

Item: 10

Policy and Resources Committee: 20 September 2022.

Local Child Poverty Action Report.

Joint Report by Chief Officer, Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership, Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the Orkney Partnership's draft Local Child Poverty Action Report for 2021/22.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 places a duty on local authorities and health boards in Scotland to report annually on activity they are taking, and will take, to reduce child poverty.

2.2.

That Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPARs) must be submitted to the Scottish Government as soon as practicable following the end of the reporting year.

2.3.

That a multi-agency group, the Child Poverty Task Force, was convened to address the new duties in respect of reducing child poverty and was adopted by the Orkney Partnership Board in 2020 as a short life working group.

2.4.

That the Child Poverty Task Force has published three LCPARs for Orkney, with the fourth LCPAR, for 2021/22, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.5.

That the Child Poverty Task Force has developed an Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022 – 2026 which will provide a coherent framework for the future planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of co-ordinated action to address child poverty in Orkney.

It is recommended:

2.6.

That the Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021/22, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved for submission to the Scottish Government, in so far as it relates to the remit of the Council.

3. Child Poverty Action Reporting

3.1.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 placed a duty on local authorities and health boards in Scotland to report annually on activity they are taking, and will take, to reduce child poverty. LCPARs must be submitted to the Scottish Government as soon as practicable following the end of the reporting year.

3.2.

A multi-agency group, the Child Poverty Task Force, was convened to address the new duty. In June 2020 the Child Poverty Task Force was adopted by the Orkney Partnership Board as a short life working group, and is reporting currently to the Community Wellbeing Delivery Group. The Child Poverty Task Force has now published three LCPARs for Orkney, for the years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21, and the LCPAR 2021/22, attached in draft at Appendix 1 to this report, is its fourth.

3.3.

A shortcoming noted in successive LCPARs was the absence of a coherent strategic framework against which to plan, implement and report collective activity to combat child poverty and mitigate its effects. During 2021/22, the Child Poverty Task Force developed a strategy to underpin and co-ordinate future planning, monitoring, implementation and reporting of action to combat child poverty in Orkney. The Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022 – 2026 was approved and adopted by the Orkney Partnership Board on 27 June 2022.

3.4.

The LCPAR 2021/22 includes a report on the consultation and development work which informed the strategy. Reporting against the targets in the strategy will commence in next year's LCPAR. The data contained in the LCPAR 2021/22 is the baseline against which future progress will be measured and reported.

3.5.

The LCPAR refers to the cost of living crisis, but its impact has not yet fed through into nationally published data. It may start to be detectable next year. Meanwhile, there are several workstreams currently under way which seek to address poverty and hardship in Orkney. To avoid duplication, the Community Wellbeing Delivery Group is convening a sub-group, provisionally called the Cost of Living Task Force, to take forward the actions contained in the Child Poverty Strategy, the recommendations of the Food Dignity Report and any future actions arising from the

new Fuel Poverty Strategy currently in development. This will enable the Child Poverty Task Force to be wound up.

3.6.

It is acknowledged by Scottish Government that small communities cannot always report quantitatively on the impact of the actions they take on very small populations, such as the sub-populations represented by the six national child poverty priority groups. To do so can be intrusive and would be statistically meaningless. Recent research on “Data and Intelligence in remote and rural areas”, led by the Improvement Service, has been looking into reporting on child poverty data, to which Orkney has been contributing. One very welcome outcome has been recognition that for communities like Orkney, qualitative reporting (such as the responses to the Making Ends Meet survey) should be considered equally as valid as quantitative.

3.7.

The Committee is invited to scrutinise and thereafter approved the draft LCPAR for 2021/22, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, for submission to the Scottish Government, in so far as it relates to the remit of the Council.

4. 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.

5. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

6. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

7. Contact Officers

Stephen Brown, Chief Officer, Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership, extension 2601, stephen.brown3@nhs.scot

James Wylie, Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, extension 2431, james.wylie@orkney.gov.uk

Karen Greaves, Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions, extension 2202, karen.greaves@orkney.gov.uk

Jim Lyon, Interim Head of Children, Families and Justice Services and Chief Social Work Officer, extension 2611, jim.lyon@orkney.gov.uk

Alex Rodwell, Head of Improvement and Performance, extension 2281, alex.rodwell@orkney.gov.uk

Anna Whelan, Service Manager, Strategy and Partnership, extension 2160,
anna.whelan@orkney.gov.uk

8. Appendix

Appendix 1: (Draft) Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021/22.



The Orkney Partnership

Working together for a better Orkney

Orkney Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021-2022

Draft version 1.2

29 August 2022



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Introduction

“I feel there is a big divide - some people seem to have a lot and some (probably more than we know of) have very little. I think making everyone aware of that and trying to find ways that we can all help each other would be good, but I don't know how we do that.”

