

# Housing News

The newsletter of Orkney Islands Council Housing Services.

Issue 86, Winter 2025/26.



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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](mailto:claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk) to request the relevant form.

Find us on Facebook - [www.facebook.com/OIChousingservices/](https://www.facebook.com/OIChousingservices/)

## Featured Articles

### Festive recipe - snowman biscuits

#### Ingredients:

For the biscuits -

- 100 grams / 3.5oz caster sugar
- 200 grams / 7oz self-raising flour
- 100 grams / 3.5 oz of butter
- 1 teaspoon of Vanilla extract
- 1 large egg

For the decoration –

- White fondant icing
- Milk chocolate chips or black writing icing
- Orange food colouring or orange smarties



**Method:**Biscuits

1. Set your oven to 180 degrees Celsius/ 350 degrees Fahrenheit/ Gas mark 4 and allow it to preheat whilst you prepare the biscuit mix.
2. Add the flour and sugar to a large mixing bowl and stir.
3. Chop the butter into small pieces and add it to the mixing bowl. Use your fingertips to rub the butter in to the flour and sugar until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs.
4. Add the egg to a cup and whisk. Add the whisked egg and vanilla essence to the breadcrumb mixture and blend to form a soft dough.
5. Add some flour to a clean flat work surface. Place the dough on to the floured surface and use a rolling pin to roll out the dough. The dough should be rolled out to the same thickness of a £1 coin.
6. Use a round cookie cutter to cut the dough in to round pieces.
7. Take a clean baking tray and grease lightly using some butter. Place the cut-out pieces of dough on to the tray and cook for 10 -12 minutes.
8. The biscuits should be light and golden once cooked. When they have finished cooking, place them on to a wire rack to cool. Once the biscuits are completely cooled, you can proceed to decorate them.

Decoration

1. Use a rolling pin to roll out the white fondant icing and cut out circles the same size as the biscuits.
2. Stick the white icing on to the biscuits by brushing a little cooled boiling water on to the back of the fondant icing. Smooth the icing down on to the biscuit as you stick them down.
3. To make a carrot nose, add a drop or two of orange food colouring to a small amount of white fondant icing and knead until combined. Roll the orange icing in to a carrot shape and stick on to the biscuit using some more of the cooled boiled water. Alternatively, you can use an orange smartie for a nose.
4. Add eyes and a mouth using black writing icing or milk chocolate chips.
5. Allow the biscuits to set before eating.

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**The Priority Services Register****What is the Priority Services Register?**

The Priority Services Register is a free UK service that provides extra support to eligible individuals in the event of a power cut.

**What support is available?**

If you are registered with the Priority Services Register, you may receive the following support:

- Information and warnings regarding planned interruption to your electricity or water supply.
- Communication that is tailored to your needs such as braille and large font.
- If you use medical equipment that relies on water or electricity, you may be provided with portable power generators and bottles of water in the event of a power cut.
- And more.

### Who is eligible?

You are eligible for support under the Priority Services Register if you:

- Use medical equipment that relies on electricity or a water supply.
- Are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Temporarily need extra support.
- Need documents in an accessible format or translating into a different language.
- Are blind or partially sighted.
- Have a Chronic illness.
- Have anxiety, depression or any other mental health condition.
- Live with children under 5 years old.
- Are over 60 years old.

You can find out more information by:

Visiting the following website: [www.psrscotland.com](http://www.psrscotland.com)

Or telephone: 08002943259

In the event of a power cut, please call 105 to report it.

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## Changes to the energy price cap

**1 January 2026 – 31 March 2026**

### 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 consumers in 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 on your annual energy bill. Despite the name, there is **no upper limit** to what you may pay - the more energy you use - the higher your bill will be. Instead, 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 amount that suppliers can charge their customers for a daily standing charge. A standing charge is the daily fee you pay for being connected to the electricity grid.

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## Price change – 1 January 2026

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 January 2026, the price cap will rise by 0.2%.

From 1 January 2026, the energy price cap for typical households on a standard variable tariff paying via direct debit will be around:

	<b>Price per unit</b>	<b>Daily standing charge</b>
<b>Electricity</b>	27.69p per Killowatt hour (KWh)	54.75p per day

This price is based on the average across England, Scotland & Wales, and includes 5% VAT.

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 the exact rate you are paying for your energy.

