

Housing News

The newsletter of Orkney Islands Council Housing Services.

Issue 81, Autumn 2024.



ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

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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

Featured Articles

Landlines - digital switch-over

Landlines in the UK are going digital.

What does this mean?

Between now and 2025, most telephone providers will be switching customers from existing analogue landlines to new landline services that use digital technology. Your provider should be in contact with you before the switch over to let you know if you will be affected. Your provider will also advise you on what to do, so your service isn't affected. If you have any questions relating to the digital switch-over, you should contact your provider directly.

Landlines are going digital...

Contact your telecoms provider for more information.



Health monitoring devices

People who use health monitoring devices should check whether the digital switch-over will affect how they work. If you have other devices connected to your phone line, such as alarm systems, you may need to upgrade these devices to ensure that they are compatible. If you are unsure whether your device or equipment will be affected, contact the supplier or device manufacturer directly.

For those tenants currently living in Sheltered Housing the Housing Service is currently investigating solutions to upgrade the current systems and will provide more information directly to those affected tenants.

If you or someone you know depends on a landline, or a telecare device connected to a landline - and who does not live within Sheltered Housing - you can contact the Telecare Team at Orkney Islands Council – Telephone number: 01856 873 535 extension 2635.

How will my other devices be affected?

If you have other devices that require a landline connection - such as alarm systems – these may need upgrading to ensure that they work with the new digital system. If you are unsure whether your device will be affected, contact the supplier or device manufacturer to check whether it will work with a digital phone line.

Emergency situations:

Digital landlines need power to work. In the event of a power cut, your digital landline will not work. If you need to contact emergency services during a power cut, you should still be able to use your mobile phone, providing it is charged and you have signal. If you are worried about contacting emergency services during a power cut, contact your telecoms provider. If you have additional needs such as a health pendant, or you live in an area without mobile signal, please contact your telecoms provider. Your telecoms provider will offer a solution that allows you to contact emergency services in the event of a power-cut.

If you are a BT customer and you have any queries, concerns, identify as vulnerable, or you'd like to discuss any additional needs that you may have, you can contact BT directly at 0330 1234 150.

You can visit the following website for more information - <http://www.bt.com/digitalvoice>

Carness Housing Development

Hossack Park update

Hossack Park is now complete. The new scheme is part of the Council's effort to boost the current housing stock.

There are 14 houses in total, including a mixture of 2 and 3 bedroom houses and bungalows. Each property is fitted with Smart Meters, sprinkler systems, a private



parking space and a port to install an electrical vehicle charger. Each property also has a private garden. There is a walled communal area at the centre of Hossack Park for residents to enjoy. Work was completed in July 2024 and tenants have since moved into their new homes.

PV Tenant's Guide

If your home is lucky enough to be fitted with solar photovoltaic (PV) system, this converts sunlight into usable electricity for the tenant. The solar panels capture sunlight, which the inverter then converts into electricity. This electricity can be used immediately to power appliances in your home, such as a kettle or fridge/freezer. Any surplus electricity that isn't used is redirected to the grid. Solar panels generate energy all year round even on cloudy days, but the more sunshine the more energy you'll produce. It can be difficult to quantify how much each tenant saves as each tenant has different needs and living habits. Every home that is fitted with solar panels is also fitted with a meter to enable Orkney Islands Council to remote read the usage of the panels to ensure that each property with solar panels is working as it should be.

Priority services register

What is the Priority Services Register?

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

What sort of support is provided?

If you are registered on 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.
 - Are blind or partially sighted.
 - Have a Chronic illness.
 - Have anxiety, depression or any other mental health condition.
-

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- Live with children under 5 years old.
 - Are over 60 years old.
 - Temporarily need extra support.
 - Need documents translating into another language or format.

You can find out more information by:

Visiting the following website: www.psrscotland.com

Or telephone: 08002943259

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

Information and updates (Housing Services)

Program of works

Are you scheduled to have improvements and works carried out on your home?

