

Item: 6

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 8 June 2022.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework.

Report by Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To scrutinise service performance against relevant indicators within the Local Government Benchmarking Framework for 2020/21, which fall under the remit of the Education, Leisure and Housing service.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to scrutinise:

2.1.

The performance of the Education, Leisure and Housing service against the Local Government Benchmarking Framework Indicators for 2020/21, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Background

3.1.

The Council has been reporting performance information in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) since 2010/11. This is a statutory function of Scottish local government.

3.2.

The Improvement Service – the national improvement service for local government in Scotland – co-ordinates and facilitates the LGBF process. Some indicators are reported directly to the Improvement Service, with data for other indicators being gathered by the Improvement Service from various sources, to which all local authorities make annual returns.

3.3.

LGBF data is published annually by the Improvement Service in its National Benchmarking Overview Report, although it is approximately one year out-of-date at the time of publication. The 2020/21 report was published on 4 March 2022.

4. Response to the Best Value Assurance Report 2017

4.1.

Although the Council has reported its performance in accordance with the LGBF requirements for several years, primarily through its Annual Performance Report, on 17 April 2018, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended that, from 2019, this information would also be reported to Service Committees for scrutiny.

4.2.

This commitment is part of the Council's response to recommendations in the Best Value Assurance Report, which was published in December 2017. This was subsequently incorporated into the Council Delivery Plan 2018 to 2023.

5. Performance

5.1.

Appendix 1 sets out the performance against the Local Government Benchmarking indicators in 2020/21 which fall under the remit of the Education, Leisure and Housing service. This includes comparisons with previous years' performance, the Scottish average and other local authorities in Orkney's benchmarking 'family groups'. There is also an analysis of performance and comment on any future action for each indicator.

5.2.

For indicators relating to Children's Services and Housing Services, similar councils are grouped by their level of deprivation. For these indicators Orkney's family group includes:

- East Renfrewshire.
- East Dunbartonshire.
- Aberdeenshire.
- City of Edinburgh.
- Perth and Kinross.
- Aberdeen City.
- Shetland.

5.3.

For Culture and Leisure Services, similar councils are grouped by their population density. For these indicators Orkney's family group includes:

- Western Isles.
- Argyll and Bute.
- Shetland.
- Highland.

- Scottish Borders.
- Dumfries and Galloway.
- Aberdeenshire.

5.4.

It should be noted that the monitoring periods for some of the indicators may differ. For example, most are for 2020/21, but some may be for 2018 to 2021 or 2017 to 2021. This is because all the indicators are calculated from national figures and are generated by different organisations for different purposes.

5.5.

Furthermore, where councils have presented updated values for previous years, the data has been refreshed to reflect this. This may mean historical data presented in the 2020/21 framework differs slightly from data presented in previous years.

6. COVID-19

6.1.

The data set in this report covers the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Impact of the pandemic has altered the core operating and delivery landscapes for all local authorities, and the LGBF performance and expenditure data should be interpreted within this context. This is important to consider both for comparison with previous years, and comparison across councils.

6.2.

The continuity provided by the LGBF will be invaluable in understanding the long-term impact of the pandemic on communities and will provide vital intelligence to assist the Council in learning lessons from its response, as well as contributing to strengthening and redesigning services around future policy priorities to support recovery and renewal.

7. Methodological Issues

7.1.

Satisfaction Data: Satisfaction data is not available for inclusion in the March publication of the LGBF. This is because publication of the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) satisfaction data is going to be later than expected due to the changed methodology used in 2020. Methodological changes introduced some comparability issues and there will be further discussions between the LGBF Board and the SHS team about how to usefully incorporate this data into the 2020/21 results.

7.2.

Educational Attainment: The absence of external assessment information in 2020 and 2021 led to grades awarded being based on teacher estimates. These results

are therefore not directly comparable with previous years. Any change between the attainment levels of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 cohorts and those of previous years should therefore not be seen as an indication that performance has improved or declined without further evidence.

7.3.

Curriculum for Excellence Literacy and Numeracy Attainment: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of schools, the Scottish Government suspended the collection of literacy and numeracy attainment data in 2020 to avoid adding further pressures on schools during this challenging period and citing potential comparability issues with previous years. The collection was reinstated in 2021.

8. Future Data Release and Data Availability

8.1.

2020/21 data for the following is not currently available and will be updated later in 2022:

- CHN11 – % of pupils entering positive destinations.
- CHN17 – % of children meeting developmental milestones.
- CHN19b – School attendance rate (Looked After Children).
- CHN20a – School exclusion rate (per 1,000 pupils).
- CHN20b – School exclusion rate (per 1,000 looked after pupils).

8.2.

All future data releases will be updated on the Improvement Service website when they become available: www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/explore-the-data

9. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and scrutiny and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

10. Financial Implications

10.1.

All financial figures in the annexes to this report are presented in real terms with previous years' data adjusted for inflation.

10.2.

All 32 Scottish Councils pay an annual rate to the Improvement Service for participation in the LGBF. For this, the Improvement Service provides Councils with data services and co-ordination of family group activity. The fee for 2020/21 was £2,516.

11. Legal Aspects

Under section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992 and in accordance with section 13 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the Council has been directed by the Accounts Commission to report on information drawn from the Local Government Benchmark Framework.

12. Contact Officers

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13. Appendix

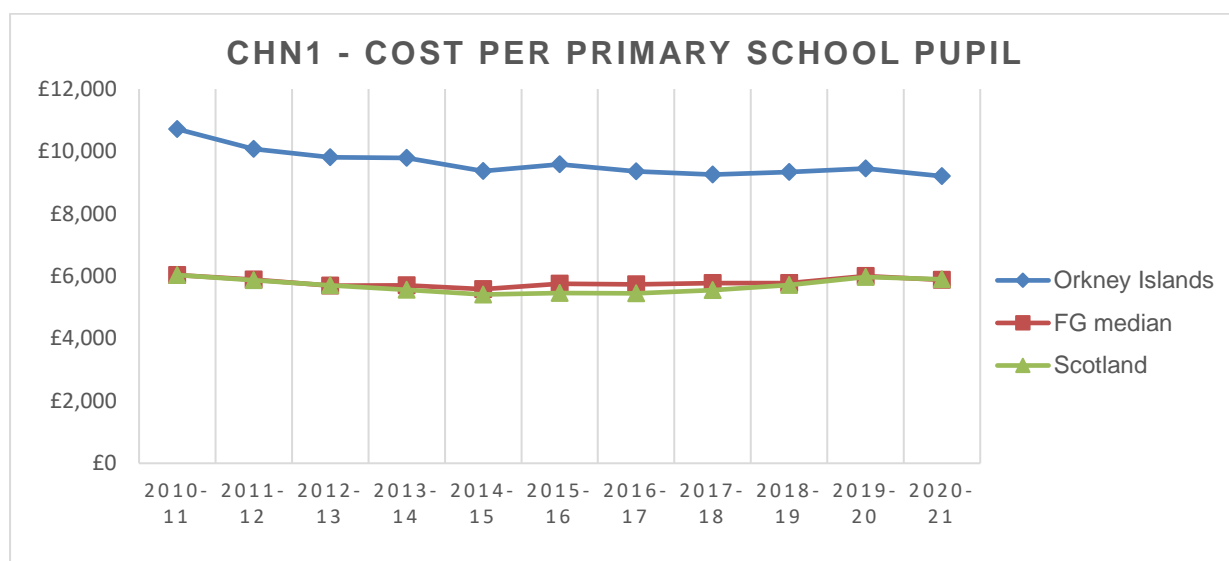
Appendix 1: Performance of the Education Leisure and Housing Service against the LGBF indicators in 2020/21.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CHN1 – Cost per primary school pupil

In 2020/21, the cost per primary school pupil in Orkney was £9,205, which is less than the 2019/20 figure of £9,448, and significantly more than the 2020/21 Scottish average of £5,897.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	31	↔
2020/21	31	



Performance Analysis

Cost per pupil in the three island groups (Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles) is noticeably higher than elsewhere. In part this will be due to the 4%+ uplift per pupil created by the distant islands allowance.

Costs per pupil in Orkney are also higher as a significant number of schools are also community facilities.

In smaller schools, which carry a high percentage of surplus places, the cost per pupil is disproportionately large.


Cost of transporting teaching staff to and from schools on the non-linked islands is a factor in this cost per pupil.

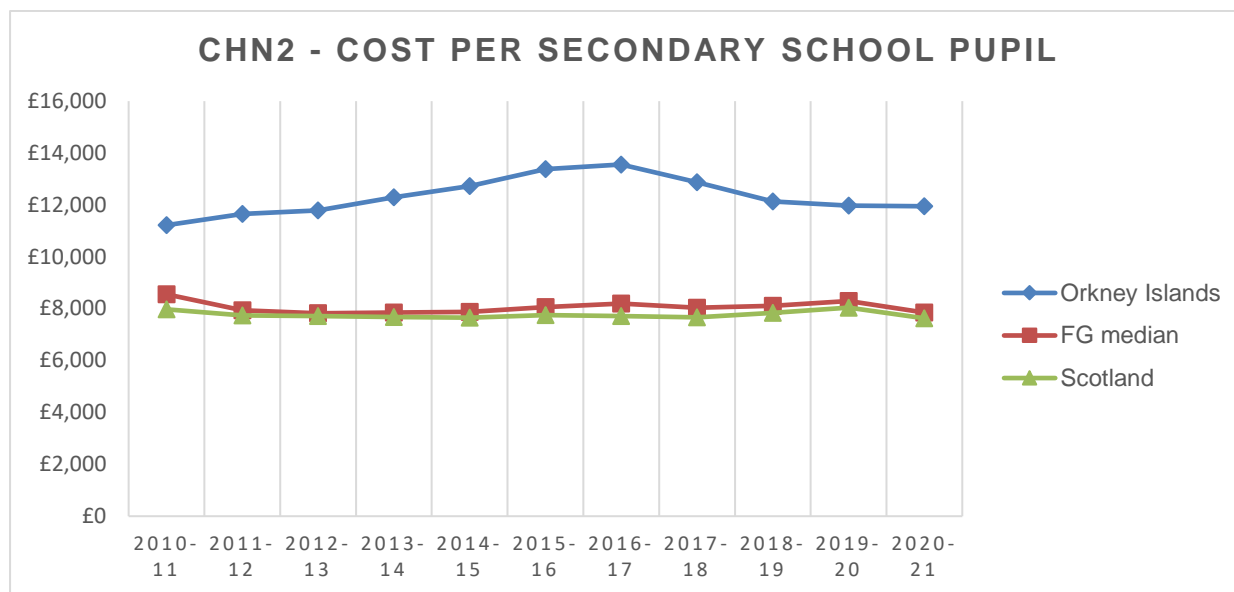
Future Action

Review the financial model for schools and learning across Orkney; consider adoption of nationally agreed staffing ratios across all schools; explore efficiencies within non-frontline support services; delineate non-education costs (e.g. community facilities costs); produce 'cost per place' data to ensure discussions are informed.