## Winter heating benefit scams

A 'scam' can be described as a fraudulent scheme where attempts are made to obtain money or personal information through deception and dishonesty. As the weather turns colder, scams relating to winter heating benefit payments appear to be on the rise. These scams are often sent by opportunists pretending to be Social Security Scotland or some other government department. They do this in an attempt to steal your personal information such as your name, National Insurance number, or bank details, etc. Scammers will try to contact individuals through, text messages, emails, letters and telephone calls, etc. They will make attempts to access a person's personal information using a range of methods, including:



- Requests for you to click links or downloads that install spyware on to your device.
- Asking for you to provide your personal details such as your bank details, under the guise that this information is required to process a payment.
- Requests for you to update your personal information using suspicious website links.

How to recognise winter heating benefit scams and what to look out for:

- Poor grammar and spelling.
- Messages asking you to click website links.
- Requests for personal information or bank details.
- Urgent demands that are time sensitive.

Social Security Scotland state on their website that, 'we will never ask for personal or financial details by text or email or ask people to reply by text or email'.

You can find out more information by visiting the following website:

[www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/people-warned-to-stay-aware-of-winter-heating-payment-scams](http://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/people-warned-to-stay-aware-of-winter-heating-payment-scams)

Things you can do to protect yourself from scams:

- If you have received a suspicious message, letter or phone call, please contact the Government Department directly to confirm whether it is genuine.
- Stop and think before providing your personal information.
- If you receive a suspicious looking text or email, do not click any website links or download files contained within them.
- You can report suspicious messages or scams to [trading.standards@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@orkney.gov.uk).
- If you think you have been a victim of a scam, please contact your bank immediately.
- You can report fraud and harassment to the police by telephoning 101.

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## Office opening times during the festive period

The Council offices will be closed between Thursday 25 December 2025, and Friday 2 January 2026. The Housing Service will also be closed during this time.

The Council Offices are closed over the Festive period, however, there will be a skeleton staff available within the social work team. They can be contacted by telephoning the Balfour Switchboard on 888000.

You can find emergency out-of-hours contact details for the Homelessness Service & Repairs Service on the last page of this newsletter.





## Orkney Blide Trust

The Orkney Blide Trust is a charity dedicated to providing support to those who have / have had any experience of mental ill health. People join the Blide as members. Anyone who has a lived experience of mental health problems and their carers are welcome to join or take part in the variety of activities and services they provide. Most people refer to the Trust as 'The Blide'.



Although the Blide is mostly for 'members' (service users), anyone who is struggling with mental health can approach them to ask for support. You can do this by telephoning 01856 874874 or visiting the Blide at 54 Victoria Street, Kirkwall. There is also a café available where people can get hot drinks, soup and toasties, etc. The Orkney Blide Trust provides extra support to people at times when other services may be closed.

The Blide Trust opening times during the festive period are:

Sat 20 Dec	11am – 4pm		Mon 29 Dec	10am – 3pm
Sun 21 Dec	11am – 2pm		Tue 30 Dec	10 am – 3pm
Mon 22 Dec	9am – 5pm		Wed 31 Dec	10am – 3pm
Tue 23 Dec	9am – 5pm		Thurs 1 Jan	10am – 3pm
Wed 24 Dec	10 am – 3pm		Fri 2 Jan	10am – 3pm
Thurs 25 Dec	10 am – 3pm		Sat 3 Jan	11am – 4pm
Fri 26 Dec	10am – 3pm		Sun 4 Jan	11am – 2pm
Sat 27 Dec	10am – 3pm			
Sun 28 Dec	CLOSED			

For more information about the events taking place over the festive period, you can visit the Orkney Blide Trust website on - [www.blidetrust.org.uk/events](http://www.blidetrust.org.uk/events)

## The Salvation Army – free Christmas day meal

The Salvation Army will be hosting a Christmas day meal again this year, in co-operation with Age Scotland Orkney. This event will be held at the Salvation Army hall on 25 December 2025. The Salvation Army stated that 'we really don't want anyone in our community - whatever age - to have to spend Christmas Day alone'.

For more details, or if you would like to book a place, please telephone 01856 873 535 by 19 December, 2025.



## **Paying your rent over the festive period**

Rent for Council Housing is payable for 48 weeks per year. The Council considers the last two weeks of the financial year, and the two weeks over the Christmas period as 'rent-free weeks' for Council house tenants. However - if you are in rent arrears – it is important that you continue to pay your rent as normal during this period. Rent for Homelessness accommodation is payable for 52 weeks per year and rent payments for garages are due monthly.