“Making Ends Meet” survey respondent, 2021

The term “child poverty” conjures up images of Victorian tenements but poverty still impacts on children today, constraining their lives and prospects. The Scottish Government uses the term in legislation to acknowledge this stark truth.

Local authorities and health boards in Scotland have a statutory duty to report every year on the actions they are taking to combat child poverty, in order to ensure that children's rights and interests are placed at the centre of our policy considerations. In Orkney, this work is supported by the Child Poverty Task Force, part of The Orkney Partnership, which brings together the many partner agencies which play a part in our children's lives and wellbeing.

Our last report, for 2020-21, was dominated by the immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on families in Orkney, and the measures taken locally and nationally in response. Data for 2020-21 is now available and it may come as a surprise to learn that child poverty rates across the UK fell during that year. The reason is thought to be the temporary uplift of £20 per week in universal credit and other emergency payments which were made to support families through successive lockdowns.

Published figures for Orkney give a rate for children living in relative poverty of 13.1% during 2020-21, equating to 467 children. When housing costs are taken into account, this figure rises to 18.2%, or 640 children. We can estimate from these figures that at least three hundred families in Orkney are struggling to get by and possibly many more, as our survey respondent suggests.

Our survey, “Making Ends Meet”, was launched in summer 2021. We asked families for their experiences of living in hardship in Orkney, and what would make the most difference to them. We are grateful to everyone who responded, and we have used the results to develop our new Child Poverty Strategy 2022-2026. The strategy sets out a framework for action to meet our ambitions for children and families in Orkney.

During 2021-22, we have seen the economy start to recover, but any gains from this have been offset by the steep rise in the cost of living. Inflated food and energy prices have caused household bills to jump sharply and record numbers of households in Orkney have sought advice and assistance, some for the first time.

This report describes what we did in 2021-22 to improve the lives and prospects of children living in poverty in Orkney.

Jim Lyon
Chair
Child Poverty Task Force

August 2022

Measuring child poverty in Orkney

All the partner agencies in the Child Poverty Task Force collect local data where this will help our understanding of child poverty in Orkney, and many have contributed to the information, data and analysis included in this report.

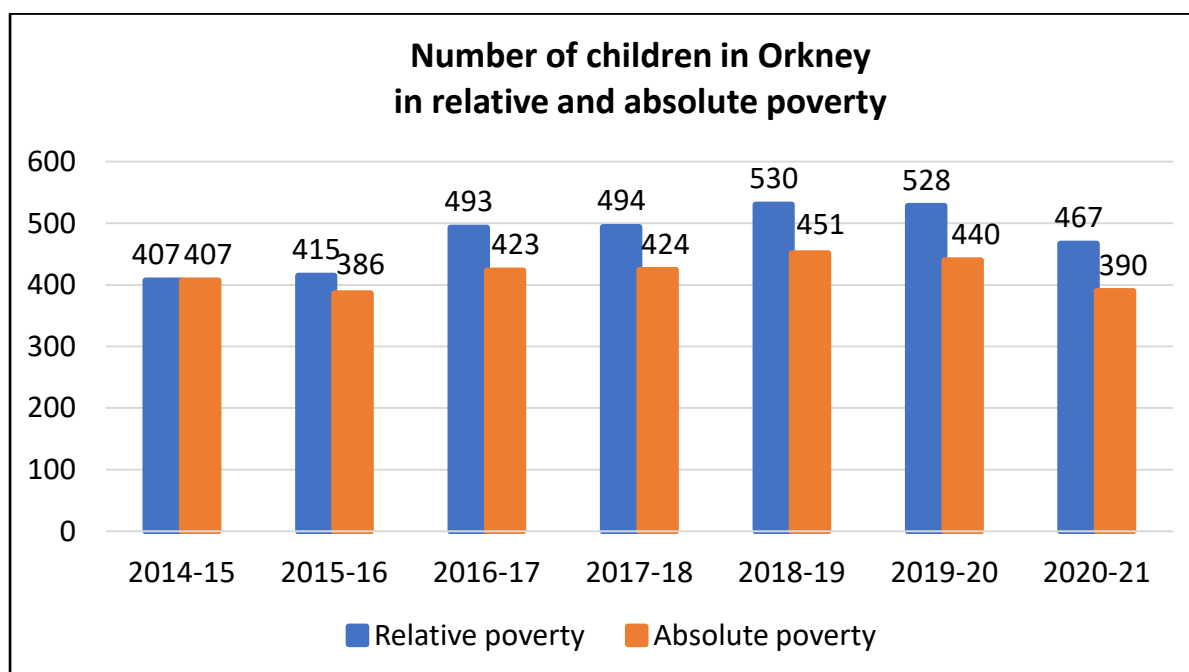
A snapshot of recent statistics¹ about Orkney families tells us that:

- 66% of households are managing well financially.
- 8% of adults have no savings.
- 12% of households with children have an adult with a long-term health problem.
- 3% of all households are single parent families and 5% have 3+ children.
- 17% of family households are single parent families and 26% have 3+ children.
- 14.7% of first-time mothers are under 25.
- 13.1% of children are living in relative poverty.