CHN2 – Cost per secondary school pupil

In 2020/21, the cost per secondary school pupil in Orkney was £11,953, which is slightly less than the 2019/20 figure of £11,967, but significantly more than the 2020/21 Scottish average of £7,629.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	30	
2020/21	32	



Performance Analysis

The average for Orkney is significantly impacted by junior high schools. Kirkwall Grammar School (as the biggest school) is closer to the national average once the figure has been adjusted to exclude Distant Islands Allowance.

The rise in cost per pupil between 2010 and 2017 is in part due to fluctuations in roll and consequently schools carry a disproportionate number of “surplus places”.

The overall school roll increased in 2020/21 and is set to increase again for 2021/22. Increase in roll, if it leads to full classes but is not sufficient to require additional classes, leads to a small drop in the cost per pupil.

Future Action


Review the financial model for secondary and junior high schools across Orkney, including the production of cost per place data to inform discussions.

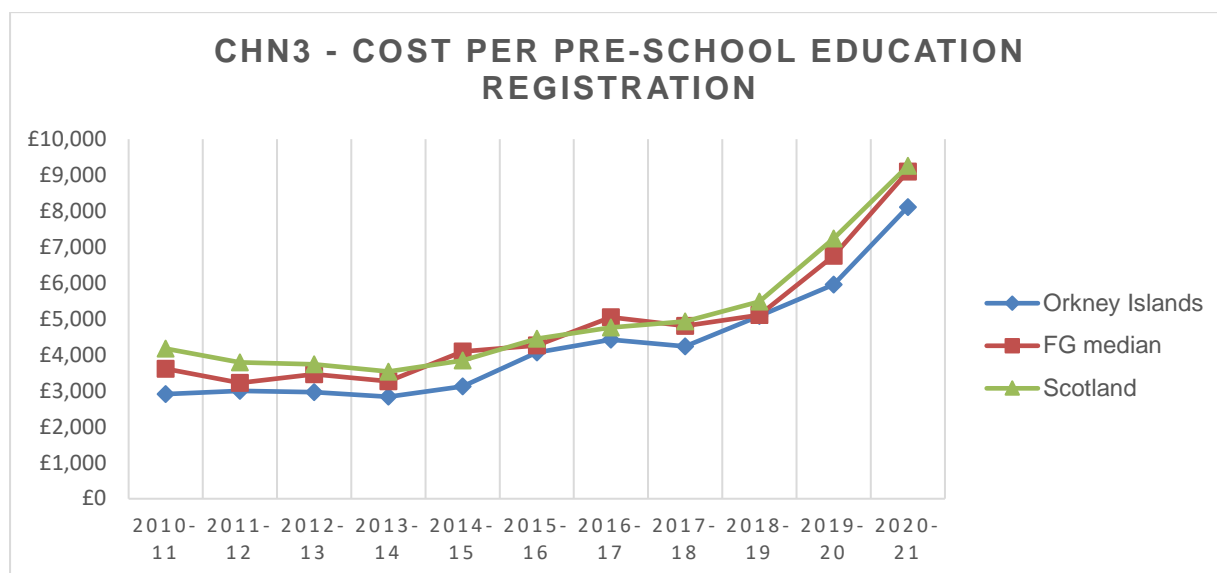
Introduce a secondary staffing policy, including:

- Measures to encourage/support employment of resident Junior High School staff.
- Ensuring itinerant teachers are deployed in a manner which minimises costs.
- Explore efficiencies within non-frontline support services.
- Explore the benefit of disaggregating costs associated with community use of facilities from school budgets.

CHN3 – The cost of pre-school education place

In 2020/21, the cost per pre-school education place in Orkney was £8,114, which is more than the 2019/20 figure of £5,958, but less than the 2020/21 Scottish average of £9,255.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	6	
2020/21	9	



Performance Analysis

The overall increase is in line with expectations linked to the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). The number of hours offered has doubled as part of the expansion, hence the increase in spend. The hours are also being offered more flexibly in larger settings, as per the Government Policy for 1140 hours, and this is incurring additional cost locally and nationally as staffing is required for longer hours each day and in holiday periods.

With increased accuracy in attributing costs to ELC (rather than primary) the change in relative position is not unexpected, eg energy costs and administrative support for ELC provision in school is not captured in the cost per registration figure).


Small settings and Distant Islands Allowance add to the cost per child.

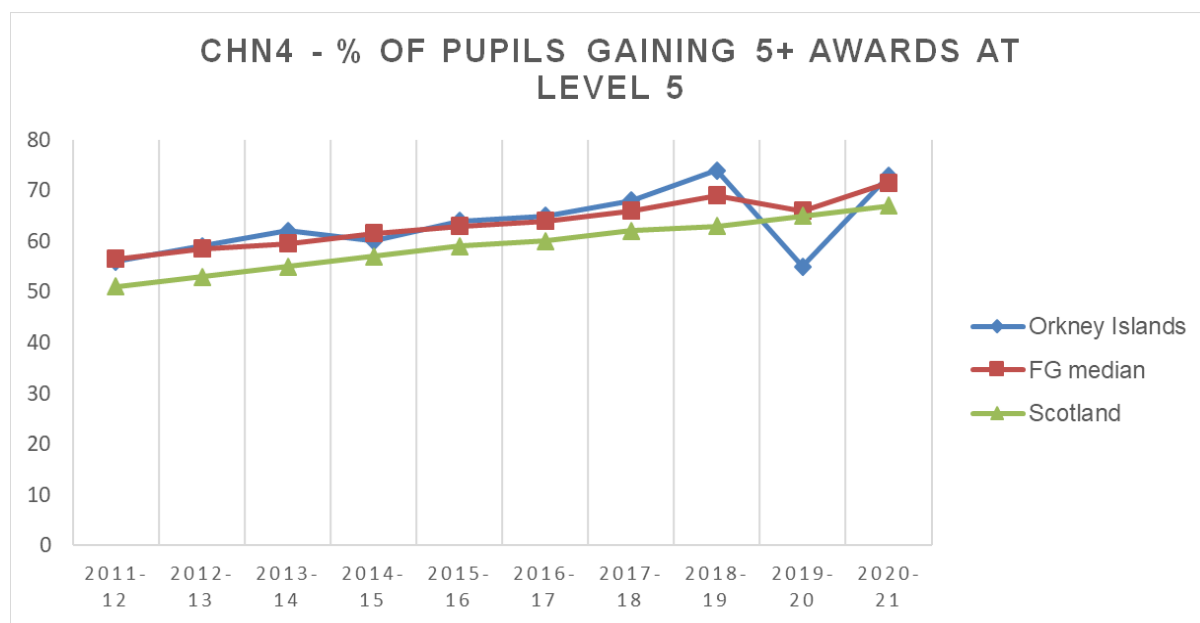
Future Action

Review the staffing and financial model for ELC now that the expansion programme has been fully implemented.

CHN4 – Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5

In 2020/21, 73% of secondary pupils in Orkney gained 5+ awards at level 5, which is better than the 2019/20 figure of 55%, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of 67%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	30	
2020/21	5	



Performance Analysis

The graph shows the attainment of 5 or more level 5 qualifications by S6 pupils in the relevant year, expressed as a percentage of the number of pupils who were in that cohort in S4. The dip in the S6 attainment measured against S4 cohort in 2020 is due to an unusually small rate of pupils staying on to S6 that year: only 47% of the pupils who were in that cohort in S4 were still in school in S6, compared to 65% in 2019 and 56% in 2021. Pupils who stay on at school have the opportunity to increase their number of qualifications. Orkney has a significantly higher than national average percentage of school leavers going into employment, rather than further or higher education, which increases the likelihood that those who leave school earlier will not increase their qualifications.


When the percentage of pupils in S6 gaining 5+ level 5 qualifications is calculated based on the number of pupils who are still in school, attainment is more consistent: 92% in 2019, 88% in 2020 and 96% in 2021.

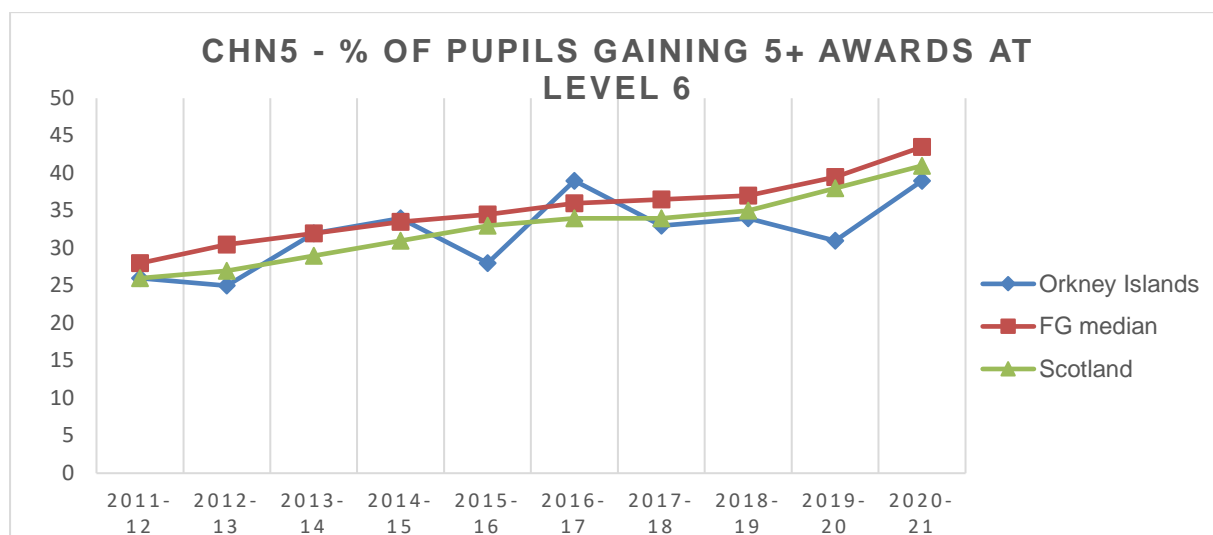
Future Action

Identify early pupils who intend to leave school after S4 to move into employment and ensure their attainment in S4 is maximised. Scrutinise curriculum choices and offer to ensure that pupils capable of attaining level 5 have the opportunity to do so in as many subjects as possible. This must, however, be balanced against pupils' needs and career aspirations; for example, the Skills for Work Coastal Navigation qualification, which is extremely relevant to the Orkney labour market, is only available at level 4. Ensure lateral progression opportunities at level 5 are available for pupils staying on into S5 and S6. Participation in the ADES/Education Scotland 3 Islands Collaborative Review of Senior Phase is supporting these actions.

CHN5 – Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6

In 2020/21, 39% of secondary pupils in Orkney gained 5+ awards at level 6, which is better than the 2019/20 figure of 31%, but not quite as good as the 2020/21 Scottish average of 41%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	25	
2020/21	15	



Performance Analysis

Since it is dealing with relatively small cohort sizes, this measure is easily skewed by cohort variation, as can be seen in the uneven pattern of attainment over the years. A falling trend since 2016-17 was reversed in 2020-21.