### **How do I pay my rent?**

You can pay your rent using one of the following methods:

**Payment via cheque or postal order** - (please do not send cash in the post).

**Credit or debit card** – you can telephone Customer Services on 01856 873 535. Alternatively, you can visit in person and use your credit or debit card to pay.

**Cash** – You can visit the collection offices in Kirkwall and Stromness and pay your rent there using cash. Although, please be aware that the Council offices will be closed between Thursday 25 December 2025, and Friday 2 January 2026.

**Internet banking** – You can pay your rent via internet banking to the following account: Bank: Royal Bank of Scotland, 1 Victoria Street, Kirkwall, KW15 1DP. Name of Account: OIC Rent Collection. Sort Code: 83-24-07. Account Number: 00233800. Please quote your Rent Payment Reference number when making the payment.

**Standing order** – you can contact your bank to set up a standing order to pay your rent.

**Online** – you can visit the Orkney Islands Council website to pay your rent online - [www.orkney.gov.uk/online/pay-it/online-payment/](http://www.orkney.gov.uk/online/pay-it/online-payment/)

### **Are you struggling to afford your rent?**

If you are an OIC tenant and you are struggling to afford your rent, please contact us to discuss your options. Rent is considered a priority bill, so it is important that you speak to us as soon as possible. You can contact Housing Services by telephoning 01856 873 535 (Between Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm, excluding public holidays). Alternatively, you can contact Finance Services on 01856 873 535 extension 2115. Please be aware that our offices will be closed between Thursday 25 December 2025, and Friday 2 January 2026.

If you have a low household income, you may be eligible for the 'housing costs' element of Universal Credit, or Housing Benefit. This will cover the cost of either all, or part of your rent. What you get depends on your circumstances, including your household income, the age of those living with you and any savings you have.

You can contact the Orkney Citizens' Advice Bureau for help in making a claim for benefits, or to discuss matters relating to debt advice and income maximisation. You can contact the Orkney Citizens' Advice Bureau by telephoning: 01856 875266 between 10am and 2pm, Monday to Friday to arrange an appointment. (Opening times may vary during the Christmas period).

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## Information and updates (Housing Services)

### Annual Report – information for tenants

Housing Services (Orkney Islands Council) have announced that the 'Annual Report' for tenants and service users (2024/25) is now available. This report highlights the key information relating to our performance, along with:

- The work we are doing to improve certain areas of the service.
- How our performance compares to other similar Scottish local authorities.
- Areas where we perform strongly, and areas that require improvement.
- How our performance this year compares to previous years.

The 2024/25 report shows that the Housing Service achieved a strong performance across a number of areas. Our properties are in good condition, with a low recorded number of repairs per property. We delivered well against the required energy efficiency standards, and our response to homelessness is good.

Areas requiring improvement include the time it takes to re-let empty properties, along with the time it takes to complete emergency repairs. You can find some of the key details from the 2024/25 Report, below. –

#### Levels of satisfaction:

Results from the satisfaction surveys “generally show good levels of satisfaction”. However, responses to consultations can be low. Our Tenant Participation Officer is working to improve engagement and encourage tenant participation.

#### Repairs:

A total of 346 **emergency repairs** were carried out in 2024/25. The average completion time in 2024/25 was 10.11 hours, compared to 8.97 hours in 2023/24.

1526 **non-emergency repairs** were carried out in 2024/25. The average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs in 2024/25 was 15.62 days. This is a decrease from an average of 17.23 days in 2023/24.

There were a variety of reasons for the delays to repairs, including bad weather, access issues and subcontractor delays. Work will be done to improve the completion times, including work to improve recording practices which will help to ensure consistency and accuracy.

#### Average re-let times:

The average time taken to relet a Council property in 2024/25 was 60.65 days. This was a decrease from 71.43 days in 2023/24.

Work is being done to make improvements to these areas, such as improving void turnaround times and minimising delays during the relet process.



## **Future builds**

The Council faces significant challenges due to restricted budgets, however, there is a high level of housing need. In light of this, we plan to continue with the development of social rented housing. In 2024-25, we built 4 new properties at Moar Drive and purchased an additional 32 properties. We also intend to build up to an additional 150 properties over the next ten years.

