

Minute

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee

Wednesday, 29 March 2023, 09:30.

Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.



Present

Councillors Gwenda M Shearer, Jean E Stevenson, Graham A Bevan, Stephen G Clackson, Alexander G Cowie, Steven B Heddle, Rachael A King, James R Moar, John A R Scott, Ivan A Taylor and Heather N Woodbridge.

Religious Representatives:

Reverend Susan Kirkbride and Reverend Fraser Macnaughton.

Teacher Representatives:

Jo Hill and Mary Maley.

Present via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

Councillor James W Stockan.

Religious Representative:

Marie Locke.

Clerk

- Sandra Craigie, Committees Officer.

In Attendance

- James Wylie, Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.
- Peter Diamond, Head of Education.
- Steve Arnold, Service Manager (Support for Learning and Inclusion) (for Items 1 to 5).
- Morag Miller, Service Manager (Primary Education) (for Items 1 to 5).
- Lesley Mulraine, Service Manager (Housing, Homelessness and Schoolcare Accommodation).
- Jane Partridge, Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary Education) (for Items 1 to 5).
- Pat Robinson, Service Manager (Accounting).
- Ian Rushbrook, Service Manager (Property and Capital Projects) (for Items 4 to 6).
- Sheila Tulloch, Service Manager (Legal Services).

In Attendance via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

- Frances Troup, Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing.
- Catherine Diamond, Service Manager (Early Learning and Childcare) (for Items 1 to 5).
- Paul Barber, Head Teacher, Stromness Academy (for Items 3 to 5).
- Claire Meakin, Head Teacher, Kirkwall Grammar School (for Items 3 to 5).

Observing

- David Brown, Service Manager (Resources) (for Items 1 to 5 and 7 to 9).
- Garry Burton, Service Manager (Leisure and Culture).
- Kerry Spence, Service Manager (Community Learning, Employment and Employability).
- Veer Bansal, Solicitor.

Declarations of Interest

- No declarations of interest were intimated.

Chair

- Councillor Gwenda M Shearer.

1. Collaborative Improvement Review of Senior Phase

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary), the Committee:

Noted:

1.1. That, under the leadership of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and in partnership with Education Scotland, all local authority areas in Scotland had made a commitment to work together to undertake Collaborative Improvement Reviews.

1.2. That a Collaborative Review Project Team, comprising representatives from the undernoted authorities, was established in early 2022 with a remit to agree the focus of a review of the Senior Phase curriculum and post-school outcomes and design a delivery programme:

- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.
- Shetland Islands Council.
- Orkney Islands Council.
- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland.
- Education Scotland Northern Alliance Regional Team.

The Committee scrutinised:

1.3. The findings of the Three Island Authorities Collaborative Review of the Senior Phase, carried out in conjunction with the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and Education Scotland, detailed in Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, and obtained assurance.

2. Guidance for Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Support for Learning and Inclusion), the Committee:

Noted:

2.1. That the draft Guidance for Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, provided support for both schools and parents/carers to ensure each child's attendance at school was as regular as possible.

2.2. That the draft Guidance for Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools and the steps taken to support poor attendance at school did not apply to Early Learning and Childcare settings, as attendance was not statutory.

2.3. That, should the draft Guidance for Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools, be approved, the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing would arrange for communication to be issued regarding the benefits of regular attendance at school for all children and young people.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

2.4. That the Guidance for Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools, attached as Appendix 1 to this Minute, be approved.

3. Raising Attainment Strategy

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Primary Education), the Committee:

Noted:

3.1. That the purpose of the Raising Attainment Strategy, which identified the next steps and actions required in order to raise attainment across the authority, was to ensure that robust plans were in place to continue to meet both the Council and the Scottish Government's vision to ensure that every child in Orkney could fulfil their potential.

3.2. That the Raising Attainment Strategy detailed the significant work already undertaken to address previously low attainment returns in the Broad General Education resulting in improved outcomes.

3.3. That the Raising Attainment Strategy pulled together relevant local and national key documents and plans clearly defining what continued actions would be undertaken during the period of the Strategy to meet national and local expectations and commitments in raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

3.4. That the Raising Attainment Strategy 2023-2026, attached as Appendix 2 to this Minute, be approved.

4. Orkney Schools Attainment

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary Education), the Committee:

Scrutinised the Orkney Schools Attainment Report for academic session 2021/22, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, and obtained assurance with regard to the level of success and achievement of children and young people.

5. St Magnus Cathedral Sub-committee

After consideration of the draft Minute of the Meeting of the St Magnus Cathedral Sub-committee held on 13 March 2023, copies of which had been circulated, the Committee:

Resolved:

5.1. On the motion of Councillor Gwenda M Shearer, seconded by Councillor Jean E Stevenson, to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the St Magnus Cathedral Sub-committee held on 13 March 2023, as a true record.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

5.2. That the recommendations at paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 of the Minute of the Meeting of the St Magnus Cathedral Sub-committee held on 13 March 2023, attached as Appendix 3 to this Minute, be approved.

6. Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Repairs and Maintenance Programme – Proposed Programme for 2023/24

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

6.1. That the draft revenue budget for the Housing Revenue Account for 2023/24 made provision for repairs and maintenance, amounting to £1,615,500.

The Committee resolved, in terms of delegated powers:

6.2. That, subject to an adequate budget being established, the undernoted programme of revenue repairs and maintenance in respect of the Council's housing stock for 2023/24, funded from the Housing Revenue Account, be approved:

- Cyclical Maintenance – £91,100.
- Planned Maintenance – £524,900.
- Reactive Repairs – £415,200.
- Voids/Improvements/Adaptations – £368,100.
- In-House Professional Fees – £216,200.

7. Profile of Homelessness

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

7.1. That, on 8 September 2021, when considering a revised Profile of Homelessness, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee recommended:

- That the Profile of Homelessness 2021 to 2026 be approved for consultation.
- That the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing should submit a report, to the meeting of the Committee to be held in March 2022, regarding the outcome of the consultation exercise, referred to above, together with a revised Profile of Homelessness for adoption.

7.2. That a consultation exercise in respect of the draft Profile of Homelessness was undertaken between August and November 2022, with a summary of consultation responses received outlined in section 6 of the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

7.3. That the Profile of Homelessness had been revised to respond to the matters raised through the consultation process.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council**:

7.4. That the Profile of Homelessness for 2023 to 2028, attached as Appendix 4 to this Minute, be approved.

8. Homelessness Strategy

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

8.1. That, on 8 September 2021, when considering a revised Homelessness Strategy, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee recommended:

- That the draft Homelessness Strategy be approved for consultation purposes.
- That the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing should submit a report, to the meeting of the Committee to be held in March 2022, regarding the outcome of the consultation process, referred to above, together with a revised Homelessness Strategy for adoption.

8.2. That a consultation exercise in respect of the draft Homelessness Strategy was undertaken between August and November 2022, with a summary of responses received outlined in section 5 of the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

8.3. That the draft Homelessness Strategy had been revised to respond to the matters raised through the consultation process and statistical information had been updated to remain reflective of the current position.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

8.4. That the Homelessness Strategy for 2023 to 2028, attached as Appendix 5 to this report, be approved.

Councillor Stephen B Heddle left the meeting during discussion of this item.

9. Conclusion of Meeting

At 12:17 the Chair declared the meeting concluded.

Signed: Gwenda M Shearer.



Orkney Islands Council

Education Leisure and Housing

**Guidance for Monitoring
and Tracking Attendance
in Schools**

Version Control

Document Reference.	Revision.	Issue Date.	Reason for Issue.	Reviewer.	Sign.
SLI/001	00.	3 May 2023.	New Policy.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion	

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1. Introduction and Aims

This guidance explains the responsibilities Education, Leisure and Housing Service have along with schools to monitor and track the attendance of children and young people in school and what actions can be taken if attendance is or becomes a cause for concern. It is important that schools and parents/carers work in partnership to support good attendance at school. If children/young people do not attend, their learning experience and wellbeing is compromised. Furthermore, good attendance promotes the best learning opportunities, punctuality and reliability; all valuable attributes for ongoing learning, life in general and for success within the world of work. Regular attendance at school also helps to build strong and positive relationships with students and staff alike which can act as protective factors when facing difficult times.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Encourage good relationships between our schools and parents/carers.
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively, and absence followed up quickly on the day to ensure the safety of all children and young people.
- Raise awareness of attendance by making all staff, parents, carers, children and young people aware of its importance and their responsibilities.

2. Responsibility of parents/carers

Parents/carers are legally responsible for making sure that their child is educated. Most parents/carers choose to send their child to school, though some do educate their child at home. Children and young people should attend school regularly if they are registered at a local authority school and parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure that they do. We recognise that there is a need to establish strong school-home links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.

3. The law and school attendance

All children and young people enrolled at local authority schools should attend regularly and should not be absent without a valid reason from primary 1 onwards. Children in Early Learning and childcare do not have a statutory requirement to attend in the same way as children from primary 1 onwards. Schools are expected to monitor attendance and take action which should include contacting the parents/carers of any child or young person not attending regularly, to support and help overcome any difficulties related to attendance. If a child or young person continues to be regularly absent from school without adequate explanation, the law says that parents/carers may be guilty of an offence.

If communication breaks down between parents/carers and the local authority, and the problem of non-attendance remains, then the local authority can decide that they have done enough to support a child but a parent/carer is not doing what they can. In these circumstances the local authority can use the law to insist that a parent does more to get their child to school.

The legal avenues available include the following:

- making an attendance order.
- Pursuing non-attendance through the courts.
- Making a referral to the Children’s Reporter, where there are other worries about a child on top of not attending school.

Information about attendance orders and court procedures can be found in Appendix 1 of [Guidance to education authorities in Scotland on the promotion of good attendance and the management of attendance issued by the Scottish Government](#).

4. Reasons for absence

As long as the school has been informed of the reason for the absence, and the school is satisfied that this is a valid reason, then the absence would be called an authorised absence. The following are valid reasons for absence:

- The child or young person is ill or has ongoing/long term health issues.
- The child or young person is attending a doctor or other medical appointment.
- The child or young person is going to a meeting about a Children’s Hearing or court, or if they are going to a Children’s Hearing, care review or court.
- Someone close to the child or young person has died.
- There is a crisis or serious difficulty at home or in the family.
- The child or young person is going to a religious ceremony or a wedding of someone very close to them.
- The child or young person has extended leave with parental consent, for example: extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school; short-term parental placement abroad; parental leave (where they are members of armed forces or emergency services and periods of leave have previously been restricted) or family returning to its country of origin (to care for relative, or for cultural reasons).

There may be other reasons that a child or young person might be absent, such as bullying, feeling isolated or being unable to access the curriculum. If this is the case, schools will work with parents/carers and the child or young person to resolve the issues to support a return to school.

4.1. Representing Orkney

If children and young people are involved in an activity that means that they need time off school, e.g. representing Orkney in a sporting event, then the school will give consideration to the impact of this absence on the child or young person’s learning when making a decision as to whether or not this is authorised. Authorisation will usually only be considered where the child or young person’s attendance is above 90%.

4.2. Reporting an absence

Parents/carers must follow the school's procedures for reporting an absence by the agreed time on the first day of absence. For secondary-aged young people, this is 09:00 and 09:30 for primary children.

If your child has an infection or symptoms that require them to be off for a set amount of time, parents/carers are asked to make the school aware of this. Alternatively, parents/carers are asked to report the absence every day. Information about infections/symptoms that have set exclusion periods can be found on pages 20 and 21 on this document: [1_infection-prevention-control-childcare-2018-05.pdf.\(windows.net\)](#)

It is important that parents/carers remain in regular contact with the school for any prolonged period of illness. Schools have a legal obligation to know where pupils are at all times when they should be in school. There may be exceptions, e.g. prolonged periods of ill health but parents/carers should have a dialogue with their child's school on these occasions so plans can be made to support children and young people.

4.3. If absences are not reported

If schools have not received notification of an absence before the agreed time (for secondary-aged young people, this is 09:00 and 09:30 for primary children), parents/carers will be contacted through the agreed procedures involving texting/phoning between 10:00–11:00. If parents/carers cannot be contacted, then schools/nurseries will move to contacting the child's/young person's emergency contacts and, if Social Work are the lead professional, they will be notified too between 11:00–12:00. This is to ensure the safety of our children and young people. If contact cannot be made with either the parents/carers or the emergency contacts by 12:00, names will be given to the Education Service, who will pass on concerning cases to Police Scotland.

5. Term time family holidays

We strongly encourage parents not to take their children out of school for family holidays. Schools will not normally give a family permission to take children or young people out of school for holidays during term-time. This means that if children and young people are off school because they are away on holiday the school will record this as an unauthorised absence. Only in very exceptional circumstances can holidays be authorised; e.g. members of armed forces or emergency services where periods of annual leave have previously been restricted.

6. Monitoring attendance

Senior staff in schools will monitor the whole school attendance weekly to detect short but frequent absences and identify any emerging issues. This allows them to work with individual children and young people and their parents/carers to support improvement in attendance.

At the end of term 1, and each tracking period following this, where attendance has fallen between 90% and 95% schools will take a closer look at attendance and see if there are any patterns emerging. Often, at this level, there are clear authorised reasons for the absence – usually illness or other reasons from the list provided in section 4. Where attendance is at this level and the reasons for absence are not known, or not authorised, by the school, parents/carers will be contacted by the school as a proactive approach to avoid attendance dipping further. This will be through the distribution of a standard ‘notification’ letter highlighting the position and that the school is monitoring the attendance closely. A template letter is available in Appendix A.

6.1. Taking Action

If the child has 90% attendance, they will have the equivalent of:

- ½ a day off per week.
- 19 days off per year; almost 4 weeks.
- 247 days off over their school career of 13 academic years, equivalent to over 1 year of lost education.

Where attendance **falls below 90%**, schools will scrutinise absences closely and work in partnership with parents/carers on improving the attendance of the child or young person. (Note: Attendance statistics early in the school year can fluctuate significantly as each day’s attendance accounts for a high percentage. For example, when a child is off for two weeks in term 1, this would result in a 75% attendance. School staff will always consider this when deciding a proportionate action.) In a small number of cases, there may be a clear reason for attendance to fall below 90%, e.g. significant long-term illness, the family is returning to a country of origin for cultural reasons or to care for a relative, and where this information is known to the school, they will take a proportionate response.

However, there may be gaps in attendance that the school cannot account for, and they then need to take action. Schools will offer support to the child/young person and their parents/carers, agreeing actions for improvement. These actions will be noted as a latest pastoral note with an agreed review date. Staff in schools are keen to resolve any issues and to work in partnership with parents/carers and possibly in a multi-agency way where needed to support children and young people’s attendance at school.

6.2. Summary of steps to monitor attendance

Stage	Percentage	Action(s)	
1	Notification	Below 95%	Notification letter sent to parents/carers. Record on SEEMiS (Education Management Information System).
2	Discussion	Below 90%	Telephone conversation with parents/carers and discussion with child / young person. Actions agreed and recorded as latest pastoral note with review date agreed. Record on SEEMiS – centrally recorded event.
3	Child's Plan	Below 85%	Child's Plan opened (or reviewed) with parents/carers. Record on SEEMiS – significant event. Alert Social Work.
4	Attendance Order	Below 80%	Local Authority Attendance Order. Record on SEEMiS – significant event. Update Social Work.
5	Social Work Referral	Below 75%	Referral to social work and alert Reporter. Record on SEEMiS – significant event. Update Education Service.
6	Reporter	Below 70%	Referral to Children's Reporter. Record on SEEMiS – significant event. Update Education Service.

7. What about children and young people arriving late for morning registration (and after break/lunch for secondary young people)

School staff will monitor late arrivals in the same way as attendance and will take action to work with parents/carers to improve the arrival times for children and young people. Children and young people are expected to be in school at the official opening time for the school so any child/young person arriving after this time will be marked late and parents/carers will be notified by text message. Where a child or young person has a pattern of lateness, parents/carers will be informed via text message and/or letter and, where needed, invited in for a meeting to agree an action plan. Templates of these text messages and letters are available in the Appendices A to F. It is important to reiterate to children and young people and their parents/carers the importance of developing positive habits, e.g. meeting deadlines and arriving on time, as essential skills for learning, life and work.

When a child or young person arrives late, this should be noted and added to SEEMiS. On occasions where a child or young person is late to arrive due to issues with school transport provision (e.g. transport break down) then the children and young people will be marked as present as long as they arrive in school and will not be marked as late on these occasions. More information for schools about dealing with late school transport can be found in Appendix F.

There may be exceptional cases e.g. chronic health needs or where the child or young person has caring responsibilities, where it is not possible for them to arrive at school on time. These cases will be discussed during a meeting between the child/young person, parents/carers and school staff and will be recorded as part of a Child's Plan.

7.1. Summary of steps to monitor punctuality

Stage	Incidents	Action(s)	
1	Notification	Any incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text sent to parents / carers (or contact made) informing them of the late arrival without prior known reason.
2	Warning	More than twice in a term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone conversation with parents/carers. Actions agreed and noted on latest pastoral notes.
3	Child's Plan	Pattern of lateness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite to Child's Plan meeting sent to parents/carers. Actions agreed and monitored weekly.
4	Multi-agency	More than 15 in a term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early discussions with Social Work – review Child's Plan.
5	Referral	More than 20 in a term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider multi-agency response including referral to Social Work.

8. What about young people who are past school leaving age?

Where young people choose to stay on at school to take further studies, the expectations for attendance and arriving on time remain the same as for all children and young people as per these guidelines.

All young people entering S5 and S6 sign a Learner Agreement confirming they will attend school and all timetabled classes, being punctual at all times. Young people who break this agreement, demonstrating a lack of commitment to their studies and school, will meet with the relevant senior leader to discuss the suitability of their current educational provision. Clear targets will be established and monitored.

9. Attendance Orders

The Council is committed to ensuring that efforts to improve outcomes for children in relation to attendance are progressed quickly and involve an appropriate and proportionate level of intervention. Measures for compulsion are expensive processes which are time consuming and can lead to further unnecessary interventions into family life. Measures for compulsion can be used when efforts to engage children and families in voluntary measures to improve attendance have failed.

10. Working with partners

Children's Hearings are always a last resort, but early help through close partnership-working with Social Work and the Children's Reporter ensures children, young people and their families receive all the support they need, when they need it.

Information about referrals to Children's Reporter can be found in Appendix H, along with information about Children's Hearings in Appendix I.

Where a young person is in the senior phase, early notification to the Pathway Planning group will allow Community Learning and Development, and associated partners, to implement early interventions.

11. Quality Assurance

The Education, Leisure and Housing (ELH) Directorate Management Team Quality Assurance calendar to include reporting (through the tracker toolkits) by Head Teacher to Service Manager at regular intervals by the submission date of the predicted Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data:

- September.
- November.
- February.
- May.
- When the August toolkit is set up for the next academic session, the final attendance rates for each child should be the overall June attendance for each individual.

This information will be reviewed by the ELH Directorate Management Team at the monthly Quality Assurance and Performance meeting following this date.

School attendance reports to include: Actions and impact for whole cohort and specific groups, including Free School Meals and Care Experienced Children and Young People. These will allow Service Managers to identify Orkney wide challenges and opportunities, ensuring additional resources are allocated efficiently and effectively. It is important that the toolkits are completed fully to allow this data to be captured accurately.

Authority totals and individual school attendance percentages will also be monitored by the Education Service team monthly.

Progress will be reported to elected members through the Education Quality and Standards Consultation Group three times per year.

12. Early learning and childcare settings (including nurseries and childminders)

Early Learning and childcare is non-statutory, which means there is no legal obligation for children to attend. Parents can decide how many of the funded 1140 hours they use. They can choose to keep their child at home if they are tired, or if they have visitors. They can also choose to take holidays during nursery time.

If a child is not going to attend on one of their expected sessions, parents/carers need to let their setting know. Parents/carers should do this by contacting the setting before their child is due to attend that day. After the initial phone call/contact, parents do not need to contact the setting daily unless there is a change in circumstances. If a child is poorly, parents/carers should also ensure that they follow any exclusion periods for childhood illnesses (for example, sick bugs), as per paragraph 4.3 above.

Settings will contact parents/carers the same day if they have not heard from them to check if all is well. If a child is not back when expected, for example, from a holiday, the setting will contact parents/carers to establish when the child will return.

If families are working with other services, the setting may work with them and the family to support the child's attendance at nursery. The early learning and childcare service would try to support parents/carers with barriers to attendance, for example, support with petrol money.

13. References

The guidance has been written with reference to the following:

[Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0/4/04009/nid245333.pdf)

[School attendance: a guide for parents - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0/4/04009/nid245333.pdf)

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Attendance Notification Letter

Dear

As you will be aware, attendance in school is monitored closely. Not only is it imperative that we know where pupils are throughout the day, but research has proven that when attendance falls below 90%, attainment is directly affected.

We know, at times, there are extenuating circumstances which explain long term absences and, of course, accept that illnesses cannot be avoided. However, we want our pupils to have a positive approach to their education and show commitment to their learning, in the same way they will be expected to when they begin their working lives. We would ask that parents/carers support us in ensuring pupils come to school, as is legally required.

I am just writing to let you know, as we end term 1 that current rate of attendance is a cause for concern at We would hope to see this improve as we progress through the rest of the year.

Obviously, if there are any issues that you feel need to be addressed, please contact me to discuss them as soon as possible.

Dear

I am contacting you in relation to the meeting we had around’s school attendance on

Unfortunately, I have to report that there has been *no improvement / a decline* in’s attendance, which is now.....%. This is a serious concern for us. It is important that you are aware there is likely to be involvement from external agencies as we try to move forwards. I would like to arrange another meeting to look at how we best address this issue. Please contact me at the school, either by telephone or e-mail (.....) so we can arrange a mutually convenient time for this

Dear

I am writing to you in order to highlight that’s current rate of attendance is a cause for concern as it is still below 90%. However, we are pleased to see that over this term there has been an overall improvement and we wanted to thank you for encouraging your son/daughter to come to school more regularly; we hope to see this continue as we progress through the school year.

We know, at times, there are extenuating circumstances which explain long term absences and, of course, accept that illnesses cannot be avoided. However, we want our pupils to have a positive approach to their education and show commitment to their learning, in the same way they will be expected to when they begin their working lives.

If there are any issues that you feel need to be addressed, please contact me to discuss them as soon as possible.

Appendix B – Attendance Child’s Plan Meeting Letter

Senior Phase

Dear

I am contacting you in relation to concerns that we have about’s attendance which is currently%.

S 4/5/6.... is a really important year for pupils preparing to sit National qualifications. We would like to request that you support us by encouraging to improve his/her attendance.

I would like to invite you into to meet with me, to look at how we can work together to address this issue.

Please contact me by telephone so that we can arrange a mutually convenient meeting time.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Broad General Education

Dear

I am contacting you in relation to ongoing concerns that we have about.....’s school attendance which is currently%.

We know there is a direct link between academic attainment and attendance in school and we also recognise that pupils with good attendance have better life skills. We are therefore keen to ensure’s attendance improves over the rest of the school year.

I would like to meet with you, your son/daughter and, the Head of Year, in order to discuss ways we could help support with any issues. Please contact the school so that we can arrange a mutually convenient time.

Appendix C – Child’s Plan Template

(The most recent version at the time of revising this policy is copied below. Please check the Growing up in Orkney website to confirm this remains the current version.)



Education Child’s Plan

Action Plan to address [child/young person’s name] needs in relation to the following Wellbeing Indicators:						Date agreed:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy <input type="checkbox"/> Achieving <input type="checkbox"/> Nurtured <input type="checkbox"/> Active <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible <input type="checkbox"/> Respected <input type="checkbox"/> Included Please ‘check’ all Wellbeing Indicators which are relevant						School	
Purpose of the plan							
Desired outcome							
What do we want to happen? (Short term)	How will we know? (Measure of success)	What are we going to do?	By when?	By whom?	To be completed at review by:	Impact on desired outcome?	
					Change Recorded? Improved/No Change/Deteriorated		
Parent/carer contribution							
Child/young person contribution							
Attendees/partners							

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Appendix D – Punctuality Notification Text Message

Your child has been late returning from lunch break twice this term. They will now be required to complete a check-in on 1 day to help them be punctual. This will be on <<day and date>>.

Please ensure they can access food in school as check-in happens at beginning, middle and end of lunch.

Your child has been late for Registration twice this term. Please support us to ensure they arrive to school on time. If there are any issues we should be aware of please contact the school. Thanks

Your child has been late for Registration twice this week. They will now be required to complete a break time detention on <<day and date>. Please support us to ensure they arrive to school on time. If there are any issues we should be aware of please contact the school. Thanks

Appendix E – Punctuality Warning Letter

Dear ...

As you will be aware, attendance in school is monitored closely. Not only is it imperative that we know where students are throughout the day, but research has proven that when attendance falls below 90%, attainment is directly affected.

We know, at times, there are extenuating circumstances which explain arriving late to school, long term absences, and, of course, accept that illnesses cannot be avoided. However, we want our pupils to have a positive approach to their education and show commitment to their learning, in the same way they will be expected to when they begin their working lives. We would ask that parents/carers support us in ensuring pupils are in school, for 8.50 am.

I am writing to highlight that has been late to school of the ... days they have attended so far this term. As you will be aware we start the day with registration which allows us to share important information with pupils without taking up lesson time. It is therefore important for to arrive to school in time for this.

If there are any issues that you feel need to be addressed, please contact me so we can discuss them as soon as possible.

Appendix F – Late School Transport

Where a school transport provision shows a pattern of lateness, the school must report the matter to the Service Manager (Resources) with a clear note of the pattern of lateness.

The Service Manager (Resources), in collaboration with Legal Services, will make representation to the transport provider and monitor the situation closely with the school. Failure to meet the terms of the contract may constitute a breach leading to penalties.

Appendix G – Attendance Orders and Court Proceedings

[Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Appendix H – Referrals to Children’s Reporter

- An initial referral can just be a simple email outlining the concerns, with basic information about child (e.g. name, DOB and address), nature of the concerns and attendance summary.
- No Child's Plan is required to be submitted at this stage.
- This will generate a generic letter to parents/carers from the Reporter
- It's always preferable to inform parents that a referral is being made but there could be occasions when this isn't possible / preferable.
- The Reporter will check with Social Work to see if they are known.
- The Reporter assesses the referral and makes an initial decision to investigate or not – a final decision on referral should be made by the Reporter within 50 working days of receipt of initial referral.
- If an investigation will take place, reports from Social Work and Education and others (eg Health, Police information/statements etc) may be requested by the Reporter. A Child’s Plan is commonly requested at this point.

Notes:

- Schools will need to demonstrate the work they have been doing to support the family, what supports have been put in place, and levels of engagement.
- All information provided could be used as evidence in court, example, staff may be called to give witness evidence and reports may be lodged.
- There are no specific attendance thresholds for referral – will depend on circumstances etc.
- Much less likely now that Education staff will be asked to attend Hearings, however, they may be asked to attend in part and provide a report for the hearing.
- When report writing, it is important to provide good evidence of what seen, heard, or told etc. The golden rules are to remember the who, what, where, when, why, how when thinking about narrating concerns.