As with 5+ level 5, the dip in 2019-20 was influenced by lockdown and a percentage of pupils leaving after S5 which is greater than previous Orkney figures (30% in 2020 vs. 25% in 2019) and the national figure for the same year (26%).

Orkney compares very well with other authorities for pupils moving into positive destinations on leaving school. However, a far greater percentage of Orkney pupils move into employment than Higher Education, removing a significant driver for the attainment of 5+ level 5 qualifications.


Future Action

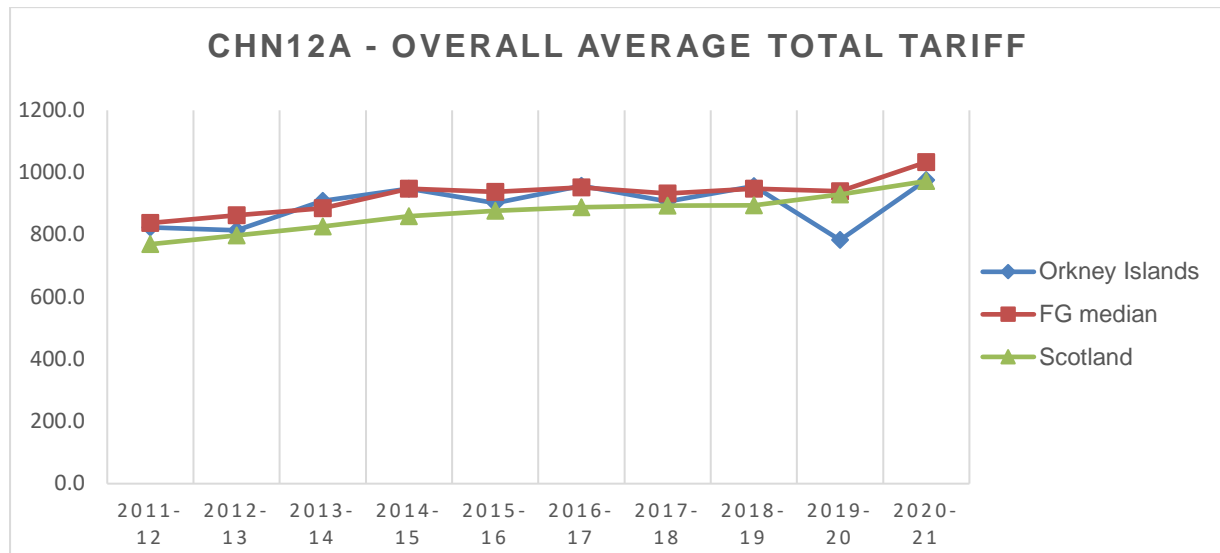
Explore alternative curriculum pathways which increase the attainment of those not aspiring to enter Higher Education.

In May 2022, we are working in collaboration with Shetland Island Council and Western Isles Council to review the Senior Phase Curriculum with a view to further meeting pupil needs and maximising attainment and positive outcomes; most changes as a result of this review would be expected to take effect in the school year 2024-25.

CHN12a – The overall average total tariff

In 2020/21, the overall average total tariff* for Orkney pupils was 976, which is better than the 2019/20 figure of 783, and slightly better than the 2020/21 Scottish average of 972.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	30	
2020/21	13	



*The tariff score for a learner is the total number of tariff points for the awards they achieve, taking account of only their latest and best attainment in each subject. This means that, for example, if a pupil has a National 5 and a Higher in Mathematics, it is the points for the Higher award which are counted.

Performance Analysis

This measure is consistent over time although 2019-20 had a dip, for the reasons already explored in CHN4 and CHN5 above.

Future Action


Look to accredit the wider achievement of pupils which is strong in Orkney, but largely unaccredited.

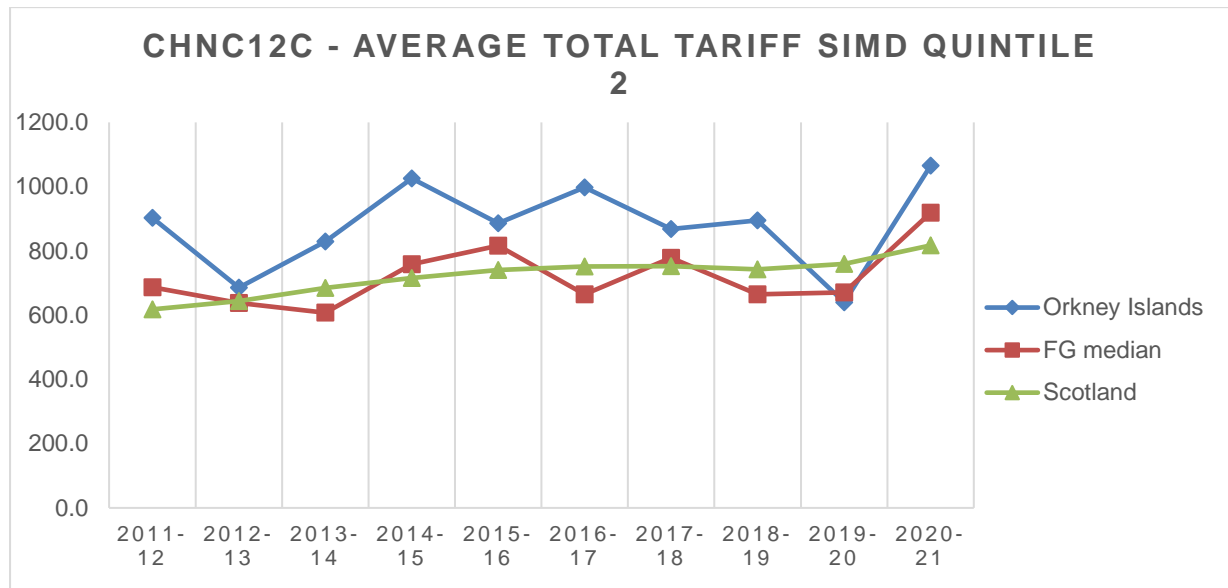
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As part of this review, we will consider whether a different curriculum model, with a greater number of courses studied in S4, would lead to higher tariff scores.

CHN12c – The average total tariff SIMD quintile 2

In 2020/21, the average total tariff for Orkney pupils in SIMD quintile 2 was 1,065, which is significantly better than the 2019/20 figure of 640, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of 817.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	27	
2020/21	4	



Performance Analysis

There is a strong record of achievement in lower SIMD quintiles in Orkney as this trend shows. Numbers of pupils in this quintile are small, leading to the fluctuations seen in the trendline.

The reasons for the dip in 2019-20 are already explored in CHN4 and CHN5 above.


It should be noted that factors which influence attainment in Orkney are not necessarily those measured by SIMD; for example poverty of access to opportunities for those not living on Mainland Orkney is a significant factor, as is lack of internet connectivity.

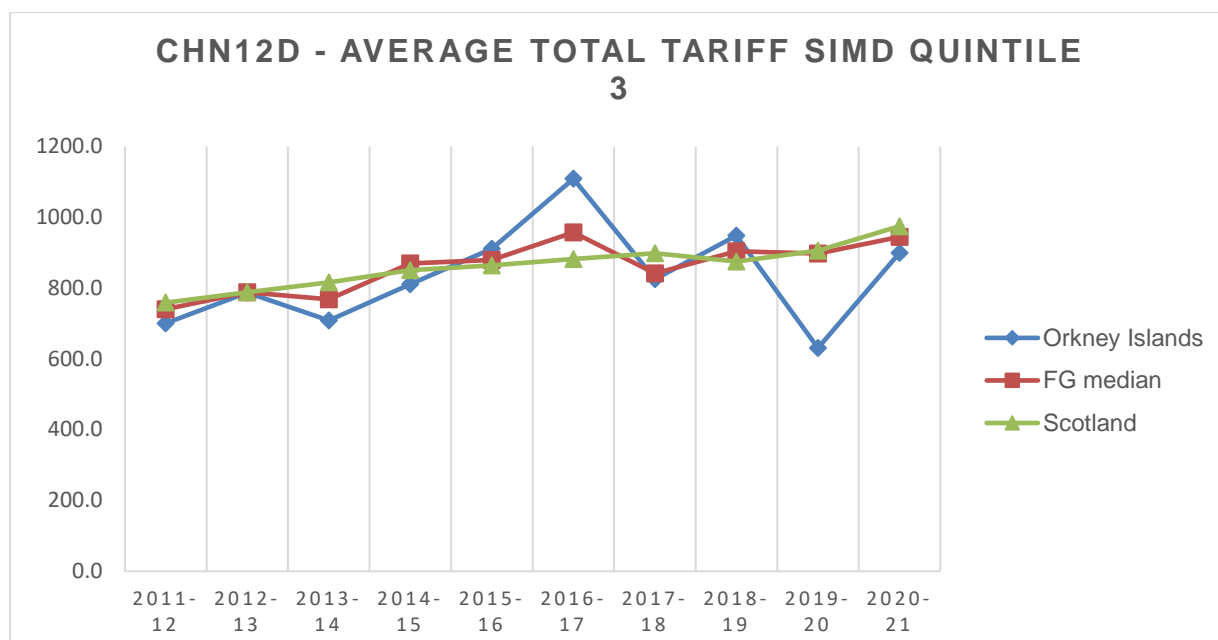
Future Action

Identify the practices which support this positive attainment and ensure they are replicated throughout Orkney schools.

CHN12d – The average total tariff SIMD quintile 3

In 2020/21, the average total tariff for Orkney pupils in SIMD quintile 3 was 900, which is better than the 2019/20 figure of 631, but not as good as the 2020/21 Scottish average of 975.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	32	
2020/21	26	



Performance Analysis

Performance is generally on a par with comparators. As with quintile 2, numbers of pupils in this quintile are small, leading to the fluctuations seen in the trendline.

The reasons for the dip in 2019-20 are already explored in CHN4 and CHN5 above.

As in CHN12d, it should be noted that factors which influence attainment in Orkney are not necessarily those measured by SIMD.

Future Action


Develop better measures than SIMD to fully identify the attainment gap in Orkney's young people.