You can find a full copy of our Annual Report by visiting our website:

<https://www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/housing/housing-services-annual-reports/>

Alternatively, you can request a written copy, or a copy in a different format by contacting Housing Services on 01856 873 535 Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (excluding public holidays).

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## **Upcoming consultations**

Consultations help us to gather feedback from our tenants on important issues. This feedback is then used towards making decisions and implementing improvements. In 2026 the Housing Service will be conducting the wholesale tenant satisfaction survey. We are required to carry out this survey every three years, but we choose to conduct it every two years. This allows us to remain aligned with our tenant's current views on different parts of the service. We will be writing to you early in 2026 to invite you to take part in this survey. The higher the response rate, the better insight we have in to the areas that need improving.

We would encourage all our tenants to respond to this survey.

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## **Reminders - Water Safety Risk Assessments & Smoke alarm testing**

As part of our routine maintenance works, Water Safety Risk Assessments are being carried out to all our properties. These tests will help to ensure that the water supply in your home is safe and free from bacteria such as Legionella, along with the risks associated with it. We have arranged for Environmental Technical Services UK LTD to carry out these assessments.

Water Safety Risk Assessments have already been carried out to a number of our properties and further testing is scheduled for the near future. If your home is scheduled for testing, you will be notified via letter in advance of the visit. The Assessment should take around twenty minutes to complete and access to your hot-water tank and thermostatic mixing valves (if you have them) will be required.

Installation and testing of interlinked alarm systems is also being carried out to our properties. These tests will be carried out by G&A Barnie who will contact tenants via telephone or email to arrange their visit. Where G&A Barnie is completing an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) alongside the smoke alarm replacement, please allow an additional 2–3 hours for the EICR and 1 hour for the smoke alarms — approximately 4 hours in total.

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These tests are very important and help to ensure the safety of the water, and smoke alarm systems in your home, along with electrical safety. Please do not ignore these letters. If you have received a letter and would like to confirm that you are due a genuine visit, please contact Housing Services on 01856 873 535 (between Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding public holidays).

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## **Tenant Participation**

### **The Annual Assurance Statement - Presentation for Tenants**

In October of 2025, our Tenant Participation Officer delivered the presentation on our Annual Assurance Statement to members of the Residents' Panel. The Annual Assurance Statement is assurance given annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to confirm that we are meeting our duties and obligations required by law. The SHR looks at areas of our performance and compares it to the performance of other local authority landlords in Scotland.

It is important for us to involve our tenants in the performance process. This is why we invite members of our Residents Panel to attend the presentation annually to discuss our Annual Assurance Statement. For 2024/25, Orkney Islands Council provided assurance that it had met all its legal duties and obligations. Our performance indicated that we performed well in areas such as responses to complaints, and low levels of antisocial behaviour. However, improvements are required to areas such as the time taken to re-let empty properties, etc.

You can find more details along with the Annual Assurance Report by visiting the following section of our website: [www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/housing/annual-assurance-statement-housing-services/](http://www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/housing/annual-assurance-statement-housing-services/)

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### **The Importance of the Housing Newsletter**

As a social landlord, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires us to develop and support tenant participation. As part of this duty, we are required to provide a range of information to our tenants. The Scottish Social Housing Charter requires social landlords to manage their businesses so that 'tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord, get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides'. The Housing Newsletter helps us to keep our tenants and service users informed, and to comply with our duties relating to tenant participation.

Ensuring that our tenants and service users remain informed is a key factor in tenant participation. Our Tenant Participation Strategy underpins how we support tenant participation and one of the key priorities contained in the strategy is 'information sharing'. We aim to provide our tenants and service users with useful information in a variety of mediums; via our website, social media and on paper. The Housing Newsletter helps us to meet this priority.

Advantages of the Housing Newsletter –

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- Tenants and service users can stay up to date with news relating to Housing Services.
- Tenants remain informed and have access to relevant and useful information.
- Readers have the option to read the newsletter in a way that suits them, either online, or as a paper copy.
- The Newsletter can be made available in alternative formats, making the information more accessible.

We give our tenants and service users the option to read the Newsletter in a way that suits them. Our Newsletter is available as a paper-copy via post, or as a digital copy online. We allow tenants the opportunity to update their preferences on an annual basis. If you can, choosing to receive the newsletter online helps us to save paper where possible.

If you would like to receive the Housing Newsletter online via email, please contact Claire Pritchard on email: [claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk) to request a permission form.