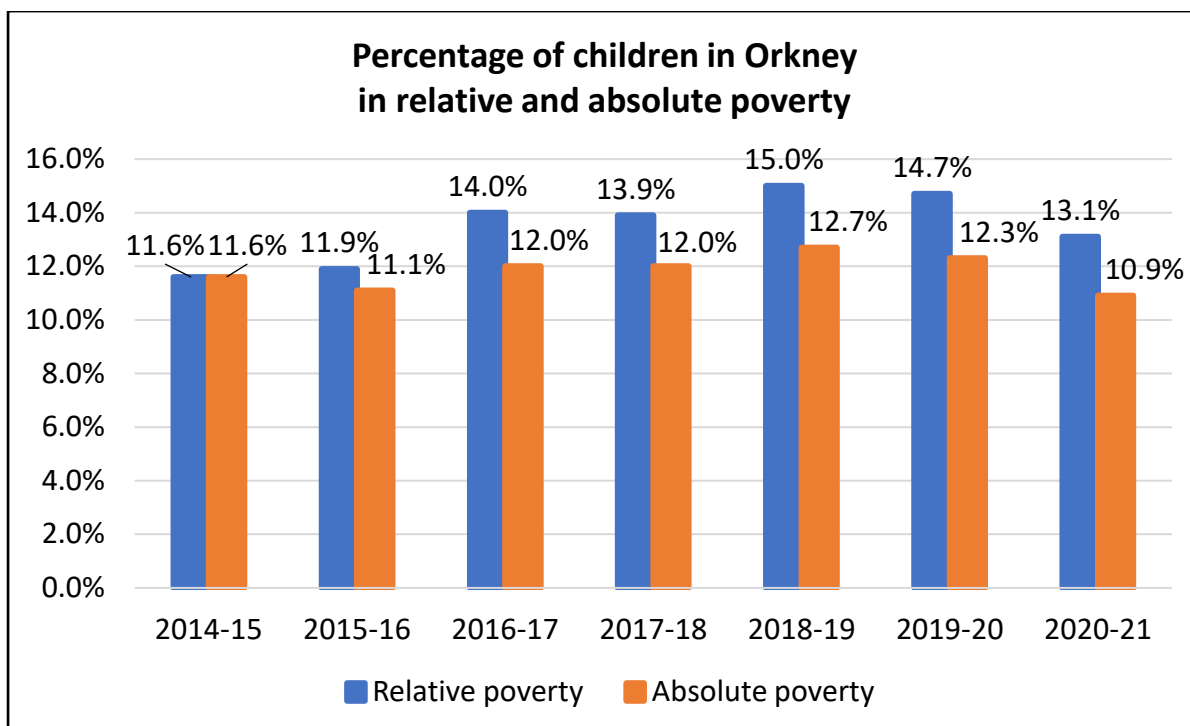
Orkney's progress towards national targets

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act requires the Scottish Government to ensure fewer than 18% of children are living in relative poverty by 2023-24, on course to achieving less than 10% by 2030. Relative poverty is defined as children in families with incomes less than 60% of the contemporary UK median income. It is a measure of whether those in the lowest income households are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole. Absolute poverty is a measure of whether those in the lowest income households are seeing their incomes rise in real terms.

The most recent figures available were published by the UK Government's Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) in March 2022. These figures are estimates of the number and percentage of children in Orkney living in relative and absolute poverty. At present we appear to be meeting the national target.