Appendix I – Children’s Hearings: Briefing Note



Some changes in Children’s Hearings

Briefing Note for Education Staff

1. Children’s Hearings highly value the input they receive from education, and your involvement can be pivotal in Hearing’s decision making. Education staff will continue to receive invitations to attend Children’s Hearings, either face to face or virtually.
2. If you have been invited to attend a Children’s Hearing in person, but would prefer to attend virtually, then please let SCRA know. Ideally do this at least five working days before the hearing.
3. The chairing panel member of a Children’s Hearing may decide to allow someone who does not have a right to attend the hearing to attend (Section 78(2) of the Children (Scotland) Act 2011). The chairing panel member also has a duty to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the number of persons present at a Children’s Hearing at the same time is kept to a minimum (section 78(4)). In addition, there is consistent feedback from children and young people that there can be too many people at their Hearings. In order to support the chairing member to manage attendance at Hearings, the practical operation of attendance at the start has changed. Only those with a right to attend at the start, and one social worker for the child, will come into the Hearing at the beginning. This applies to face to face and virtual Hearings.
4. Any other people in attendance will join by invitation of the chairing panel member and will remain for as long as the chairing panel member determines. In reality this may mean that people join and leave the Hearing at various points throughout the entire discussion.
5. This change in practice is designed to improve participation by children, young people and families in Children Hearings. The Promise has told us that *‘Scotland must be aware of the power dynamics that can exist within decision making, where influential professional voices can dominate and drown out other perspectives. There must be a balanced approach to decision making that primarily listens to and focuses on children and their families’*. Our Hearings Our Voice are very clear in their 40 Calls to Action that *“There should be less professionals at my Hearing, and adults should leave my hearing when they don’t need to be there.”*
6. Children’s Hearings are not for multi-agency information sharing. It may be more appropriate to plan attendance for the right professionals and fully share information at any GIRFEC meeting for a child in advance of a Children’s Hearing. At the end of any Children’s Hearing the Reporter will notify the Locality Authority of the Hearing decision. In practice this means we notify the designated social work department electronic mailbox. It is then for the social work department to share the decision with education if appropriate.
7. The chairing panel member may allow a person, including education staff, to attend for much of the hearing, for example joining shortly after the start and remaining for the rest of the Hearing. The chairing panel member might consider this appropriate for example if the child or relevant person finds the education representative very supportive or the education representative has a significant contribution to make throughout the Hearing. This will be for the chairing panel member to decide, taking into account all the relevant circumstances.
8. If you come to a Hearing Centre in person, you will be asked to wait in a waiting room. If you attend a Hearing virtually you are likely to have to wait in the meeting ‘lobby’ where unfortunately there is no direct means of communication. The duration of the wait will vary from Hearing to Hearing.
9. If a further discussion, a question and answer session or some further information from SCRA would be helpful please get in touch with your Locality SCRA office to arrange a face to face or virtual meeting.

SCRA, March 2022



Orkney Islands Council

Education Leisure and Housing

Raising Attainment Strategy 2023 - 2026

Version Control

Document Reference.	Revision.	Issue Date.	Reason for Issue.	Reviewer.	Sign.
ES/RAS	00.	3 May 2023.	New Policy.	Service Manager Primary Education	

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National and Local Context

Background

In 2015 the Scottish Government set an improvement agenda for Scottish schools called the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#) with a focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The Attainment Scotland Fund was established.

The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan was first published in 2015, is updated annually and sets out a clear vision for Scottish Education based on delivering Excellence and Equity. The national mission was refreshed in 2022:

- to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.
- support education recovery, increase pace of and reduce variation in progress.

In April 2022 the [Scottish Attainment Challenge: Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#) (the Framework) was published. The Framework supports schools, local authorities and others across the education system to support educational recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and increase progress in improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty.

The Framework also outlined changes to the distribution of the Attainment Scotland Fund. Initially, the Attainment Scotland Fund provided additional funding to local authorities which had high levels of deprivation. These were referred to as Challenge and Schools Programme authorities. As part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge refresh, this funding was replaced by the Strategic Equity Fund and saw all local authorities benefiting from this funding stream.

Orkney receives funding via the:

- Strategic Equity Fund – local authorities are allocated funding to be used strategically to support authority-wide programmes.
- Pupil Equity Fund– schools are allocated funding. Headteachers are responsible for the planning and implementation of the spending of Pupil Equity Fund.
- Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund – local authorities are allocated funding to be jointly managed by the education service and Orkney Health and Care.

The Pupil Equity Fund was introduced in 2017 to support schools address the equity gap for children and young people. This funding is based on the number of children and young people in schools in receipt of free school meals. Not all schools in Orkney benefit from this funding.

The Care Experienced Children and Young People's Fund was introduced in 2018 to enable local authorities, as corporate parents ([Good Parenting Plan](#)), to make strategic decisions around how best to improve the attainment of those who have experienced care.

Local authorities are required to demonstrate impact of all three funding streams and to reduce inequity. In Orkney we must ensure that the pace of change accelerates so that no child or young person is disadvantaged, and that equity lies at the heart of the educational experience for all.

The Scottish Government has set a requirement for all local authorities to set stretch aims from 2022-2023. The Framework outlines the expectations on local authorities in setting their stretch aims. These will support improvement in outcomes and reducing the poverty-related gaps in:

- achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (literacy combined and numeracy combined).
- the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF level 5 based on the “Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations” publication.
- the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF level 6 based on the “Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations” publication.
- the proportion of 16–19-year-olds participating in education, employment or training based on the Annual Participation Measure produced by Skills Development Scotland.
- a locally identified aim for health and wellbeing, to be measured using local datasets.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge funding programmes dovetail with the [Getting it Right for Every Child](#) and the [Curriculum for Excellence](#) keeping children and young people at the centre. Rights for children and young people have been further enhanced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was passed in a Bill in the Scottish parliament in 2021.

The journey so far

In 2019 Orkney’s Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels were lower than the national average, and in most measures, rated amongst the lowest levels of attainment in Scotland. Our evidence of the local context and the low poverty rates, coupled with the high pass rates of the Scottish Qualification Authority results, indicated that this was an anomaly. A significant amount of work was undertaken to address this by local authority officers, supported by the Education Scotland Attainment Advisor. The following steps were introduced:

- Tracking statements were developed and agreed for Broad General Education levels.
- Targets were set for P1/P4/P7 and S3 in literacy and numeracy.
- Predicted levels were introduced and required to be submitted three times a year by Head Teachers to Education Service officers.
- More regular tracking and monitoring meetings were introduced between Head Teachers and Teachers and between Head Teachers and Education Service officers and or the Attainment Adviser.
- Development of Orkney’s Broad General Education tracking toolkit began and continues to evolve.
- Professional learning was provided to support the development of teachers’ professional judgements resulting in growing confidence among teachers.

- Local Authority and Attainment Adviser engagement with Head Teachers and Teachers improved confidence and skills in understanding and using data.

Aims and purpose of this strategy

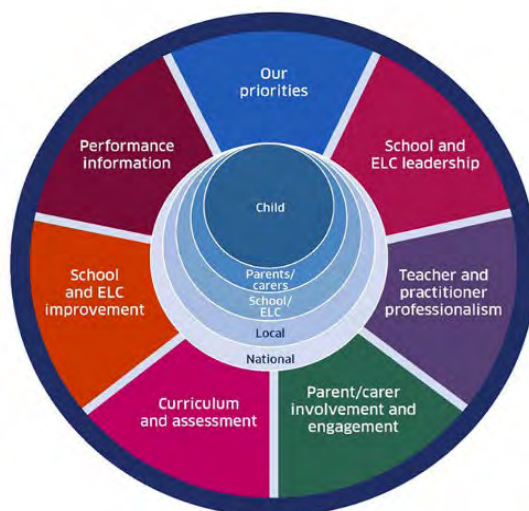
In Orkney we strive to [Work Together for a better Orkney](#). In April 2021, the Council adopted the national vision, “We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential” from The Promise. This attainment strategy aims to deliver the Scottish Government’s strategy of ‘Excellence and Equity in Education’ so that every child and young person can fulfil their potential.

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that we have robust plans in place to continue to meet both our and the Scottish Government’s vision and that every child can fulfil their potential. The [National Improvement Framework](#) has six National Improvement Drivers. We have identified key actions under each of the drivers. In addition, this Raising Attainment Strategy has two clear outcomes which link to the [Orkney Islands Council Education Service Plan](#).

- Raising Attainment for All – Striving for Excellence.
- Closing the Poverty-Related Attainment Gap – Striving for Equity.

National Improvement Framework

To inform our strategy we have identified the following key actions using the National Improvement Framework Drivers.



School and Early Learning and Childcare Leadership

Leaders at all levels will empower others to take ownership of their own learning and teaching to ensure the highest quality. We will:

- Collaborate with teams to develop consistency and sharing of good practice.
- Signpost leadership pathways for professional learning, encouraging leadership at all levels.

Teacher and practitioner professionalism

Children and young people should experience high-quality learning and teaching. We will:

- Provide high-quality professional learning opportunities to create a dedicated, highly skilled and qualified workforce.

Parent/carer involvement and engagement

When parents and carers engage in their child's learning journey then outcomes are better for children. We will:

- Ensure that schools and settings continue to reach out and engage with families in ways that suits families best.
- Families will be supported by working in partnership with partner agencies and the third sector.

Curriculum and assessment

What children and young people learn and achieve throughout their education affects how prepared they are for their future. We will:

- Listen and value the opinions of the children and young people.
- Ensure that we offer a broad, relevant and coherent curriculum.

We will use assessment data to inform our knowledge of children and young people's progress to provide opportunities for challenge and support.

School and Early Learning and Childcare improvement

Schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings will reflect and evaluate the quality of education. We will:

- Use the appropriate evaluation frameworks e.g. the Care Inspectorate's 'Quality Framework' and Education Scotland's 'How Good is our School?' and 'How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?' publications to drive improvement outcomes.
- Produce robust improvement plans which are outcomes and measures based.
- Focus on improvement planning which will tackle closing the equity and poverty gap.
- Provide 1140 hours of high-quality provision rated as good or better as assessed by the Care Inspectorate.

Performance Information

We will:

- Interrogate qualitative and quantitative data through use of our tracking and monitoring systems ensuring that gaps are identified and appropriate improvement actions taken.
- Support schools to set robust and aspirational targets for pupils in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing (attendance), contributing towards the local authority stretch aims.
- Early Learning and Childcare settings will use their data to ensure clear monitoring and tracking of children's progress including identifying and planning for children who are not making good progress.

Attainment Strategy

Raising Attainment for All – Striving for Excellence

Sector	Activities
All primary and secondary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide professional learning to improve teaching and learning experiences. • Provide professional learning to continue to develop confidence in teachers' professional judgement and increase consistency of expectation. • Create opportunities for collaboration and sharing of good practice. • Effectively use a range of assessment data to inform children and young people's progress. • Develop a robust system to track individualised targets. • Impact will be clearly tracked through outcomes and measures planning.
All schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All points of transition are planned and tracked effectively to ensure continuity of learning. • Relaunch of the Realising Ambition document to support schools to develop high-quality play experiences in P1, which build on the children's prior learning.
Early Learning and Childcare settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring high-quality provision of professional development opportunities which lead to impactful changes in practice. Provide opportunities to engage in mini research projects. • Ensure that all early learning and childcare managers and practitioners consistently implement the early learning and childcare 'Securing Children's Progress' guidance • Ensuring ongoing recruitment and growth of the workforce to enable full accessibility of 1140 hours.
Broad General Education (primary and Early Learning and Childcare settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Broad General Education tracking toolkit is maintained regularly and developed where needed. • Robustly track attainment using the BGE toolkit to identify trends and gaps. • Further develop tracking and monitoring across the service.

Sector	Activities
All secondaries and junior high school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the capacity of the secondary guidance network across all the JHS and secondary schools in Orkney, leading to consistency of procedures and processes and better outcomes for young people.
BGE secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and track the progress of S3 learners. • Develop robust BGE tracking from S1-S3. • Review the BGE curriculum across all schools and establish next steps in line with local context and national guidance. • Reinvigorate Interdisciplinary Learning.
Senior Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the curriculum model for Senior Phase in line with the local context and new national guidance. • Continue to develop Literacy and Numeracy beyond S4. • Continue to use Senior Phase tracking framework to monitor progress and plan interventions.
Orkney College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the curriculum offer supports attainment at the Senior Phase.

Closing the Poverty-Related Attainment Gap: Striving for Equity

Research by Professor John McKendrick has demonstrated that there are children in Scotland living in poverty, even in the most affluent areas. Two thirds of those classed as poor live outside deprived areas.

The impact of poverty is wider than the work of the schools. [Orkney's Child Poverty Strategy 2022-2026](#) reported that in 2021, 467 children were living in relative poverty and 390 children were living in absolute poverty, which equates to 13.1% and 10.9% respectively of children in our local authority area. Concerningly, this is thought to be underestimated.

Orkney currently uses the data from children in receipt of free school meals (FSM) to inform targeted activities. Further work is being undertaken to explore how the data from the UK's Children In Low Income Families index (CiLiF) can better inform our understanding of the number of children and families who may be currently living in poverty in Orkney.

Planning and implementation of the use of the [Pupil Equity Fund](#) will support the six priority family characteristics as identified by the Scottish Government:

- Lone parent families.
- Minority ethnic families.
- Families with a disabled adult or child.
- Families with a young mother (under 25).
- Families with a child under one.
- Larger families (3+ children).

Our current data identifies a significant gap in the combined attainment for children and young people in receipt of Free School Meals or who have experienced care as compared to their peers.

In mitigating the impact of the poverty and equity gap, we intend to focus on the following activities which link to the Education Service plan themes of Inclusion and Wellbeing, Learning and Achievement and Systems and processes.

<p>All schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that tracking approaches capture the progress of children and young people in receipt of FSM and or are care experienced are monitored and targeted interventions are established where and when required. • At all transition points targeted interventions where required will support vulnerable children and young people and their families. • Ensure that all staff have an awareness of the cause and impact of poverty on children and young people and their families.
--	--

All schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor attendance rates and provide support to those at risk of or with attendance lower than 95%.
Early Learning and Child Care settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded places will be available for all children aged 3 years, those children not yet starting school or 2-year-old children if eligible.
BGE Primary 1 to Secondary S3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil Equity Funding is planned using a measures and outcomes framework to measure impact.
Senior Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that young people move on to positive destinations post school.
Orkney College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise opportunities for young people to participate in the senior phase offer at Orkney College, seeking to overcome geographical and other barriers.

Stretch Aims 2022 - 2023

Core Stretch Aims 2022 - 2023

	P1	P4	P7	P1/4/7 Combined
Reading	88%	81%	85%	85%
Writing	86%	75%	80%	80%
Listening and Talking	93%	91%	92%	92%
Literacy	No targets set			75%
Numeracy	89%	81%	84%	85%

Senior Phase

Proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more passes at SCQF Level 5 based on "Summary statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations" publication.	95%
Proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more passes at SCQF level 6 based on "Summary Statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations" publication.	68%
Participation measure: proportion of 16-19 years olds participating in education, employment or training based on Annual Participation Measures produced by Skills Development Scotland.	95%

Health and Wellbeing

Attendance	95%
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Plus Stretch Aims

Free School Meals P1-7	
Reading	60%
Writing	47%
Listening and Talking	70%
Numeracy	54%

Care Experiences Children and Young People P1-7

Reading	37%
Writing	26%
Listening and Talking	51%
Numeracy	29%

Strategy Monitoring

The Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, the Head of Education and Service Improvement Team will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to track and monitor in-year progress.

Progress towards stretch aims will be monitored through the Education Service quality assurance process.

Minute

St Magnus Cathedral Sub-committee

Monday, 13 March 2023, 14:00.

Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.



Present

Councillors Gwenda M Shearer, Jean E Stevenson, Graham A Bevan, Alexander G Cowie, Steven B Heddle, John A R Scott and Ivan A Taylor.

Reverend Fraser Macnaughton.

Clerk

- Sandra Craigie, Committees Officer.

In Attendance

- Frances Troup, Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing.
- Ian Rushbrook, Service Manager (Capital Programme and Property).
- Peter Trodden, Solicitor.
- Nick Hewitt, Team Leader (Culture).

In Attendance via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

- Pat Robinson, Service Manager (Accounting).

Apology

- Lord Lieutenant Elaine Grieve.

Declarations of Interest

- No declarations of interest were intimated.

Chair

- Councillor Gwenda M Shearer.

1. Review of Policy on Lighting Up St Magnus Cathedral for Special Events and Charitable Campaigns

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Team Leader (Culture), the Sub-committee:

Noted:

1.1. That, since 2014, a number of requests had been received to light up the outside of St Magnus Cathedral in particular colours for special events or to raise awareness of charitable organisations and campaigns.

1.2. That, on 4 November 2016, when considering the introduction of a policy for lighting up the outside of St Magnus Cathedral for special events and charitable campaigns, the St Magnus Cathedral Sub-committee recommended that consideration of adopting policy guidelines in respect of lighting up St Magnus Cathedral be deferred, to enable wider consultation with groups associated with the Church Session of St Magnus Cathedral.

1.3. That, on 3 April 2019, when reconsidering the introduction of a policy for lighting up the outside of St Magnus Cathedral for special events and charitable campaigns, the St Magnus Cathedral Sub-committee recommended that powers be delegated to the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Sub-committee, to determine requests from organisations wishing to light up St Magnus Cathedral, where the following conditions were met:

- Lighting up was part of a national charitable campaign, where the charity or its aims were relevant to Orkney.
- Lighting up was for a local charity as part of a wider local awareness raising or specific local targeted campaign.
- No political element to the activity.
- No commercial element to the activity.
- Lighting up was for a maximum of 24 hours.
- The charitable organisation provided and installed the coloured gels required, in liaison with the Traditional Stonemason or the Visitor Services Officer.
- No cost implication to the Council.
- No inappropriate clash with another activity, event or service taking place in St Magnus Cathedral.
- No physical impact or damage to the building.

1.4. That, as requests were becoming more frequent and varied, the policy guidelines in respect of illuminating St Magnus Cathedral had been reviewed.

1.5. The proposal that the following criteria be included in the policy guidelines in respect of illuminating St Magnus Cathedral:

- Lighting up was to mark a national event, so designated by the UK or national governments.
- Lighting up was in support of national campaigns to promote the equality, dignity and increased visibility of minority groups.

The Sub-committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

1.6. That the following policy guidelines in respect of illuminating St Magnus Cathedral be approved:

- Lighting up was:
 - part of a national charitable campaign, where the charity or its aims were relevant to Orkney; or
 - for a local charity as part of wider local awareness raising or specific local targeted campaign; or
 - to mark a national event, so designated by the UK or national governments; or
 - in support of national campaigns to promote the equality, dignity and increased visibility of minority groups.
- No political element to the activity.
- No commercial element to the activity.

1.7. That powers be delegated to the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, in consultation with the Convener and the Chair and Vice Chair of the St Magnus Cathedral Sub-committee, to determine applications for illuminating St Magnus Cathedral, which met the policy guidelines outlined above, and subject to the following conditions:

- Lighting up was for a maximum of 24 hours.
- The charitable organisation provided and installed the coloured gels required in liaison with the Cathedral Conservations Team or the Visitor Services Officer.
- No cost implication to the Council.
- No inappropriate clash with another activity, event or service taking place in St Magnus Cathedral or its environ.
- No physical impact or damage to the building.

Councillor Steven B Heddle joined the meeting during discussion of this item.

2. Conclusion of Meeting

At 14:12 the Chair declared the meeting concluded.

Signed: Gwenda M Shearer.



Orkney Islands Council

A Profile of Homelessness 2023 - 2028

Version Control

Document Reference.	Rev.	Issue date.	Reason for issue.	Reviewer.	Sign.
HD POL 070.	Draft.	15/10/2007.	New.	Project Officer.	
HD POL 070.	SS and HC 30/10/2007.	30/10/2007.	Consultation to follow.	Project Officer.	
HD POL 070.	Final version following consultation.	20/12/2007.	New	Project Officer.	
HD POL 070.	Reviewed.	30/09/2013.	Updated for 2013.	Head of Housing and Homelessness.	
HD POL 070.	Approved, ELH 11/06/2014.	11/06/2014.	Approved.	Head of Housing and Homelessness.	
HD POL 070.	Reviewed.	03/08/2021.	Draft.	Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing.	
HD POL 070.	Reviewed following consultation.	01/02/2023.	Draft.	Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing.	
HD POL 070.	Reviewed following Education, Leisure and Housing Committee.	12/04/2023.	Approved at committee and updated following committee discussion.	Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing.	

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This document is available on request, in a range of different formats such as audio format, Braille, and in large print. It can also be made available in different languages on request.

Introduction

Since 2002 we have been publishing a Profile of Homelessness.

It is important to analyse demographic trends and other issues specific to the local area in order to appropriately plan and target our service provision and to ensure it is inclusive of all groups within our society. We need to obtain a detailed picture of the issues underlying homelessness in Orkney before we can appropriately seek to tackle it.

The strategic landscape surrounding homelessness has changed significantly in recent years. The Profile of Homelessness now underpins the Homelessness Strategy, the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and also a chapter within the Local Housing Strategy which focuses on homelessness.

This revised Profile of Homelessness for 2023, seeks to determine the current situation surrounding homelessness in Orkney generally and also throughout the individual communities and 20 inhabited islands which make up the area.

Part One: General Trends and Issues affecting Homelessness

The Housing Needs and Demand Assessment from 2013 provides a significantly more detailed overview of Orkney's demographics, tenure split, income levels and general housing need. The information below takes some of the key points related to homelessness from the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment as well as some up to date figures for other homelessness related areas.

During 2023 the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment will be updated. In addition, an enhanced piece of work is being undertaken to appropriately assess the housing needs of Orkney's workforce.

Demographic Trends

Demographic projections for Orkney show a slow but steady population increase

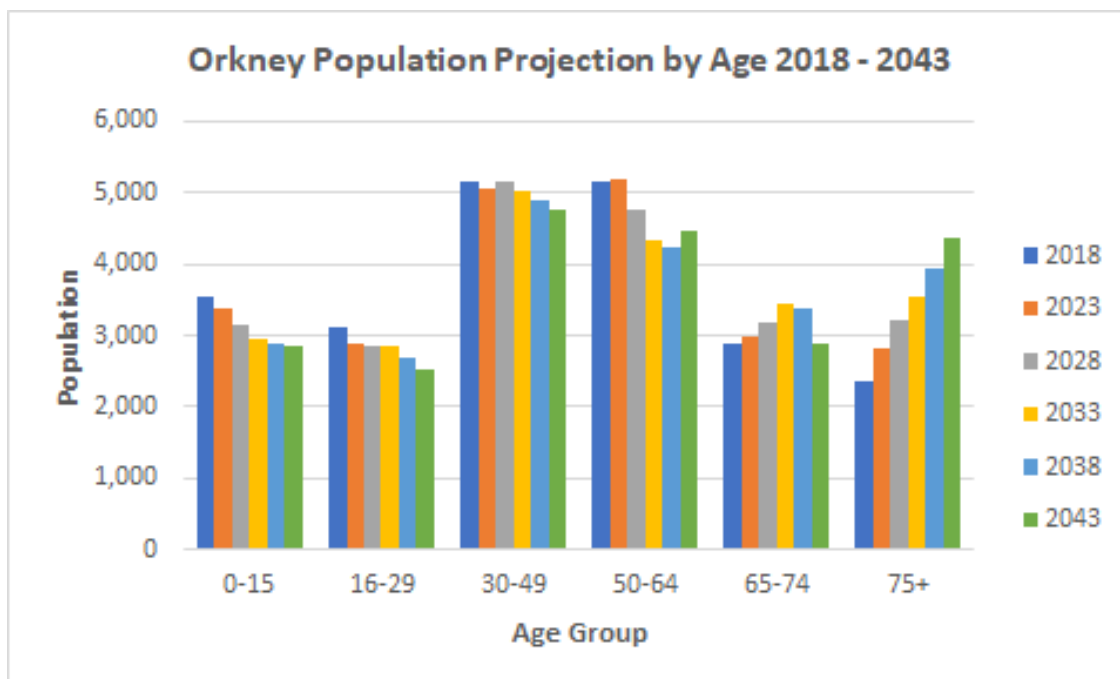
The population in Orkney rose from 19,560 in 1991 to 21,400 in 2011 (Census day figures Scotland's Census 2013). In June 2018 it stood at approximately 22,190. The Census in Scotland was delayed due to the pandemic and was carried out in 2022. It is expected that information from the 2022 Census will be published from 2023 onwards. Population projections suggest that population levels in Orkney will remain stable initially and begin a slight decline in 2033 based on National Records of Scotland estimates 2018. The number of households is also anticipated to increase from the current level of around 11,471. More detail on population projections is available in our Local Housing Strategy.

Population on the outer isles

Conversely there was a sizable drop in the population of Orkney's outer islands between 1991 and 2001. This has now levelled off and in some cases started to rebound. However, there is still a concern about the sustainability of some vulnerable island communities. Falling school rolls, an aging demographic and increased care needs are all factors that can come into play. There is a general drift from outlying areas of the Mainland and isles to the larger settlements. It is at present still unclear whether this drift to the main settlements reflects the preference of households or whether a lack of housing options, economic opportunities and wider infrastructure precipitates outward migration. It is also unclear how the impact of the pandemic may affect this in the longer term with a potentially increased ability for many people to be able to work from home. Population projections developed by the Housing Service, based on National Records of Scotland projections and births, deaths and migration levels over the last 20 years would suggest that isles populations may decline from approximately 2,692 in 2021 to 2,575 by 2027.

An ageing population

Population projections also reveal an increasingly older population. The graph below shows the estimated population projections based on 2018 National Records of Scotland statistics. As can be seen there is a large variance between age groups over the time period. The number of people in the 0 – 15 and 16 – 29 age group drops over the period. The 30 – 49 age group remains stable and then drops slightly while the 50 – 64 age group declines and then starts to build. The 65 – 74 range climbs and then declines down to earlier levels. The most notable change is amongst the 75+ age group. The 75+ age group is climbing significantly from a starting point of around 2,300 in 2018 and reaching 4,300 by 2043. The percentage of the population that is 75+ is predicted to rise from 11% in 2018 to 20% in 2043. This is significant and will pose challenges to various services. As well as an aging native population the increase in older people may also be influenced by the inward migration of older people into Orkney from elsewhere in Scotland and the UK.



Data provided by NHS Orkney enables us to look at the population (by age) distributed across Orkney and shows us that across Orkney the 45 – 64 age group represents the most significant proportion of those registered at GP surgeries in Orkney.

Practice.	Persons aged 0-4.	Persons aged 5-14.	Persons aged 15 - 24.	Persons aged 25 - 44.	Persons aged 45 - 64.	Persons aged 65 - 74.	Persons aged 75 - 84.	Persons aged 85+.	Patient Total.
Skerryvore.	453.	979.	843.	2,252.	2,357.	907.	568.	208.	8,567.
Stromness.	103.	288.	276.	631.	984.	428.	282.	90.	3,082.
St Margaret's Hope.	58.	176.	110.	308.	493.	233.	120.	35.	1,533.
Islands View (Rousay).	11.	23.	20.	47.	81.	58.	33.	5.	278.
Heilendi.	162.	360.	340.	910.	1,123.	540.	342.	109.	3,886.
Dounby.	110.	250.	259.	508.	937.	420.	263.	89.	2,836.
Orcades.	65.	206.	141.	311.	631.	298.	225.	66.	1,943.
Total.	962.	2,282.	1,989.	4,967.	6,606.	2,884.	1,833.	602.	22,125.

Heilendi includes Shapinsay and North Ronaldsay.

Stromness includes Flotta and Graemsay.

Orcades combines Eday, Hoy, Sanday, Stronsay, Westray, Papa Westray.

The inward migration of older people to Orkney has a considerable impact on the housing system. Although many of the older population are economically inactive, their purchasing power in the housing market is a major factor and has encouraged prices to rise beyond the reach of many indigenous young people and lower income households.

Taking into account the projected increase of older households the policy basis has been to ensure that care and support are delivered while the client remains at home, in homely surroundings provided this is appropriate.

A prerequisite to this is the quality of the homes and the range of facilities contained in an individual's home to enable adequate care and support to be delivered. Older people often experience difficulties in maintaining the fabric of their homes. This is clearly an issue within Orkney where there have been problems with Below Tolerable Standard Housing. The Scottish House Condition Survey (2017-19) estimates that 31% of households in Orkney are in fuel poverty and 22% in extreme fuel poverty. If the household is headed by an older person, those figures become 41% and 34% respectively. The Scottish House Condition Survey (2017-19) states "These are a best estimate of fuel poverty under the new definition of fuel poverty and cannot be compared to previous local authority analysis figures." The population in the Orkney Isles along with those in other Scottish Island Authorities are particularly severely impacted by the energy crisis

A Care and Repair scheme operates in Orkney and has played an important role in enabling older owner occupiers, especially, to remain in their homes, rather than having to move to specialist accommodation.