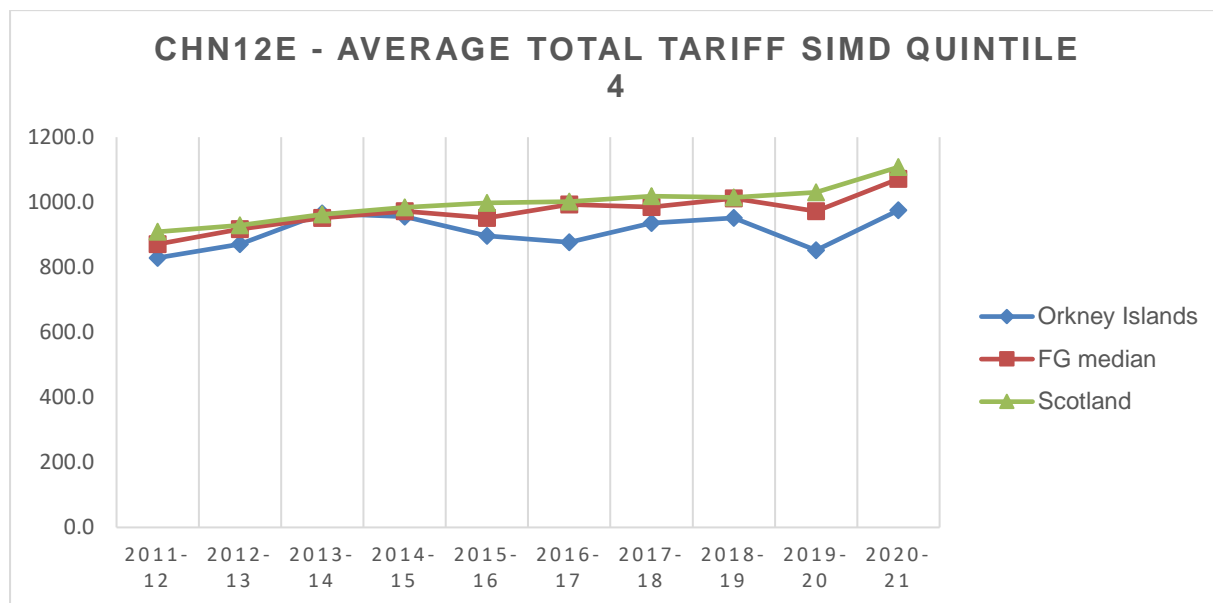
Investigate whether our high percentage of pupils leaving school early, and the lower percentage entering Higher Education are related to SIMD or other poverty measures.

Monitor these measures and use them to target interventions.

CHN12e – The average total tariff SIMD quintile 4

In 2020/21, the average total tariff for Orkney pupils in SIMD quintile 4 was 975, which is better than the 2019/20 figure of 852, but not as good as the 2020/21 Scottish average of 1,108.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	30	
2020/21	28	



Performance Analysis

The majority of Orkney pupils are in SIMD quintile 4. Orkney's performance in this measure is consistently below national comparators when total tariff points is used as the measure. Orkney pupils perform at a similar level to comparators when complementary tariff points are measured, ie. when the comparison is based on the same number of courses. This indicates that Orkney pupils in this quintile are on average gaining similar grades to comparator pupils in the courses they take, but they are taking fewer courses.

Future Action


Look to accredit the wider achievement of pupils which is strong in Orkney, but largely unaccredited.

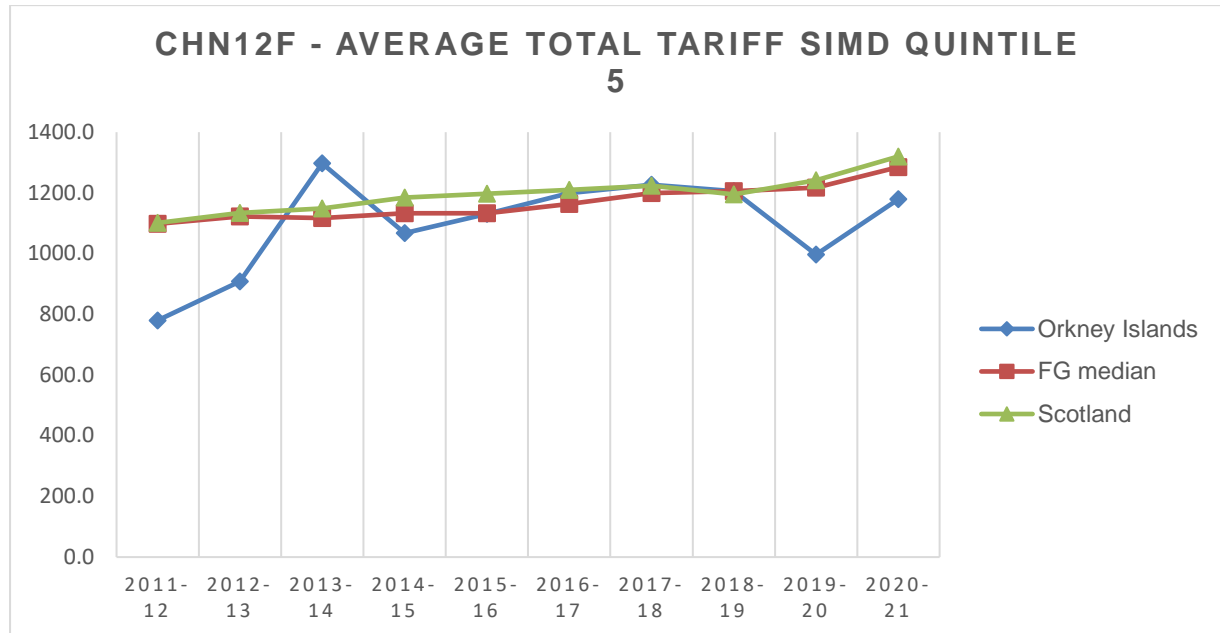
In May 2022, we are working in collaboration with Shetland Island Council and Western Isles Council to review the Senior Phase Curriculum with a view to further meeting pupil needs and maximising attainment and positive outcomes; most changes as a result of this review would be expected to take effect in the school year 2024-25.

As part of this review, we will consider whether a different curriculum model, with a greater number of courses studied in S4, would lead to higher tariff scores.

CHN12f – The average total tariff SIMD quintile 5

In 2020/21, the average total tariff for Orkney pupils in SIMD quintile 5 was 1,179, which is better than the 2019/20 figure of 997, but not as good as the 2020/21 Scottish average of 1,320.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	28	
2020/21	22	



Performance Analysis


Orkney's performance in this measure had been in line with national comparators in the years leading up to lockdown. The reasons for the dip in 2019-20 are already explored in CHN4 and CHN5 above.

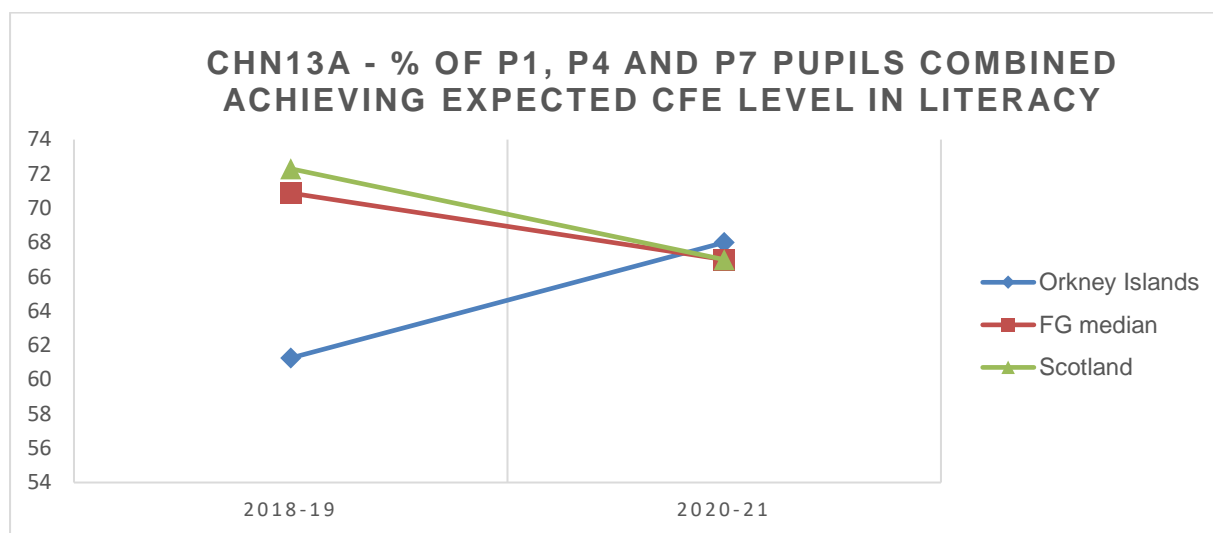
Future Action

As part of the review of Senior Phase, seek to ensure that there are pathways for all pupils at all levels which provide motivating courses in which they will attain well. In particular, focus on establishing and acting upon the reasons for low attainment in Orkney in level 7 courses.

CHN13a – % of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy

In 2020/21, the proportion of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE level in literacy was 68%, which is better than the 2018/19 figure of 61% (there is no data available for 2019/20), and the 2020/21 Scottish average of 67%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2018/19	31	
2020/21	11	



Performance Analysis

Orkney Broad General Education levels have improved on previous years. In 2020-21, Orkney was the only authority in Scotland to increase the combined P1,4,7 literacy levels. Staff along with our Education Scotland Attainment Advisor, have worked extremely hard under difficult circumstances to maintain and improve Curriculum for Excellence levels of achievement and now have more confidence in the quality of their tracking data giving a more accurate representation of children's levels. Staff in schools continue to focus on the achievement of all children and are becoming more confident in judging levels and setting higher aspirations and targets for all children.


Future Action

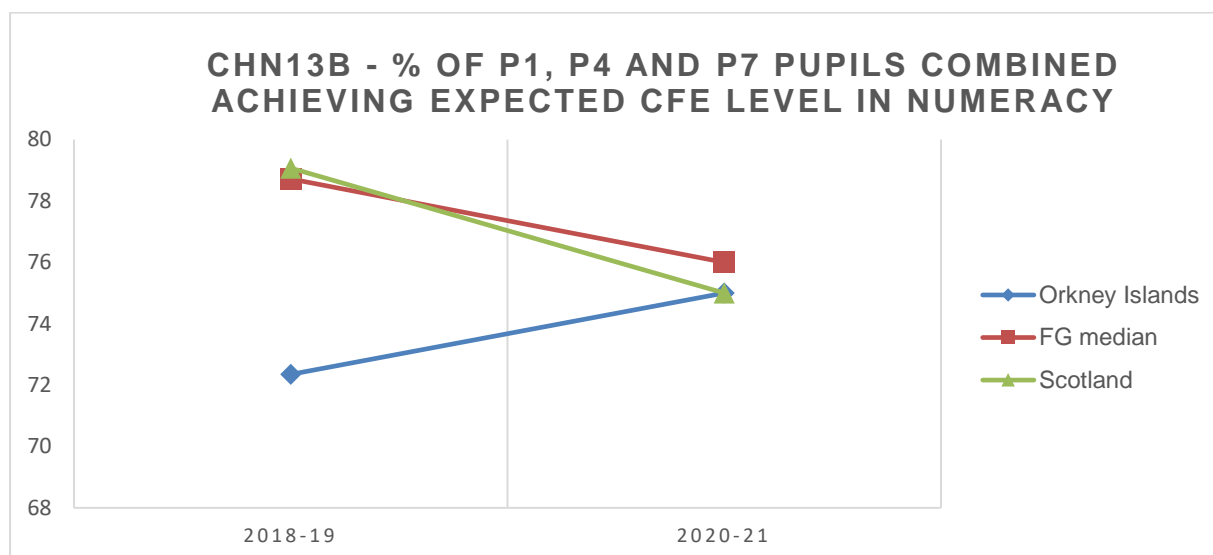
Continue with the clear focus on raising attainment and continue to set ambitious targets which will be based on the stretch aims programme implemented by the Scottish Government. These will be monitored and analysed 3 times per session. There will be an authority wide drive to raise attainment in listening and talking for session 2022/23.