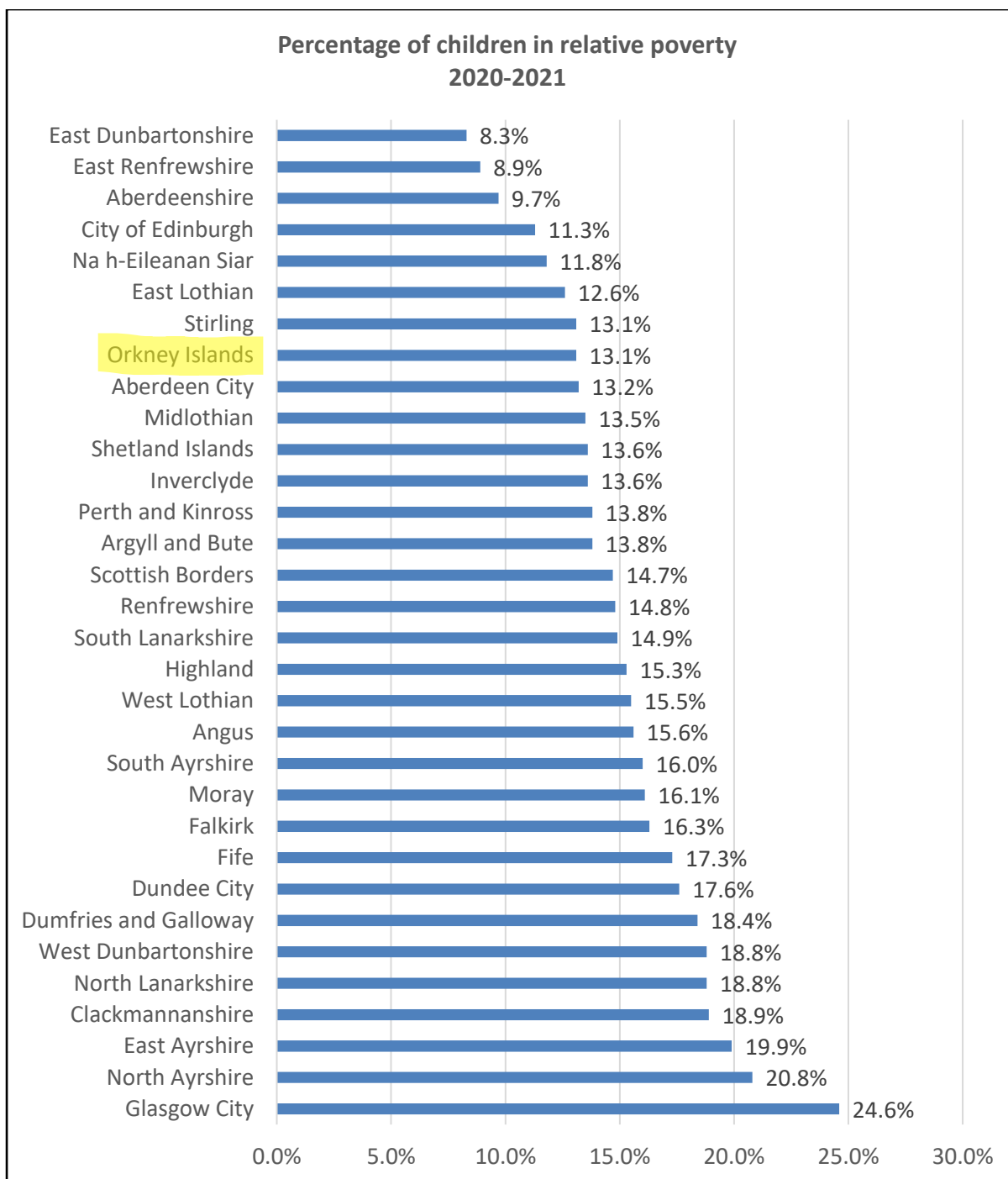
¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-child-poverty-statistics-january-2022/>



The headline rate of child poverty across the UK fell during 2020-21, primarily as a result of the temporary £20 a week uplift to universal credit brought in during the pandemic. The new Scottish Child Payment of £10 per week was introduced from February 2021, for children under six where families are in receipt of universal credit. Additional emergency payments were made to families during 2020-21 for lockdown and holiday food, supplemented in Orkney by extra cash payments from the Council. The cumulative effect of these benefits is likely to have been the main cause of the recorded fall in child poverty in Orkney.

How Orkney compares with the rest of Scotland

DWP advises that the incidence of child poverty in 2020-21 is likely to be under-reported because of issues in surveying families remotely during lockdown, rather than face-to-face. DWP data is likely to be more reliable in comparing different local authorities than in comparisons locally between different years. Doing this with regard to relative poverty, we see that Orkney is the joint 7th best performing local authority area in Scotland.



Scottish Government maintains a dashboard of child poverty indicators² for local authority areas in Scotland. A selection of the most recent data to be published, comparing Orkney with Scotland as a whole, can be found in Appendix 1.

The Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) maintains a dashboard of public health indicators³, including data relating to child and maternal health. There are proven links between poverty and poor health outcomes. Health inequalities exist to varying degrees throughout Scotland and are defined as unfair and avoidable differences in people’s health across social groups and between different population

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-child-poverty-statistics-january-2022/>

³ https://scotland.shinyapps.io/ScotPHO_profiles_tool/

groups. A selection of the most recent child health data to be published, comparing Orkney to Scotland as a whole, can be found in Appendix 2.