Ethnicity

The 2011 Census indicates that there are 626 individuals making up an estimated 285 households from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Groups in Orkney. This indicates that 2.93% of Orkney households are from BME groups and this is an increase from a figure of 0.3% of households in the 2001 census.

Increase in number of households

The number of households in Orkney was expected to rise over the coming years from the base level estimation of 10,500 in 2018 to just over 11,000 by 2028 based on housing projections from 2018 National Records of Scotland statistics. A large proportion of that increase was predicted to come from an increase in single person households. The expectation was that the average household size will drop from 2.15 in 2018 to 2.07 in 2028 according to projections from 2018 National Records of Scotland statistics. However, the current level of houses in Orkney is 11,471 and therefore some revision of the forecasts is required. It is anticipated that the next census will assist in this respect.

Economic Trends

Unemployment levels in Orkney have been consistently among the lowest in Scotland for a number of years. Unemployment has been 3% or below for a number of years. The figure for 2021/2122 is 2.8% compared to the Scottish figure 3.4% and the British one of 4.1%.

The Orkney population also has the highest economic activity rate in Scotland with 79.2% of the working age population being economically active in 2021/2022, this compares to the Scottish figure of 76.5% (NOMIS, Office for National Statistics).

Orkney shows signs of displaying a tight labour market. A tight labour market is one where “the demand for labour is near or exceeds the supply of labour” as defined by FutureSkills Scotland. This can create problems for businesses when it comes to recruiting suitable labour locally. Consequently, the need to bring in labour from outwith Orkney can have a significant impact on the housing market, with employers needing to find accommodation for the incoming workforce. Although economic activity is relatively high, income levels are relatively low as demonstrated in the table below.

Average Weekly Earnings by Area (2021)

Area	Average weekly wage
Great Britain	£613.10
Scotland	£622.00
Orkney	£565.20
Highland	£611.40
Eilean Siar	£670.10
Shetland	£677.90

(NOMIS, Office for National Statistics; 2022)

The table above shows that comparisons between the UK and Scottish averages, as well as neighbouring authorities, Orkney’s average weekly wage is very low.

The table below shows that the social rented sector is the sector of choice for lower income households who may require more assistance through Housing Benefit or the housing costs element of Universal Credit.

Percentage of tenants in receipt of housing benefit

Tenure.	Percentage.
Council	40%.
Housing Association.	33%.
Private Rented.	10%.

Percentage of tenants in receipt of housing benefit

Tenure.	Percentage.
Council and OHAL.	16%.
Private Rented.	4%.

(Source: Orkney Islands Council Housing Benefit Section; 2021)

Housing Trends

As of the 31 December 2022 Orkney had a total housing stock of 11,640 properties. The majority of these properties are houses, with flats only accounting for 5% of the stock at the 2018 Local House Condition Survey (LHCS 2018). The stock is also relatively old, with 35% of properties built before 1945, in comparison to the national average of 31% (Scottish House Condition Survey 2016- 2018).

Housing tenure in Orkney

Owner occupation is the predominant tenure in Orkney, with an estimated 65% of the population owning their own property in 2019 (Scottish Government Housing Statistics, stock by tenure 2020). Social renting from a local authority or housing association is considerably less prevalent in Orkney than in the rest of Scotland at just 15%, well under the national average of 23%.

Council housing is predominantly concentrated in the main settlements of Kirkwall and Stromness with only a third of all Council properties located outside these areas. The Council has housing stock in most islands (10 islands in addition to mainland Orkney) however, there is no Council provision in North Ronaldsay or Papa Westray. Total Council housing stock is 1011 including 73 Council owned properties used for emergency housing.

There is one Registered Social Landlord in Orkney – Orkney Housing Association Ltd (OHAL). OHAL's stock is situated again mainly in Kirkwall and Stromness. It has some but limited provision in rural mainland areas or the outer isles and this includes South Ronaldsay, Burray, Shapinsay, Westray and North Ronaldsay. OHAL have a total of 808 rented properties along with 149 Shared Ownership and Shared Equity properties.

In Orkney the private rented sector (which comprises households in private rented, tied accommodation and with a 'life rent') is estimated to stand at 10% and is roughly the same size as that estimated for Scotland as a whole – 14% (Scottish Government Housing Statistics, 2020). It is unusually large in comparison with the social rented sector. There are over 1,100 registered private rents in Orkney and these do not include tied accommodation or properties let to close family members, of which Orkney is believed to have a significant number. Although housing options are limited outwith the owner occupied sector, which poses particular problems for low-income households, the private rented sector can provide a valuable option to those who cannot access the social rented sector.

Specific Housing Issues

The Need for Additional Social Housing

At 31 March 2022, the waiting list for social rented housing stood at 893 – a 62.7% increase from March 2014 and a 170% increase from the figures quoted in our original profile of homelessness in 2002. At 1 February 2023, the waiting list stood at 1128 representing increases of 105% (since 2014) and 241% (since 2002).

During 2021/22 the Council had 118 vacancies to fill, which were allocated as follows:

- 72 Homeless Households (48 Kirkwall, 17 Stromness, 6 Mainland, 1 Isles).
- 6 Emergency Platinum (3 Kirkwall, 1 Mainland, 1 Isles, 1 Stromness).
- 3 Medical (2 Kirkwall, 1 Isles).
- 15 Overcrowding (10 Kirkwall, 1 Stromness, 2 Mainland, 2 Isles).
- 2 Under-occupancy (2 Mainland).
- 2 Corporate Parent (2 Kirkwall).
- 7 Specific Need to be in the Community (3 Kirkwall, 1 Mainland, 2 Isles, 1 Stromness).
- 2 Unsatisfactory Living Arrangements (1 Stromness, 1 Isles).
- 0 Relationship Breakdown.
- 1 Insecurity of Tenure (1 Stromness).
- 3 Emergent households (2 Kirkwall, 1 Mainland).
- 5 No Priority (2 Kirkwall, 1 Stromness, 2 Mainland).

The average length of time that a homeless household remains in emergency housing before being offered a secure tenancy from either the Council or Orkney Housing Association Limited (OHAL) varies considerably from year to year, depending on whether new schemes are built by the Council or OHAL. Currently (2021/22) it takes, on average, 9 months for a household to be allocated a one bedroom property, 5.3 months for a family to be allocated a two bedroom property and 8.9 months for a three bedroom property.

The social rented sector has traditionally been the tenure for lower income households. Tenants who reside in the social rented sector rely more heavily on state pension and other benefits as a source of income. This is shown in the tables above for housing benefit / Universal Credit Housing Cost claimants. With the increase in rents in the social rented sector over the last few years due to on-going house build programmes and stock upgrades the gap between the rent levels of the social and private sector are narrowing. This will potentially have an effect on the affordability of housing for low income households who do not qualify for full housing benefit / Universal Credit housing costs and are required to cover a proportion of the rent themselves. Care needs to be taken however as due to the pandemic, there is some anecdotal evidence that private sector rents have risen, in some cases significantly.

Social housing continues to be the most affordable housing tenure and this has been exacerbated by recent changes to welfare reform. There will continue to be pressure for additional social housing as low income households or households on benefits struggle to meet the cost of private sector housing.

Below Tolerable Standard Housing

The 2018 Local House Condition Survey, found that 3% of the total stock was below the tolerable standard. This equates to around 308 properties. This figure was considerably higher than the national Scottish figure of 1%, although it is a sizeable drop from the 12% that was recorded in the 1998 Housing Needs Survey.

Despite the consistent improvement in condition of the housing stock and the continued development of the Care and Repair scheme Orkney still has a stubbornly high level of BTS properties compared to the national average. This is partly down to the large amount of pre 1919 housing stock, but also the fact that Orkney has a lot of differing property types spread over small rural island communities and these communities have the highest levels of BTS properties.

Fuel Poverty

Orkney has a relatively harsh climate in comparison to other areas of Scotland. This represents a real challenge in the fight against fuel poverty as residents face higher fuel bills to achieve an acceptable degree of comfort. The Scottish House Condition Survey: Local Authority Analysis tables (2017-19) shows 31% of households in Orkney are living in fuel poverty, compared to 24% of households in Scotland as a whole. These are a best estimate under the new definition of fuel poverty and cannot be compared to previous local authority analysis figures. It is anticipated that this situation will worsen due to the current increase in fuel costs and cost of living crisis.

Various programmes to help eradicate fuel poverty have been undertaken over the last 5 years; primarily the Scottish Government funded programmes of Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme (previously known as HEEPS: ABS) and Warmer Homes Scotland. This has been delivered alongside Council, Housing Association and third sector funded programmes.

A considerable number of insulation and energy efficiency measures have been installed in private and social housing stock to try and reduce fuel poverty. However, despite these efforts, high and rising fuel costs have continued to impact on households' abilities to escape fuel poverty. In addition, the relative stagnation of wages over the time period has also played a part.

The age of the housing stock in Orkney is also a contributing factor towards the high levels of fuel poverty. Fuel poverty is perceived to be worst in the private rented sector as old, energy inefficient housing stock combined with low wages means households need to spend more of their income heating their home.

The challenge is in developing a co-ordinated approach to accessing resources from the range of agencies and initiatives, to maximize and target resources to those most in need.

Housing for People with Particular Needs

The provision of specialist or adapted housing for households with particular needs is essential in enabling all members of the community in Orkney to maintain independent lives in the areas in which they wish to live. A major challenge for Orkney is managing the projected increase in the older population, by ensuring that housing provides sustainable solutions, which respond effectively to changing need and support independence. The provision of 'barrier free' homes in new housing developments and the delivery of adaptations to existing unsuitable properties will be crucial aspects of building an appropriate infrastructure of property, care and support for older people. The range of current provision addresses the diverse needs of the population to an extent, although identified shortfalls in provision exist particularly in remote areas.

At 31 March 2022, 2.9% of the Council stock was classed as sheltered housing, located in Kirkwall and Stromness. The extra care housing scheme at Braeburn Court in St Margaret's Hope provides an additional 13 units of supported accommodation. A further 78 properties that have been adapted for other disabilities and this brings the Council total up to 11.9% of stock. Orkney Islands Property Developments Limited (OIPDL) provides a further 24 units of very sheltered accommodation in Kirkwall and additional units in Westray. OHAL provides 219 amenity properties, 58 wheelchair properties and 7 supported properties. The concentration of sheltered housing and specialist provision in the main settlements may exacerbate the outward migration of households in remote communities, as those with particular needs are forced to seek appropriate accommodation elsewhere. In addition, there are a range of supported tenancies for people with particular needs across Orkney.

The 2018 Scottish Housing Condition Survey revealed that 1% of properties in Orkney require an adaptation for the occupant. Of these households, the features that cause problems are most commonly related to handrails, replacement taps, access ramps and higher sockets, which perhaps reflects the age profile of Orkney's households.

Sustainability in Orkney

Sustainability cuts across environmental, social and economic concerns. Housing has an important contribution to make in creating a more sustainable future, but this can only be achieved if sustainability is a key consideration at all stages, from location decision, layout design and specification to construction, use and maintenance. Local authorities with responsibility for land planning, strategic housing issues, as potential funders of housing construction and improvement, and through partnership activity with a wide range of agencies can bring a strong influence to bear on future development location decisions and the objectives to be achieved by that development.

Various national energy efficiency retrofit programmes have been undertaken across Orkney and the Council is currently involved in delivering the Energy Efficiency Scotland: Area Based Schemes (EES:ABS) throughout Orkney with the aim of helping reduce fuel poverty and carbon emissions, in partnership with Warmworks Scotland.

Specific Island Issues

Some Communities are experiencing decline because of a combination of falling population levels and changing population profiles brought about through a complex mix of limited employment opportunities, lack of housing opportunities for new or expanding households, and demand from external housing markets pushing prices up. Equally opportunities to work from home, post pandemic, may assist to reverse some of this decline.

Conclusions

The demographic profile produced here is vital to inform local service delivery that is appropriate and proportionate. Given Orkney's dispersed rural and island communities Homelessness and Housing Advice Services need to ensure that the range and type of information and advice provision is tailored to the specific needs and preferences of local people.

This point should, of course, be considered in light of some important demographic patterns that show increasing numbers of older people, of new households (for example through relationship breakdown and inward migration), and of an increasingly diverse (though numerically low) ethnic mix. Similarly, anticipated tenure changes along with increased house prices and demand for social housing are considered within the Local Housing Strategy.

The Housing Service is committed to ensuring that the tenancies it offers to homeless households threatened with homelessness are sustainable, and also that people in other forms of tenure are assisted to remain in their homes wherever practical. This requires experience in a broad range of Advice and Information services. For instance, in order to sustain their tenancy effectively, people may need information, advice and advocacy on matters such as:

- Housing benefit / Universal Credit housing costs and other benefits to pay for rent and other housing costs.
- On rights to take appropriate action, for example, information on the right to carry out improvements and make alterations in the social and private housing sector.
- Grants that are available to help owners and tenants carry out home improvements and do repairs, as well as help tackle fuel poverty.
- Support available from other agencies, including making services accessible.

The provision of accessible services is a major element of the Housing Service's Equalities Policy and Accessibility Strategy. Advice and Information services relating to accessibility commitments are, therefore, extremely important and should link closely with the demographic profile. Advice and Information services must also cover people with other particular needs. For example, the housing needs of people seeking some form of housing support, or seeking access to specialist accommodation such as sheltered or extra care housing. In addition, consideration needs to be given to geographical accessibility linked to appropriately targeted services.

Part Two: Service User Consultation

Types of Consultation Undertaken

When the profile of homelessness was originally produced back in 2002 a questionnaire was sent out to past and present homeless applicants and with a response rate of over 30% the information gathered was considered very useful. Since that date we have embedded the use of customer satisfaction surveys into our services and find them extremely useful both as a method of gauging the effectiveness of our services and in further developing our services.

A rolling programme of entry and exit questionnaires is now being used and the information gleaned from this is used to inform our strategies and policies.

In addition to the questionnaire, we have in the past used focus groups to gather information and views and this is something we have continued to utilise in the development of our new homelessness strategy for 2023. We are required to undertake a whole tenant survey on a 3 yearly basis but in practice we have done this every two years so that it remains reflective of the current tenant and service user base. The survey is undertaken by an independent company on our behalf. This allowed our tenants / service users to respond openly. This information is taken forward into our annual report which is produced annually in October. Although much of the information relates to our housing services more generally, many of our tenants have originally been service users of our Homelessness and Advice Service.

Consultation is undertaken with both service users and service providers as part of our general processes around strategy development. Consultation was undertaken with other agencies during 2022 and this included consulting by electronic means and also a face to face event which allowed responses to be fuller and more developed than in the written form. In addition, a small number of interviews were undertaken with individuals who were prepared to be involved and had experienced being homeless recently. These were undertaken by telephone to ensure anonymity.

The Housing Service has a broad range of strategies covering various topics related to homelessness to a greater or lesser degree. During 2022, consultation was undertaken with service users and agencies around the revised Homelessness Strategy and Profile of Homelessness. We continue to maintain close links with many agencies involved in homelessness prevention and support services. In addition, we take part in national groups around homelessness and ensure the Orkney position is included accordingly.

The Homelessness Strategic Group, meets infrequently and oversees the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy (amongst other documents), it also looks specifically at:

- The Implementation of the Homelessness Strategy.
- The Implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
- The Implementation of the Advice and Information Strategy.

Our Questionnaires

Below are some of the comments received from our questionnaires and interviews, both positive and negative.

- “I was impressed with the help I received with the current COVID-19 outbreak ongoing.”
- “Everything was dealt with quickly, clearly and very efficiently especially with the difficulty of them working from home due to COVID-19.”
- “The cost of emergency housing for a working single mum is astronomical.”
- “Very satisfied with the written information provided as was given a very detailed pack providing all the details needed.”
- “Everybody was so helpful, I was in such a state.”

How do we ensure quality information provision around homelessness?

In order to ensure we provide good quality information in relation to homelessness, we expanded our website to include a full online housing options guide. Our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan includes an action to endeavour to expand this further with the provision of an online interactive housing options app.

Across our services we have in place quality assurance processes to ensure that staff are qualified to an appropriate level so that they have the skills to assist those who need our help. We routinely check our written information to ensure accuracy and seek information around our services through processes such as a range of questionnaires and a footer on every letter which asks for comments whether positive or negative. In addition, we use information from complaints and compliments. These processes ensure that we have a stream of information in between our wholesale tenant and service user satisfaction process.

Related Strategies

As part of the consultation on the revised Local Housing Strategy at the half year stage, during 2020 and development of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, various agencies were involved in a process of consultation including development days. In addition, there was a joint seminar between the Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd during summer 2019 to focus on the key actions within the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

These events were of central importance to the development of the documents concerned and a section on the outcomes of consultation can be found within each of the relevant strategies and as such will not be reproduced in great detail here. However, some general comments relating to homelessness which arose from the Local Housing Strategy consultation included:

- “Whilst homelessness is something we would all like to eradicate there are other kinds of acute housing need and I think the Housing Service has the balance of assistance just about right. Naturally if additional resources were provided by central government then all types of housing need could be addressed more quickly”.

- “While it would be preferable to move households to permanent accommodation as quickly as possible, it must be done with a care especially where children are concerned to prevent disturbance by possible enforced school changes”.

Identifying and Consulting with the ‘Hidden’ Homeless of Orkney

The Homelessness and Advice Section at Orkney Islands Council is aware of the fact that people finding themselves homeless, or threatened with homelessness in Orkney, do not always present themselves to the Council. During 2021 our Tenant Participation Strategy was reviewed and a consultation will be taken forward over coming months. This will look at ensuring that we continue to involve groups within society who may be under-represented and to seek to minimise barriers to engagement.

Ongoing Consultation

The Council is committed to consulting service users in the development of both new and existing services and will continue to do so, using as wide a variety of methods as possible.

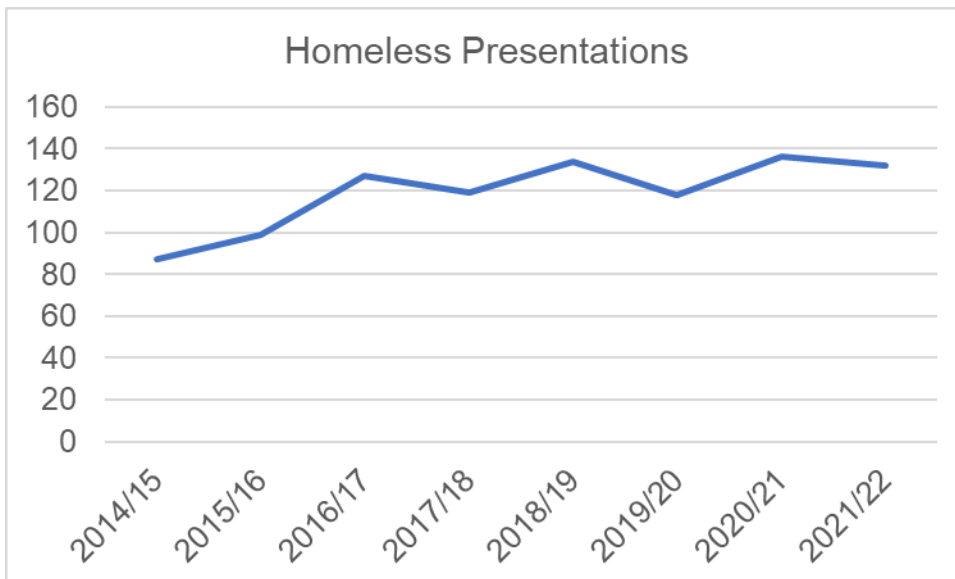
During 2022 a process of consultation was undertaken in respect of the new Profile of Homelessness, a new Homelessness Strategy and our Tenant Participation Strategy will be consulted upon in 2023. While together this amounts to a significant amount of consultation, it will be helpful to ensure that information gleaned from consultation is absolutely up to date and that it reaches a broad sector of society to ensure it remains reflective of the views of our service users and the agencies which complement our services. The Profile of Homelessness will be updated following completion of this process.

The Way Forward

The national policy around homelessness has changed significantly since the original Homelessness Strategy was developed. Significant inroads have been made towards enhancing and further developing the services in Orkney which assist with the prevention and alleviation of homelessness. This has gone a significant way towards improving access to services and housing options for households experiencing homelessness and those threatened with homelessness. In addition, ongoing changes to the homelessness legislation have significantly changed the picture of homelessness across the country and are expected to continue to do so. This coupled with welfare reform has resulted in changes to the size of accommodation required. The COVID-19 pandemic, has also impacted on homelessness need and provision and is likely to continue to do so for an undetermined period of time. We will continue to work with stakeholders in expanding and improving our services to ensure they remain reflective of need.

Part Three: The Figures

Homelessness Presentations

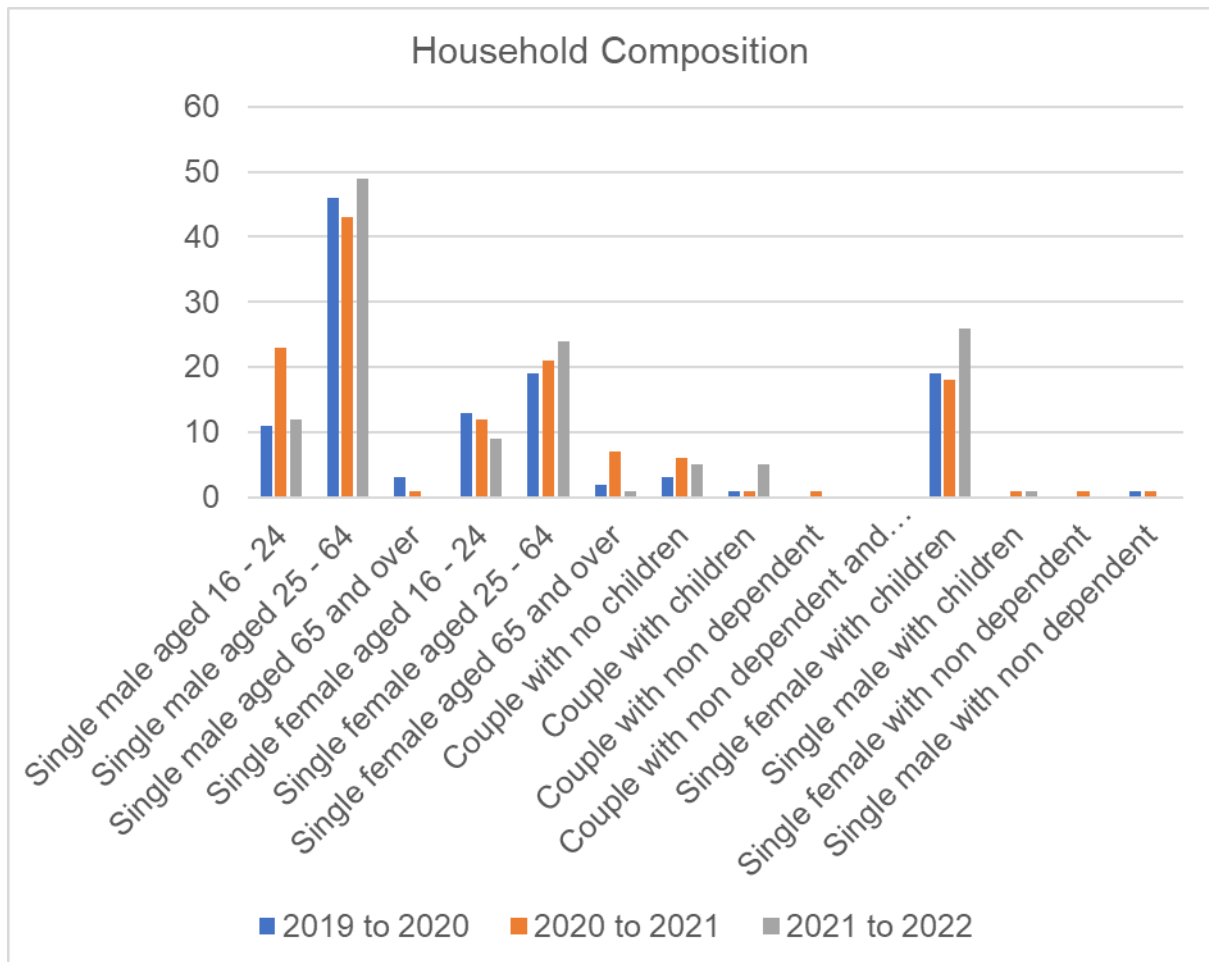


Between April 2016 and March 2021 Orkney saw a steady increase in the number of recorded homeless presentations, following a drop in presentations in 2014/15 and 2015/16. Between April 2021 and March 2022 however there was a slight fall in presentations to 132 compared to 136 in 2020/2021. Homeless presentations remain significant in relation to the size of the population and the number of social housing units becoming available each year.

The original profile of homelessness stated that “in order to identify ways of preventing homelessness, and addressing the problems faced by those who are homeless, we need to fully understand why people are approaching us.” This is still very much the case today and the rest of this section of the profile considers what if any changes have occurred since our original Profile of Homelessness was published in April 2002 and what new trends have developed in terms of why households approach as homeless, where they have come from, and the types of households that are approaching.

More recently the introduction of a housing options approach has allowed greater endeavours to prevent homelessness from occurring and this has also allowed a clear view of people’s aspirations. Despite the availability of low cost home ownership schemes for some people social housing is the only feasible option.

Who approaches the Council as homeless?



Single Households

Single person households continue to dominate homeless presentations in Orkney. This coupled with “under-occupancy” changes imposed by welfare reform has resulted in a greater demand for one bedroom accommodation than was previously the case.

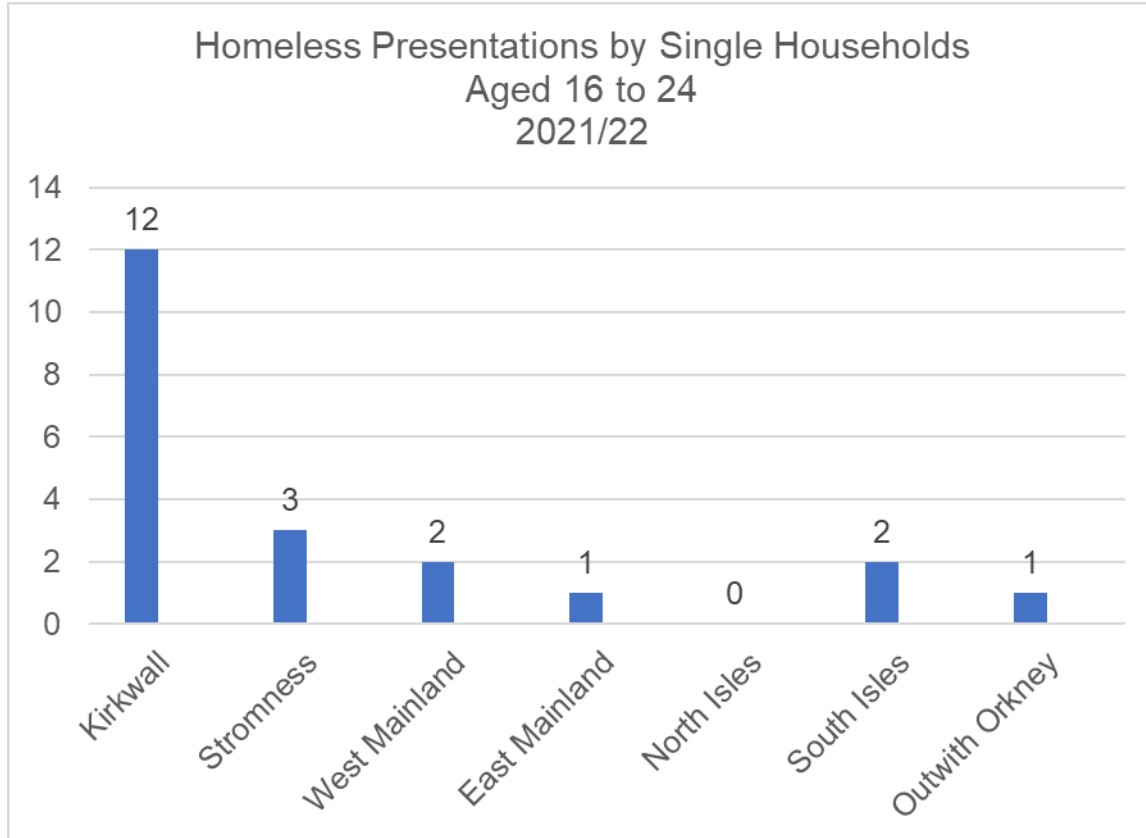
Under 25's

In 2021/22 of the 132 applications 21, (16%), were from people under 25. This is down from a high of 37 of 127 applications, (29%), in 2016/17 as a proportion of overall applications. And, there is a slight fall compared to 2020/21 where there were 25 from a total of 136 applications, 18% of the total.