The results in Orkney show a very promising trend and praise must be given to all staff who have achieved this. We must not, however, fail to recognise the significant drop in other Local Authorities' attainment as result of lockdown and as such we will expect to see a fluctuation in rank over the next few years as all Local Authorities recover.

CHN13b – % of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy

In 2020/21, the proportion of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE level in numeracy was 75%, which is better than the 2018/19 figure of 72% (there is no data available for 2019/20), and the same as the 2020/21 Scottish average.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2018/19	27	
2020/21	14	



Performance Analysis

Orkney was among a few local authorities in Scotland where the combined numeracy from P1,4 and 7 increased and the gap between Scotland and Orkney has significantly decreased, albeit that it is likely that COVID-19 impacted the national figures. Staff along with our Education Scotland Attainment Advisor, have worked extremely hard under difficult circumstances to maintain and improve Curriculum for Excellence levels of achievement and now have more confidence in the quality of their tracking data giving a more accurate representation of pupils' levels. Staff in schools continue to focus on the achievement of all children and are becoming more confident in judging levels and setting higher aspirations and targets for all pupils.

Future Action


Continue with the clear focus on raising attainment and continue to set ambitious targets which will be based on the stretch aims programme implemented by the Scottish Government. These will be monitored and analysed 3 times per session. There will be an authority wide drive to raise attainment in listening and talking for session 2022/23.

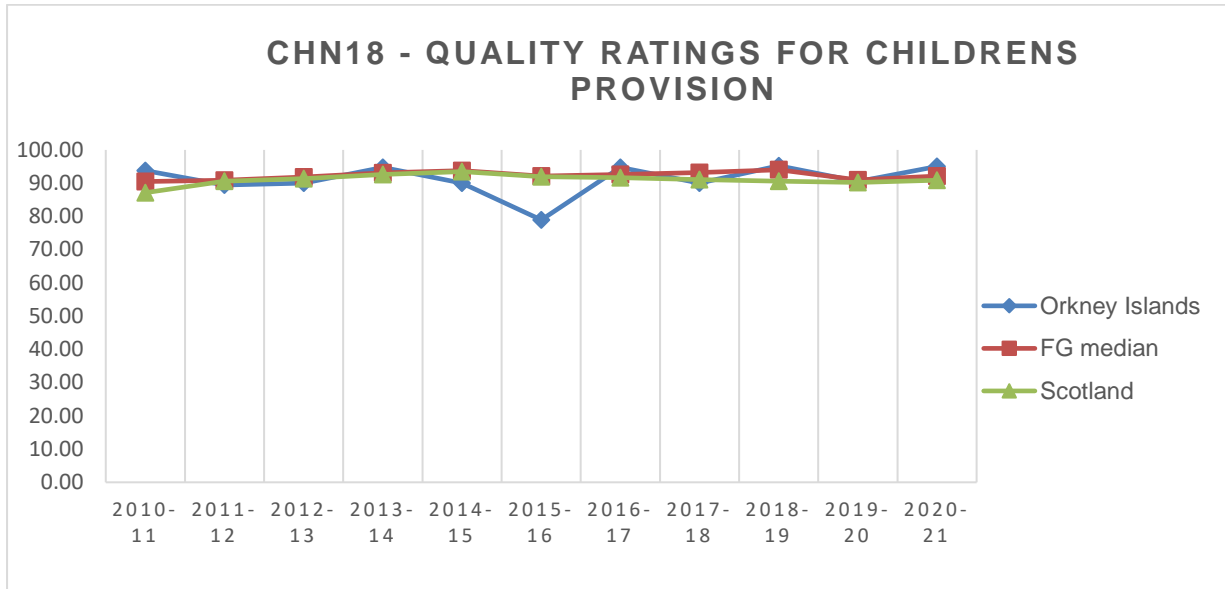
The results in Orkney show a very promising trend and praise must be given to all staff who have achieved this. We must not, however, fail to recognise the significant drop in other Local Authorities' attainment as result of lockdown and as

such we will expect to see a fluctuation in rank over the next few years as all Local Authorities recover.

CHN18 – The percentage of early years provision which is graded good or better

In 2020/21, Orkney’s funded early years provision which was graded good or better was 95%, which is better than the 2019/20 figure of 90.5%, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of 90.93%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	17	
2020/21	9	



Performance Analysis

Performance of funded provision is consistently high. As Orkney has a small number of nursery settings, one setting with a grade of less than good can have a significant impact on the overall percentage rating for the Local Authority. A figure of 95% means the data indicates one setting graded as less than good.


Future Action

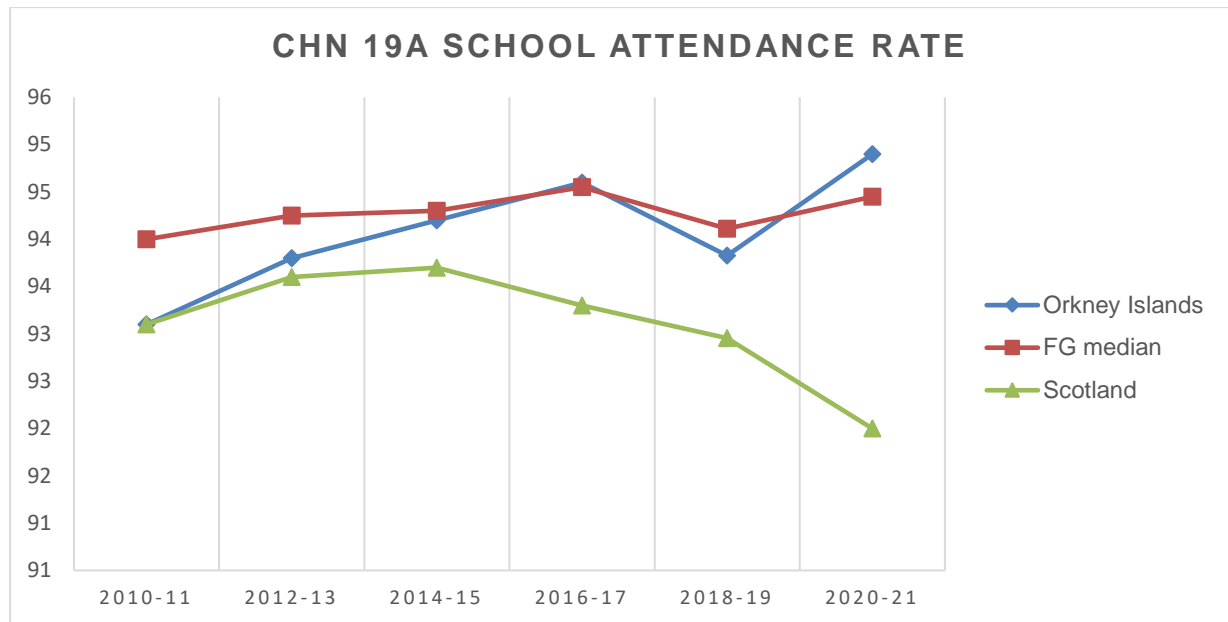
Development work has been undertaken with the setting graded as less than good; there is a high degree of confidence that the experience of the children in the setting is good or better; the Care Inspectorate has not recommended inspection activity following its suspension due to COVID-19; a recent inspection follow up visit from Education Scotland has identified the nursery as an area of strength in the school.

The early years’ service has been able to recommence its programme of learning, support and quality assurance across settings and providers.

CHN19 – School Attendance Rate

In 2020/21, the school attendance rate in Orkney was 94.9%, which is better than the 2018/19 figure of 93.83%, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of 92%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2018/19	7	
2020/21	2	



Performance Analysis

Against a very challenging backdrop of COVID-19 the overall performance is good.


With regard to COVID-19, Orkney fared well on the whole. As such our attendance is high in comparison to the national figure.

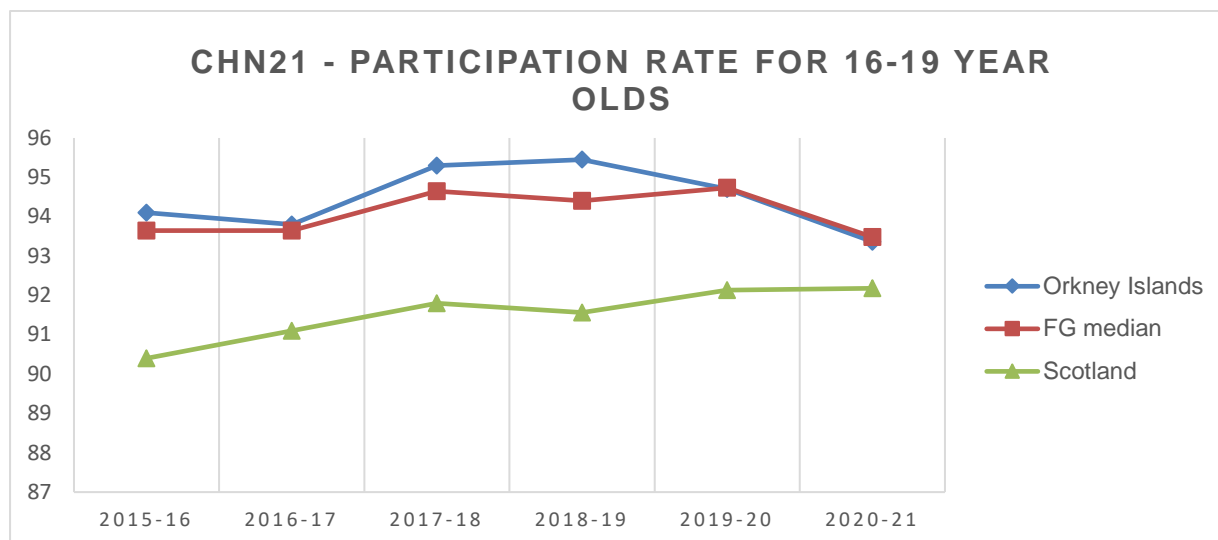
Future Action

Establish a consistent attendance policy across Orkney schools with regards to recording, monitoring and prompt action to work with families where levels drop.
 Training for relevant staff on the role of Scottish Children's Reporter Administration in supporting attendance.

CHN21 – Participation rates among 16 to 19-year-olds (per 100)

In 2020/21, participation in learning, training or work among Orkney’s 16 to 19-year-olds was 93.37%, which is not as good as the 2019/20 figure of 94.71%, but better than the 2020/21 Scottish average of 92.18%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	6	
2020/21	11	



Performance Analysis

Orkney’s participation rate is usually high and well above national rates. However, the 2020/21 participation figure of 93.37% highlights the impact of COVID within a small local authority. Orkney was named the second most vulnerable local authority to be impacted by the pandemic. We saw a decrease of young people entering employment in 2020/21 when employment opportunities were very limited in the local area, we therefore saw a slight increase in the number of people unemployed (both actively seeking and not seeking opportunities).

Future Action

A group was convened during lockdown to actively support young people into positive destinations, with input from Community Learning and Development, Developing the Young Workforce and Skills Development Scotland staff and a successful track record of winning funding for staff to support this work. Further funding has been secured for 2022/23 to continue to identify young people at risk of not moving into a positive destination and to work with employers to maximise opportunities for young people.