We want to notify you of the scheduled works for 2024/25 that may affect your home. Orkney Islands Council are looking to carry out improvements to some of our properties in 2024-25. Below is some more information on when and where we aim to carry out these works —

Existing Windows and External Doors

Which properties will be subject to works?

We are aiming to replace windows and doors at:

- Buttquoy Place;
- Earl Sigurd Street;
- Earl Thorfinn Street;
- John Street;
- Pumpwell Park.

When will the works take place?

New uPVC double glazed units and doors are scheduled to start in late **spring / summer 2025**. Your Housing Officer will confirm dates closer to the installation. Properties for the 2026 replacement program are currently being determined.

Heating units

Which properties will be subject to works?

We are aiming to fit new heating systems at:

- Lambaness (Sheltered Housing) – 13nr properties including the common room.

When will the works take place?

We are replacing existing storage heaters with modern fan assisted storage units. Work is due to start in **early 2025**.

Tenant Participation

Ways to engage

Stay in touch with Housing Services!

Facebook:

We post regular updates and information on our Facebook Page. You can find us on Facebook by visiting www.facebook.com/OIChousingservices. Please note, you will need an internet connection, a Facebook account and a suitable device to access our Facebook page.

Join our Residents' Panel:

The Residents' Panel is run jointly between Orkney Islands Council and Orkney Housing Association Limited. The Residents' Panel meet several times a year to discuss matters relating to Housing Services. Members examine certain areas of the service and provide their feedback. Feedback is given due consideration when making decisions or deciding whether improvements need to be made. We are always looking for new members to join our Panel – if you would like more information, or if you are interested in joining – please contact our Tenant Participation Officer (details below) Please note, you need to be 18 or older and a tenant of Orkney Islands Council to join the Residents' Panel.

Join the Armchair Panel:

The Armchair Panel provides tenants with the opportunity to engage in consultations and events from their own home. Orkney Islands Council offers members the choice in how they would like to take part, this includes paper-based methods and online. If you would like to hear more information on our Armchair Panel, or if you're interested in joining – please contact our Tenant Participation Officer on the details at the end of this article. Please note, you need to be 18 or older and a tenant of Orkney Islands Council to join the Armchair' Panel.

Form your own Residents' Association:

Many people are keen to improve the area they live in, and it is likely that members of your community are too. Residents' Associations are formed by members of a local community who wish to come together and make a positive change to the area they live in. These groups are referred to as 'Residents' Associations as they consist of tenants from Orkney Islands Council, tenants who rent privately, and people who own their home. Registered

Residents' Associations may also be entitled to grants that can be used towards the cost of running the Association and making improvements to their local area.

For more information, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer on 01856 873 535 (Mon – Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding public holidays) or email: claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk

Tenant Participation Strategy Consultation

Orkney Islands Council have been conducting a consultation on our Tenant Participation Strategy. We are required by law to have a Tenant Participation Strategy – this is a plan that outlines our approach to tenant participation and engagement. Tenant Participation is an important part of our work at Housing Services. Your views and feedback allow us to make the necessary improvements to our service and are taken in to account when we make decisions.

We wanted to hear feedback from our service users on our current approach to Tenant Participation. Our Tenant Participation Officer hosted a series of events to engage in discussions with service users on how we may improve our current approach. These events were held both online and in-person and attendees were given the choice to attend during the evening, or day-time. We provided a variety of ways for individuals to engage – these included events, discussions, and both online or paper surveys. We recognise that there are many factors that can impact an individual's ability to take part. For example, family or work commitments, location and disability, etc. We hope that by offering a variety of ways to engage, individuals feel more able to take part.

Thank you to all those who engaged in our consultation. The feedback we received will be used towards making the necessary improvements to our approach to tenant participation.



Customer Satisfaction results

Local authority landlords are required by law to carry out a wholesale customer satisfaction survey every three years. However, Orkney Islands Council carries out the customer satisfaction survey every two years. This ensures we are aligned with our current tenants and their views. You can find a summary of the key findings below from the 2024 survey below:

These results are based on feedback from 337 tenants:

Overall service

74% of respondents felt satisfied with the overall service, 28% said they were very satisfied and 15% felt dissatisfied.

