a revised go-live date of March 2026 due to external factors. The Team Lead for the All Age Nurse Led Psychiatric Liaison Team is now in post and the remaining posts are out for recruitment. The SOS app has been launched and has received positive feedback from the community and plans are in place to make it available on app stores by mid-2026. The Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) programme has seen an increase in referrals and there are plans to offer group sessions in schools to expand reach.

It was advised that there will be a paper presented to the next Integration Joint Board on the Primary Care Improvement Plan Proposal. There are some issues that the funding currently in place does not allow for all the regulatory services to be fully compliant, which means the Board will have to take a decision on preauthorising funding allocations. It was advised that it is still an aspiration to have mental health



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practitioners in Primary Care. In respect of telehealth, most psychological therapy work is now being conducted remotely via Near Me.

Supporting Older People to Age Well

Progress on the transition from analogue to digital telecare systems continues with 364 individuals remaining to be transferred. A request for capital funding to complete the transition was being submitted to the Council's Policy and Resources Committee. The utilisation of Brinkies Wing to be discussed in the next agenda item.

Efforts to reduce waiting times for social work assessments were advised, with a reduction from eight weeks to four weeks achieved. However, capacity challenges and fluctuating referral complexities were noted. The number of individuals receiving care at home had increased to 173, though capacity constraints limited further expansion. Work to improve care home inspection grades was ongoing, with some homes achieving "good" ratings while others remained at "adequate".

Unpaid Carers

Progress on the plan for the second Orkney Unpaid Carer Conference was shared, with the event scheduled for 27 November. The Conference would focus on local supports and include inputs from various organisations as well as young carers. Progress on increasing carer assessments was shared, with final year figures to be confirmed. It was advised that a dedicated Young Carer Strategy was nearing completion, with publication expected by March 2026. Efforts to develop a Carer-friendly Policy for Orkney Islands Council staff was ongoing, with further discussions planned. Training for frontline workers on unpaid carer awareness was being developed, with plans to explore whether this training should be mandatory. Work is ongoing to increase the number of carers accessing services, with progress to be reviewed at the end of the financial year.

It was agreed that an update would be provided to the January meeting on all action areas which would help the discussion on developing the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan for 2026/27. **Action:** Shaun.

4. Brinkies Wing Discussion

Following the discussion at the last meeting, it was proposed that the wing be dedicated to providing residential respite care, addressing the need for planned respite services. This approach was suggested as a way to alleviate the current challenges of emergency respite admissions, which often transition into permanent care placements. It was clarified that many current respite admissions are, in practice, temporary admissions that become permanent due to the lack of planned respite options.

There was a discussion on the potential benefits of consolidating respite care into one dedicated wing, which could allow for better planning and scheduling of respite

services. This would also enable the existing respite beds in other care homes to be converted into permanent care beds, potentially increasing capacity for long term care. Some concerns were raised about the geographical challenges for families, particularly those further away including isles, in accessing respite care in Stromness. However, it was suggested that families might be more amenable to travelling for planned respite compared to permanent placements. There was agreement that utilising the wing for respite beds could address multiple system pressures, including delayed discharges, support for unpaid carers, and the need for permanent care placements.

Following a discussion on the importance of considering step-up and step-down care beds within the system, which could help prevent hospital admissions and support reablement efforts. It was suggested that the concept of GP, or interim, beds could be revisited, potentially spreading these beds across the care homes rather than centralising them in one location. It was reminded that the overall capacity of the new Kirkwall care facility, Kirkjuvagr House, has reduced from 44 to 40 beds which needs to be factored into planning.

There needs to be clarity on the role of the third sector in this. It was agreed that Stephen and Morven would follow this up and explore potential models for third sector involvement. **Action:** Stephen. It was also noted that there is ongoing work with Housing colleagues on the Strategic Housing Investment Plan, which includes provisions for extra care housing adjacent to care homes.

Concerns were raised about the financial feasibility of the proposal, noting the current resource constraints and the need to prioritise improving existing services. These concerns were acknowledged but the importance of defining unmet need with plans in place should funding opportunities become available was highlighted.

5. AOCB

None.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 21 January 2026: 0930-1130.

Stephen Brown (Chief Officer)

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Chair's Assurance Report to the Integration Joint Board

Title of Report:	Strategic Planning Group.	Date of Meeting:	12 November 2025.
Prepared By:	Cllr Rachael King.	Presented By:	Cllr Rachael King.
Purpose:	To present the minutes from the Strategic Planning Group meeting on 12 November 2025.		

Positive Assurances:	Decisions Made:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress on Strategic Priorities:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental Health and Wellbeing: Suicide Prevention Action Plan published. SOS app launched. LIAM (Let's Introduce Anxiety Management) programme expanding into schools. Recruitment ongoing for psychiatric liaison team.• Supporting Older People to Age Well: Telecare transition progressing. Social work assessment waiting times reduced to four weeks. Care home inspection grades improving.• Unpaid Carers: Second Orkney Unpaid Carer Conference scheduled for 27 November. Young Carer Strategy nearing completion. Carer-friendly Policy development underway.• Collaborative Working: Updates demonstrate strong partnership working across health, social care, and third sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Priorities: A comprehensive update on all Strategic Priorities at January meeting to inform the 2026/27 Strategic Plan Delivery Plan.• Third Sector Engagement: Agreement for separate meeting to discuss and provide clarity on third sector role.• Scottish Ambulance Service Work Update: Update on mapping work to be shared at the February 2026 meeting.

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Areas of Concern or Key Risks to Escalate:	Major Actions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capacity Challenges: Ongoing pressures in care homes and community services.• Financial Feasibility: Concerns about resource constraints and prioritisation of existing services before new initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brinkies Wing: Proposal to dedicate Brinkies Wing for planned residential respite care to alleviate emergency respite pressures and increase permanent care capacity.
Comments on Effectiveness of the Meeting:	
The meeting was well relatively attended, with some key professionals joining this specific meeting to share their views from their services to address system pressures and improving service delivery.	