Pathway Planning meetings now take place termly (or when appropriate) to identify individuals who have barriers to achieving and sustaining a positive destination. Based on this discussion, opportunities can be identified, and the individual assigned a lead adviser who will work with the young person to identify actions to agree the most appropriate provision they will work towards.

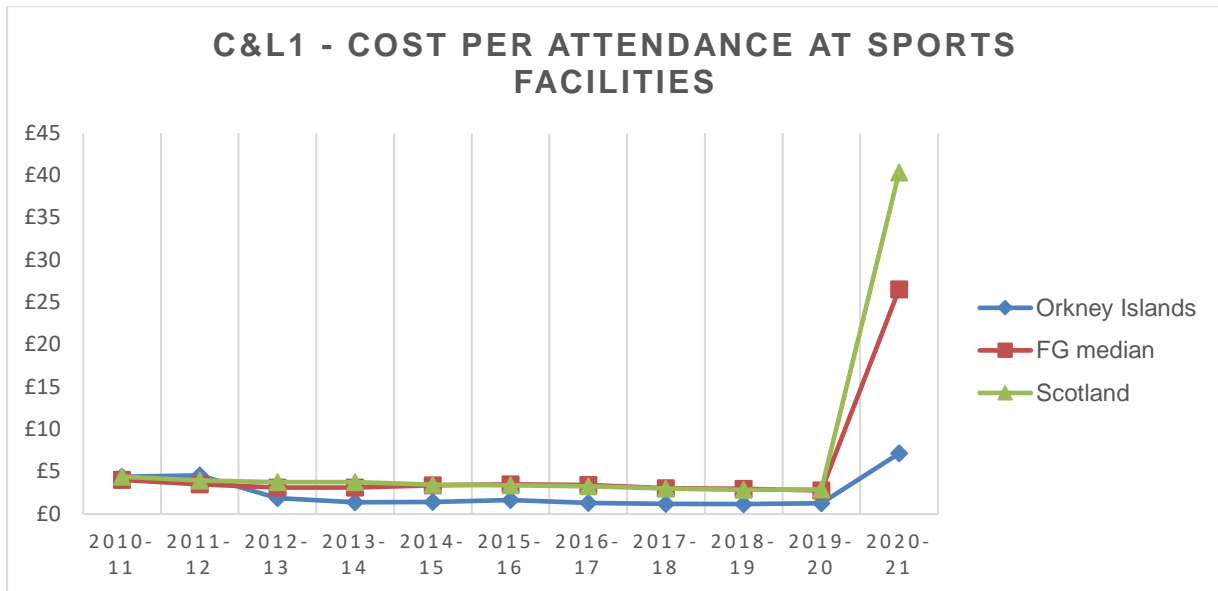
Updates of the individual's progression and any additional barriers will be discussed at the termly pathway planning meeting until the young person moves into a positive destination.

CULTURE AND LEISURE SERVICES

C&L1 – Cost per attendance at sports facilities

In 2020/21, the cost per attendance at sports facilities in Orkney was £7.16, which is more than the 2019/20 figure of £1.29, but less than the 2020/21 Scottish average of £40.36.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	6	
2020/21	2	



Performance Analysis

In comparison to 2019-20, the cost per attendance has increased by 139%. This is due to COVID-19 and the majority of facilities being closed until September 2020. However, Orkney has shown in comparison to the average and rest of Scotland that it still continues to provide value for money.

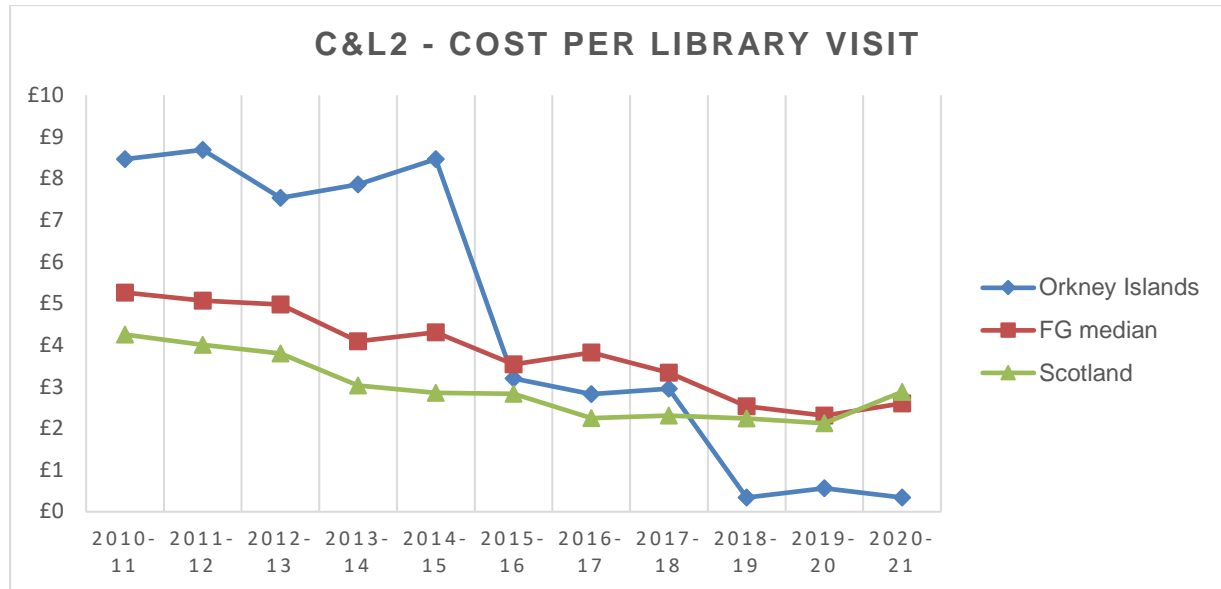
Future Action

Focus on recovery from the pandemic by increasing usage in line with COVID-19 mitigations and continue to reduce the cost of the service as part of the Council's overall approach in budget management.

C&L2 – Cost per library visit

In 2020/21, the cost per library visit in Orkney was £0.34, which is less than the 2019/20 figure of £0.56, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of £2.88.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	1	↔
2020/21	1	



Performance Analysis


Maintaining rate well below Scottish average with a high number of library visits through online services, Click and Collect and social media contribute to this. Gradual easing of restrictions were followed until current opening hours from 4 September 2020. <https://orkneylibrary.org.uk/opening-times/>

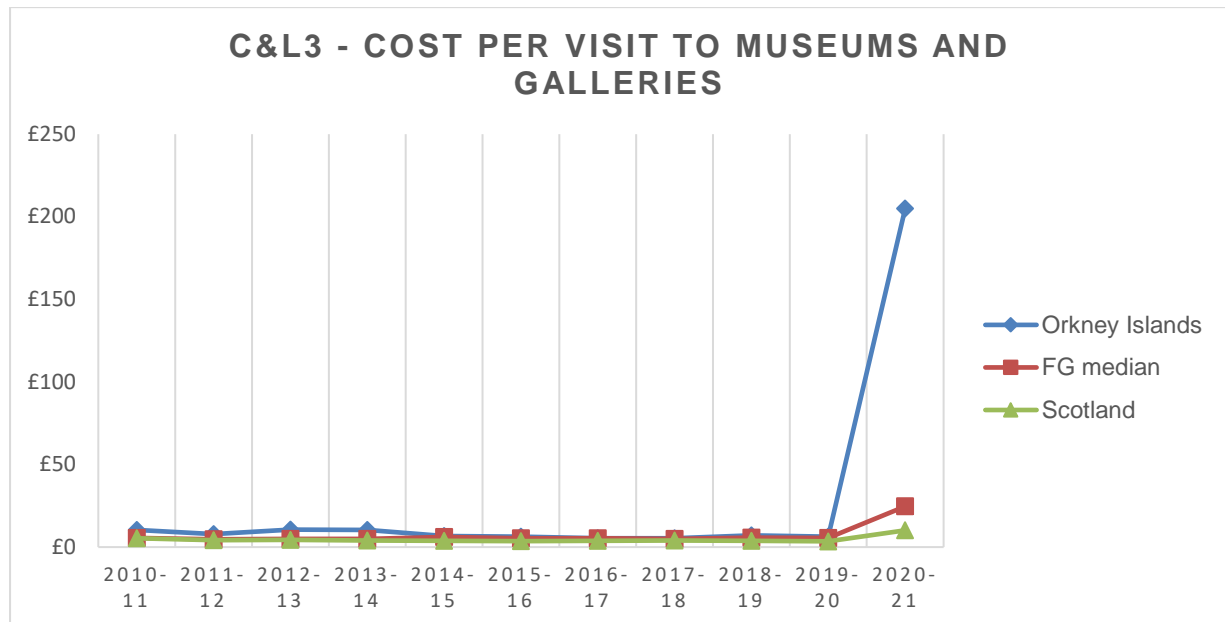
Future Action

Maintaining the current cost per visit will be a challenge given the reintroduction of the mobile library service as a result of the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. There is a need to work closer with local and national partners to develop the Library and Archives online offer and promote the services to a wider audience.

C&L3 – Cost of museums per visit

In 2020/21, the cost of museums per visit in Orkney was £204.93, which is more than the 2019/20 figure of £6.24, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of £10.14.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	20	
2020/21	23	



Performance Analysis

Orkney's figure will perhaps always inevitably be at the higher end due to the small size and limited number of museum facilities, small local population, and finite potential number of people visiting Orkney, compared to large municipal museums with easier communications.


The impact of the pandemic, with its closures and reductions to visitor numbers, including, significantly, the virtual cessation of cruise ship traffic, has been catastrophic but hopefully temporary, as is the continuing additional and temporary cost burden of managing the Scapa Flow Museum redevelopment, which will complete in summer 2022.