## Rent consultation feedback

The Council is required by law to consult with tenants on any proposed rent increase and to take their views in to account when making a decision.

Currently, the Council consults with all tenants on the matter of rent increases once every three years. The consultation was extended to cover a three-year period to help provide tenants with certainty relating their rental position. To ensure that all tenants are given the opportunity to express their views, new tenants are consulted with during the intervening years.

The most recent rent consultation was carried out with **all our tenants** in December 2024. Tenants were provided with a survey asking them for their views on the proposals for the next three years. Following the consultation, Orkney Islands Council agreed that Council house rents should increase annually from 1 April as follows:

- 2025/26 - 4% increase
- 2026/27 - 4% increase
- 2027/28 - 2.5% increase

A further consultation was carried out in September 2025 with all **new tenants** housed since the December 2024 Consultation. A total of 98 surveys were sent out, and 7 were returned, equating to a 7.1% response rate. Not all surveys were completed in full for each question. You can find a more detailed breakdown of the results below: --

### Tenant Consultation Responses - Results

<b>Year:</b>	2025/26 (December 2024)		
<b>Response rate:</b>	7% of all tenants (67 of 896)		
<b>Rise.</b>	<b>Agreed.</b>	<b>Neither agreed nor disagreed.</b>	<b>Disagreed.</b>
2026/26 – 4%	34%	24%	40%
2026/27 – 4%	33%	28%	37%

2027/28 – 2.5%	45%	28%	37%
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<b>Year:</b>	2026/27 (September 2025)		
<b>Response rate:</b>	7.1% of new tenants (7 of 98)		
<b>Rise.</b>	<b>Agreed.</b>	<b>Neither agreed nor disagreed.</b>	<b>Disagreed.</b>
2026/27 – 4%	57%	14%	29%
2027/28 – 2.5%	57%	14%	29%

### Combined results

<b>Combined results</b>			
<b>Response rate</b>		7.4% of all tenants (74 of 994)	
<b>Rise.</b>	<b>Agreed.</b>	<b>Neither agreed nor disagreed.</b>	<b>Disagreed.</b>
2025/26	34%	24%	40%
2026/27	35%	27%	36%
2027/28	46%	27%	26%

## Tenant record form

It is important for the Housing Service to have up-to-date contact details for all our tenants. This allows us to contact you on necessary occasions, such as arranging repairs, or notifying you of important information, etc. To ensure that your contact details are up-to-date, please complete the tenant record form enclosed with this Newsletter. You can return the form using the freepost envelope provided. Please return the form by **Monday 19 January 2026**.

## We are looking for tenants to join our Armchair Panel!

Tenant participation is important – it allows tenants to engage with their landlord with a view to improving aspects of the Housing Service. Tenant feedback is used to influence the decisions we make and changes to policy that relate to Housing.

### What is the Armchair Panel?

The Armchair Panel gives tenants the option to participate in consultation and engagement opportunities from the comfort of their own home. Members can choose a method of engagement that suits them, such as telephone consultations, paper methods, or digital opportunities online. There are many factors that can limit a person's ability to engage. These include; family commitments, working hours, or residing in a rural area, etc. The Armchair Panel is designed with this in mind and aims to provide all tenants with the opportunity to participate.

### The benefits of joining:

There are many benefits to becoming a member of the Armchair Panel, these include:

- The chance to participate with your landlord from the comfort of your own home.
- An increased awareness in the role of Housing Services.
- Tenants are in control of how often they engage and the method they use.
- The chance to provide valuable feedback that can improve our service and influence the decisions we make.
- Transferrable skills and something to add to your CV.

To become a member you must be at least 18 years old and a Council house tenant of Orkney Islands Council.

If you would like further information on becoming a member of the Armchair Panel, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer, - Claire Pritchard on –

Email: [claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01856 873 535

(Claire's working hours are between 8:30am – 5:00pm, Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays).



## Tenant Participation Pop-up Events

Our Tenant Participation Officer hosted pop-up events in Stromness and Kirkwall to promote and encourage Tenant Participation. These events took place on Tuesday 2 December and Wednesday 3 December, 2025. Attendees were given the opportunity to learn more about Tenant Participation and the engagement opportunities provided by the Housing Service at Orkney Islands Council. This included information relating to our:

- Residents' Groups
- The Residents' Panel
- The Armchair Panel
- The Housing Newsletter
- Consultations & surveys

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend these events.