Communications and participation

77% of respondents felt that the Housing Service is good at keeping them informed about their service and decisions. This was an increase from 70% in 2022.

Satisfaction with opportunities to take part in the Housing Services decision making process increased from 61% in 2022 to 71% in 2024.

Contact with the Housing Service

61% of respondents said that they had contacted the Housing Service in the last 12 months with a query (not relating to rent or service charges). In 2024, 82% of respondents felt that staff were helpful compared to 75% in 2022. In 2024, 71% felt that their query was dealt with in a reasonable time frame and 80% had a positive view of the overall quality of customer service.

Complaints

The number of respondents who made a complaint in the last 12 months had decreased from 7% in 2022 to 5% in 2024. 39% of those that had made a complaint expressed satisfaction with the way their complaint was handled.

The Home

Of those individuals who moved into their home in the last year, the majority were satisfied with the standard of their home when they moved in.

In 2024, 68% of respondents were satisfied with the overall quality of their home, this was compared to 75% recorded in 2022.

Repairs & Housing Services

Amongst those who had repairs carried out in the last 12 months, 84% were satisfied with the service they received.

64% of respondents considered their rent to be good value for money.

The Neighbourhood

In 2024, 59% of respondents were satisfied with Housing Services' contribution to the management of their neighbourhood. This decreased from 67% in 2022.

If you would like to access a summary of the findings, please email housing@orkney.gov.uk, or telephone 01856 873 535 (Mon – Friday 9am – 5pm excluding public holidays).

Benefits, financial information & further support

Changes to the Winter fuel payment

What is the Winter Fuel payment?

The Winter Fuel Payment is an annual payment paid to pensioners to help them with the cost of heating their home. Responsibility for the Winter Fuel Payment is being taken over by Scotland in the year 2024/25.

Changes to the Winter Fuel Payment

The Scottish Government has confirmed that the annual Winter Fuel Payment will **no longer be available to all pensioners**. The Winter Fuel Payment will now be means tested – this means that you must be in receipt of an eligible benefit to qualify for the payment. In order to qualify, you must be over state pension age and in receipt of means tested benefit, such as pension credit.

How do I claim the Winter Fuel Payment?

In most cases, those eligible will receive the payment automatically.

Winter Heating Payment

Please note that the Winter Fuel Payment is separate to the 'Winter Heating Payment'. The Winter Heating Payment is available to those on low-income benefits who have extra heating needs. Those eligible for the Winter Heating Payment do not need to apply - qualifying individuals should receive the payment automatically through Social Security Scotland.

Further help with your energy bills:

Warm Homes Discount Scheme

The Warm Homes Discount is a one-off discount of £150. If you are eligible, this discount will be applied directly to your energy bill by your energy provider.

You qualify for the Warm Homes Discount if one of the following applies:

- You get the [Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit](#).
- You [are on a low income in Scotland](#) and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme.

If you are on a low income you will need to speak to your energy provider to apply for the Warm Homes Discount. Other eligible individuals should have the discount applied automatically to their energy bill.

Other sources of help:

If you are worried about your energy bills or are struggling to afford them, contact your energy provider to discuss your options. For further advice, you can contact the following:

Citizens Advice Bureau Orkney

Telephone: 01856 875266 (opening hours 10am to 2pm, Monday-Friday but voicemails can be left outwith these times) email: bureau@orkneycab.casonine.org.uk

THAW Orkney

Tel: [01856 878388](tel:01856878388) Email: info@thaworkney.co.uk

You can also visit the Fuelbank Foundation website for further advice and information relating to your energy bill - www.fuelbankfoundation.org/individuals/

THAW Orkney

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 and those struggling with energy debt. THAW also provides services to help tenants with energy bills and energy efficiency, these include:

- 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. Alternatively, if you are experiencing short term energy debt or struggling to heat your home, you can apply for the Home Heating Support Fund (details below).