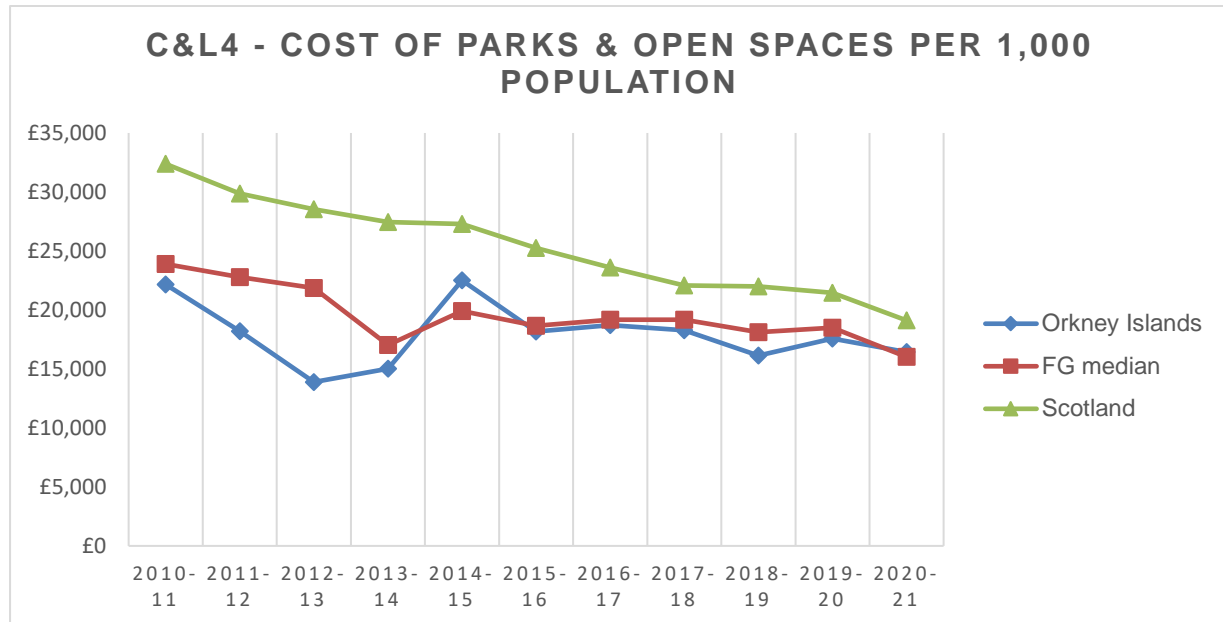
Future Action

Continue to review both short-term (project-based) costs and underlying (baseline) costs as part of the Council's overall approach to budget management. A review of the overall Culture Service will be carried out using external consultants.

C&L4 – Cost of parks and open spaces per 1,000 population

In 2020/21, the cost of parks and open spaces per 1,000 population in Orkney was £16,429, which is less than the 2019/20 figure of £17,579, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of £19,112.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	10	
2020/21	15	



Performance Analysis

The downward trend mirrors the Scottish average and with Orkney only having a 6.7% decrease, it is reasonable considering the value for money in the service area.


Future Action

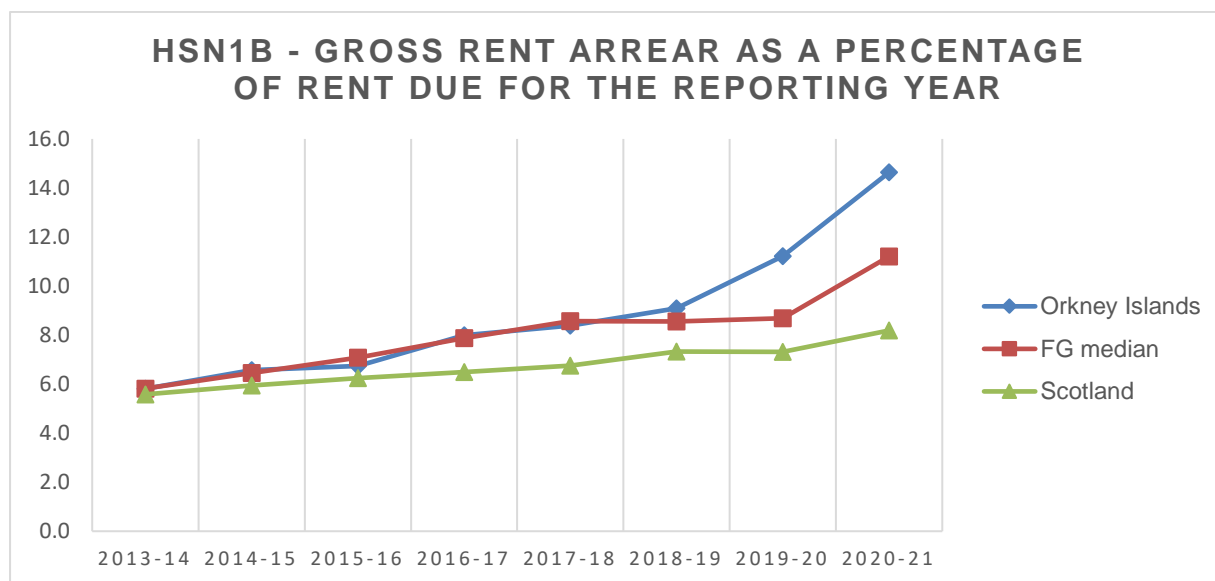
As part of the Council's overall approach to budget management, consideration of satisfaction and value for money need to be factored into the service provision on maintaining and developing these sites. Orkney Islands Council receives an annual funding allocation as part of the Scottish Government's Play Area Renewal Programme (£26,000 in 2022/23) which will be used to upgrade as many of the council's 47 play areas as possible.

COUNCIL HOUSING

HSN1b – Gross rent arrears as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year

In 2020/21, the level of Council house rent arrears was 14.64%, which is more than the 2019/20 figure of 11.22%, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of 8.19%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	25	
2020/21	26	



Performance Analysis

The Council's Housing Service is a member of Scotland's Housing Network, an organisation that offers a benchmarking service to councils who wish to be members. It also offers other related services including sub-groups to discuss good practice.

A report is presented annually to the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee which details all of Housing Services' performance in comparison with its peer group (other small councils) and the national average. This indicator of gross rent arrears includes both current and former tenant arrears as a percentage of rent due. Nationally there are high levels of former tenant arrears written-off. Orkney adopts a prudent approach to write-offs and endeavours to collect former tenant arrears. In 2020/21 Orkney wrote off 6.8% of former tenant arrears in comparison to the national average of 31.9%.

Arrears throughout 2020/21 were challenging as a result of COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, a strong focus was placed on the recovery of arrears. This included undertaking welfare checks for all Council tenants throughout the initial lockdown, working with tenants to ensure that those who needed assistance to claim Universal Credit Housing Costs / Housing Benefit, were assisted to do so. There was also close joint working with Orkney's Citizen's Advice Bureau in relation to income maximisation and money advice/debt assistance. Every attempt was made,

and continues to be made, to recover outstanding arrears where this is possible. This has included senior management prioritising the pursuit of arrears and significant levels of staffing resource being focused on this aspect. The Service continues to actively pursue rent arrears and has increased its focus on arrears recovery over the course of financial year 2021/22.

Future Action

Former tenant arrears are continually reviewed to ensure that the most appropriate action continues to be taken to recover the debts outstanding and to analyse procedures to see if improvements can be made. This type of debt can be difficult to recover and can take some years to clear.


The Council will continue to actively seek to recover rent arrears and remains focussed on assisting tenants, at the earliest opportunity, who are facing financial difficulty as a result of the impact of COVID-19 to prevent a further increase in arrears. This includes assisting tenants to claim Universal Credit/Housing Benefit, making referrals for debt advice and income maximisation etc.

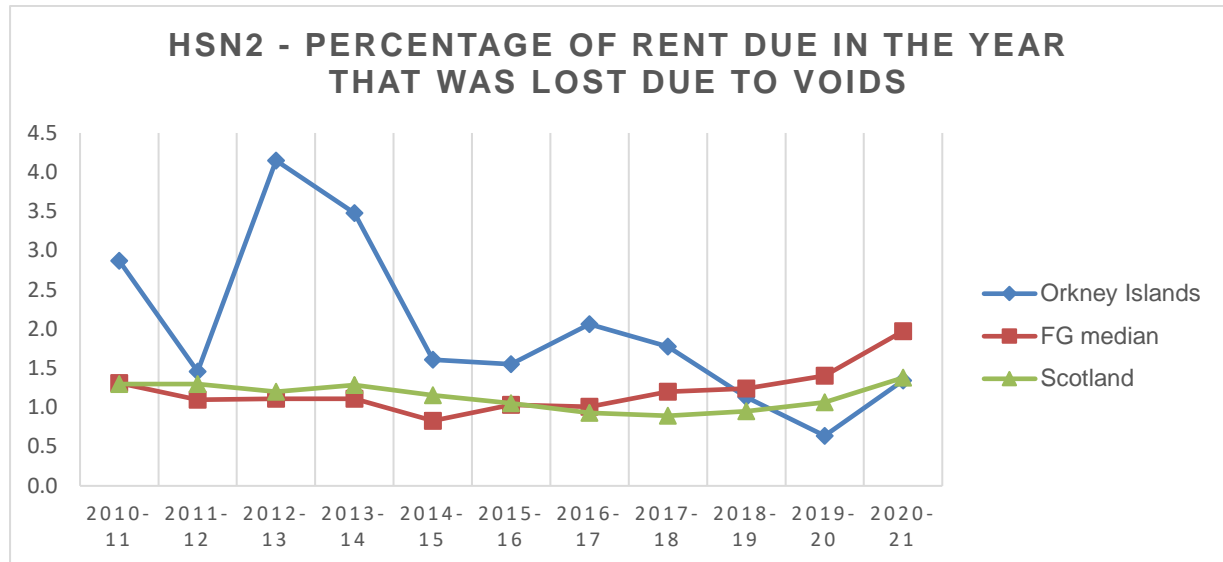
Eviction remains a last resort. Obtaining an eviction decree does not always result in the tenant being evicted. For instance, the tenant may clear their arrears or begin making regular payments towards the debt and the decision may be taken to offer a new tenancy instead. The Council may have duties under the homelessness legislation to re-house households they have previously evicted.

Equally it remains important that rental income is recovered appropriately so processes have been updated to ensure the best approach and every effort will be made to work alongside tenants, to adapt to the impact of COVID-19 and the roll out of Universal Credit and to seek to address some of the issues arising accordingly.

HSN2 – Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids

In 2020/21, 1.34% of Council house rent due was lost due to properties being unoccupied, which is more than the 2019/20 figure of 0.64%, and about the same as the 2020/21 Scottish average of 1.38%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	6	
2020/21	15	



Performance Analysis


Various factors contribute to the rise in void rental loss outlined above. National guidance on COVID-19 required that void properties were held for 72 hours following keys being returned, before staff went in to deal with the void and significantly increased cleaning was implemented. In addition, some voids were located on the isles. Following the initial lockdown, there was a period of time where travel to the isles was prohibited. Following that there were operational difficulties with access to public conveniences for staff welfare purposes. There have also been general supply issues affecting a range of items, including internal doors. However, work continues towards sustained improvements in the operational procedures surrounding voids. There are regular joint meetings between frontline staff in the relevant internal services with the specific aim of reducing void periods.