The provision of the young persons supported accommodation is vital to addressing homelessness in this client group.

Of those who present as homeless from the under 25s age group a significant number present because their parents are no longer willing or able to accommodate them. The Council's lettings policy includes a priority pass for newly emerging households. This allows some opportunity for young people to be able to obtain social housing without the need to present as homeless. However, this does depend

on the area as in areas of high demand such as Kirkwall, it is generally only households with a gold priority pass who would be able to secure social rented housing. The Local Housing Strategy focuses on the provision of other types of accommodation to assist young people to access low cost home ownership properties where this is relevant.



The graph above shows the geographic areas from where households under 25 present as homeless. As would be expected, areas like Kirkwall and Stromness as major population areas would be expected to be higher up the scale. However, it is perhaps more surprising that the number from the West and East Mainland is broadly comparable to that of the North Isles.

Single People under the age of 25 face an additional hurdle when trying to secure accommodation in the private sector as they are not entitled to full housing costs if on Universal Credit, and therefore if they are not working will find accessing accommodation very difficult.

Single Applicants aged 25 to age of retirement

In 2021/22 of the 132 applications 73 (55%) of all applications were between 25 and 64 years of age. Of those 75 of whom approached as the result of a relationship breakdown (21 violent and 54 non-violent). A small number (3) gave up secure accommodation to approach as homeless.

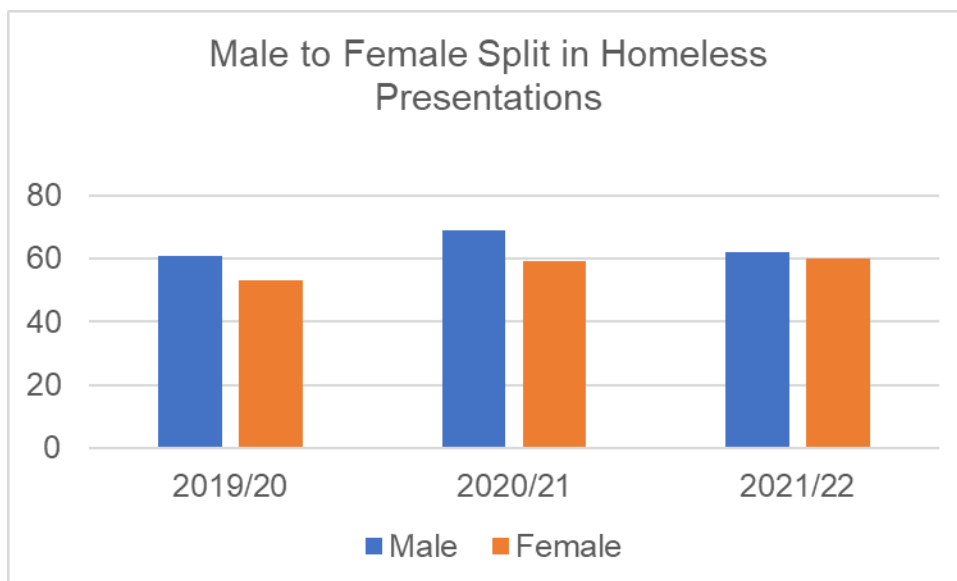
There are significant challenges in respect of the supply of smaller accommodation.

Single Applicants over the age of retirement

There was only one single applicant, (a woman), over sixty-five years of age who approached as homeless in 2021/22. This figure is a decrease compared to 2020/21 (seven applicants) and was a rise from previous years; this was for a variety of reasons.

Single Applicants – Male /Female Split

As the following bar chart shows the number of single male applicants remains higher than female ones and this is true across all age groups. Initial assessment show that relationship breakdown is a significant reason for homelessness approaches from single men, a problem exacerbated by the lack of affordable accommodation.



Homeless Households with Children

In 2021/22, there were 32 households, in total, with dependent children (24%), out of 132 homeless applications. This compares to 15% in 2020/21. The total number of children in temporary accommodation as at 31st March 2022 was 20 compared to 11 children at 31 March 2021.

Single Parent Households

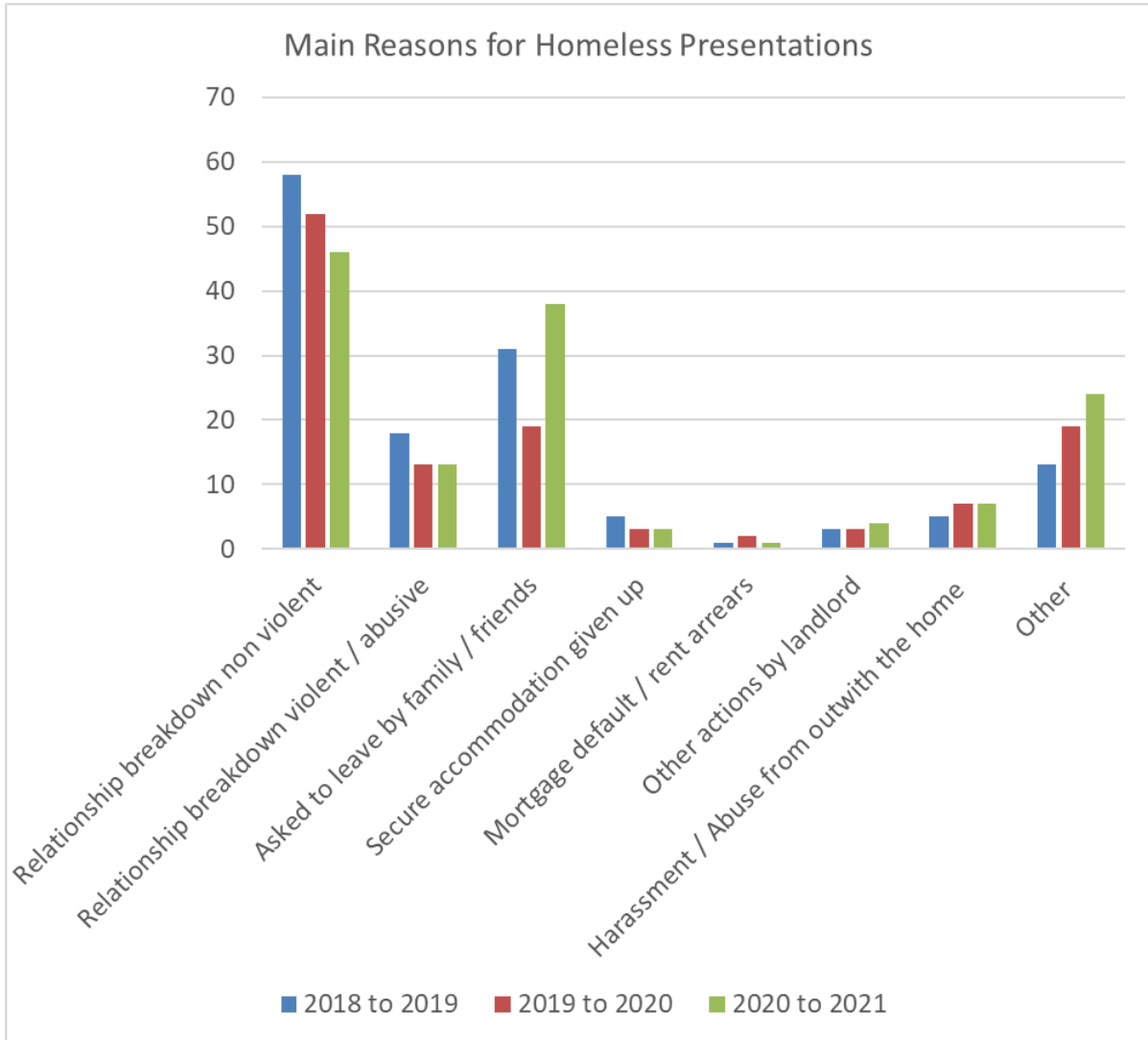
In 2021/22, there were 28 applications (21%) from single parent households which is an increase from 2020/21 where there were 19 applications which was 14% of the total, a similar proportion of single parent households applying as over the previous 3 years. Of these 28 approaches 23 were as the result of relationship breakdown (10 violent and 13 non-violent.). 1 (5%) of the single parents approaching the council were male.

Couples with Children

In 2021/22 five couples with children presented as homeless, compared to one couple in both 2020/21 and 2019/20.

Why are homeless presentations made?

The chart below highlights the 8 highest causes of homelessness since 2019/20.



The main causes of homelessness have remained predominantly the same for the last decade, with the two main causes being relationship breakdown, and family / friends no longer being willing / able to accommodate being largely responsible for the bulk of homelessness applications.

Relationship Breakdown

The level of non-violent relationship breakdown presentations was higher in 2021/22 standing at 54 (41%) compared to the previous year which saw 46 applications (34%). In 2019/20 this reason accounted for 52 (44%) of the presentations. Of these 54, 7 were single person households ages 16 – 24 and 30 were single person households of 25 years and over. There were also 13 households with children. This

is by far the biggest single reason behind homeless approaches in Orkney and must be addressed by the homelessness strategy.

Non-Abusive Relationship breakdown

In addition to looking at the way homeless applications are processed, it is important that the Homelessness Strategy emphasises the importance of prevention work including making use of Counselling and Family Mediation Services.

Abusive Relationships

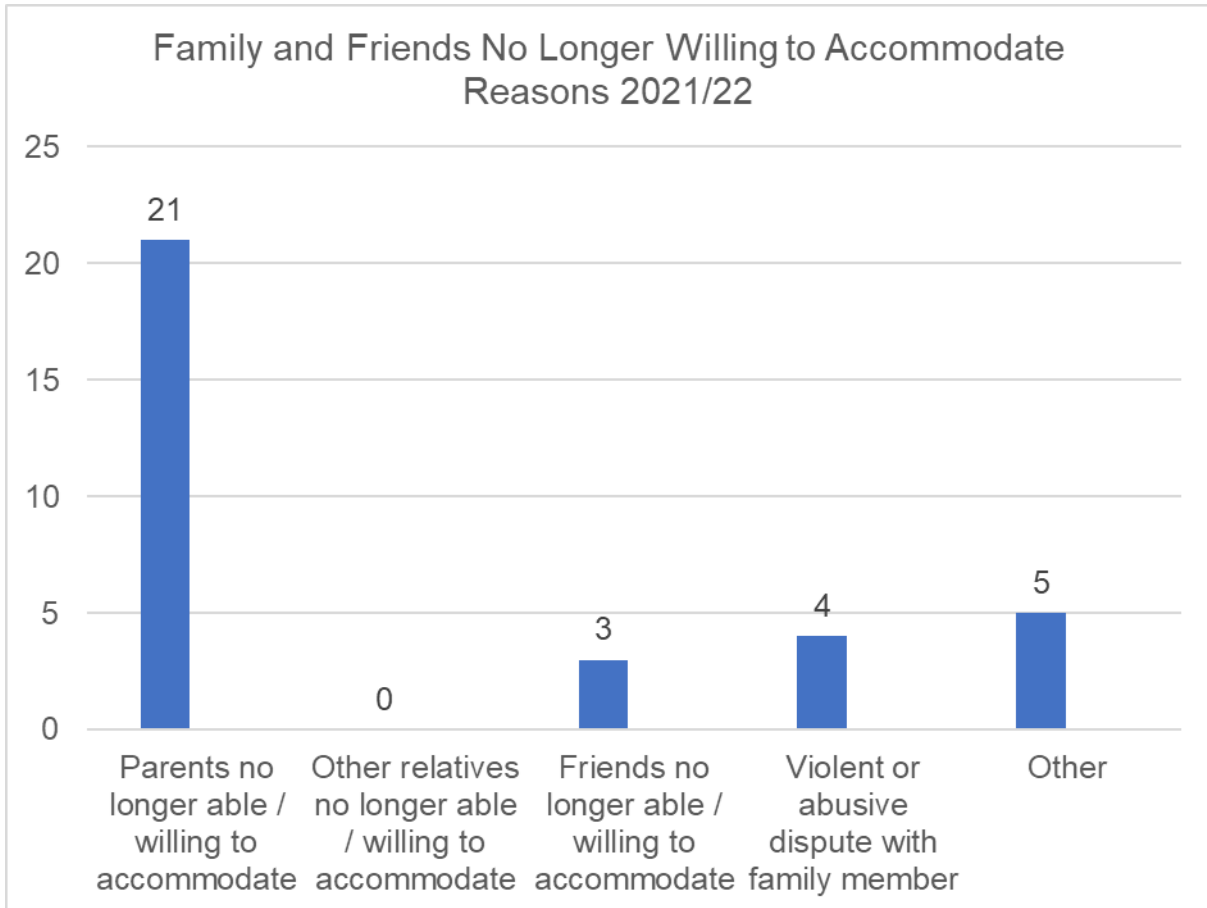
In 2021/22 there was an increase of applications due to relationship breakdown violent/abusive 21 cases (16%) of the total compared to 13 presentations (9.5%) in 2020/21. Homeless presentations due to domestic abuse remains significant. Nationally it was anticipated that during 2020 to 2021, there may be a higher level of homelessness presentations as a result of domestic abuse than in previous years. This was due to the pandemic leading to families being at home together for greater periods of time, the potential for consumption of alcohol etc to be higher and COVID-19 restrictions potentially making it more difficult for someone experiencing abuse to be able to seek help. While locally the figures did not register an increase in homelessness presentations, there is still a need to monitor the situation closely.

Through the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan we have updated our movable CCTV packages which can be readily sited in properties throughout the community as required, to assist to combat domestic abuse.

Temporary accommodation and support is provided through Phoenix House Refuge and there are 4 units of move on accommodation beside Phoenix House. These units benefit from the support and proximity to the refuge and are equipped with CCTV and other security measures. In addition, temporary accommodation is provided throughout the community as required.

Family and Friends unable / unwilling to accommodate

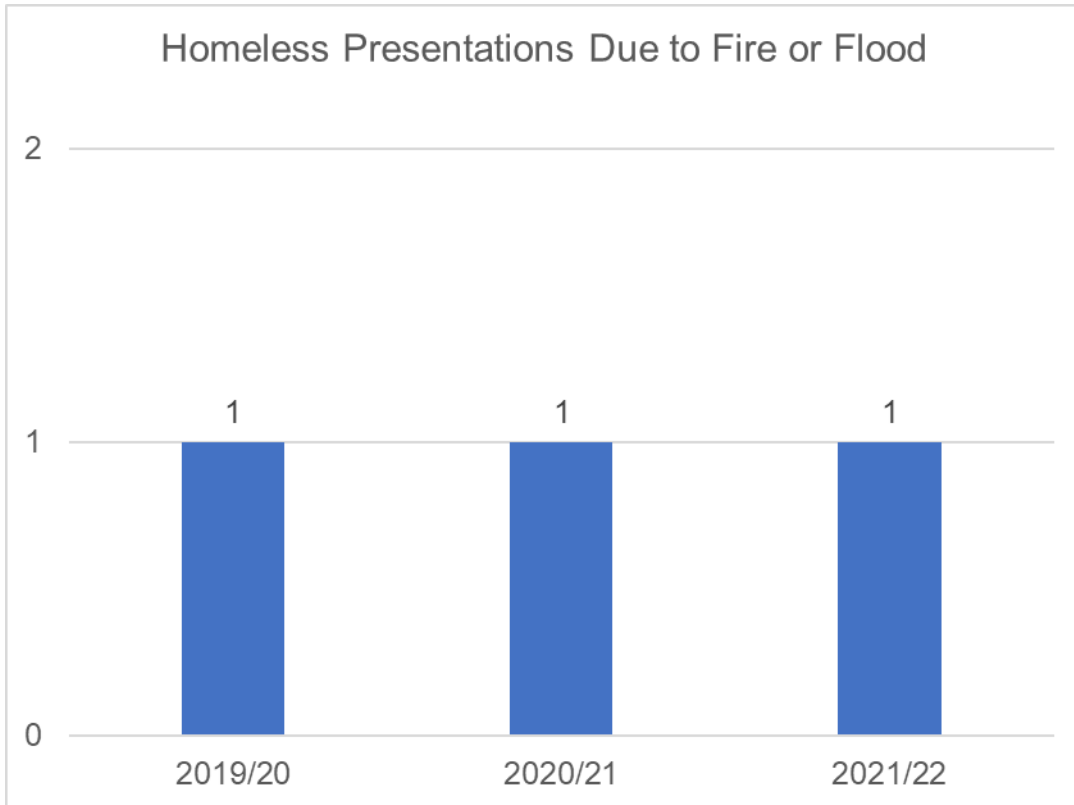
Of the 33 homeless presentations made under this category during 2021/22, 30 approached from the parental home as indicated by the following chart. Of the 30, 12 were single people aged 16 – 24, and 18 were single people over 25. Where households had not previously held accommodation elsewhere, applicants are most likely to be younger (16 – 18) and presenting from the parental home.



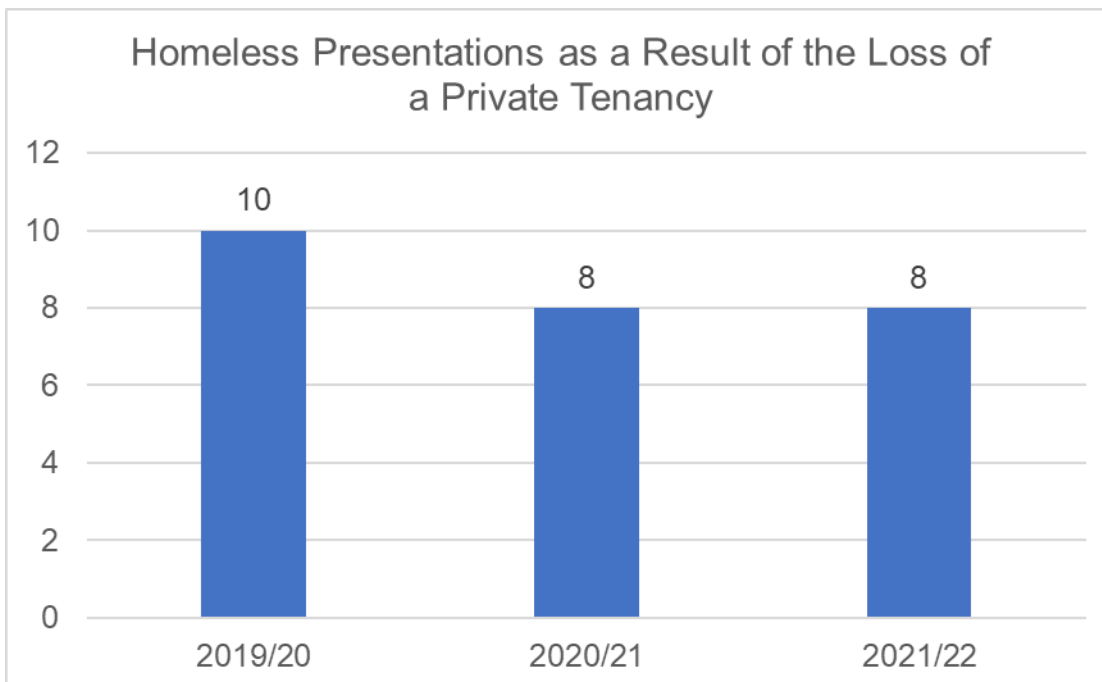
As with relationship breakdown this is a significant cause of homelessness in Orkney and measures must be put in place in order to reduce the number of applications received as a result of family / friends being unable or unwilling to accommodate. These could include increased access to mediation –and increased provision of alternative accommodation especially for those under 25 who have very limited access to accommodation in the private sector due to the level of likely entitlement to housing costs if on Universal Credit.

Emergency

By their very nature emergency presentations are difficult to predict. The level of homelessness presentations as a result of emergency is relatively low and in financial years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 was at 1 case for each year. Provision of temporary accommodation always has to be available at short notice and this is particularly true in the event of an emergency situation such as fire and flood.



Loss of Private Rented Accommodation



The number of households presenting with the primary reason being the loss of a private sector tenancy has dropped significantly from a peak of 32 in 2004/05 to 8 in 2020/21 and 10 in 2021/22. The reason for this drop is partially due to a legislative change which means secure tenancies are being provided by the private rented sector.

In the past the Homelessness and Advice Section often accepted households in receipt of invalid notices to quit as homeless as there was no advice service to refer them to. Today there is not only the Council's own advice and information service but also a dedicated worker with the Citizens Advice Bureau. The Council accepts homeless applications at the point that a household is in receipt of an eviction decree, prior to that stage every effort will be made to endeavour to prevent homelessness from occurring.

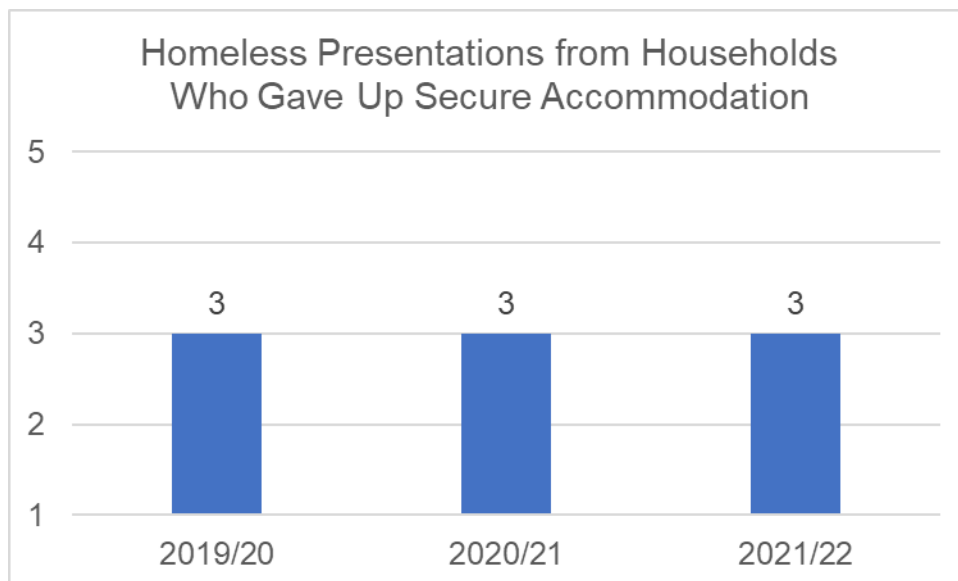
Other Causes of Homelessness

Mortgage Default / Loss of Accommodation Due to Rent Arrears

The level of homeless approaches in Orkney due to mortgage default or rent arrears was very low with one case for the financial years of 2020/21 and 2021/22 and two cases during 2019/20. This would suggest that preventative work whether through legislation which requires mortgage lenders and landlords to notify the local authority in the event that they are taking action to recover a property as a result of debt, or through referral for appropriate financial advice is relatively effective.

Given up Secure Accommodation

Since our first Homelessness Strategy, homeless approaches as the result of giving up secure accommodation that was otherwise available for the household to occupy (for example leaving a council tenancy because it was felt to be in the wrong area or to be too small) has remained a small but significant cause of homeless presentations and an area which remains an important focus. Further analysis of these cases suggests that a primary motivator in such cases is a desire to move to a different area or to a bigger / better property. In instances where households were advised not to leave the property before approaching, they were subsequently found to be intentionally homeless.



Discharge from hospital / prison

In 2021/22 there was one presentation as homeless on discharge from either hospital or prison – the same number as the previous year. Testament in part to the success of the protocols in place with Orkney Health and Care's Criminal Justice Service and the Integration Joint Board. However, there is no room for complacency and an increasingly ageing population could mean that this becomes an issue in the future.

Throughcare / Aftercare

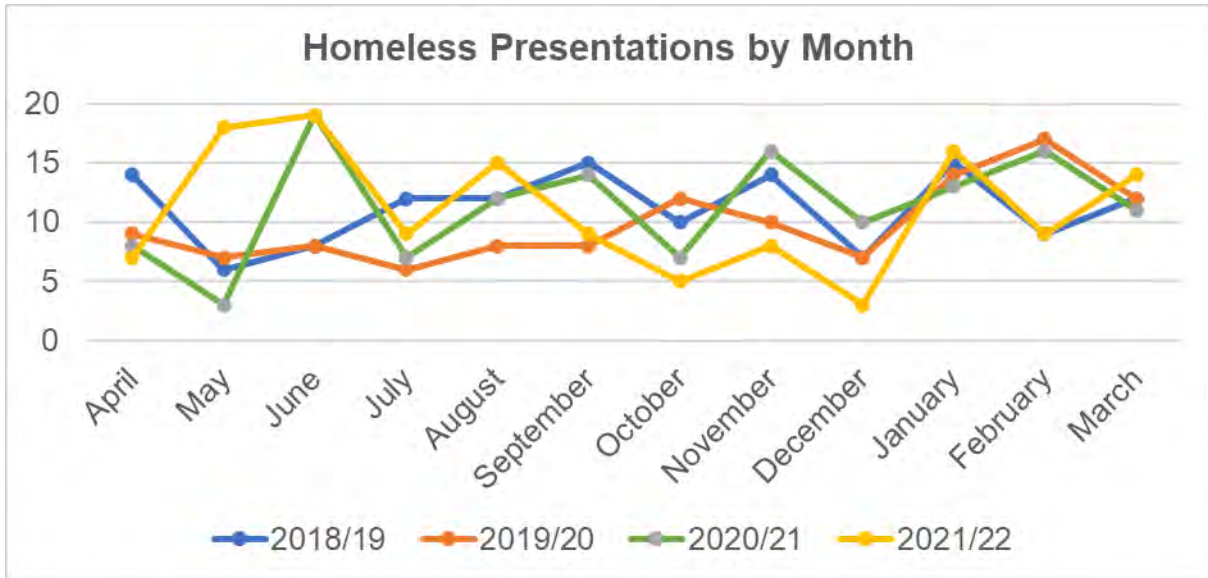
The Council has a Protocol on Housing and Young People Leaving Care. This is intended to ensure that young people leaving the care system, are able to access accommodation and the support they need without the need to present as homeless. The level of accommodation provided to this client group is monitored through our annual report to the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee in relation to homelessness. A section of the report is devoted to the allocation of all Council vacancies by the specific type of housing need and area. Our Protocol on Housing for Young People Leaving Care, provides more detail on the issues facing this client group and our responses to those.

Repeat Homelessness

The number of cases where an applicant was found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness on 2 or more occasions in a 12 month period is relatively low in Orkney and amounts to only one or two cases per year.