Fuel poverty

Orkney's weather, older housing stock and lack of mains gas contribute to some of the highest rates of fuel poverty in Scotland. The last available figures for Orkney, from the Scottish House Condition Survey 2019⁴, show that 30.5% of Orkney households were in fuel poverty during 2017-19, compared with a Scottish average of 24.4%. 21.8% of Orkney households were in extreme fuel poverty over the same period, compared with a Scottish average of 11.9%. The 2021 survey is due to be published in late 2022/early 2023.

Rising wholesale energy prices in 2021 saw some of Orkney's energy suppliers go out of business and their customers transferred to alternative suppliers at higher cost. The UK price cap per unit on home energy was raised by 12% in October 2021 and 51% in April 2022, with another 50% rise anticipated in October 2022. THAW Orkney has reported record numbers of families seeking advice and assistance with hugely inflated fuel bills. The further increases in energy costs due to take effect will undoubtedly push many more Orkney families into extreme fuel poverty.

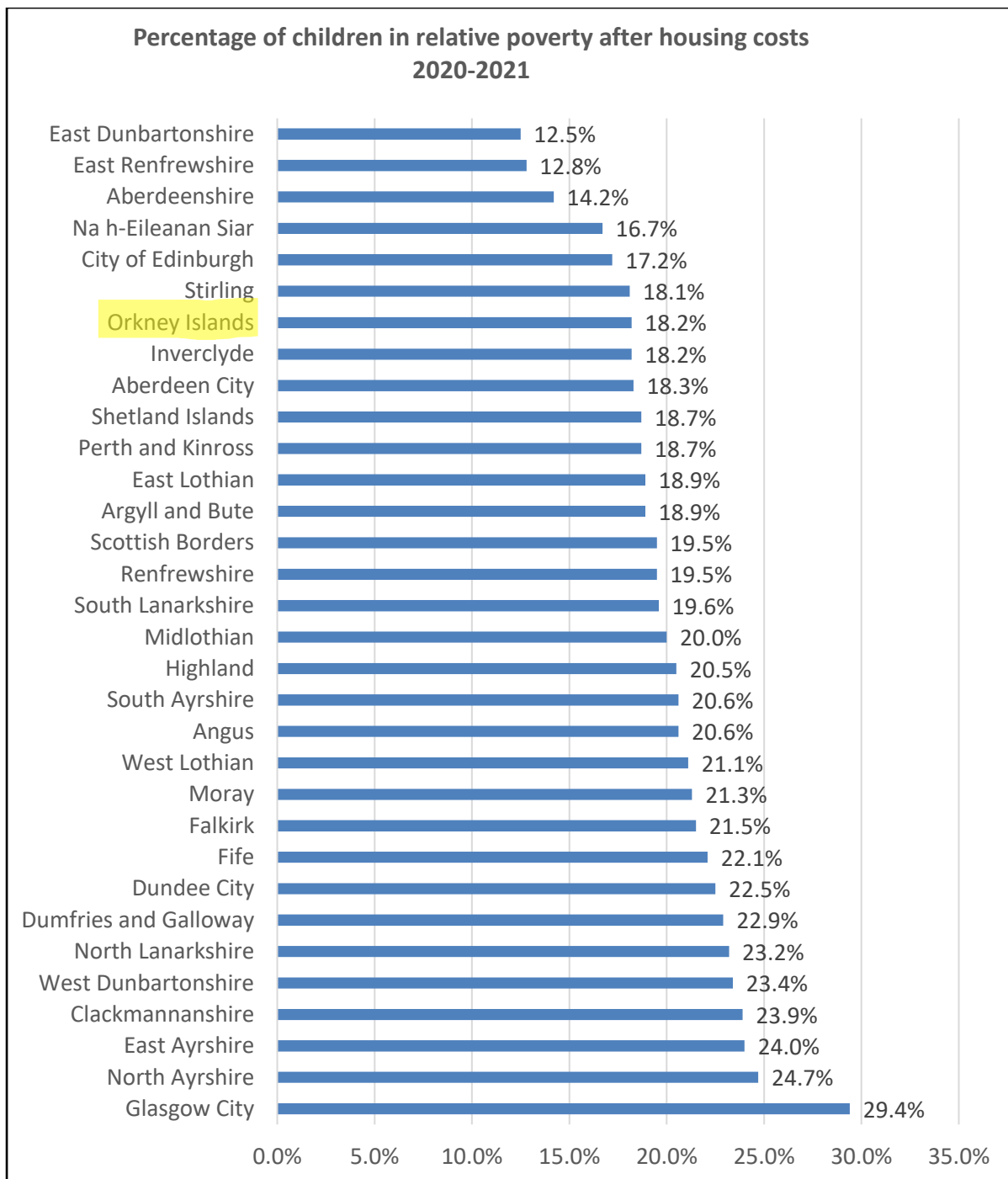
A new Fuel Poverty Strategy for Orkney is in preparation, but the Orkney Partnership acknowledges that action will be needed well in advance of winter 2022-23.