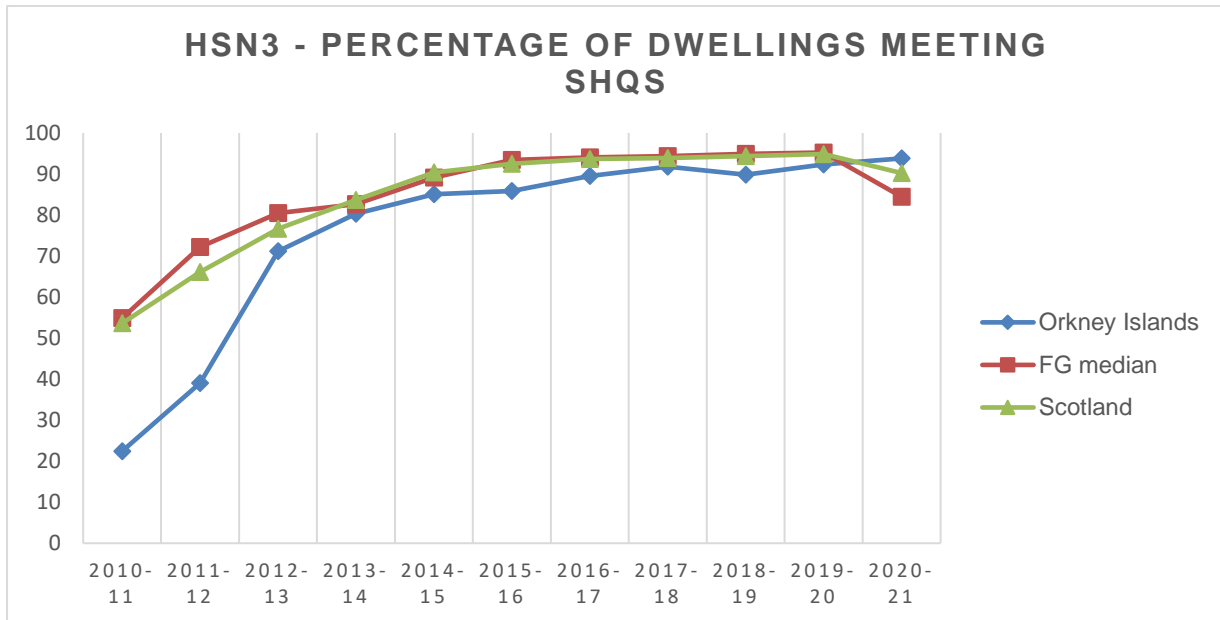
Future Action

The new procedures remain in place and void rental loss will continue to be monitored. It is likely that the void rental loss will also be lower in 2021/22 although there have been a number of newly built properties and therefore turnover is likely to increase.

HSN3 – Percentage of dwellings meeting Scottish Housing Standards

In 2020/21, 93.80% of Council housing in Orkney met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, which is better than the 2019/20 figure of 92.33%, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of 90.26%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	23	
2020/21	9	



Performance Analysis

The Council was required to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by March 2015 and maintain the standard thereafter. The Council was also required to ensure its properties met the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) by December 2020 and maintain that thereafter. ESSH2 requires to be met by 2032 and contains extremely challenging energy efficiency targets.

With regard to SHQS, traditionally Orkney has recorded a higher proportion of properties recorded as an exemption or abeyance than is true for Scotland generally. At present, following a significant review of abeyances and exemptions, this is broadly averaged at 2.5% of the Council's stock in comparison to an average of all Scottish Local Authorities of 6.0%.

A property may be classified as being in abeyance when work cannot be done for 'social' reasons relating to tenants' or owner-occupiers' behaviour, for example, where owner-occupiers in a mixed ownership block do not wish to pay a share of a secure door entry system and do not consider it to be necessary. Another example would be where the tenant is elderly or suffering from a medical condition that has led them to feel that they do not wish work to be undertaken on their home at this point in time.

A property can be classified as an exemption where the property is capable of meeting the SHQS on a particular element but the landlord believes it is not possible to meet it for technical or legal reasons or because the cost is considered disproportionate.

A specific module has been developed in the asset management computer system, Concerto, which now facilitates recording of the SHQS. While the module was being developed, the opportunity was taken to undertake a refresh of data and an initial stock review with a view to minimising the level of abeyances and exemptions and ensuring data held was appropriately robust. The depth of information held on Concerto has been enhanced. There has been a process of seeking to reduce the number of properties failing the SHQS. While most of these are marginal fails and the intention would have been to have progressed most to an SHQS pass in 2020/21, this has been delayed due to COVID-19. These are now being progressed.

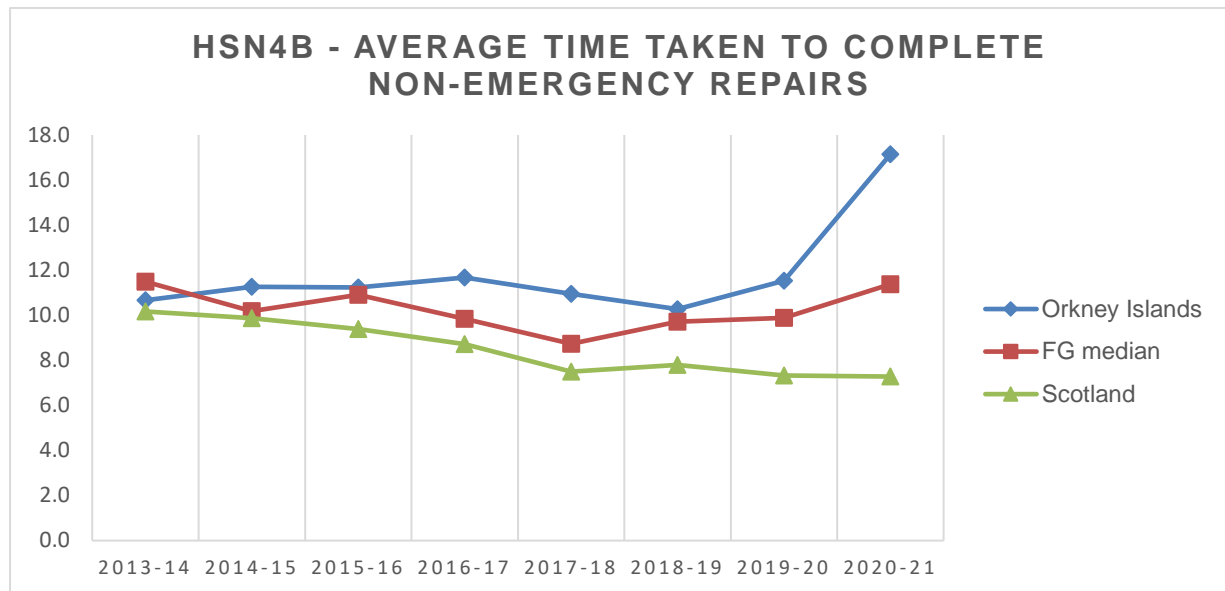
Future Action

Work will continue to be progressed in respect of the SHQS. In addition, work will continue in relation to reducing abeyances and exemptions as and when this becomes a potential. This may include when properties are returned to the Council. Where the cost is prohibitive, it is likely that the Council will take steps to remove the particular property from its stock.

HSN4b – Average number of days taken to complete non-emergency repairs

In 2020/21, it took an average of 17.14 days to complete non-emergency repairs to Council housing in Orkney, which is not as good as the 2019/20 figure of 11.53 days, and the 2020/21 Scottish average of 7.28 days.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	24	↔
2020/21	24	



Performance Analysis

The area of repairs is one where context is particularly relevant with some councils setting very challenging timescales for completion well ahead of the legislative requirement. Orkney's geography presents some challenges in that respect. The time taken to deliver non-emergency repairs has declined significantly from the previous year.


For the first quarter of 2020/21, Scottish Government guidance in relation to COVID-19 meant that it was not possible to undertake non-emergency repairs. This amounts to 2,100 days. If this period were removed the figure would be 14.92 days. Once lockdown was lifted in late June 2020, there was a backlog of non-emergency repairs. COVID-19 continued to affect repair timescales thereafter as a result of issues including travel to isles being restricted for a period of time, supply issues and some tenants feeling uncomfortable about workmen accessing their homes despite mitigations being in place.

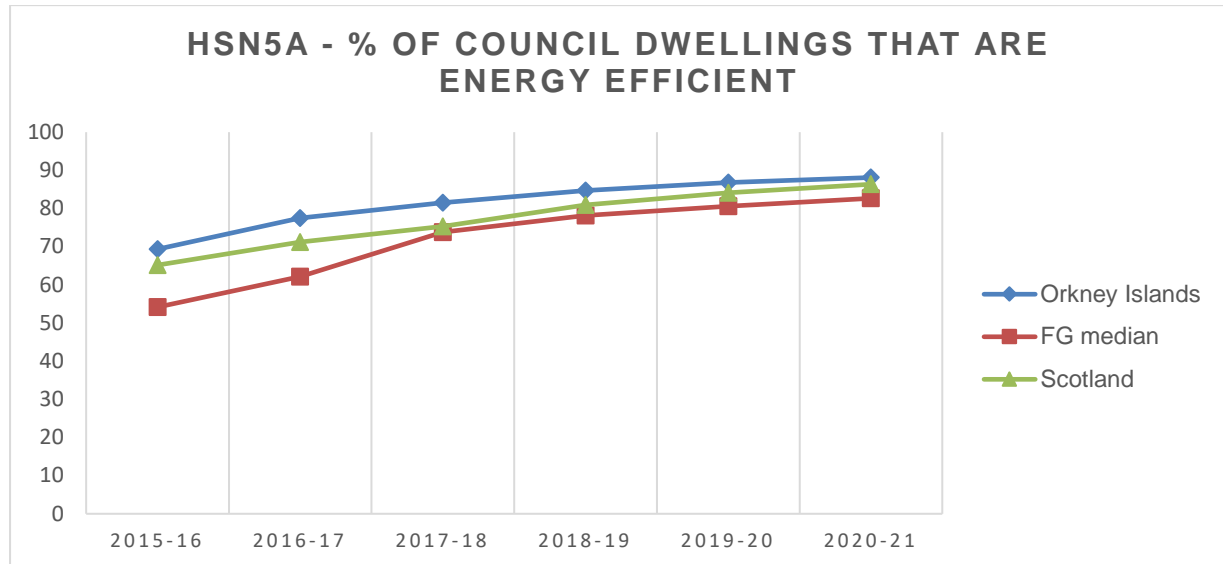
Future Action

We continue to work with contractors to encourage faster invoicing and greater accuracy of recording. We will re-visit the mobile app if the technical difficulties can be overcome but at this moment this is unclear.

HSN5 – Percentage of Council dwellings that are energy efficient

In 2020/21, 88.12% of Council houses in Orkney were energy efficient, which is better than the 2019/20 figure of 86.76%, and the 2019/20 Scottish average of 86.35%.

Rank out of 32 Scottish Councils		
2019/20	10	
2020/21	11	



Performance Analysis

The Council must also ensure that its properties meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) – the first target was December 2020. Further challenging standards will be required to be met by 2032. The Education, Leisure and Housing Committee receives an annual update report at the June cycle of meetings, regarding progress towards this.

The Council's performance in relation to meeting ESSH is generally in line with the Scottish average.

Orkney has very specific issues relating to energy efficiency including no mains gas and specific property types leading to additional challenges. We also have very few "cloned" properties which means we have a high percentage of property with their own Energy Performance Certificates which gives us a much more accurate and full understanding of our stock's standard.

Future Action

Plans are being progressed in relation to the Council's requirements to meet ESSH2 by 2032.

Currently 270 properties or 27% of Council housing stock meet ESSH2. It is estimated that the cost for the remaining 701 homes to be brought up to ESSH2 standard is £15.6 million.

Council approval on a summary of works and costs was received in March 2022. A detailed programme of works will be progressed through the Council's Capital Project Appraisal process accordingly.