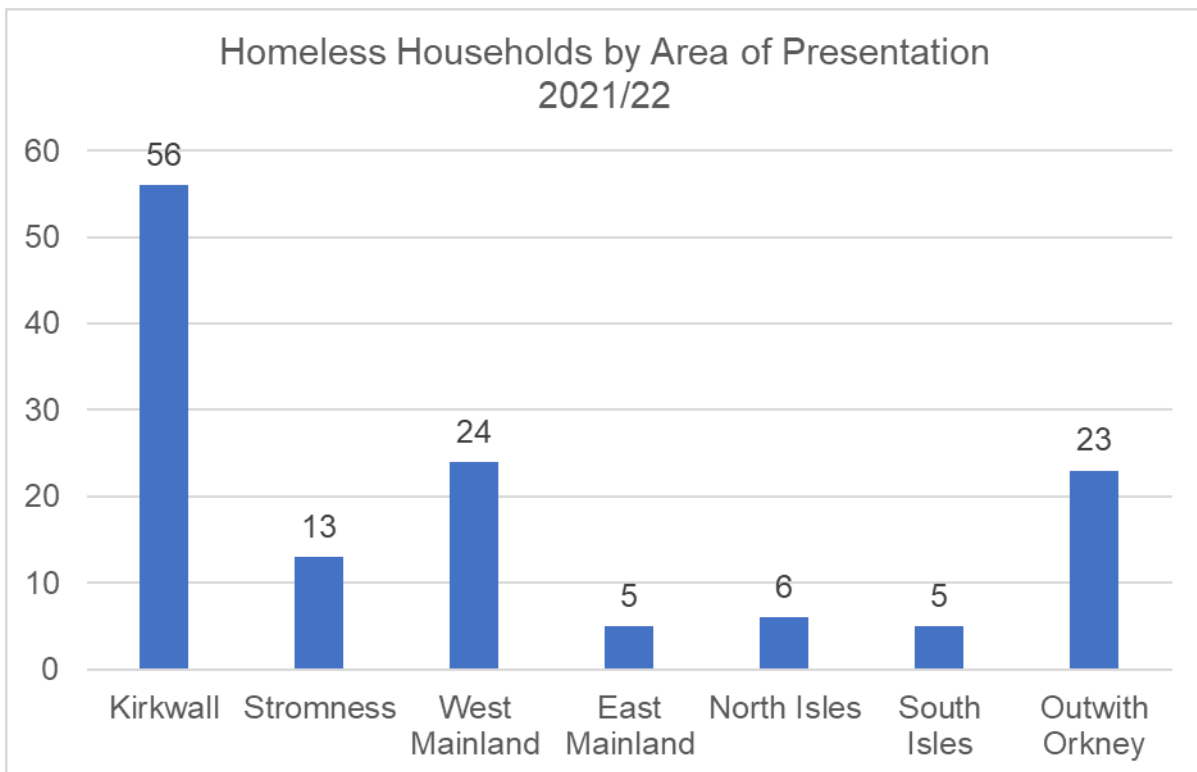
Seasonal Issues

Presentations in Orkney do not remain entirely steady throughout the year and more work needs to be done to understand why presentations are higher at certain times of the year. An analysis of seasonal trends could potentially assist with planning for both temporary accommodation and to a lesser degree for permanent housing. However, an analysis of the trends does indicate that there is less seasonal variation than was the case in the past. The chart below looks at presentations on a month by month basis since April 2018. What specifically is evident is a drop in presentations in December annually but with November and January showing higher levels of presentations accordingly. Presentations were lower during April and May 2020, predominantly due to the COVID-19 lockdown and this was immediately followed by a predicted rise in presentations.



What Areas Do Applicants Approach From?

Geographical Location



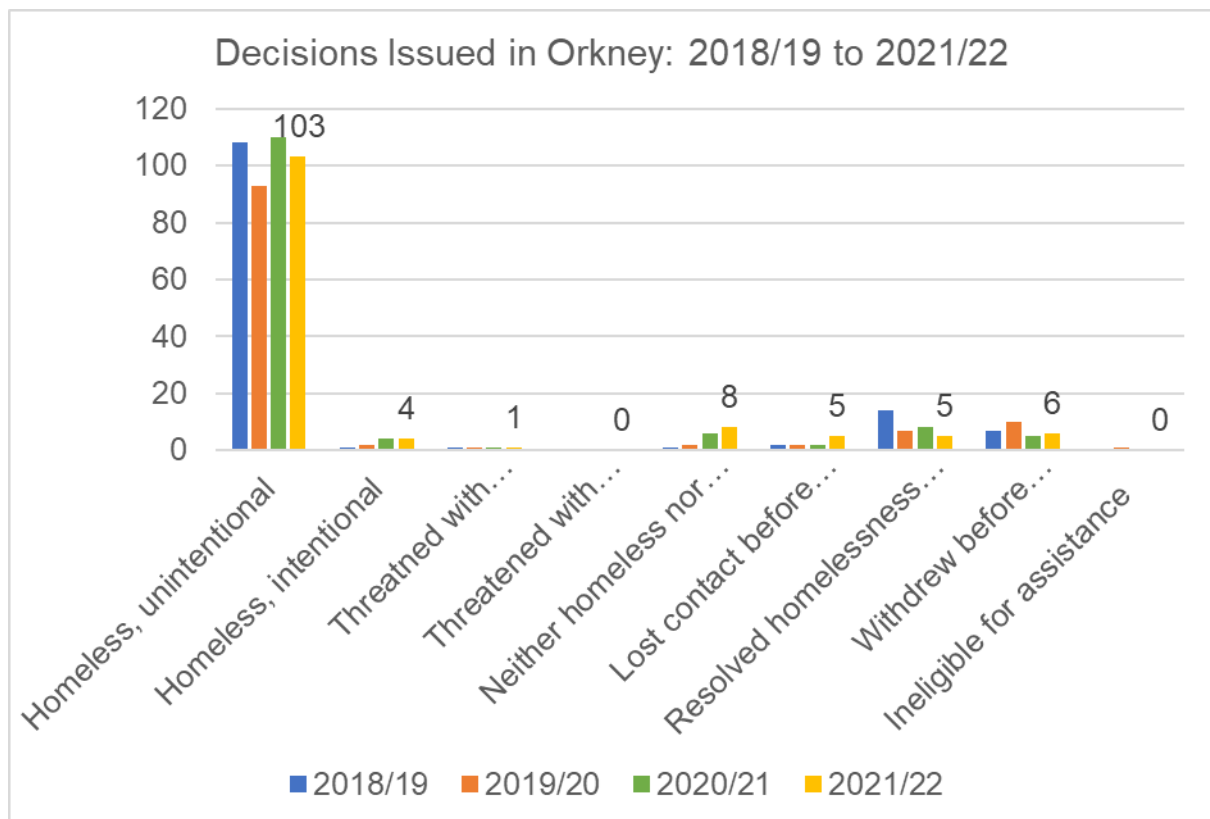
The table above shows that 42% of homeless applications originate from Kirkwall. A further 32% originate from elsewhere on the Orkney mainland. As regards applications from outwith Orkney, during financial year 2021 to 2022, there were no cases which had no local connection. Therefore, the households represented either had a local connection with Orkney or had presented as a result of issues of domestic abuse or harassment which meant that local connection was not an issue.

Ethnicity of Applicants

Although presentations from ethnic and minority groups remain low compared to Scottish levels as a whole, there is consistently a small number of approaches made by individuals from Eastern Europe.

Decisions

The following table gives a breakdown of decisions made on homeless applications in the 3 years covering 2019/20 to 2021/22. As can be seen the ratio of decisions has stayed largely the same across the period.



Homeless, Unintentional, Local Connection

Year on year, the majority of those assessed under the homelessness legislation have the full homelessness duty accepted. That is to say they are found to be unintentionally homeless and with a local connection. There is a duty to provide temporary accommodation to this group until an offer of appropriate permanent accommodation is secured. During financial year 2021/22 the Council accepted a duty to permanently rehouse 74.2% of households who presented as homeless.

Homeless, Intentional

The numbers of intentionally homeless decisions are relatively low. The Council took a decision in November 2020 to continue to assess intentionality following changes to the Homeless etc (Scotland) Act 2003, which in effect allowed a local authority to

opt out of investigating intentionality. In 2021/22 there were five households found to be homeless intentionally.

Homeless, Unintentional but with No Local Connection

The number of cases where a household is found to have no local connection with Orkney, are relatively limited. Local connection focuses on whether a household has been resident in the area for 6 out of the last 12 months; 3 out of the last 5 years; has a local connection due to family reasons or other special reasons. During financial year 2021/22 there were no cases where the household was found to have no local connection.

Changes to local connection took effect at a national level from November 2022, and Orkney raised its significant concern about the impact this may have if, in effect, households can choose where in the country they present as homeless. An islands impact assessment was undertaken by the Scottish Government. The impact of the change in legislation will be monitored accordingly.

Lost Contact / Homelessness Resolved prior to assessment

There has been a slight increase in the number of homeless cases where contact has been lost with the applicant prior to the homeless assessment being finalised. In 2021/2022 this figure was 5 of all cases closed in this year 3.4% of cases compared to 2.2% of cases the year before. The low level of lost contact is in part at least due to the adoption of a more proactive approach to homeless prevention and assessment, with staff working with households to identify a range of housing options where possible. In some instances however, the resolution may only be temporary (for example moving out of temporary accommodation and in with family / friends) and may lead to a further homeless approach in the future.

The Use of Temporary Accommodation

The Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan has replaced its Temporary Accommodation Strategy. The use of temporary accommodation and length of stay within temporary accommodation is monitored closely and the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan aims to reduce the time households spend in temporary accommodation.

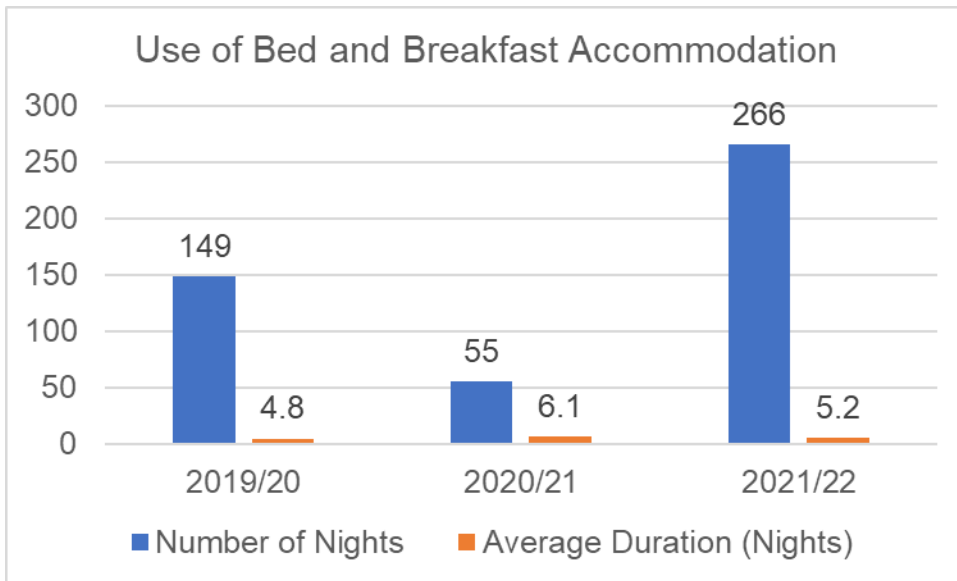
In most cases homeless applicants are offered short term tenancies in self-contained properties, and where possible in an area where they wish to be.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of temporary accommodation escalated significantly. In order to address this, additional properties were taken from our permanent stock, in order to ensure temporary accommodation could be provided where required.

As of 31 March 2022 there were 46 homeless households in temporary accommodation. Throughout the financial year 2021/22, the number of households in temporary accommodation has generally been above 58 households. At any one time throughout 2021/22, the families being accommodated included an average of 11 children.

As at 21 February 2023, 72 households were in temporary accommodation, 13 households were awaiting temporary accommodation while staying with friends / family and therefore don't need temporary accommodation. This represents a significant rise in demand for temporary accommodation.

Changes to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order in effect prevent the legitimate use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for housing homeless households. Because of the ongoing pandemic, temporary exemptions were in place until 30 June 2021 in certain limited circumstances. The graph below shows the use of Bed and Breakfast in 2019/20 to 2021/22. While the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation has been greatly restricted for a number of years and is only used in emergency situations, its occasional use is sometimes necessitated.



Homeless Prevention

In 2021/2022 the Housing Services provided housing advice and information to 18 clients. The level of housing options / advice cases relative to those which later became formal homelessness presentations is as follows:

Financial Year.	Number of Cases.	Went on to Present as Homeless.
2018/19.	31.	5.
2019/20.	19.	4.
2020/21.	22.	8.
2021/22.	18.	3.

This service has the potential to expand if it were sufficiently resourced. Ideally the pressure on social housing could potentially be reduced if there were a staffing resource which could focus on helping clients to explore all the options that may be available to them.

Conclusions

Orkney has seen the level of homeless presentations fluctuate slightly over recent years in comparison to a relative decline in housing options and advice and information cases. The key causes and trends in homelessness identified from this section will be considered in the final section of this profile.

Part Four: Current Services

Why Look At Current Services?

Part Four of the Profile of Homelessness in Orkney looks at the services currently available to those finding themselves homeless in Orkney.

In 2002, when our first Homelessness Strategy was being developed, a robust assessment of service provision was undertaken which allowed the identification of gaps, from there a means of filling each gap was explored, whether by expanding existing services or the creation of new ones.

Since then, service provision and joint working have moved on significantly. However, it remains important to continually assess service needs and determine whether service provision continues to meet those needs.

Although there are still few services which are specifically dedicated to homelessness, many agencies play a key role in the prevention and alleviation of homelessness in Orkney, including assisting with the provision of temporary accommodation. Many agencies offer services across a range of disciplines but for ease of reference we have split the range of services offered into the areas of:

- Emergency / Temporary Accommodation.
- Advice and Information Services.
- Housing Support.
- Health Services (General Provision).
- Mental Health Services.
- Drug and Alcohol Services.
- Relationship Breakdown.
- Services for 16 - 25 year olds.
- Children's Support Services.
- People with Particular Needs.
- Other.

It is acknowledged that many agencies in Orkney take on much broader roles with generic services than would be likely to be found in more urban areas. It is essential that the Homelessness Strategy continues to harness this willingness to be flexible and adaptable. Only by agencies being willing to look beyond initial remits and continuing to be open to a range of possibilities, can we ensure that assistance is available to the broadest possible cross section of our communities.

It is also acknowledged that this list is not intended to be exhaustive and that some services outwith Orkney are accessible by various means including electronically.

Emergency / Temporary Accommodation

The Council previously produced a Temporary Accommodation Strategy. However, the development of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan has presented an opportunity to amalgamate these two documents appropriately.

In the main, the Council's temporary accommodation comprises furnished tenancies from within the Council's general needs stock. There are four properties from Orkney Housing Association Ltd. There is more specialist provision aimed at specific groups including young people with support provided by Right There, refuge and support services provided by Women's Aid Orkney for women and their children (if any) fleeing domestic abuse.

The Housing Support Duty requires that all homeless households who are assessed as unintentionally homeless and in need of support, are provided with support accordingly. The Council has a protocol and generally provides support from within its own staffing resources.

Supported accommodation is provided by various other agencies for the following groups:

- Women and their children (if any) who have experienced domestic abuse; (Women's Aid Orkney).
- Young people of 16 – 25 years who require support to develop independent living skills (Right There).

Protocols have been developed between the Homelessness Section and the agencies responsible for the supported accommodation detailed above.

Leasing Arrangements

The Council has a policy covering the leasing arrangements to homeless households. This allows the usage of two different types of tenancy agreement being:

- A Contractual Common Law Tenancy (for periods of up to 6 months).
- The Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (for periods of over 6 months).

Both tenancy agreements afford tenants increased rights and security, the use of the Short Scottish Secure Tenancy particularly allows a greatly increased level of rights for those tenants to whom we have a long term duty. This was intended primarily to increase their levels of security, to ensure tenancy conditions could be enforced in situations where this was necessary, for instance where another household's rights were compromised, or to prepare the household for the types of conditions provided by a full Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.

Furnished Tenancies

Most applicants who are placed in temporary accommodation are offered a furnished tenancy. This is done at an early stage in proceedings and more often than not before a decision has been reached as to the long term duties owed. Most properties are taken from the Council's stock and a small number of others are leased from Orkney Housing Association Ltd.

At present a homeless applicant can expect to spend up to 9 months (if waiting for a smaller property) and 8.9 months (for a larger property) in such a tenancy before being offered permanent accommodation. These timescales have generally increased over the last 3 years. However, this increase was intensified in 2020/21 as a result of the pandemic. In general terms the cause of the increased time in temporary accommodation is as a result of smaller building programmes being undertaken leading to a smaller number of properties being available for allocation coupled with a mismatch in size and area of available properties relative to the demand in respect of homelessness.

The costs incurred in equipping a property can be considerable. Originally, in order to seek to counteract this and to ensure value for money for the Council, the rent charges on emergency properties include a furnishing charge of £22.69 per week (as at 2022). Since the introduction of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in 2019, we have frozen rents on emergency accommodation in recognition that there is an issue with affordability.

Council policies on seeking to bring in additional charges to assist with budget deficits present a challenge from the context of affordability for homeless households. There is a policy on charging for the storage of a homeless household's furniture and other belongings. The revenue raised as a result of this is also considered alongside possible costs of bad debt etc. Where relevant, the provision of an unfurnished tenancy may be a potential to limit recharges for that household. Each case is considered on its own merits and this situation arises relatively infrequently.

Bed and Breakfast

The Council's Housing Service tries to avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast to house homeless households. However, there are times when this is not avoidable but every effort is made to keep its use to a minimum and we are endeavouring to ensure there are no breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

Women's Refuge: Phoenix House

Owned by Orkney Housing Association Ltd and managed by Women's Aid Orkney, Phoenix House Refuge can accommodate up to three households at any one time and each household is likely to remain in the refuge for 3 – 6 months until they feel ready to move on. Support is provided on site.

Four properties which are sited beside the refuge have been leased to Orkney Islands Council, for use as move on accommodation from Phoenix House. Each property is equipped with security equipment such as CCTV systems to allow increased security for the households concerned. Support can be provided by Women's Aid Orkney from the Refuge. In addition, moveable CCTV packages are held which can be sited on a property within the wider community which may allow the household concerned to remain in their own home.

During 2021/22 Women's Aid Orkney supported 149 women and 60 children and young people. They received a total of 155 new referrals (119 women and 36 children and young people). The occupancy rate for the refuge was 55%.

Young Persons' Supported Accommodation for Those Aged 16 – 25

Two facilities offer the above supported accommodation for those who lack independent living skills with support provided on site by Right There.

In Kirkwall, 3 units of supported accommodation are provided at Glaitness Farm House. In addition, 6 units of move on accommodation are provided on the same site.

In Stromness, the accommodation at John Street, provides 4 separate rooms, one of which has an en suite and kitchen area. Additionally, there is a 5th room which is also en suite and used as accommodation for support staff.

In 2020/21 Right There provided support for 25 young people in supported accommodation and occupancy rates were on average of 89%.

Team Manager (Housing Support)

In recognising the high level of support some of those presenting as homeless need, Orkney Islands Council's Housing Service has employed a qualified social worker to assist with the provision of that support. The Team Manager (Housing Support), assisted by a Housing Support Officer, works to ensure the housing support needs of homeless people are appropriately met. Through a detailed assessment process in line with the Housing Support Duty introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, the Team Leader (Housing Support) identifies and co-ordinates the housing and wider support needs of service users. The Team Leader (Housing Support) is separate from the dispersed Home Support Team and this enables the Officer to respond to cases which may require assistance to sustain a tenancy but otherwise may fall outwith the criteria for Home Support.

Home Support Team

The Home Support team is dispersed in structure. One officer is placed within Housing Services. This ensures support is available to those who need it while they are placed in emergency accommodation and while they move on and settle in permanent accommodation.

Housing support is intended to be short term and aimed at those who can benefit from a housing support service usually provided for less than two years. Staff offer floating support to homeless households.

It is felt that such 'floating' support is generally more appropriate in an Orkney context than static support linked to specific units of accommodation. However, there are problems with ensuring that this level of support is available to those approaching as homeless from the outer isles.

Right There Well Being Service

Right There Orkney have developed a new wellbeing service, this provides additional (day support) support for young people accessing accommodation. The Council commissioned a service from Right There to ensure support is on site between 5pm and 11pm as well as sleep over, 7 day per week in both Glaitness and Stromness supported accommodation. The wellbeing service also offers:

- Practical and emotional support.
- Move on support from supported accommodation to permanent tenancies.
- Support in people's own home and in the community.
- Support for people of all ages who are using drugs and alcohol.
- Mental health support for people up to age 25.

Emergency / Temporary Accommodation – Shortfalls in current service provision

Possible gaps exist in service provision for those with a particular need due to the low level of presentations from this group for example those with physical disabilities. Although certain adapted properties are held for use as homeless accommodation, their availability cannot be guaranteed. This could be addressed through an agreement for priority rehousing with Orkney Housing Association Ltd. However, economies of scale and a limited level of provision throughout the combined stock generally, mean that adapted properties cannot remain empty in case a need arises under emergency situations.

Provision of temporary accommodation is now evidenced through our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. While the solution is to endeavour to permanently rehouse homeless households more swiftly, this would require increased levels of housing development. Currently the level of subsidy per house meets a proportion of the overall costs only and the proportion required from the Housing Revenue Account is substantial.

Orkney's Housing Revenue Account is too small to enable sufficient funds to be raised from tenant contributions through rents and currently a substantial review of the HRA Business Plan is underway to determine the likely level of affordable building going forward.

Emergency / Temporary Accommodation – The Way Forward

The Housing Service at Orkney Islands Council is committed to maintaining good quality fully furnished accommodation for those finding themselves homeless. However, consideration will be given to the best means of providing for certain groups. This may include consideration of different accommodation models. Currently building of new units is being restricted to smaller units due to subsidy restrictions and affordability issues as outlined above.

Advice and Information Services

The Council has a comprehensive, specialist housing advice service with its main remit being to prevent homelessness wherever possible and to follow a housing options approach to homelessness prevention.

This Service has a vital role to play in providing households with advice and information / housing options interview about the situations they find themselves in, this may include the validity of Notice to Quits, an individual's rights to the matrimonial home and general housing options advice. This provision is offered to those who approach the service with sufficient time to allow their homelessness to be prevented, however, it is not necessarily extended to those who are being assessed under the homelessness legislation as a result of the limited time available to the household concerned. Ideally this situation needs to change, as there are various situations where homelessness could legitimately be prevented, this may include in cases of relationship breakdown where there is no abuse. Equally a household threatened with homelessness inside 2 months has a right to a homelessness interview and gatekeeping must be avoided.

The Council has a comprehensive Advice and Information Strategy which aims to continue to improve advice provision in the area generally. In addition, this includes joint working with a range of other organisations in Orkney who provide housing advice. Detailed below are some of the other organisations concerned.

The Council's Homelessness and Advice Service is accredited to type 2 with the Scottish Government's quality assurance accreditation, the National Standards for Advice and Information Providers. This has been held since 2008. Achieving this accreditation included ensuring that all staff were trained to a nationally recognised level through successful completion of the Professional Development Award in Housing Law for Advisors currently offered through Shelter. In addition, the Council offered funding and support to a range of other agencies who offer housing advice to enable them to achieve the accreditation as well. This has included Orkney Housing Association Ltd and Orkney Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB).

Citizens Advice Bureau

The CAB is the main provider of independent, free, general advice and information in Orkney. At present the CAB only have an office in Kirkwall, although contact can also be made by phone or by e-mail. In addition, surgeries are run in various islands over the summer months. The CAB also has a comprehensive national website.

Like all CABs in Scotland, Orkney's is linked to the Shelter Housing Aid Centres enabling them to access specialist housing advice if required.

Orkney CAB employs a specialist Homelessness and Welfare Rights Officer, which is funded through the Homelessness Strategy's Local Outcome Agreement. This post provides independent housing advice, assists with benefits appeals and assists those who wish to appeal the Council's decisions etc. Representation in court is also offered in various circumstances.

Orkney CAB also offers independent money advice services. These include assistance with multiple debt and any applications under the mortgage to rent scheme etc. This area, along with the Homelessness and Welfare Rights Officer, include covering the requirements of Section 11 of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003. Section 11 requires all Registered Social Landlords, Private Sector Landlords and Mortgage Lenders to notify the Local Authority before taking action to evict or repossess property.

Orkney CAB also offer home visits to clients who cannot attend the office and offer video appointments using the Near Me software. They can also meet with clients at other agencies if required – for example they often meet clients at Orkney Blide Trust's premises.

Orkney Housing Association Ltd

Orkney Housing Association Ltd (OHAL) is Orkney's only Registered Social Landlord and as such works closely with the Council to assist in the prevention and alleviation of homelessness.

The provision of housing advice including advice on housing options (including low cost home ownership options), relationship breakdown and tenancy sustainment is provided by OHAL as part of normal service provision. OHAL provides permanent accommodation for a substantial proportion of homeless households to whom we have a long term duty. Arrangements for this are made under a protocol for Section 5 Referrals, which is a process by which the Council can refer a homeless household for permanent rehousing.

Women's Aid Orkney

Women's Aid Orkney provides housing advice for women and their children, if any, who have experienced domestic abuse. This is likely to include advice on security of tenure, their rights under the homelessness legislation, how to access legal representation and the possibility of seeking interdicts etc.

Public Health

Whilst the role of Public Health will be considered in more depth at a later stage in this document, it is included here as they are a key provider of advice and information on a range of health-related issues and are easily accessible to those who are homeless / threatened with homelessness.

It plays a particular role in relation to providing advice to accessing health services and advice on healthy eating for homeless households etc.

Legal Advice

There are a number of Solicitors in Orkney who can advise on people's legal position and rights.

Independent Advocacy in Orkney

Orkney Citizen's Advice Bureau currently provides a free, confidential and independent advocacy service for vulnerable adults in Orkney.

They provide an invaluable service for those who would otherwise find it difficult to access assistance. They support and enable people who are vulnerable (perhaps because of old age, infirmity, learning disability, dementia or mental health problems) to speak up for themselves and exercise their rights as individuals.

A specific Children's and Young Persons Advocacy service that specifically works with people who have been looked after and those in receipt of mental health services is available from a different provider which will be highlighted later in this document.

Job Centre Plus

The Jobcentre Plus can advise applicants on benefit entitlement and employment opportunities and should not be underestimated as a source of advice and information. In addition, work coaches available through Jobcentre Plus can give advice on the support available when returning to work or starting a business.

Those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness may also be referred as relevant, to other agencies such as the CAB for income maximisation advice.

Community Learning, Development and Employability

The Community Learning, Development & Employability Support Team (CLDE) can assist anyone living in Orkney, to improve their outcomes through learning. The role of CLD is to support individuals, groups, and communities to make a positive change in their lives or in their community by using a range of different approaches including youth work, community-based adult learning, family learning, volunteer development, employability support and community development. The Service can offer practical assistance, personalised one-to-one and group work support to people who are looking to increase their confidence, knowledge and skills in various areas and progress towards learning, training or employment.

There is a focus on expanding partnership work with housing partners to explore CLD approaches and preventative work around homelessness with young people.

Housing Advice and Information Provision – The Way Forward

When our original profile on homelessness was being developed in 2002, advice provision in Orkney was much less well developed than is currently the case.

In order to ensure appropriate standards of advice were provided, various key agencies agreed to join together in aiming to become accredited to the Scottish National Standard for Advice and Information Providers, with the Scottish Government. Currently (2022) these agencies are:

- Orkney Islands Council's Homelessness and Advice Service.
- Orkney Citizen's Advice Bureau.

In addition, Women's Aid Orkney and Right There undertook the required training through Shelter's related training programme to ensure their knowledge met the appropriate standards.

Provision of information has traditionally been through relevant leaflets and posters and increasingly is provided through electronic means including our online housing options guide. This allows people to identify who they can contact for more specific information or at a point of housing crisis.

The Homelessness Strategy needs to ensure the ongoing need to organise training on homelessness and other related issues to a wide range of agencies. Although training should be delivered on an approximately annual basis for a range of agencies, it would be advantageous to seek to determine where the agencies concerned feel they would like to receive training and whether they feel there are gaps in their knowledge and this will be taken forward through the relevant groups.

Support Services

The type of support required

The support needed by those finding themselves homeless varies significantly from case to case. Some of the more vulnerable clients require daily contact and help with all aspects of maintaining their tenancy – budgeting, home care, self care and more. Others require little more than a fortnightly check that everything is okay. Improvements have included the employment of a qualified Social Worker (Team Manager (Housing Support)) supported by a Housing Support Officer previously introduced through the Homelessness Strategy.