If you were unable to attend these events, but would like to learn more about tenant participation, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer.





## **The Warm Home Discount - Scotland 2025-26**

### What is the Warm Home Discount?

The Warm Home Discount provides eligible households with a one-off annual discount to their electricity bill of £150. This payment helps households on a low income with their energy costs during the colder months.

### Eligibility

To qualify for the payment in Scotland, Households need to be on a low income, or in receipt of certain means tested benefits. If you receive the guaranteed credit element of pension credit, you do not need to apply. You will receive a letter notifying you that you are eligible for the Warm Home Discount. In other circumstances, you will need to contact your energy provider directly. You may be eligible to the Warm Home Discount (Scotland) payment, if all of the following apply:

- You or your partner receives certain means tested benefits;
- Your energy provider is part of the Warm Home Discount scheme and;
- You or your partner's name is on the energy bill.

Your energy provider may have extra eligibility criteria, this is known as the 'broader group'. They will be able to tell you if any other benefits you receive make you eligible you under their scheme.

The Warm Home Discount is different to the Cold Weather Payment & Winter Fuel Payment. If you receive the Warm Home Discount, it will not affect these payments.

### How to apply

Please contact your energy provider directly to see if you qualify for the Warm Home Discount. You should contact them as soon as possible. Even if you were eligible for the payment last year, you will still need to contact your energy provider again this year. If you are eligible for the payment, the discount will be applied by the 31 March 2026. Please note however, you will need to stay with the same energy provider to ensure that you receive the discount for this period.

## **Benefits, support & further information**

### **Improving the Cancer Journey**

#### Macmillan – Improving the Cancer Journey Island Services

'Improving the Cancer Journey' (ICJ) is here to support people living in Orkney that have been affected by cancer.

Cancer can affect many different aspects of your life, along with the lives of those around you. It can be difficult to know what support is available and how to access it. Improving the Cancer Journey works in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support to help

individuals affected by cancer access none-clinical services in Orkney.

You can visit the following website to access more information, along with a self-referral form:

<https://www.ohb.scot.nhs.uk/.../improving-the-cancer.../>

Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ), NHS Orkney - contact details:

Email: [ork.icj@nhs.scot](mailto:ork.icj@nhs.scot)

Telephone: 01856 888084 (Public Health Department)

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## **NHSO Public Health Winter Health Messages**

### **Vaccines**

- The flu and coronavirus vaccines are being offered from September 2025.
- If you're eligible, you will receive a letter, email or text message with details of your appointment or information on how you can book one.
- For further information please go to the following website: [www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/winter-vaccines/](http://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/winter-vaccines/)

### **Winter illnesses**

- Most people are no longer required to test if they develop respiratory symptoms.
- If you do become unwell, try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people as far as you can.
- If you do need to leave home, wear a well-fitting face covering.
- For further advice please see [www.nhsinform.scot/winter-illness/](http://www.nhsinform.scot/winter-illness/)

### **Diarrhoea/Vomiting**

- Gastroenteritis is a very common condition that causes diarrhoea and vomiting. It's usually caused by a bacterial or viral tummy bug.
- It affects people of all ages, but is particularly common in young children. Most cases in children are caused by a virus called rotavirus. Cases in adults are usually caused by the 'winter vomiting bug'.
- Gastroenteritis can be very unpleasant, but it usually clears up by itself within a week. You can normally look after yourself or your child at home until you're feeling better.
- Try to avoid going to your GP, as gastroenteritis can spread to others very easily. Phone **111** or your GP if you're concerned or need any advice. More information

can be found at [www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/gastroenteritis/](http://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/gastroenteritis/)

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### **Message from Quit Your Way Orkney – Stop Smoking Service**



Quit Your Way Orkney is your free, friendly, local stop smoking service. We support any Orkney resident to quit smoking in the way that works best for them. If you have used our service before and returned to smoking, we will support you with another quit attempt, without judgement.

With 12 weeks of support from a specialist stop smoking service and stop smoking medication, you are 3 times more likely to quit smoking and remain a non-smoker than if you try on your own.