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

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

Telephone: 01856878388

Anchor Buildings,
Bridge Street,
Kirkwall,
Orkney, KW15 1HR

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



Home heating support fund:

<https://homeheatingadvice.scot/>

Self referral: <https://homeheatingadvice.scot/home-individual/>

Email: support@homeheatingadvice.scot

Cost of Living support – Money Map

Citizens Advice Scotland's Money Map website was launched to help you find sources of online support to help you:-

- Increase your income;
- Reduce your bills;
- Ease the cost of daily living.



The website will take you through a quick questionnaire which then creates a personalised list of the areas that you might want to spend more time looking into. You can follow these personalised links to get advice and support with the areas that are impacting you.

There is a wide range of support available including benefit entitlement, options for reducing energy costs, help with council tax or rent/mortgage payments and grant information. There are also links to tools to help you budget, including - information on maximising your available money by switching suppliers, getting the most out of your banking and ensuring your tax code is correct.

Citizens Advice Scotland strongly recommend that everyone gives the budget planner a try as it can be a useful way of identifying exactly where your money is going each month. This is the best starting point for identifying any areas that you may be able to reduce your expenditure. When you use the Money Helper budget planner you will also get personalised tips once you have completed it.

The website is designed as a self-help service for anyone who can use online resources. However, it is not intended to replace the local Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau - you are still able to contact us for an appointment to discuss any of the above issues face to face, and get help to work through them.

You can find the website by visiting moneymap.scot. If you don't have access to the internet, or if you would prefer to speak to an adviser, you can contact Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau on –

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

CLD – Employability Team

The Community Learning and Development – Employability Team are here to support people who would like to take steps towards learning, training and work. For example, you could be looking for your first job, or going back to work after a break to look after your family. The team can also support parents who are working, but would like to progress within their career or look at other employment opportunities. The team work with individuals to look at their personal goals and offer support through a variety of one-to-one or group work sessions to help you achieve these. The team often work with a variety of partners across Orkney to help people gain confidence, skills and experience to make steps towards employment or progress within the workplace.

The benefits of community learning include:

- Bringing people together;
- Helping to form supportive communities;
- Improving skills and increasing confidence;
- Helping to support health and wellbeing.

The Council's Community Learning and Development Service has helped to create 'The Community Learning guide to courses'. This was created together with Activelife, local schools, community associations and community centres. This guide contains details on the available courses. Courses are offered subject to demand and on a first come first served basis. You can find a copy of this Guide by visiting our website at: www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/community-learning-and-development

Alternatively, you can request a written copy by contacting Community Learning and Development on the details below.

Email: employability.support@orkney.gov

You can contact Community Learning and development on, telephone: 01856 873535. To enrol in a class being held at The Learning Link please call 01856 879200 or email thelearninglinkenquiries@orkney.gov.uk. These courses are not available to book through Customer Services or online.

Parent power

Increase your parent power

We can help you:

- gain confidence, knowledge and skills
- progress in your learning and training
- increase your employment opportunities
- and increase your household income



Increase your parent power:

- Gain confidence, knowledge and skills.
- Progress in your learning and training.
- Increase your employment opportunities.
- Increase your household income.

We can support parents:

- from lower income families.
- who are single, who are relatively young.
- those with three or more children.
- with children under 1 year old.
- who have children with a disability, or who have a disability themselves.

We also work with parents who are employed, or looking to gain employment.

What we can offer:

We will work with you to establish your goals and aspirations, offering the support you need. This might include confidence building, training, information and other help with progressing in your career.

To check your eligibility and apply call 01856 873535 ext 2413, or visit www.orkney.gov.uk/ParentPower

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's Community Fridge receives donations of surplus food from many local organisations on a regular basis. Anyone can pop along to the Community Fridge, although please be aware, that the supply is sometimes limited. Regular updates are posted on their Facebook page with information on the food that is available –

www.facebook.com/greenerorkneycommunityfridge

Locations:

- 26 Bridge Street, Kirkwall and;
- 116 Victoria Street, Stromness.