Support for the Family

Where necessary our Housing Support Officer will ensure that Home Start is bought in to offer help to families with children under five. In addition, Relationships Scotland Orkney offer support and specialist counselling to help prevent relationship breakdown, and child-focused family mediation, as well as a child contact centre where parents can see children they no longer live with. They also offer various specialist forms of support including for Primary School age children and their families, help and advice for separated parents and specialist substance use support and counselling. Voluntary Action Orkney also provides a befriending service.

Other services exist which can offer assistance in some situations. Orkney Blide Trust runs a befriending service for those with mental health issues which can allow family members a break from the supportive role if only for a short period of time. In addition, this allows the individual concerned to talk to someone from outwith the family unit if required.

Team Manager (Housing Support)

Based within the Housing Services the Team Manager (Housing Support) is a qualified social worker, offering support to those in temporary accommodation, as well as in secure council tenancies. Following liaison with, and referral to, other agencies this enables a comprehensive support package to be identified at an early stage.

In addition, a dispersed 'Home Support Team' was created to provide support for those who need it on a short term basis (for up to 2 years) in both temporary and permanent accommodation across a range of tenures. The team have built on the foundations already laid by the Team Manager (Housing Support). In addition to providing intensive support where needed, the team also works to link tenants into more mainstream support services and one officer is based within Housing Services.

Floating housing support is available to people who live in all types of tenures including those who are owner occupiers. The service provides short term housing support which is aimed at those who can benefit from a housing support service usually provided for less than 2 years.

Domestic Abuse

The development of Phoenix House, Women's Refuge made significant inroads towards meeting the needs of women and children fleeing domestic abuse, with targeted support being provided onsite. In addition, the close liaison between Women's Aid Orkney and our Housing Support Service will ensure that victims of domestic abuse in temporary accommodation (whether in the refuge or elsewhere in the community) can access specialist support as well as more general assistance.

MARAC

A Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a meeting where information is shared on domestic abuse cases deemed to be high risk. Representatives of local police, health, social work, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, probation and other specialists may attend. This structure is also vital to tackling domestic abuse at a local level.

Men's Aid

Although there is no local provision, Men's Aid can be accessed for any male victims of domestic abuse and Relationships Scotland Orkney offer support for male victims.

Victim Support

Victim Support Scotland provides practical and emotional support and information about the Criminal Justice system to victims, witnesses and others affected by crime. This includes support for male victims of domestic abuse.

Employability Orkney – Supported Employment Project

Employability Orkney helps to provide a range of sustainable supported employment, training and volunteering opportunities for people who may face a barrier to gaining employment. This includes individuals with a learning disability, physical disability, mental health needs, alcohol/substance misuse need; those who are ex-offenders, care leavers, long-term unemployed and anyone who may experience a disadvantage in entering the labour market.

Health Services (General Provision)

A Housing Contribution Statement has been developed in order to append the Integration Joint Board's Local Strategic Commissioning Plan. This is intended to highlight the contributions made by housing services to assist with the role of the Integration Joint Board.

GPs Surgeries

The nature of homelessness in Orkney is such that most homeless applicants continue to access their Doctor as before.

However, we continue to source information from the questionnaire sent out to homeless applicants, to ensure that issues aren't arising re access to health services specifically.

GP's and other Health Professionals have a key role to play in providing advice and access to information for homeless applicants. They are often, in Orkney, the one constant that an individual has in a period of sometimes traumatic change.

Dentists

As outlined above in relation to GP provision, the nature of homelessness in Orkney is such that most homeless applicants continue to access their dentist as before.

However, we continue to source information from the questionnaire sent out to homeless applicants, to ensure that issues aren't arising re access to dental services specifically.

Public Health

Public Health works across a range of areas with the aim of reducing health inequalities whilst improving the health and wellbeing of the people in Orkney. For individuals, NHS Orkney Public Health deliver and commission a number of services to support health.

- The Nordhaven Clinic (Orkney's sexual health clinic) is a service commissioned through Public Health. Situated in Skerryvore GP practice it offers a free and confidential service which includes STI testing, access to contraception including emergency contraception and free condoms, pregnancy testing and sexual health related advice.

- The NHS Orkney polytunnel project aims to assist mental health and wellbeing through engagement with green spaces. This has provided a space for groups or individuals to access a green space but also engage in gardening activities and are open 7 days a week from 8am to 9pm. One of the tunnels, which is wheelchair accessible, can provide a relaxed location and be booked by groups. Additionally, there are plots available to garden either as individuals or groups.
- Quit Your Way Orkney is a free, confidential specialist stop smoking services offering one to one support including support to stop smoking during pregnancy. Specially trained stop smoking advisors provide advice, guidance and support to people who smoke to quit in a way that suits them. Community pharmacies, such as Boots and Sutherlands, also deliver stop smoking service.
- Orkney's Public Health Team also deliver a range of training for professionals and volunteers including 'Money Counts' which is a one-hour session designed to help frontline staff and volunteers to best use the 'Worrying About Money?' leaflet to support people struggling with money worries or financial crisis.
- 'MAP – Motivation, Action, Prompts' training supports participants to develop knowledge and skills relating to health behaviours change techniques to them to support others to make small manageable positive health behaviour changes in their own lives. 'Confidence to Cook' training to train is available from the Public Health Team.
- Vaccinations to protect against a range of infectious diseases are available in Orkney and a GP registration is not necessary to access this service.
- General health advice can be found through the NHS inform website at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>. Information about NHS Orkney services can be found on the NHS Orkney website.

Mental Health Services

As with many other areas, Mental Health Provision in Orkney is with the notable exception of Orkney Blide Trust, largely limited to that provided by Orkney Health and Care and NHS Orkney. The teams all work closely together and with Orkney Blide Trust to ensure that services provided are constantly being evaluated and improved.

Orkney Blide Trust

Orkney Blide Trust is a third sector organisation whose remit is to promote and provide support to individuals and their families who suffer from mental ill health.

It aims to provide opportunities for those with mental illness or mental health problems, to meet others with similar difficulties and help them to find the best means of addressing their problems. They offer befriending, floating / home support and a daily (including Saturday and Sunday) drop in centre in Kirkwall as well as a café and a number of support groups.

Community Mental Health Team

The Community Mental Health Team comprises qualified specialist mental health professionals, social workers and support workers. It offers support for people with mental health needs. The team is divided into different services: substance misuse, psychology, CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), generic community psychiatric nursing, mental health social work, and a memory team. The latter service supports people with dementia and offers help with health and social care needs.

Mental Health – The Way Forward

The Housing Service is committed to working with both the statutory and voluntary sector to improve the services offered to those suffering from mental health problems who become homeless or who are threatened with homelessness.

Drug and Alcohol Services

A number of services exist in Orkney for those ready to acknowledge they have a problem with substance misuse and the time has come to deal with it. Fewer perhaps for those who are not yet ready but in need of support to deal with day to day situations.

Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

The local Alcohol and Drugs Partnership is very proactive in its approach and ensures that the issues surrounding substance misuse are represented and addressed in a variety of strategic documents.

In recent years its awareness raising campaigns have become much more prominent and it provides an article quarterly for the Housing Service's Newsletter 'Housing News'. This is linked into the Health and Homelessness Action Plan with the intention of ensuring that issues of substance misuse are targeted at households who may benefit from information or assistance.

Counselling and Advisory Services for those with a drug or alcohol issue

Counselling services are available for those who suffer either from their or own or other's misuse of alcohol and /or drugs and those who have personal problems or lifestyle issues. These are provided by Relationships Scotland and Right There depending on the age group of the individual seeking counselling. It should be possible to source a range of services including one-to-one counselling interventions, group work support, education, information and training.

Relationships Scotland Orkney is commissioned by the Alcohol and Drug Partnership to provide specialist substance misuse counselling for adults. In addition, the Service has a Substance Misuse Support Worker who offers harm-reduction support and family support (CRAFT) for loved ones, which can be especially helpful where someone is not yet ready to engage in therapy but wants to change their behaviour.

Healthy and responsible attitudes towards alcohol and awareness of the dangers of drug misuse are promoted to assist those seeking to address their problems by offering counselling and support by a variety of methods. Relationship Scotland Orkney offer specialist substance misuse counselling as outlined above, which can help to explore the underlying reasons for the substance use, where someone is ready to explore their triggers. Help is offered also through counselling for low self-esteem, stress, depression, anger, relationship, gambling and other 'addictive' disorders. In addition, they offer a specific counselling service for young people affected by drug or alcohol issues.

Health Board Home Detox Nurse and the Substance Misuse Worker

Specialist teams exist within Orkney to work specifically with those with substance misuse issues. These officers provide a valuable link into other mainstream services and help build trust with clients who would otherwise be unwilling to engage with those trying to offer assistance.

Alcoholics Anonymous

There is an Alcoholics Anonymous group in Orkney, and this is undoubtedly a great source of support for many people. The group through its co-ordinator also works to promote the needs of alcoholics in Orkney for access to treatment and support.

Support for Those Who Aren't Ready to Stop Drinking

Not everyone with a perceived drink problem is at the stage that they are ready to address that problem and work needs to be done to develop services for this group. For example, not all agencies feel comfortable putting care workers into a situation where the client may be volatile and intoxicated. We need to work together to ensure that everyone is able to access basic support whatever stage on the 'road to recovery' they are at, whilst ensuring that the safety of those offering that support is not compromised.

Relationship Breakdown

When our original profile of homelessness was developed, it was noted that with the exception of the Citizens Advice Bureau there was a lack of independent practical and affordable advice for those involved in a relationship breakdown.

Services for those involved in relationship breakdown have moved on considerably since then and various processes have been developed to enable individuals to find out what rights they have and how to access support to exercise those rights.

A leaflet was produced to provide specific information on housing rights, covering all tenures, for those who were experiencing relationship breakdown. This clearly outlined the roles of various partner agencies including the Council, OHAL, OIPDL, Orkney CAB, Women's Aid Orkney and Victim Support Orkney.

However, continued high levels of homelessness due to relationship breakdown would suggest that some issues remain. Given the nature of the housing sector in Orkney, the Homelessness and Advice Section has been offering assistance to those who advise their relationship has broken down but there is no abuse as

housing options for this group are very limited. This area needs to be explored further as other possibilities may exist.

We need to work with current service providers to ensure that the range of advice and assistance available is expanded. Ideally people should be able to easily identify whether it is likely that they would have sufficient equity from the sale of a property to fund two separate homes or whether they would qualify for one of the low cost homeownership schemes available.

Counselling and Mediation Orkney

Relationships Scotland Orkney offers specialist, free and confidential relationship counselling provided by professionally trained counsellors who can help those experiencing relationship difficulties with a view to reconciling or agreeing an amicable separation.

Where a couple have separated or are separating, Relationships Scotland Orkney provide specialist, free and confidential Family Mediation where a professionally trained mediator helps them to manage the process and make arrangements for their family.

Where children live with one parent and are unable to see the other parent in their own home, Relationships Scotland Orkney's child contact centre provides a safe space where children can see the parent or other relative they no longer live with. This can be supported (staff are on hand), supervised (staff are present at all times) or help with managing handovers between parents where there is high conflict or they wish to minimise contact with each other.

Referrals of homeless households or households threatened with homelessness can be referred where they may benefit from their services. This includes, but is not limited to, family mediation and services for young people.

Women's Aid Orkney

Currently delivering the range of services for women (and their children) who are experiencing Domestic Abuse, Women's Aid Orkney provides information as well as practical and emotional support for individuals. This is provided both on-site at Phoenix House Refuge and move on accommodation at Phoenix Terrace and also on an outreach basis. In addition, there is a drop in facility at Phoenix House in Kirkwall.

Orkney Rape Counselling and Advisory Service (ORSAS)

Orkney Rape Counselling and Advisory Service (ORSAS) provides information and support for anyone aged 13 and over who has experienced sexual violence recently or in the past. Family, friends and professionals supporting survivors can also receive support. ORSAS provide advocacy for anyone considering making a report to police or going through the legal process in relation to these crimes. They undertake independently evaluation prevention programme in secondary schools, training in the community and with professionals on sexual violence. They campaign to improve service responses to survivors.

Victim Support

Practical and emotional support is provided to male victims of domestic abuse where required. This can be provided through the local offices or by contacting the national helpline.

Services for 16 – 25 Year Olds

In 2002, when the original profile of homelessness was developed, Orkney did not have any established organisations giving advice and assistance specifically to young people under 25. This has changed significantly since then with the development of the Young Scot local project. This allows young people to seek information and assistance on a range of different matters.

Now, two facilities offer supported accommodation for those who lack independent living skills with support provided on site by Right There.

In Kirkwall, there are 3 units of supported accommodation provided at Glaitness Farm House. In addition, 6 units of move on accommodation are provided on the same site.

In Stromness, the accommodation at John Street, provides 4 separate rooms, one of which has an en suite and kitchen area. Additionally, there is a 5th room which is also en suite and used as accommodation for support staff.

The Voluntary Action Orkney run the Connect Project. The Project offers individualised support and learning programmes for young people (15-21) who are facing barriers or challenges after school and are not yet ready to enter the workplace or manage more formal training programmes or further education.

They help build confidence, health & wellbeing and life skills and assist with transition onto the next steps that are right for them. They maintain regular contact with those who have moved on and assist with ongoing financial, living or employment issues or advice as requested.

Youth Workers

Throughout Orkney there are Youth workers who work with groups and individuals on a range of issues. They are an essential first point of contact especially in the more rural communities. In some cases posts have been developed to work on specific issues such as drugs misuse.

Right There- Youth Counselling (Y-Talk)

Y-Talk is provided by Right There and is Orkney's youth counselling service. It is a free and confidential service which specialises in counselling for young people up to the age of 25.

Y-talk provide support through issues such as substance misuse, stress, depression, anxiety, trauma, adverse childhood experiences, loneliness, isolation, low self-esteem, low confidence, suicidal ideation, anger or bullying. The counselling is provided at locations throughout Orkney, a counselling base in Kirkwall, and offers face to face sessions. Online or telephone counselling is also available.

Counselling and Mediation Orkney

Services are offered to assist in cases of family breakdown to allow young people to learn about family relationships and to assist them to rebuild relationships where necessary. Where avoiding family breakdown is not possible assistance can be given to manage the emotional aspects of moving away from home, increasing the potential for future reconciliation and embedding learning to avoid similar breakdown in future relationships.

Orkney Youth Counselling was initially set up in September 2004 to address the needs of young people encountering problems with alcohol and substance misuse. Since that time the service and developed to include the counselling of children with parent drinkers and to do preventative work with teens experiencing low level psychological difficulties.

Training Providers

Lifeskills Centres is a training provider that helps people into work and offers a wide variety of courses and skills essential to finding work. People are eligible for the courses if they are unemployed and are 16 years of age and over. They are designed to assist people to move into an apprenticeship, employment or self employment.

Referrals to the courses can be made via Skills Development Scotland.

Under 25's – The Way Forward

If we are to take a holistic approach to homelessness, it is essential that all agencies dealing with those under 25 are fully involved in the creation of the homelessness strategy. Agencies involved in Education and training young people have a vital role. The work they do with young people in preparing them for employment, spills over into many other aspects of their lives. This can help break cycles of homelessness as well as unemployment. They can also act as an information point ensuring that the people they are training can access advice and assistance in relation to housing issues. There is a need for this to be developed further to include pre-tenancy training and various home making skills.

The Homelessness and Advice Section need to build on existing arrangements to offer all agencies dealing with young people regular briefing sessions not only on homelessness law, but also advice services available. Work should also continue to build on referral systems already in place ensuring that assistance is available when it is needed.

It is important to ensure that the referral system between agencies is a two way process. There is a need to ensure that where housing is the first port of call, young people can be helped to access appropriate support and training from a range of sources.

The existing case conference system which is operational where a young person is involved with two or more agencies, has been shown to be effective and should continue and be further developed to ensure that all the needs of that young person are being met.

Children's Support Services

In general terms the needs of children are well met in Orkney. Agencies such as HomeStart work alongside the statutory agency to ensure that families with children under 5 receive as much support as they need. Whilst the Children and Families team within Orkney Health and Care work to identify and work with children at risk.

Within the Education System there are teachers who fulfil a 'guidance' role and again this is invaluable in supporting those experiencing difficulties.

Where a homeless family is placed in temporary accommodation there is a need for close joint working between agencies to ensure minimum disruption to schooling, and this is something the Education Service and Housing Service are already working on. There is also the need to strengthen the links between the Homelessness and Advice Section and Schools so that more practical preventative work can be undertaken.

Older People / Physically Disabled

There are many voluntary agencies in Orkney offering support and assistance to these groups and on the whole they work well alongside the statutory agencies. Having said that, from the perspective of housing, the system often fails when someone is admitted to hospital following, for instance, a fall and is ready for discharge, but unable to return to their home. It is felt that in many instances earlier intervention could avoid the need for a stay in emergency accommodation. This is something that the homelessness strategy will look to address.

As an increasing proportion of the local population falls into older age brackets, adaptations to property becomes more of a pressing issue to ensure that homelessness from the perspective that a property is no longer suitable for the household's needs can be avoided wherever possible. This may include adaptations such as the provision of level access showers and handrails/ramps.

During 2021/22, 55 adaptations were carried out to Council properties, including level access showers, grab rails in the shower, hand rails on paths etc.

There is an evidenced need for both wheelchair and amenity standard housing, this is evidenced through planning of the Local Housing Strategy and allocations systems. This currently amounts to 277 properties within OHAL's stock, mainly in two and three apartment size, but some larger properties. Approximately 79% of the properties concerned are to be amenity standard with the remainder being

wheelchair accessible. In addition the Council holds 105 properties which are adapted. In 2021 5 additional units of supported housing for particular needs was developed.

Sheltered housing with warden facilities is currently available in Kirkwall and Stromness. Extra care housing has been developed in Kirkwall, St Margaret's Hope and in Westray to allow older people to remain independent for as long as possible. These have been shown to provide successful provision and outcomes for tenants.

Age Scotland Orkney

Age Scotland Orkney is a local independent charity which has been working with and for older people in Orkney for over 30 years, previously Age Concern Orkney. Our mission is to support, inspire, involve and empower older people in Orkney, and influence others, so that people here enjoy better later lives. We inspire older people by encouraging them to realise their opportunities and overcome the challenges of later life. We involve older people by connecting and engaging with them through our networks and enabling them to participate in groups and their local communities.

Our Services-

- Here2Care person centred care at home.
- Here2Help traditional home help and companionship.
- Good day calls - a daily wellbeing check.
- Podiatry clinic run every day.
- Christmas lunch working with The Salvation Army – reducing loneliness.
- One stop shop for information and advice, support and signposting.
- Post Diagnostic Support – Dementia.
- Dementia Orkney Project - Community Hub.

Crossroads / Orkney Carers Centre

These organisations aim to improve the quality of life for carers and those for whom they care, by giving information, emotional support and practical help. Crossroads works with a range of clients and offers both long term and short breaks for the elderly and disabled.

Dementia Orkney – Carers Support Group

This is an independent support group open to the family and friends of people with dementia. Members give mutual support, exchange information, share experiences and coping skills with each other.

Care and Repair – Orkney

Orkney Care & Repair offers independent advice and assistance to help homeowners repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they can continue to live in comfort and safety in their own community.

Orkney Care & Repair offers personal, financial, and technical support to people facing the difficult task of repairing, improving, or adapting a home which is no longer suitable to their needs.

Initially targeting elderly, disabled and low-income groups throughout Orkney, they now can offer the service to a much wider client base, through delivering the 'Scheme of Assistance' originally awarded by Orkney Islands Council in 2011. This means that now anyone living in privately owned or rented properties can access a wide range of housing related assistance.

Without Care and Repair, many vulnerable households would be unable to maintain their home. Orkney Care and Repair is managed through Orkney Housing Association Limited.

Handy Person Service

The Small Repair Service is part of the service delivered by Orkney Care and Repair and helps older and disabled people and those on low incomes to carry out minor repairs and ensure that properties remain in good condition. This has proved to be a popular and effective service.

Orkney Disability Forum / Dial a Bus

Orkney Disability Forum acts as an umbrella organisation for voluntary groups and individuals concerned with the welfare of disabled people and the statutory bodies in Orkney responsible for the provision of services for the disabled. Its aims are to improve services, encourage integration in the fullest sense and provide joint action for the welfare of physically and mentally disabled people of all ages in Orkney.

Dial-a-Bus is a door to door transport service for people with disabilities or mobility problems.

Older People / Physically Disabled – The Way Forward

Not everyone can be placed in a box' saying 'older person', 'elderly' or 'disabled' or 'alcoholic', and more often than not, a number of 'labels' can be applied to any one individual. Those over the age of retirement are no different and it is not always easy to identify and fully meet support needs. The Homelessness Strategy needs to identify the fact that some people are not easy to work with, and indeed often don't want the support identified as being needed.

There is also a need to ensure that admission and discharge protocols are reviewed regularly to enable us to avoid wherever possible the use of temporary accommodation. The ultimate aim must be to identify and address the potential risk long before a stay in hospital precipitates a crisis. The Discharge Protocol needs to be rigorous and to consider more closely a possible increase in older people having difficulties in managing an existing property following a stay in hospital.

Other

Some services fall outwith the main classifications but still play a vital role in the prevention and alleviation of homelessness.

Restart Orkney

This is one of Employability Orkney's projects. Its aim is to provide low cost second hand furniture to those on low incomes, including homeless households. Homeless households are able to access furniture at a greatly reduced cost. The scheme has been proved to assist greatly with tenancy sustainment.

Starter Packs Scheme

This scheme is run by Kirkwall Council of Churches. It provides great assistance to homeless households in setting up a permanent tenancy.

Starter Packs include items provided partially by donation and partially by specific purchase and cover crockery, cutlery, kitchen utensils and small electrical items and linen. Individual starter packs are targeted at the needs of the household concerned.

Orkney Food Bank

The Orkney Food Bank provides healthy food for households in times of crisis. Various agencies, including the Housing Service, can refer clients to the Food Bank.

Orkney Food Bank can issue emergency parcels to organisations to issue to someone in crisis until a full referral can be made. Currently 2022 – the foodbank is only open Tuesday and Friday.

In addition, they can issue an electricity top up so clients can heat the food they give them. Orkney Foodbank funds this but THAW Orkney administer on the electricity top ups on their behalf.

THAW Orkney

THAW Orkney can work with clients and officers on key aspects of fuel poverty - undertaking home energy assessments and in some instances providing electricity support in the form of vouchers.

Service Provision – Conclusions

Not every agency who works with those who are homeless or potentially homeless in Orkney has been identified in this section. This is because in reality there is not a single agency in Orkney that has not at some point, however unknowingly, worked with someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Many agencies in Orkney take on broader roles and provide generic services that would be unlikely in more urban areas. It is essential that the Homelessness Strategy, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and accompanying Advice and Information Strategy continue to harness this willingness to be flexible and adaptable. Only by agencies being willing to look beyond initial remits can we ensure that assistance is available to the broadest possible cross section of our communities.

Service provision has moved on considerably from our initial profile of homelessness in 2002. Although significant inroads have been made it is important to remember that further improvement and expansion should continue in order to provide the best homelessness services possible. The addition of supported accommodation for those experiencing drug and alcohol issues would be beneficial.

Part Five: Conclusions

Whilst a document of this size can only serve as an introduction to the issues surrounding homelessness in Orkney, we believe that it contains much valuable information. The first four sections of this profile have considered many topics surrounding homelessness in Orkney, from a general overview of housing related issues in Orkney to a more detailed analysis of the causes of homelessness and those most vulnerable to it. What this document has tried to do is to both assess the current extent and impact of homelessness in Orkney, and to look at how effective the work undertaken during the past 5 years has been in addressing the issues raised in the previous profile.

Additionally, it has tried to highlight the areas where there is room for improvement, as well as the things of which Orkney is justifiably proud. Listed below are some of the key messages we need to take forward from this profile and into the homelessness strategy.

- The group most at risk of homelessness are single people, within the category of single people there remain 2 distinct sub groups:
 - 16 to 24 year olds – this group find it particularly hard to find accommodation because of relatively low incomes and rules relating to the shared accommodation rate under the local housing allowance. Additionally where accommodation is secured it is often threatened by a lack of appropriate support.
 - 25 to age of retirement – since the previous profile was written, changes to the legislation have resulted in this group becoming entitled to permanent accommodation thus significantly changing the landscape in respect of homelessness provision. The challenge to the Council is primarily in respect of the sheer availability and existence of smaller properties.

The Homelessness Strategy must identify ways of assisting these groups to access decent affordable long term accommodation.

- More people present as a result of relationship breakdown than for any other reason. In order to reduce presentations from this group a wider range of housing options and access to affordable housing must be developed.
- Family and Friends no longer being able / willing to accommodate is another key cause of homelessness in Orkney. In some cases this is where young people have been unable to secure alternative accommodation, and in other households have returned to family after the loss of other accommodation. Only by working to ensure that a wide range of housing options are available to all sectors of our communities will be able to reduce presentations from this group of households.
- We need to do more work to identify hidden homelessness in Orkney in general, and in the outer isles in particular.
- Repeat homelessness, often linked to relationship breakdown is an issue in Orkney and steps must be taken to address it.

- Recent 'emergency' presentations have shown that the Council must prepare for the unexpected.
- Realistically the number of people accepted as homeless, unintentionally so, and with a local connection is going to remain at a higher level.
- There are also concerns in terms of homelessness services about the ageing population of Orkney. There is an ever increasing need not only for supported or sheltered accommodation but also for accessible accommodation close to amenities. There is also an impact on the availability of care and support services.
- There has to be a greater emphasis on homeless prevention / housing option services. The aim being to assist a household before a crisis point is reached.
- Finally there is the need to balance out the services needed by different groups and communities to ensure that no one group or community is disadvantaged.

In updating this profile our aim has been to provide the information needed to ensure that the next Homelessness Strategy for Orkney does not only identify the real issues affecting both households and service provisions but come up with some practical solutions that will have a real impact over the next five years.



Orkney Islands Council

Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028

Version Control

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1. Introduction and Background

This is the fourth Homelessness Strategy of Orkney Islands Council. It aims to build on the previous three and reflect the developing context of homelessness in Scotland including legislative and policy changes as well as our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

This strategy sets out how we will seek to address homelessness, build on existing improvements; identify new or further ways to prevent homelessness and support people to find sustainable housing solutions.

The Council's Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017- 2022, which is currently under review, sets out a number of key priorities for the Council in relation to the future of housing and housing related services in Orkney. Two key priorities have specific pertinence in relation to the Homelessness Strategy and for the progress of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRPT).

Ensuring an adequate supply of houses

- Ensure that Orkney has a sufficient range, number and type of houses to meet demand and need and offers a suitable range of housing options.

Preventing and Alleviating Homelessness

- Improved housing options and early intervention leading to reduced periods of time in temporary accommodation. The provision of housing support as required.

These priorities from the Local Housing Strategy are interlinked for without sufficient affordable housing it will be difficult to prevent and address homelessness successfully in the longer term.

2. Legislative and Policy Context

Since the last strategy there have been a number of legislative and policy initiatives. This has included the Scottish Government's vision "Ending Homelessness Together" and the requirement for local authorities to produce and implement Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTP).

The 2017 Programme for Government made a renewed commitment to tackle homelessness, to end rough sleeping and to transform temporary accommodation. It established the short-term Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group to identify the actions needed to achieve these ambitions.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) identified the actions that may be required. The Scottish Government produced their initial "Ending Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: Action Plan" in 2018 as a means of addressing the issues identified.

The Scottish Government responded to the recommendations stemming from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group in their “Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan”. The Plan introduced the term Rapid Rehousing meaning:

- A settled, mainstream housing outcome as quickly as possible;
- Time spent in any form of temporary accommodation reduced to a minimum, with the fewer transitions the better;
- When temporary accommodation is needed, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and within a community;
- And, local authorities were required to produce Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans for which the Scottish Government provided some funding.