The effect of housing costs

On 12 July 2022, the End Child Poverty Coalition (EPC) published new estimates commissioned from Loughborough University for child poverty in 2020-21, based on the DWP figures but recalculated after housing costs had been taken into account. In Orkney, the number of children living in relative poverty after housing costs was calculated to be 640, or 18.2%. Orkney is still in joint 7th best place.

No figure for Scotland overall has been published officially since 2019-20 but, from these figures, we can estimate the Scottish average to be 21%, equating to 187,148 children.

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-household-survey-2019-annual-report/>



Source: End Child Poverty Coalition, July 2022

The cost of living

During 2021-22, we have seen the economy start to recover, but any gains from this have been offset by the recent steep rise in the cost of living. Inflation rose sharply throughout 2021-22, noticeably affecting food prices and impacting hardest on families on lower incomes for whom food is a much greater proportion of the household budget.

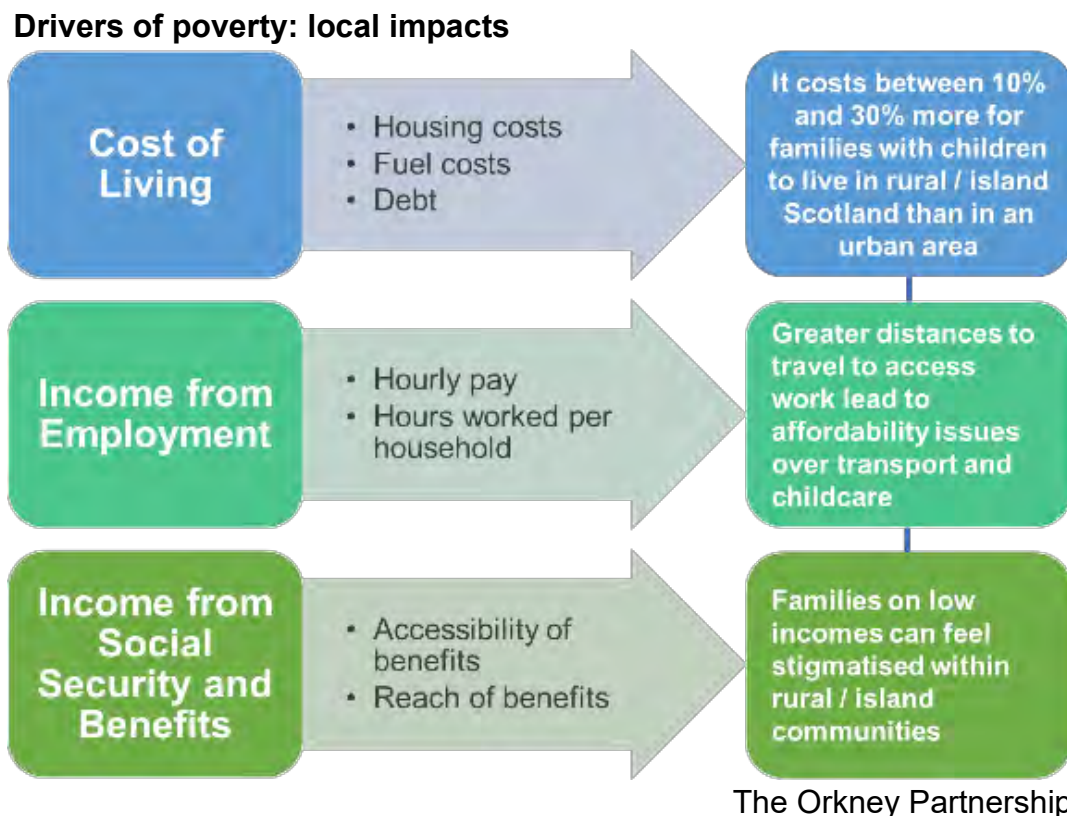
Island residents know from our own experience that it costs significantly more to live on an island than it does on the Scottish mainland, and more again on our smaller

ferry-linked isles. Research commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise⁵, last updated in 2016, found that to achieve a minimum acceptable standard of living, it cost up to a third more on an island. For a family of four living in an island community with no access to a supermarket, a weekly shop cost £48 more than in an urban area. Taking into account recent rises in the cost of fuel, and consequently freight, the difference is likely to be much larger today.