Get in touch with us to find out more or to refer yourself for support:

- Using the green 'Click To Be Contacted' button on NHS Inform - <https://www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/health-and-wellbeing-services/12902%20ork1116>
- Scanning the QR code and using the green 'Click To Be Contacted' button on NHS Inform
- Phoning 0800 0356344 (freephone) or 01856 888084
- Sending an email to [ork.quityourway@nhs.scot](mailto:ork.quityourway@nhs.scot)



**QR Code for 'Click to be Contacted'**

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### **ESOL qualifications**

The Learning Link are offering formal qualifications in English as a second or other language. For more details, please read the information in this article: --

**SQA Approved Formal Qualifications with The Learning Link:**

- ESOL National 2 (SQA)
- ESOL National 3 (SQA)
- ESOL National 4 (SQA)

**Current ESOL - TLL**

- ESOL beginner's conversation skills group – Tuesday morning (mixed nationalities)
- ESOL advanced conversational skills group (Wednesday morning)
- ESOL Nat 4 with KP

**Online ESOL Formal Learning Opportunities:**

- ESOL Formal online learning (QR code) SCQF levels 3, 4, 5

**Websites That Offer Free ESOL Tests to Establish Their Current Level of English:**

- <https://www.esolcentre.uk/placement-test.html>
- <https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/english-level-test>
- <https://www.esl.co.uk/en/online-language-tests/english-test#paragraph-9928>

If you would like to find out more, you can contact the Learning Link on:

Telephone: 01856 879 200

Email: [thelearninglinkenquiries@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:thelearninglinkenquiries@orkney.gov.uk)

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**Tackling Household Affordable Warmth Orkney**

THAW Orkney is a charitable organisation that was established in 2014. THAW helps to provide energy advice and access to wider energy support to the people of Orkney.

THAW provides a range of services to help tenants who are struggling to keep their heating on. THAW also provides help to those struggling with energy debt, energy bills and energy efficiency. The help that THAW provides includes:

- Information and advice on energy efficiency and heating systems.
- Electricity tariff switching and billing support.
- Assistance to access other grant funded programmes.
- Financial support for prepayment and credit meters.
- Support with energy debt.

If you are experiencing issues with your bills or energy supply, please contact your supplier first as they may be able to resolve issues with you over the telephone. Otherwise, if you need any other help with energy efficiency, energy bills or your heating system, feel free to contact THAW Orkney on:

Email: [info@thaworkney.co.uk](mailto:info@thaworkney.co.uk)

Website: <https://www.thaworkney.co.uk/>

Telephone: 01856 878 388

THAW have recently moved premises - they are now located at **12-14 Queen Street, Kirkwall, KW15 1JE**

Office hours: Monday - Tuesday &  
Thursday - Friday, 9.30am-4.30pm



## Greener Orkney's 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 Community Fridge receives donations of surplus food from many local organisations on a regular basis. Anyone can pop along to the Community Fridge – but, please be aware - supply may be limited or restricted. Generally, there is a limit of three items per person, unless there is a surplus. A 50p donation is requested to help towards the running costs of the Project.

Regular updates are posted to the Greener Orkney Community Fridge Facebook page with information on the food that is available –  
[www.facebook.com/greenerorkneycommunityfridge](https://www.facebook.com/greenerorkneycommunityfridge)

### Locations:

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



### Opening times:

	<b>Kirkwall – 26 Bridge Street</b>	<b>Stromness – 116 Victoria Street</b>
<b>Monday</b>	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
<b>Tuesday</b>	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
<b>Wednesday</b>	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
<b>Thursday</b>	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm



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<b>Friday</b>	8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
<b>Saturday</b>	12:00 pm – 2 pm	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm
<b>Sunday</b>	Closed	8:30 pm– 9:00 pm

Opening times over the festive period may vary – please see the Greener Orkney Community Fridge Facebook page for more information.

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## Orkney Foodbank

Orkney Foodbank continues to be busy providing individuals and families throughout Orkney with food and household essentials, as well as advice and referrals to other forms of help. Winter, especially December, is our busiest time and we couldn't do it without the support of the Orkney community. We value every donation, large or small; every tin of soup and toothbrush is needed!



If you or anyone you know is struggling to afford food this winter, please reach out through the Housing Service, Social Work, CAB, THAW, your GP or contact us directly via [info@orkney.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@orkney.foodbank.org.uk)

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas from all at Orkney Foodbank!

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**Office contact details****Housing Management:**

Telephone: 01856873535.

Email: [allocations@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:allocations@orkney.gov.uk)

**Homelessness and Advice:**

Telephone: 01856873535.

Email: [homeless@orkney.gov.uk](mailto: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.