The Scottish Government is looking at introducing legislation which would ensure that all public bodies work jointly to prevent homelessness and they established a Prevention Review Group to consider options for such a law in 2019. The Group's Report published in February 2021 included a recommendation for a new law ensuring all public bodies work together to prevent homelessness.

The Scottish Government consulted on this proposed homeless prevention duty which included

- the introduction of duties on public bodies and landlords to prevent homelessness and in particular to ‘ask and act’, to identify if there is a risk of homelessness and if so to act upon that information
- increased responsibilities in relation to strategic and joint planning
- changes to the homelessness legislation to prevent homelessness for example by extending the existing duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for up to six months before it occurs,
- to prescribe what actions that reasonable steps may involve.

The consultation period ended at the end of March 2022 and there is the intention is for legislation in 2023.

The Scottish Government updated their “Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan”, in 2020. The Plan outlines how they along with local authorities and the third sector should work jointly to "end homelessness". The revised Plan has reflected actions that are required to respond to COVID-19.

Other recommendations from HARSAG have included the definition of intentionality be changed to it being a 'deliberate manipulation' of the homelessness system. The Scottish Government proposed to review the impact of the change in the summer of 2021.

There is provision in the 2003 Act to allow the Scottish Ministers to modify referrals between local authorities relating to local connection. The HARSAG recommended that the provision in the 2003 Act to allow the Scottish Ministers to modify referrals between local authorities in Scotland relating to local connection be enacted. The suspension of the power to refer to another local authority was implemented in November 2022. The Council has particular concerns about how this change might impact island authorities such as Orkney.

The legal framework itself has not, as yet, changed to any significant degree though the Code of Guidance was updated in 2019 - the previous version was updated version in 2005.

There are further developments which are likely to impact directly or indirectly on homelessness.

In 2020 The Scottish Government introduced temporary changes regarding eviction. The period of notice, in many circumstances such as rent arrears, was lengthened to six months. Also, changes were implemented which allowed the First-tier Tribunal, in all private rented housing cases, to use their discretion on whether or not to grant an eviction notice.

Some of these measures were made permanent in the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Act 2022. This includes the grounds for repossession for Assured Tenancies and Private Residential Tenancies remaining “discretionary” and pre-eviction protocols relating to rent arrears in the private rented sector being introduced.

As a response to the ‘cost of living crisis’ the Scottish Government introduced legislation to freeze rents for both social and private tenants and put in place a moratorium on evictions (similar to what was in place during the pandemic), this is to last until March 2023.

From 1 October 2022 people who intend to use properties for short-term lets within Scotland have to apply to their local Council for a licence.

The Scottish Government is intending to introduce a new Housing Bill in 2023 and consulted on – ‘a new deal for tenants’. It is proposed that the legislation include:

- the establishment of a regulator for the private rented sector to enforce defined standards
- implementing a national system of rent controls in the private rented sector
- the creation of a new Housing Standard to cover all homes;
- setting minimum standards for energy efficiency and zero emissions heating.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a specific duty on local authorities to carry out an assessment of the extent and nature of homelessness within their area and to prepare and submit a strategy for preventing and alleviating homelessness.

Since 2007, local authorities have not had to produce separate homelessness strategies, and guidance from the Scottish Government advises that homelessness strategies should now be integrated with the Local Housing Strategies. Orkney Islands Council took the decision to continue to produce a separate Homelessness Strategy that expands on what is contained within our Local Housing Strategy. The reason for this is that significant research exists in relation to homelessness in an urban context but very little exists in relation to homelessness in a remote and rural context.

Other statutory requirements in respect of homelessness include to:

- Provide advice and assistance and prevent and alleviate homelessness wherever possible.
- Ensure that advice and information is available in the local area free of charge.
- Endeavour to prevent homelessness where action has been taken by a mortgage lender or landlord to repossess the property.
- Assess the circumstances of households if there is reason to believe they are homeless or threatened with homelessness and Councils can use their discretion on whether to carry out an assessment of intentional homelessness.
- Take into account the Code of Guidance when making decisions on homelessness latest update 2019.
- Assess if homeless households require the housing support services and provide such services if they are required.
- Provide suitable temporary/emergency accommodation for those who require it.
- Implement the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 - details what sort of temporary accommodation is unsuitable for homeless households.
- Provide suitable settled accommodation for those who are assessed as unintentionally homeless.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out the standards and outcomes which all social landlords are expected to meet when carrying out their housing activities. The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors, assesses and reports on how well social landlords meet the Charter's outcomes.

The Charter includes some outcomes of particular relevance to homelessness which are taken into account in this strategy as well as the latest Scottish Government's guidance on Local Housing Strategies. This includes guidance in respect of what local authorities should take into account in developing their approach to meeting their responsibilities towards preventing and addressing homelessness.

The Charter was reviewed in 2021 and as a result of the consultation exercise some minor changes were made and the revised Charter came into force in late 2022.

The Scottish Government identifies five outcomes contained in the National Performance Framework which are viewed as essential to their aspiration to end homelessness in Scotland. These outcomes are:

- The importance of inclusive communities.
- Respecting human rights.
- Tackling poverty.
- Education.
- Safety.

This Homeless Strategy contributes to these National Outcomes and to the Homelessness Vision set out in the Scottish Government's Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan¹.

Homelessness vision:				
Everyone has a home that meets their needs.				
Homelessness is ended.				
To end homelessness we will:				
Embed a person-centred approach.	Prevent homelessness from happening in the first place.	Join up planning and resources to tackle homelessness.	Respond quickly and effectively whenever homelessness happens.	Prioritise settled homes for all.

The Strategy contributes also to Orkney's Local outcomes² namely:

- Strong Communities - Orkney's communities and individuals are fulfilling their potential.
- Living Well - Our people are resilient and live well.
- Vibrant Economy - Orkney has a vibrant economic environment.

Equality and Diversity

Orkney Islands Council is committed to promoting equal opportunities, challenging discrimination and fostering good relations, in carrying out its work and delivering services and in employment. Our aim is for Orkney to be a community where we all have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

As a partner in the Orkney Partnership the Council has signed up to their Equality and Diversity Strategy (2012) and its position on equality and diversity, as follows:

“Promoting equalities means recognising that everyone has different needs and taking positive action to ensure that everyone is able to contribute to society. We will do our best to provide equal opportunities to our most remote communities and hard-to-reach individuals, while respecting everybody's right to privacy”.

Promote equal opportunities for all:

- Ensure that everyone is enabled to participate in society.
- Welcome and celebrate diversity.
- Place equality at the heart of policy and practice.
- Raise acceptance of rights and responsibilities.
- Secure access for all to national services.

¹ Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan 2018 (updated 2020).

² Orkney Community Plan 2019-2022 incorporating the LOIP.

There are also separate strategies that focus on equalities and accessibility.

Local Outcome Agreements

At the outset of the first Homelessness Strategy, the Council set up Local Outcome Agreements with various local agencies to endeavour to prevent and alleviate homelessness. These include:

Orkney Citizen's Advice Bureau.	To employ an independent homelessness and welfare rights officer.	£41,166.
Employability Orkney.	Support for Co-Ordinator's post covering umbrella organisation including supported employment project and furniture store.	£17,334.
OIC's staffing and related costs.	Related costs include training for staff and other agencies to focus on homelessness and prevention activities (including Local House Condition Survey).	£168,546.
Advocacy Services.	To provide funding to ensure there is access to an advocacy service (CAB).	£16,673.
Drug and Alcohol and Counselling Advisory Service.	To support the service to assist those with drug and alcohol issues (currently under development).	£8,085.
Women's Aid Orkney and MARAC.	To support the service to assist women and their children who have experienced domestic abuse.	£14,150. £2,266.
Employability Orkney -Restart Orkney.	To support the furniture reuse project.	£8,005.
Starter Packs Orkney.	To support the starter packs project.	£2,404.
Relationships Scotland.	To provide counselling and mediation to endeavour to prevent homelessness.	£2,164.
Right There.	To provide housing support inside the Young Persons' Supported Accommodation Projects.	£223,207.
Total:		£504,000.

3. Aim of the strategy

To prevent homelessness as far as possible, and where it does occur, that time spent in homelessness is kept to a minimum.

Objectives/outcomes

- Ensure that homeless households' views are sought and taken into account when reviewing and developing services.

- Provide accurate advice and information including through our Housing Options service, ensure the service is accessible, that differing needs are met and the service widely publicised.
- Enhance and improve the Housing Options approach including by introducing a housing options 'tool'.
- Continue to develop and improve services to prevent and address homelessness through partnership working with other services/organisations.
- Develop training programmes with partners in the public and third sectors to enable all relevant services to participate in a broad range of preventative approaches/activities.
- Ensure staff are kept fully informed of any developments relating to the cost of living crisis to enable them to appropriately assist Orkney residents.
- Develop with partners including Women's Aid Orkney policies and good practice procedures in relation to Domestic Abuse.
- Ensure that no one is prevented from making a homeless application.
- Have an effective, timely response to those presenting as homeless including those in crisis.
- Discuss with appropriate partners developing a Housing First pilot for young people who would benefit from the model.
- Keep stays in temporary accommodation to a minimum.
- Reduce the use of temporary accommodation.
- Continue to explore ways to reduce rents in temporary accommodation.
- Increase the proportion of social lets (both Council and OHAL) that are made to homeless households.
- Increase the role of the private rented sector in preventing and alleviating homelessness.
- Seek a sustainable solution for individuals who have experienced homelessness or who are threatened with homelessness.
- Provide appropriate advice and support to assist households in sustaining their accommodation including housing support.
- Revisit housing education and develop/access to suitable materials to be used in schools/college.

4. Homelessness in Orkney

Applications

In 2021/22, the Council received 132 homeless applications, four applications fewer than the previous year, a fall of 3%. This compares with 2020/21 which saw a 15% rise in applications from 2019/20.

At 21 February 2023 there were 122 homeless applications, which compares with 117 applications received at the same time in 2020/21.

Table 1: Homeless applications and homeless assessments 2017/28 to 2021/22

Reason.	2017/18.	2018/19.	2019/20.	2020/21.	2021/22.
Homeless applications.	118.	134.	119.	136.	132.
Assessed as homeless.	97.	107.	93.	108.	105.
% assessed as homeless.	82%.	80%.	78%.	79%.	80%.

(HL1 figures³) (OIC figures)

The proportion of those who initially applied as homeless and who were subsequently assessed as homeless remains relatively constant.

The time taken to assess an applicant decreased in 2021/22 from 23.5 days to 21.6 days.

Table 2: Average time (days) from assessment to closure for applications assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

2017/18.	2018/19.	2019/20.	2020/21.	2021/22.
146.	114.	188.	208.	199.

(HL1 figures) Rough Sleeping

The number of people who slept rough in the previous three months prior to presenting as homeless to the Council remains relatively steady - 10 applicants in 2021/22 in comparison to eight applicants for financial years 2020/21 and 10 in 2019/20.

There were no applicants who had been roofless the night before presenting as homeless in 2021/22, in comparison with three applicants in 2019/20 and five in 2019/20.

³ <https://www.gov.scot/collections/homelessness-statistics/>

Table 3: Homelessness presentations where applicant slept rough 2016/17 to 2020/21.

Year.	At least once during the last 3 months.	The night before.
2017/18.	15.	10.
2018/19.	10.	10.
2019/20.	10.	5.
2020/21.	8.	3.
2021/22.	10.	0.

(HL1 figures)

Rooflessness is likely to be a one-off situation and there is no chronic rough sleeping in Orkney. If it comes to the Council's attention that someone is roofless then the person is directly approached and offered assistance.

Reasons for homelessness

The three most common reasons for people applying as homeless in Orkney (as in Scotland as a whole) continues to be

- 'Non - violent' dispute within household /relationship breakdown.
- Asked to leave.
- Violent/abusive dispute within the household.

There was an increase in both the number and proportion of applicants who presented as homeless in 2021/22 due to non violent relationship breakdown. This was the case also for those who applied as homeless where there was violence/abuse within the household.

In 2021/22, 41% of presentations were because of non violent relationship breakdown compared to 34% in 2020/21. Violence/abuse within the household rose to 16% in 2021/22 from 10% of applicants in 2020/21.

Table 4: Reasons for applying as homeless in Orkney, 2016/17 to 2021/22.

Reason.	2017/18.	2018/19.	2019/20.	2020/21.	2021/22.
Dispute in household / relationship breakdown: non-violent.	37	58	52	46	54
Dispute within household: violent or abusive.	6	18	13	13	21
Asked to leave.	20	31	19	38	20
Harassment/abuse outwith the home.	13	5	7	7	4
Mortgage default / rent arrears.	3	1	2	1	1
Other action by landlord.	5	3	3	4	2
Secure accommodation given up.	3	5	3	3	3
Loss of service / tied accommodation.	1	0	2	4	2
Discharge from prison / hospital / care / other institution.	1	2	0	1	1
Emergency (fire, flood, etc).	0	0	1	1	1
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home.	0	1	2	1	0
Overcrowding.	1	1	1	4	0
Other reason.	29	9	13	13	23
Total.	119	134	118	136	132

(OIC figures)

In 2021/22, the level of people subject to of harassment or abuse from outwith their home decreased from the previous year and was the fourth most common reason for applying to the Council as was the case in 2020/21.

Households

Single households remain the predominate group of people presenting as homeless as is the case across Scotland. Seventy two percent of applicants in 2021/22 were single households, just slightly lower than the previous year - 79% of applicants.

In 2021/22

- Male single households were the largest group at 46% of all applicants
- Just over a quarter of applications - 26% - were from single female applicants.
- A fifth (20%) of all applicants were single parents, this is the highest number and proportion of applicants over the last five years. All, apart from one applicant, were female single parents.
- There was also an increase in the total number and proportion of households applying as homeless with children, again the highest over the last five years. Twenty four percent of applicant households contained children, the vast majority of which were in single parent households.

Table 5: Household type of homeless applicants in Orkney, 2017/18 to 2021.22.

Household.	2017/18.	2018/19.	2019/20.	2020/21.	2021/22.
Single male 16-24.	13.	19.	11.	23.	12.
Single male 25-64.	46.	42.	46.	43.	49.
Single male 65+.	1.	3.	3.	1.	0.
Single males.	60.	64.	60.	67.	61.
Single female 16-24.	16.	14.	13.	12.	9.
Single female 25-64.	7.	25.	19.	21.	24.
Single female 65+.	2.	1.	2.	7.	1.
Single females.	25.	40.	34.	40.	34.
Couple.	7.	5.	3.	6.	5.
Couple with children.	3.	0.	1.	1.	5.
Single female parent.	20.	17.	19.	18.	26.
Single male parent.	2.	4.	0.	1.	1.
Other.	2.	4.	1.	3.	0.
Total.	119.	134.	118.	136.	132.

(OIC figures)

In 2021/22 just over a fifth (22%) of all single applicants were young single people aged between 16 and 24 years. This is a fall both in numbers and in proportion - just over a quarter - of the single 16 – 24 years old who applied in 2021/22. In 2019/20 20% of applications were from young single people. In 2020/21 the proportion of young people presenting as homeless, per 1,000 of the total population, was slightly higher than the Scottish average of 13 per 1,000 of population. Comparisons for previous years are 11.7 for 2019/20 and 20.6 the previous year.

Few care experienced young people applied as homeless between 2018/19 and 2020/21. There were:

- Three young people who were looked after less than five years before presenting as homeless, and
- A further eight young people whose experience of care was more than five years from presenting as homeless.

The Housing Service has a positive working relationship with the Through and After Care Team and there is a joint protocol which tries to ensure that a young person who leaves care does not go through the homeless route to access housing.

Ethnicity

In the three years from 2018/19 to 2021/22 the largest proportion of those applying as homeless described themselves as white Scottish with other white British groups also recording a substantial proportion of applicants.

Table 6: Ethnicity of main homeless/threatened with homelessness applicant as a proportion of all applicant households.

Ethnicity.	2018/19.	2019/20.	2020/21.	2021/22.
White Scottish.	42%.	44%.	66.9%.	59.6%.
White Other British.	26%.	27.5%.	20.6%.	31.6%.
White Irish.	0.7%.	0.8%.	1.5%.	0.7%.
White Polish.	0.7%.	0.8%.	-	-
White Other.	0.7%.	3%.	-	2.9%
Other Ethnic Group.	1.5%.	-	1.5%.	2.2%
Not Known or Refused.	28%.	23%.	9.5%.	3%

(OIC figures)

There were very few who fell into the white other category (including Irish or Polish applicants). Over the three years it was very uncommon for someone from another ethnic group to apply as homeless.

The 2011 Census recoded “white Scottish” as the most dominant group at 79% of Orkney's population and 18% self-identifying as “white British”. The least populous groups (as in those applying as homeless) were those who self-identify as “white other” - 2%.⁴

Veterans

The number of ex armed forces personnel who have applied as homeless has, in the five years to 2021/22, been between zero and ten applicants, ranging as a proportion from 0% to 8% of applicants. The Council is conscious of the specific housing

⁴ Scottish Council Areas 2001 to 2011 Census Profile Comparator Tool, February 2018, National Record for Scotland.

related issues that some ex Service personnel can face and will consider how best to respond to the recommendation in the Veterans' Homelessness Prevention Pathway Report.

Temporary Accommodation

The majority of the temporary accommodation in use for homeless households is self-contained Council properties taken from our general needs stock, there are a few properties leased from Orkney Housing Association Ltd. All the accommodation is situated on mainland Orkney. It is as follows (and includes temporary accommodation for young people):

- 53 self-contained properties in Kirkwall.
- 4 self-contained properties in Finstown.
- 12 self-contained, 3 shared in Stromness.
- 7 self-contained in St Margaret's Hope.

The majority are one bedroom properties reflecting the domination of single person households.

Bed and Breakfast - a few establishments may be used in an emergency. All these establishments, used by the Council, are accredited by Visit Scotland after being subject to their quality assurance checks.

In 2021/22 more people moved out of temporary accommodation, 106 households, than moved in, 100 households. This is in contrast to the movement in and out of temporary accommodation in 2020/21 where 114 households moved in and 56 households moved out. This reflected in part at least the impact of COVID-19 in 2020/21 which led to households remaining in temporary accommodation for longer. They were unable to move on, predominantly due to a smaller number of properties becoming available for relet and there was a need to ensure there was sufficient temporary accommodation to meet demand.

The rate at which homeless households left temporary accommodation increased in 2021/22 when compared to the previous two years.

Table 7: Households entering and exiting temporary accommodation.

Year.	Entering.	Exiting.	Net Difference.
2019/20.	91.	89.	2.
2020/21.	114.	56.	58.
2021/22.	100.	106.	-6.

(HL1 figures)

The Council tries to avoid the use of B&B to house homeless households however, there are times when its use is not avoidable but every effort is made to keep its use to a minimum and the Council is endeavouring to plan for the imminent changes to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

While there was a decrease in the length of time households stayed in B&B in 2021/22 there was a considerable increase in the number of nights spent in B&B. This was in part due to some particular circumstances and as a result of there being insufficient temporary accommodation. There were, however, no breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order regulations.

Table 8: Number of nights and average time spent in B&B 2017/18 to 2021/22.

Year.	Number of nights.	Average duration – nights.
2021 to 2022	266.	5.2.
2020 to 2021.	55.	6.1.
2019 to 2020.	149.	4.8.
2018 to 2019.	21.	2.1.
2017 to 2018.	52.	3.25.

(OIC figures)

Time spent in temporary accommodation

Single person households and other households without children had the longest wait for rehousing. There was a fall in the length of time single parents spent in temporary accommodation compared to the previous two years, they make up the vast majority of households with children.

Overall the time spent in temporary accommodation was higher in 2021/22 than has been the case over the last five years reflecting the decrease in the supply of houses to let.

Table 9: Average total time (days) spent in temporary accommodation, by household type.

Year.	Single Person.	Single Parent.	Couple.	Couple with Children.	Other.	Other with Children.	No HL1.	All.
2017/2018.	148.	87.	156.	147.	166.	256.	42.	138.
2018/2019.	118.	76.	119.	-	143.	25.	-	111.
2019/2020.	203.	168.	102.	-	246.	158.	-	193.
2020/2021.	194.	205.	190.	113.	-	-	-	194.
2021/2022.	225.	157.	314.	-	200	181	-	207

(HL1 figures)

As at 31 March 2022, 47 households were accommodated in temporary accommodation. This was a significant decrease from the previous year when 69 households were in temporary accommodation and nearer the number of households accommodated in 2020 and 2019. The significantly higher numbers in 2020/21 reflects the impact of Covid 19.

Table 10: Number of households in temporary accommodation.

Year – as of:	Number of households:
31 March 2022	47 households.
31 March 2021.	69 households.
31 March 2020.	45 households.
31 March 2019.	45 households.
31 March 2018.	28 households.

(OIC figures)

At 21 February 2023, 72 households were in temporary accommodation. In addition to this, 13 households were staying with either friends or family and therefore do not require temporary accommodation. In effect this equates to 85 households in temporary accommodation representing an increase of 189% on the figures for March 2020. This reflects the increase in the number of presentations and the negative impact that COVID-19 has had on letting properties.

The Council 'flipped' four properties in 2021/22 and in 2020/21 in comparison to one property in 2019/20. Flipping relates to turning a temporary tenancy into a permanent let. We intend to continue 'flipping' tenancies when appropriate and feasible.

Prevention

As noted above one of our Local Housing Strategy's key priorities "is to prevent and alleviate homelessness through early intervention and improved housing options". We remain committed to this goal. And this was similarly highlighted in our Housing Contribution Statement which highlights the need:

- For better and shared baseline information of the housing and support needs from people with long term, multiple health conditions and complex needs.
- To develop, with health and care teams, better shared assessment processes which would allow for links with housing support plans and the housing allocation process.

It is hoped that such developments would assist in preventing any potential homelessness

The emphasis on prevention by the Council, as well as the Scottish Government, accentuates the need for good joint working arrangements including making timely referrals and signposting to relevant services such as primary care.

There has been a further decrease in the numbers of people seeking / provided with housing options information and advice. It is not yet clear why there has been such a decline in housing options work. The lack of other housing options could well be a factor and resource constraints in having insufficient time to fully explore other options may also play a part.

The Council's housing service is accredited at the National Standard for Information and Advice to provide Type I and Type II and the Council has maintained its accreditation since 2008 and was successfully re-accredited in 2022. The Council supports Orkney CAB in maintaining their accreditation.

In 2021/22 the most common information provided was on housing options across tenures this was generally at Type I level (provision of advice and signposting). Homelessness and security of tenure issues were the next most common areas of information and advice provided.

In 2021/22, regarding Type II advice (which is casework), the main area housing staff provided advice was tenants rights including security of tenure issues. Further measures taken by the Scottish Government until March 2023 – such as a moratorium on evictions - should mean there is limited need to provide very limited provision of information and advice in this area.

It is not yet clear how extensive the negative impact that the cost of living crisis will have on the residents of Orkney. The Council is acutely aware of the real difficulties that many residents in Orkney face including the potential for an increase/deepening of those in fuel poverty along with possible effect on residents' health. We will work jointly with other agencies and services to mitigate negative consequences. We will seek to ensure that our staff are kept fully up to date with relevant developments so they are able to provide appropriate information and advice and to signpost residents to organisations and services to make sure that they are able to access all the available help.

Table 11: Number of households receiving housing options/advice and information.

Year.	2017/18.	2018/19.	2019/20.	2020/21.	2021/22.
Number.	58.	31.	19.	22.	18.

(OIC figures)

The Council is hoping to introduce a housing options app to enhance effectiveness of our work in this area. Due to COVID-19 the introduction has been delayed. The app offers the opportunity to explore the possibility of broadening out the housing options approach to other organisations (with appropriate training). Also, discussions with other services such as health and social services regarding their potential role in preventing homelessness, for example by identifying and responding to any issues that could led to future homelessness.

From the latest available figures, in the four years from 2018/19 to 2021/22 over a fifth of homeless applicants were not living in settled accommodation when they presented as homeless. The proportion fell slightly in 2019/20 to just under a quarter of all applicants. When they presented as homeless, in:

- 2018/19 thirty eight (28%) had no settled accommodation.⁵
- 2019/20 twenty seven (23%) of applicants had no settled accommodation.
- 2020/21 forty seven (34%) of applicants had no settled accommodation.
- 2021/22 thirty three (25%) of applicants had no settled accommodation.

⁵ Settled accommodation is defined as having the same accommodation for 6 months or more.

Table 12: Number of applicants who were not living in settled accommodation 2018/19 to 2020/21

Year.	2018-19.			2019-20.			2020-21.			2021-22.		
Age.	Under 25.	25 to 64.	Over 65.	Under 25.	25 to 64.	Over 65.	Under 25.	25 to 64.	Over 65.	Under 25.	25 to 64.	Over 65.
Female.	6.	7.	-	6.	8.	-	8.	12.	1.	5.	9.	-
Male.	4.	20.	1.	4.	9.	-	6.	20.	-	7.	12.	-
Total male and female.	38.			27.			47.			33.		
% of all applicants.	28%.			23%.			34%.			24%		

(OIC figures)

Across the four years, young women, aged 16 to 24 years, were more likely to have presented as homeless from accommodation that was not settled compared to young men. The numbers of women presenting as homeless from 'unsettled' accommodation has been slowly rising in recent years as has the proportion. This has risen from 28% of applicants in 2018/19 to 23% in 2019/20, increased to 34% in 2020/21 and dropped to 24% in 2021/22.

The proportion of homeless applicants who were registered also on the common housing register has risen slightly over the three years up to 2020/21 where it stood at 42% but has decreased to 35% in 2021/22.

Table 13: Number of applicants registered on the housing waiting list 2018/19 to 2020/21.

Year.	2018-19.			2019-20.			2020-21.			2021-22.		
Age.	Under 25.	25 to 64.	Over 65.	Under 25.	25 to 64.	Over 65.	Under 25.	25 to 64.	Over 65.	Under 25.	25 to 64.	Over 65.
Female.	6.	15.	-	9.	17.	5.	5.	18.	2.	12.	17.	0.
Male.	6.	16.	2.	6.	20.	0.	5.	10.	1.	6.	14.	0.
Total male and female.	45.			41.			57.			49.		
% of all applicants.	34%.			34%.			42%.			35%.		

Women, who are homeless, are more likely to have registered on the housing list both in overall numbers and proportionately. Over the four years, 106 women were registered on the housing list in comparison to 86 men.

The proportion of applicants who were already on the housing list, when they became homeless and were also not living in settled accommodation, is a small proportion of the total number of homeless applicants. This amounts to less than a third of overall applicants for 2018/19 to 2021/22.

Table 14: Applicants who were registered on the housing list and not living in settled accommodation 2018/19 to 2021/22.

Year:	2018 to 2019.	2019 to 2020.	2020 to 2021.	2021 to 2022.
Applicants on housing list and homeless from non-settled accommodation.	11 (24%).	8 (20%).	5 (15%).	16 (33%).
Percentage of total homeless applications.	8%.	7%.	4%.	12%.

Though the proportions are small overall it could be a useful exercise to look in more detail at those or a selection of those applicants to assess if this could assist in future preventative approaches.

The number of people who presented as homeless within one year of having been previously assessed as homeless is generally very small and in 2021/22 there was one household where this applied. This compared to two households in 2020/21 remains very small at two households. The percentage of Scottish homeless households reassessed as homeless within one year was 5% in 2020/21 this compares with our figure of 0.75% in 2021/22.

Table 15: Repeat homelessness 2018/19 to 2021/22.

Year.	Number of cases of repeat homelessness.
2021/22.	1.
2020/21.	2.
2019/20.	2.
2018/19.	1.

(OIC figures)

The percentage of new Council tenancies allocated to homeless applicants which were sustained for more than a year was 90.91% for financial year 2020 to 2021, slightly higher than the figure of 88.37% for 2019/20.⁶ And, at a slightly higher rate than those housed from the waiting list (89.2%).

We are conscious of the need to closely monitor repeat presentations and to go back further than a year to see if there any useful information that emerges which could assist future preventative measures.

Support/Supported Accommodation

In 2021/22, of those assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, 27% of households were recorded as having one or more support need. This was similar to the previous year which accounted for a quarter of households and in 2019/20 32% of households (HL1 Figures).