The cost of living is not included as a factor in the statistics published nationally on child poverty rates. But it is clear that while the headline statistics suggest that Orkney has relatively low rates of child poverty, the effect of the higher cost of living means that there are likely to be many more families experiencing hardship. Following years of campaigning, this message is at last being heard by the Scottish Government and we will keep pushing for policy change to help island families.

Drivers of poverty

The cost of living is one of three main drivers of poverty identified by the Scottish Government and we can see below how local factors impact on these three drivers.




In the short term, these are the main factors which our immediate actions seek to address. In the longer term, we are considering more strategic options, which have the potential to create a fairer community for everybody, with a more equitable distribution of socio-economic opportunities and benefits. These options are included in our outline action plan which forms part of Orkney's Child Poverty Strategy 2022-2026.

⁵ <https://www.hie.co.uk/research-and-reports/our-reports/2016/november/30/a-minimum-income-standard-for-remote-rural-scotland-a-policy-update/>

Lived experience of making ends meet

Developing a Child Poverty Strategy for Orkney 2021–2023



Making ends meet – is your family getting by?

The Orkney Partnership is asking for the views of families with experience of hardship and disadvantage. Some families were just about managing before the pandemic but have since found themselves short of money, perhaps for the first time. For others, getting by is a daily struggle. We recognise the impact money problems have on people, especially those responsible for children – as parents, caregivers, grandparents or in some other way. Your answers will help us develop a strategy to tackle child poverty in Orkney and enable all of our children to get the best start in life. Mostly, poverty depends on your income, whether from work or social security, and the cost of living. But there are other factors that make a difference too, including:

- Skills, employment and childcare for parents and carers
- Children's wellbeing, physical and mental health
- Education, social opportunities and life skills
- Local infrastructure including housing, transport, sporting and community facilities

THE QUESTIONNAIRE
If you do not have responsibility for children you do not need to complete this survey. There is no need to answer all the questions if you'd rather not – your responses will still be useful. All answers are completely confidential so we are not asking for your name, but quotes from your comments may be used anonymously. If you would like help with managing money, please ask any of the contacts in the support list provided separately. You can ask local contacts to help you complete the survey. Please tick the boxes, indicate yes/no or write in the text boxes below as applicable.

Q1 ABOUT YOU & YOUR HOUSEHOLD
Are you a...

Parent
 Caregiver
 Grandparent
 Responsible for a child in another way?

How many children under 18 in your household are...

Under 1 year old
 Pre-school
 Attending school
 Attending college/university
 Formally looked after either at home or away from home by the local authority
 Other?

Where do you stay?

Mainland Orkney
 Linked South isles
 Ferry linked isles

Does anyone in your household have a disability?

Yes No

If yes, do you think this makes a difference to your cost of living? (tell us more below if you wish)

Do any of these statements apply to you and your household?

More than 2 children born after April 2017
 Someone in my household has an alcohol, drug or gambling problem
 We don't always agree what to spend our money on
 I don't have wider family support
 English is not the first language in the house
 I can't afford to give my child(ren) pocket/spending money

Is your household a single parent family?

Yes No

What age group are you in?

Under 18
 18–24
 25–64
 Over 65

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In autumn 2021, the Child Poverty Task Force launched a survey, 'Making Ends Meet'⁶, to gather the views of families who had experienced, or were experiencing, socio-economic disadvantage and hardship. The purpose was to help services in Orkney understand the issues, ask what help families would find most useful and inform Orkney's Child Poverty Strategy.

'Making Ends Meet' was promoted by agencies in Orkney who support families in crisis, for example the Orkney Foodbank. It was distributed to wider groups of families by front line practitioners, including Health Visitors. A factsheet listing sources of help and support was distributed along with the survey questionnaire.

At the start of the first lockdown in 2020, many families who had been just about managing before the pandemic found themselves in difficulty, some for the first time. Local and national emergency measures were brought in to help, as described in our Local Child Poverty Action Report for 2020-21. By summer 2021, the economy was picking up but the temporary uplift to Universal Credit ended in September 2021 and many people were worried about how they would manage without it.