Opening times:

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

Financial support from Social Security Scotland

Social Security Scotland provides 14 benefits for families, low-income households, disabled people and carers.

If you need help to check what financial support you could be eligible for and help to apply, local support is available

Advisers from Social Security Scotland attend Kirkwall Library on Wednesday mornings and can visit other venues if requested, including Warehouse Buildings, Dounby Milestone Church, Hope Community School, Orkney Library & Archives (Kirkwall) and Orphir and Stenness Church.

You can also check eligibility and apply online at mygov.scot, by post or over the phone by calling Social Security Scotland free on 0800 182 2222.

[Information in other languages](#) is available and an interpreter can be arranged.

Support for disabled people

[Child Disability Payment](#) and [Adult Disability Payment](#) provide extra money to help with the costs that come with having a disability or long-term health condition. If you currently get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), your award will automatically transfer to Social Security Scotland.

Pension Age Disability Payment is a new benefit that is replacing Attendance Allowance in Scotland. It is for people of State Pension Age and over who have a disability or long-term health condition and who need help looking after themselves or supervision to stay safe.

The payment was planned to launch in Orkney on 21 October when it will be open for new applications. If you are getting Attendance Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) your award will be transferred to Pension Age Disability Payment in 2025. You do not need to apply for Pension Age Disability Payment.

People can apply under special rules if they have a [terminal illness](#). This means that Social Security Scotland will fast track their application.

Benefits for families

Family costs can be tricky to balance. If you're getting Universal Credit, tax credits or other qualifying benefits, you could be entitled to five family payments, including:

- [Scottish Child Payment](#) – over £100 every four weeks to help towards the costs of looking after each child under 16.
- [Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment](#) – one off payment of up to £754.65 after 24 weeks of pregnancy up until a baby turns 6 months.
- [Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment](#) – one off payment of £314.45 to help with the costs of early learning when a child is between two and three years and six months.
- [Best Start Grant School Age Payment](#) – one off payment of £314.45 to help with the costs of starting school when a child is first old enough to start primary one
- [Best Start Foods](#) – up to £42.40 every four weeks from pregnancy up to when a child turns three to help buy healthy food.

Financial help to pay for a funeral

The cost of paying for a funeral can cause extra strain for many people at a difficult time. [Funeral Support Payment](#) provides eligible people getting certain qualifying benefits with financial support to help pay for a partner, child, parent or sibling's funeral.

Applications can be made any time from the person's death until six months after the date of the funeral.

Support for young people to start a new job

[Job Start Payment](#) is available to young people and care leavers when they are offered a job after a period of unemployment. The one-off payment helps with the costs of starting a new job such as the costs of travel, work clothes or childcare. Eligible people receive a one-off payment of £294.70 or £471.50 if they are a main carer of any children.

Carer benefits

[Carer Support Payment](#) is replacing Carer's Allowance in Scotland. It is a new benefit for unpaid carers and will be available in Orkney and the rest of Scotland from 4 November. People can still apply for Carer's Allowance from the Department of Work and Pensions until then so check if you are eligible and don't miss out on financial support.

[Young Carer Grant](#) is available to people aged 16 to 18 who are caring for someone getting a certain disability benefit for an average of 16 hours a week.

[Carer's Allowance Supplement](#) is an automatic payment for unpaid carers who are getting Carer Support Payment from Social Security Scotland or Carer's Allowance from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).



Office Contact Details

Housing Management:

Telephone: 01856873535.

Email: allocations@orkney.gov.uk

Homelessness and Advice:

Telephone: 01856873535.

Email: homeless@orkney.gov.uk

Homelessness Out of Hours Service:

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

Write to us:

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

Emergency Duty Worker Service:

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

Out of Hours Repair Service

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

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

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

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

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

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

Homelessness Service

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