Mental health and independent living/housing management skill were the most common areas of recorded support needs and in 2019/20 mental health issues were recorded for 23% of applicants. In 2020/21 there was a notable fall to 7% of households. Those households where support with independent living/hosing management skills was identified stood at 11% and 13% respectively.

⁶ Orkney Islands Council Housing Services Annual Report 2020 -2021.

Table 16: Support needs identified for households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness 2019/20 to 2020/21.

Year.	Mental Health.		Learning Disability.		Physical Disability.		Medical Condition.		Drug/Alcohol Dependent.		Housing Management.	
	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.
16 – 24.												
Single person.	6.	2.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.	1.	0.	4.	14.
Single parent.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.	0.
Couple without child.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.	0.
Couple with child.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
Other.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
25 – 64.												
Single person.	14.	6.	0.	0.	3.	2.	1.	4.	2.	3.	3.	1.
Single parent.	1.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	1.	0.
Couple without child.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
Couple with child.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.

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Year.	Mental Health.		Learning Disability.		Physical Disability.		Medical Condition.		Drug/Alcohol Dependent.		Housing Management.	
	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.	19/20.	20/21.
Over 65.												
Single person.	0.	0.	0.	0.	2.	1.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
Single parent.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
Couple without child.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
Couple with child.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
Total.	21.	8.	0.	0.	5.	3.	1.	5.	3.	3.	10.	15.

(OIC figures)

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Issues relating to the mental health of some young people, in particular care experienced young people has been identified also in Orkney Health and Care's Mental Health Strategy.

Regarding care experienced young people Orkney Health and Care identified the need to assess "the range of supported accommodation provisions which may meet the varied needs of young care leavers". The Council works in partnership with Children and Families to ensure that there is accommodation available to young people leaving care and that they do not go through the homelessness route.

There has been no increase in the amount and type of supported accommodation provided in recent years. The supported accommodation provision for young people comprises:

- Three units with shared kitchen (Kirkwall).
- Four separate rooms, one of which has en-suite facilities and a kitchen area. Additionally there is a fifth room which is also en-suite and is used as accommodation for support staff (Stromness).
- Six move on self contained properties (Kirkwall).

Phoenix House (Women's Aid refuge):

- Three self contained flats within a refuge; and
- Four units of move on accommodation, owned by Orkney Housing Association Ltd and managed by the Council.

The Housing and Homelessness Service plan to discuss with Orkney Health and Care how best to meet the housing and support needs of those young people who have complex needs and who may require high levels of support including any care experienced young people. This will include exploring the potential of a HF4Y (Housing First for Youth) model. Financial resources are a key issue.

The Council's Housing Service provides a visiting/floating housing support service available to those with relatively low support needs. This includes for those in temporary accommodation, resettlement support and assistance, where necessary, with tenancy sustainment. The Council has a positive relationship with third sector organisations that also provide housing support services to which the Council makes referrals.

Settled Accommodation

In relation to housing for let in Orkney, the proportion of both social sector and private sector housing to rent, is lower than the Scottish average.

It was estimated that in 2019 the private rented sector made up 10% of the housing stock in Orkney compared to 14% in Scotland as a whole and that the social rented

sector was estimated at comprising 15% of Orkney's stock compared to 23% of the Scottish housing stock⁷.

While the average waiting time for the different property sizes has roughly remained the same there has been a noticeable increase in the number of households waiting to be housed, in particular of those waiting to be housed in one bedroom properties. This reflects the predominance of smaller households seeking housing whether through the housing list or because of homelessness.

Table 17: Homeless households waiting time by size of property, 2017/18 to 2021/22 .

Year.	Waiting time for one bed.	No of House holds.	Waiting time for two bed.	No of House holds.	Waiting time for three bed.	No of House holds.
2021/22.	9 months.	60.	5.3 months.	23.	8.9 months.	10.
2020/21.	9.2 months.	40.	5.4 months.	15.	11.6 months.	5.
2019/20.	8.2 months.	42.	4.1 months.	19.	8.6 months.	2.
2018/19.	5.9 months.	37.	3.3 months.	15.	3.2 months.	6.
2017/18.	7.5 months.	43.	3.4 months.	29.	5.8 months.	5.

(OIC figures)

The number of OIC properties available to let saw a welcome increase in 2021/22 compared to the previous four years where the numbers had been declining.

Table 18: Number of OIC vacant self-contained properties 2017/18 to 2020/21.

Year:	2017/18.	2018/19.	2019/20.	2020/21.	2021/22.
Number of lets of self-contained houses that became vacant.	123.	94.	72.	67.	118.

(From OIC Annual Housing Reports)

In 2021/22 the Council let 118 properties, of those 72 were to homeless households (61%% of lets) a significant increase in numbers and the proportion compared to 2020/21. Fifteen properties (13% of total vacancies) were on the Orkney mainland, but outwith the main population centres of Kirkwall and Stromness, of those six were let to homeless households.

Sixty five of the lets to homeless households were in Kirkwall (48) or Stromness (17), 55% of the total number of lets in 2021/22.

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-statistics-stock-by-tenure/>

The majority of homeless households are waiting for a one bedroomed property in Kirkwall.

In 2020/21 the Council let 67 properties, 23 of which were to homeless households (34% of lets). 29 properties (43% of total vacancies) were on the Orkney mainland, but outwith the main population centres of Kirkwall and Stromness. Only 3 homeless households were housed within these areas. During 2019/20 the Council had 72 properties to let of which 22 were let to Homeless Households (30.5%); (14 Kirkwall, 7 Stromness, 1 Mainland). This compares to lets to homeless households in 2018/19 where the Council let 94 properties of which 30 were to homeless households (32% of Council lets).

Table 19: OIC housing allocations by household type.

Year:	2017/18.	2018/19.	2019/20.	2020/21.	2021/22
Homeless households.	31.2%.	28.7%.	30.6%.	35.7%.	58.4%.
Waiting list applicants.	54.7%.	56.4%.	48.6%.	48.6%.	31.2%.
Transfer applicants.	14.1%.	12.8%.	20.8%.	15.7%.	8.8%.
Other.	-	2.1%.	-	-	1.6%.

(From OIC Annual Housing Reports 2019/20)

In 2021/22 Orkney Housing Association Ltd re-let 65 properties of which 23 were referrals to the Council which were let to homeless households (35% of lets). There was a total of 85 lets and 6 mutual exchanges. In 2020/21 OHAL let 53 properties of which 36 were to homeless households (68% of their lets)⁸. In 2019/20 OHAL let 78 properties and let 35 to homeless households (45% of lets)..

During 2020/21 Orkney Housing Association Ltd let 53 properties of which 36 were let to homeless households (67% of lets). In 2019/20 OHAL let 78 properties of which 35 were to homeless households (45% of their lets)⁹.

Compared to previous years there the housing outcomes for homeless households in 2021/22 have been concentrated in the social housing sector – 72% permanently housed by the Council and 28% permanently housed by Orkney Housing Association.

⁸ These percentages are based on a mix of OIC, OHAL and HL1 figures.

⁹ These percentages are based on a mix of OIC, OHAL and HL1 figures.

Table 20: Outcomes for households assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness, 2018/19 to 2020/21.

	2018/19.	2019/20.	2020/21.	2021/22
LA tenancy.	30.	25.	27.	71.
RSL tenancy.	30.	35.	36.	28.
Private rented tenancy.	0.	5.	12.	4.
Returned to previous/present accommodation.	10.	5.	14.	4.
Moved in with friends/relatives.	5.	10.	10.	4.
Home Ownership	-	-	-	1.
Home Ownership – Shared Ownership	-	-	-	1.
Other – known.	0.	5.	6.	2.
Not known – contact maintained.	0.	10.	10.	4.
All outcomes.	75.	100.	115.	119.

(HL1 figures)

As noted above the greatest number of lets to homeless households each year is in Kirkwall. The ability to house homeless households is affected by the size and area where vacancies arise. The predominant need/demand is for one bedroom properties and there are insufficient vacancies of this size.

Currently 28 homeless households are waiting for a one bedroom property in Kirkwall. The majority of social housing developments detailed in the Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) are planned for Kirkwall where the highest demand for social rented housing lies.

The proportion of young people housed in the social sector decreased in 2021/22 and accounted for 28% of those housed. This compared to 50% in 2020/21, 60% in 2019/20 and 67% in 2018/19. As with other homeless households young people are predominately housed in settled accommodation in the social sector - 93% of those housed.

Table 21: Outcomes for young households assessed unintentionally homeless and contact maintained 2019/20 and 2020/21¹⁰.

Year.	LA tenancy.	Private rented tenancy.	Returned to previous / present accommodation.	Moved-in with friends/ relatives.	RSL.	All.
2020/21	5.	5.	5.	5.	10.	30.
2019/20.	5.	5.	-	5.	10.	25.

(HL1 figures)

The Council has seen the proportion of their let to homeless households increase and will keep under review the proportion of our lets made to homeless households. We continue to monitor, with Orkney Housing Association Ltd, our section 5 agreement.

The Council's new allocations policy scheduled for introduction in April 2021, has been delayed due to COVID-19. Once implemented, we will be reviewing its implementation to assess what, if any, impact it has on housing homeless households.

COVID-19 delayed the start of and completion of some developments in Orkney. Some new build social housing scheduled came on stream in the summer of 2021 including 32 one and two bedroom properties. This assisted us in addressing the need of a number of those homeless households waiting to be rehoused.

The Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2020/21 to 2025/26 aims for the Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd together to complete 297 affordable units of housing by the end of the Plan.

5. Challenges and Gaps

Main Challenges and Gaps

While the Homelessness Service has achieved much since the last Homelessness Strategy there are a number of developments which this current strategy will address so we continue to improve our response to prevent homelessness and to alleviate homelessness as quickly as possible when it occurs. New challenges which the Council has to address and areas where further improvements can be made are outlined below.

¹⁰ Scottish Government figures; <https://www.gov.scot/publications/youth-homelessness-statistics>

Information and Advice and Housing Options

The Council places great importance on preventing homelessness by the timely provision of accessible, professional information and advice and recognises that the service continues to improve and is able to meet new demands.

It is important that the Council and partners are able to assist people on a range of housing issues across tenures with the aim of preventing homelessness and assisting in sustainability of accommodation. This requires well trained and knowledgeable staff, and appropriate means of providing information, advice and advocacy across a broad range of areas.

The Council and Orkney CAB are the main sources of information and advice. It is also important that all organisations which deal with homelessness or people who are threatened with homelessness have access to sufficient information and training so they are comfortable in taking on a role of providing information and advice which could for example prevent homelessness occurring.

The strategic principles/objectives of the advice and information strategy include:

- To provide a comprehensive and up to date service in an expanding range of areas in an increasingly complex environment.
- To ensure that other services are sufficiently on board with their role in homelessness prevention.
- To ensure that staff are properly trained, are kept up to date with relevant developments to enable them to fulfil this role and that sufficient resources are made available.
- To ensure advice and information services are equally available throughout the Orkney Isles given the nature of Orkney's geography with its dispersed rural and islands communities.

Housing Options

The Council's Housing Options approach emphasises homeless prevention and we are committed to developing this approach and ensuring that the staff providing advice and information on housing options continue to be kept up to date with all relevant changes and developments.

We are keen to develop a pilot on Personal Housing Plans we are, however, conscious of the additional resources required for this to be undertaken properly.

There are particular challenges in being able to provide a realistic range of housing options. This is due to, for instance:

- The shortage of social housing to rent and of the appropriate size.
- Accessing the private rented sector which is smaller in size than the Scottish average and the shared room rate for those under 35 years of age.
- For some affordability issues particularly regarding owner occupation.

This is set against a backdrop of population growth and household formation for example through relationship breakdown.

Relationship breakdown

Being 'asked to leave' and non-violent relationship breakdown remain the two most common reasons provided by those presenting as homeless. The third most frequent reason is homeless due to violent or abusive disputes within the household. This is so in Orkney and across local authorities in Scotland. The restrictions imposed by the response to COVID-19 have resulted in an increase in demand to a number of services and already there is a knock on effect on the numbers that present as homeless.

Abuse

There is a consistently high proportion of applicants who become homeless due to violent or abusive disputes within the household. Women's Aid Orkney provides accommodation, advice and support to women and children who have experienced domestic abuse. There are security measures available through current legislative structures. The introduction of further protective measures will allow for greater choice in whether to remain or leave the home and if the choice is to remain this could mean an increase in homeless presentations from the abusive partner.

While there is a Corporate Domestic Abuse Strategy there is not a specific policy which covers the Council's housing management and homelessness service and is underpinned by the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 which will be phased in shortly.

Young People

The Council's supported accommodation currently managed by Right There is an important resource which prepares young people, including for some care leavers, to live independently. There are some care leavers and young homeless people who have high and complex support needs and who would benefit from a more specific type of housing with support model such as the Housing First for Youth.

There is a need to ensure that support is available when young people move into their own tenancies to assist with resettlement and that it is available at a later stage if the young person is encountering difficulties in sustaining their tenancy. Support to assist in accessing employment, training and education is also important for many young people.

Health and social care

The Housing Contribution statement highlights a number of ways in which the Council's Housing Service assists Orkney Health and Care in meeting their outcomes for health and social care, for example by:

- Developing better shared assessment processes with health and care teams to link with housing support plans and the housing allocation process.
- Maintaining our existing housing options approach but extending it to improve longer term planning and anticipating future needs by extending our prevention/early intervention approach to housing need.

- Recording and analysing a range of data and indicators on housing need, demand and provision to provide a robust baseline of future and anticipated needs.

The importance of further joint work with Orkney Health and Care is underlined with the increased focus on homelessness prevention and also the likelihood of the introduction of public bodies having a duty to assist in the prevention of homelessness.

While there are few people presenting as homeless on discharge from hospital there should be a joint review of admission and discharge protocols to avoid wherever possible the use of temporary accommodation and to identify and address any potential risk before a stay in hospital leads to a crisis.

Support

The Council has a positive working relationship with a range of third sector organisations which offer a variety of services which homeless people can access. It is important to ensure that homeless people are kept informed of and referred to, if required and agreed, to appropriate services. Such services could include, for instance:

- Women's Aid Orkney which provides emotional and practical support to women who have experienced domestic abuse. It also provides support with their children as well as refuge accommodation.
- Orkney Blide Trust which provides a number of services including housing support to people in their own home, support to survivors of childhood abuse, a counselling service and a Befriending Service.
- Right There's Y-Talk provides a youth counselling service for children and young people up to the age of 25 and their Y-Change service which provides support to people aged 16 years and over who misuse drugs and alcohol and have been involved in offending/reoffending or anti-social behaviours.
- Relationships Scotland Orkney offers relationship and individual counselling, family mediation and parenting support for separated parents. They also offer specialist drug and alcohol support and counselling; specialist support and play therapy for children. In addition, trained support workers can help individuals and families with a range of issues such as anxiety and depression, parenting, relationship difficulties and other challenges.

The Council's Housing Support Service plays an important role in enabling homeless households to sustain their accommodation and to live independently. There is a qualified Social Worker and a Housing Support Officer, employed directly by the Housing Service. Their work is targeted at ensuring the housing support needs of homeless people are being met appropriately. This allows specialist Social Work skills to be used to assist those with a range of issues including addictions.

In addition, the Council employs a Housing Support worker who works directly with tenants in this respect. Currently COVID-19 adjustments mean that support is predominantly provided by telephone to clients. Socially distanced visits for the more vulnerable of our tenants were undertaken. In 2021/22, of those who presented as homeless, 65 were given a housing support assessment and of those 35 were

recorded as not requiring any support, 25 required support and five were assessed as requiring, but not provided with, support. This indicates the pressure which the housing support/support services face.

Mental health is often the most frequently identified support issue of people assessed as homeless. Orkney Health and Care's Mental Health Strategy highlights that demand for mental health services continues to grow including an increase in referrals to Child and Adolescence Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in 2019/20 compared to the previous year.

We are not yet able to assess if there will be increasing number of homeless people who may have support needs as a result of COVID-19 including in relation to their mental health.

The Council recognises the difficulties there are in trying to ensure that those living on the isles are able to access appropriate support services.

For homeless people's health and well being it is essential that these services are adequately resourced to be able to meet the demand for their services.

Temporary Accommodation

The pressure for temporary accommodation increased in 2020/21. For example In the three months since December 2020 the number of households in temporary accommodation did not fall below 61 with the highest number standing at 65 at the beginning of January. During that period, 17 households were rehoused into settled accommodation.

In the light of COVID-19, 16 additional units of temporary accommodation were sourced as part of the Council's stock for housing homeless households. These properties were either 'flipped', rotated or maintained as part of our temporary accommodation stock.

The Council had four housing projects under development and the majority of them came off stream in the second half of 2021. This increased supply of houses assisted the Council in meeting some of the demand from homeless households who were in temporary accommodation.

There continued to be pressure on our temporary accommodation in 2021/22, though not to the same extent. While there was a fall in the number of households accommodated at the 31st of March 2021/22 there was an increase in the number of days households spent in temporary accommodation.

There was an increase also in 2021/22 of the number of nights spent in Bed and Breakfast though there was a fall in average length of stay compared to the year before. The Council reluctantly uses Bed and Breakfast establishments and the extent of its use is dependent on the availability of temporary accommodation. The Council has not, since the introduction of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, breached the Order. We intend to ensure that this remains the case in the future even as the Order now covers all homeless households.

We are aware of the challenges of meeting the temporary/emergency accommodation needs if someone's homelessness is due to an emergency (for example a fire) and for those who become homeless on the isles where demand is not predictable.

The number of homeless households varies as does their length of stay. This is affected by a number of factors including demand, housing supply, particularly of social housing, and the proportion of social housing lets being made to homeless households.

One of our main challenges which relates, in part at least, to the supply of social/affordable housing is to minimise the time spent by homeless households in temporary accommodation. This highlights the need for continued investment in social/affordable housing to meet the high level of demand in Orkney.

The Council flipped four properties in 2021/22 and we will continue to look for appropriate accommodation to convert from temporary into settled accommodation.

Settled Accommodation

Social Housing

The demand for social housing in Orkney remains high. The Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd operate a joint housing list which stood at 1001 in July 2022, and, the greatest demand - from 604 applicants on the waiting list is centred on Kirkwall as is the case of homeless households.

The vast majority of homeless households are permanently rehoused in the social sector. Over the last 5 years the time taken to rehouse homeless applicants was greatest in 2019/20 and 2020/21. This may be explained, in part at least, by the delay in some new build properties coming on stream and the historic imbalance of required house sizes compared to the demand including demand from homeless households.

The Council is aware that there needs to be an increase in the proportion of social housing being let to homeless households (the proportion of Council lets in 2021/22 increased to 61%) and this should result in a decrease in the time spent in temporary accommodation. This increase should be in both the Council and Orkney Housing Association Ltd stock. The Council's arrangement with Orkney Housing Association Ltd for section 5 referrals currently remains at the same level of 75%.

Four Council housing projects were developed during 2021 and 2022. These properties becoming available for let greatly assisted with housing homeless households previously in temporary accommodation.

The Council has been supporting the efforts of Islands Trusts to attract funding for housing. Several island communities have been successful in attracting funding from the Scottish Land Fund and the Scottish Government's Rural and Islands Housing Fund.

Private Rented Sector

The ability to access the private rented sector is limited and is impacted also by affordability and benefit issues. Seven percent of households were housed in that sector in 2019/20 whereas no household was housed in private sector properties the year before. In 2020/21 ten percent of households were housed in the private sector.

It is difficult as yet to assess what impact, if any, COVID-19 may have had on the private rented market for instance any growth in AirB&B can affect the numbers of properties available to rent.

The Council operates a rent deposit scheme to assist some of those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in accessing this sector. The number of participating landlords has declined in recent years and if sufficient resources were available, the Council would wish to re-engage with private landlords in order to increase their participation.

Orkney Islands Property Developments Ltd (OIPDL) is a private sector company which provides a range of rented accommodation including some general lets and student accommodation. OIPDL is a registered Letting Agency. The Council has a good relationship with OIPDL and means to explore the potential for closer partnership working with OIPDL, for example, in relation to increasing access to the private rented sector.

6. Actions

The actions the Housing Service intends to use to respond to the issues raised are set out below. These are generally (not always easily) within the context of some of the outcomes contained in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

There are a number of actions which may be difficult to undertake without additional resources including staff and the actions emphasise the importance of joint and collaborative working in meeting the needs of people who are homeless or people who are threatened with homelessness.

The Housing Service recognises the importance of ensuring that the views and voices of homeless people are heard and responded to, and we will carry out consultation exercises regularly regarding our service and where improvements can be made. We will consider different methods to involve them to ensure and that their experiences inform the delivery, and future planning, of services.

People looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them (Outcomes 7,8,9).

The Housing Service is seeking to improve our Housing Options Service by introducing a Housing Options 'app'/tool (this was delayed due to COVID-19). This will increase the scope and reach of Housing Options advice and information. Its introduction will provide further opportunities for joint work with our partners and the expansion of a housing options approach. This should allow for early intervention in

cases of people who are threatened with homelessness with a view to preventing homelessness from occurring.

Further the Housing Service will examine the possibility of establishing a pilot of Personal Housing Plans which would allow for an assessment of the resources required to broaden their use and ensure that they were comprehensive. This will include consulting with partner services/agencies.

If it is evident during a Housing Options interview that the person is homeless or threatened with homelessness we will ensure that they complete a homeless assessment, while still progressing with other Housing Options solutions. We will ensure that any identified support needs are responded to.

We will discuss with Women's Aid Orkney on the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Policy and the development of accompanying procedures to include possible ways of safely preventing homelessness for those who have experienced domestic abuse taking account of forthcoming legislative changes¹¹.

Also we will consult with Orkney's Domestic abuse/violence against women forum regarding how, for example sexual abuse, rape and sexual assault may impact on housing and the potential for homelessness which should be incorporated into policy and practice.

We will consider different ways to increase awareness of, and to publicise, the range of services available. A review of the Council's website has recently been completed. The development of a Facebook page and other possibilities may assist to ensure that more rural and island communities are also able to access information and advice.

Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options (Outcomes 7,8,9).

We wish to establish if there are any other and more appropriate housing solutions for people on the housing list including those who do not have a 'priority pass'. Where this could be the case, we will offer a housing options interview.

People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness (Outcomes 7,8,9).

Use the introduction of the enhanced Housing Options Services to publicise widely the Services and homelessness prevention to a broad range of agencies and to the general public.

We will maximise the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness.

¹¹ Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill 2020

We will discuss with Orkney Housing Association Ltd and private landlords, the potential to introduce enhanced practices relating to serving section 11 notices¹², and discuss with private landlords their new responsibilities regarding pre action requirements if taking actions for repossession. This should allow for earlier intervention in cases of potential evictions, as a further means of preventing homelessness.

The Council has a protocol with through care and after care services to ensure that young people leaving care do not go through the homelessness system to access accommodation. They may though be housed in the same supported accommodation service as young people who presented as homeless. We will along with our partners consider the recommendations contained in the 'Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway- Improving Care Leavers Housing Pathways' with a view to how best they could be implemented within Orkney's setting.

In order to try and prevent young people becoming homeless we will examine in greater detail their housing history to get a better understanding of triggers and the potential for early interventions to prevent homelessness occurring. This exercise could assess also the accommodation and support needs of young people who are becoming homeless and if current provision is meeting their needs. Also, this exercise will consider the second 'Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway' which is for all young people who are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

Homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice (outcome 12).

Review the training needs of staff in the homelessness/housing options service. We will also open discussions with other services/agencies regarding any knowledge gaps and areas where training would be beneficial and develop jointly a training programme with a focus on prevention particularly given the potential for legislative change in this area. This could include joint/interagency training

- to assist in identifying, for example, those threatened with homelessness, the need for early intervention and possible sources of assistance
- to develop a deeper and shared understanding of what services can offer, how best they can be accessed and support homelessness prevention
- relating to developing trauma informed practice.

Further,

- Training targeted to particular services and their particular role in prevention, for example, for NHS staff in homelessness issues, housing options advice and discharge protocols.

¹² Note North and Island Hub section 11 Report, 2020 and subsequent guidance <https://www.scotlandshousingnetwork.org/what-we-do/publications/section-11/>

To gain a better understanding of the respective roles and resources of our partners in preventing or alleviating homelessness we will seek to engage with our partners in 'pathway mapping' and that processes are informed by those who have experienced homelessness. We will consider different means to keep our partners informed and up to date with developments regarding homelessness and related services.

We will make sure that housing staff and staff in other agencies are able to respond appropriately to Orkney residents who are affected by the cost of living crisis through being kept fully informed and up to date of all relevant developments.

We will ensure that people living on the Isles can access the up to date information and advice they require. Continue to explore the potential of social media as a method of providing information and keeping people up to date.

Provision of suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when needed (outcome 12).

Temporary accommodation needs will be reviewed regularly, will be guided by the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, while ensuring we can meet people's needs including the geographical spread of the properties. We will discuss with OHAL the potential for using some of their properties for temporary accommodation.

We will continue to consider ways in which rent in temporary accommodation could be reduced.

We will continue to explore how best to meet emergency accommodation needs for those who become homeless on the isles such as exploring the possibility of locally provided Bed and Breakfast for use in such occasions or sourcing private lets while ensuring that any accommodation used meets the Council's standards.

We will explore with Orkney Health and Care and any other appropriate services how best to provide appropriate support and accommodation for those with complex/multiple needs including 'Housing First' model and in particular, a Housing First for Youth model for those young people and care leavers who have complex/multiple needs who may benefit from such a provision.

Ensure all homeless households when leaving temporary or emergency accommodation continue to have the opportunity to participate in an exit survey as a means of checking the quality of the accommodation and to ensure it is maintained and improved. An electronic means of sourcing quality information should be sourced.

Homeless people are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to (Outcome 12).

We will seek the cooperation of Orkney Health and Care and the Third Sector in assessing the type and capacity of support services available in Orkney. This would identify if and where there are any gaps in provision and could inform preventative approaches and any developments with Housing First. This should include reviewing the times at which support is available to assess the possibility of having more

flexible services which operates outwith 'office hours'. This could encourage greater uptake of services where there is non-engagement by service users.

Assess and where appropriate develop or update joint protocols and procedures for needs assessment to ensure appropriate support for people including those with complex or multiple needs. Ensure there are effective referral arrangements in place to enable links into the full range of relevant services.

Ensure that staff are kept aware of the links between health and housing including the impact of dampness and fuel poverty can have on health, any such issues are recorded and where appropriate people are referred/signposted to relevant services.

Tenants (and others) get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available (Outcome 11).

The council is aware of the need to increase the number of housing lets which homeless people receive and will increase the proportion of allocation initially so we met the Scottish average of 42%.

We will, along with Orkney Housing Association Ltd, review our section 5 agreement to assess how well it is working. We will also consider if Orkney Housing Association Ltd 's choice based lettings methods of allocating properties has any impact on the rehousing of homeless households.

Review the extent of joint work with Orkney Health and Care. In doing so we will explore ways in which joint working can be improved such as around prevention of homelessness, in accessing and in the delivery of support services including housing support.

Discuss with our partners such as Orkney Health and Care ways to strengthen/increase capacity of the housing support services in order to assist with homelessness prevention and sustainability of accommodation, across tenures.

Explore with other partners the potential for further prevention and early intervention activities including referral arrangements to assist in maintaining people in their homes, to be across all housing tenures and include those falling into arrears or those who require adaptations.

We hope to revive the multi-agency (involving both the public and third sectors) Homelessness Strategic Group to assist in taking these actions forward and to monitor progress.

7. Monitoring and Reviewing the Strategy

The Homelessness Strategic Group will be responsible for the implementing and monitoring of the Homelessness Strategy. Where useful subgroups may be set up to implement specific aspects of the Strategy.

The Council also monitors the success of its local outcome agreements through its Service Level Agreements. Funding is allocated annually and is aligned with budget commitments.

Progress will be reported annually to the Council's Education, Leisure and Housing Committee on a regular basis and Information will also be made available to the public through the Council's website.