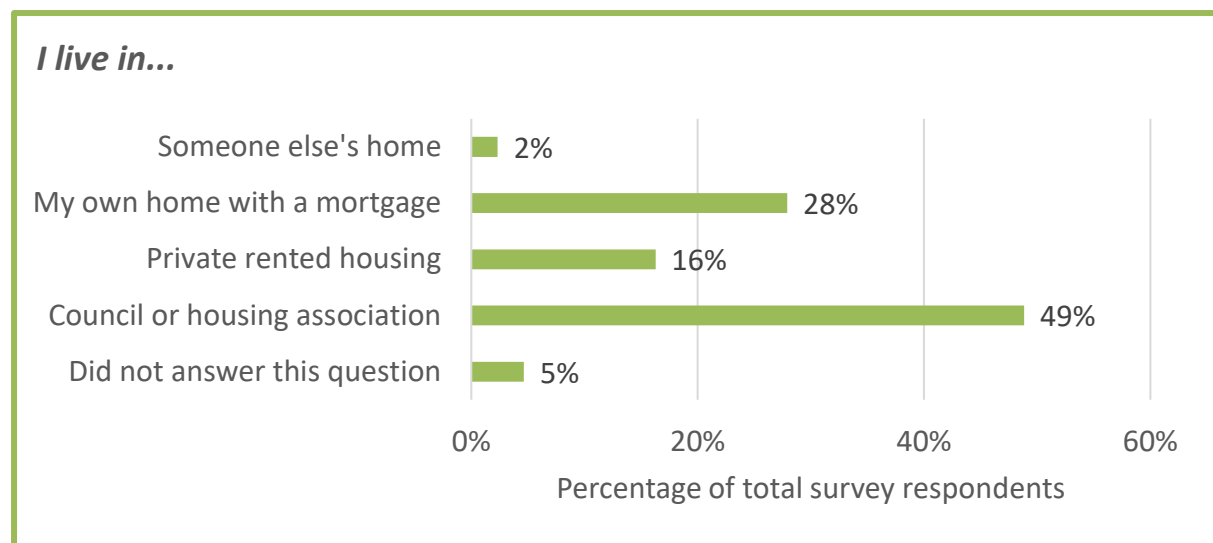
Forty-three families responded to the survey and provided a wealth of detail about the particular issues which were causing them to struggle financially. We are grateful to all of them for taking the time to complete the survey. Statistics from small samples are of limited value, but the narrative detail which respondents provided

⁶ <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/News?postid=4588>

about their daily lives has been hugely helpful in planning the action we need to undertake.

We asked some questions to establish whether respondents were in any of the family types identified by the Scottish Government as at most risk of poverty. This told us that a disproportionately high number of respondents were lone parents and/or had family members (children or parents) experiencing long term illness or disability.

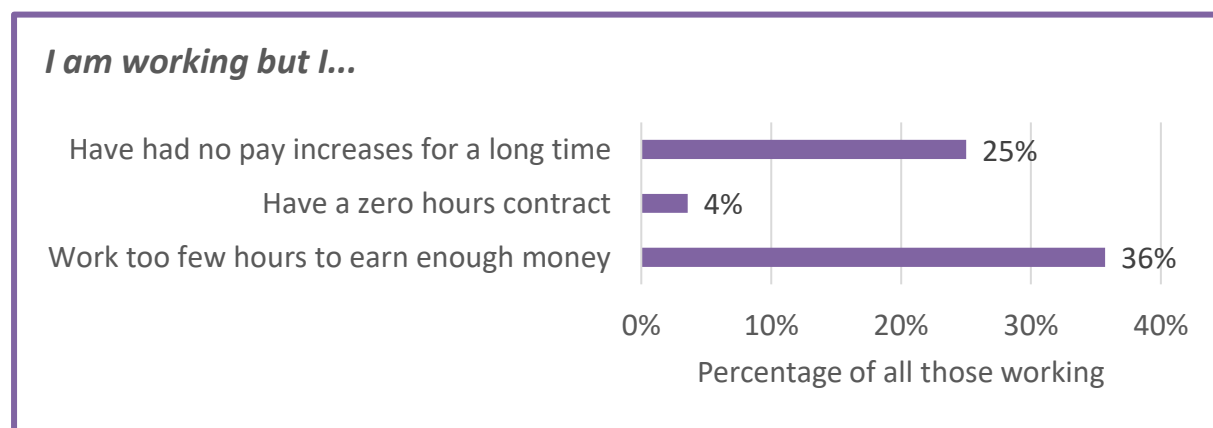
Respondents were self-selected and didn't have to answer every question, so the quantitative data is indicative only and not statistically significant. Where necessary we have assumed a nil response for those who skipped a question. Some key findings are reported below, with comments edited for anonymity where necessary.



- 100% of respondents were aged 25-64
- 55% of respondents were in a single parent family
- 24% of respondents had someone in their household with a disability

"I cannot work full time because I care for my daughter and husband."

"It makes employment unlikely and/or unstable."

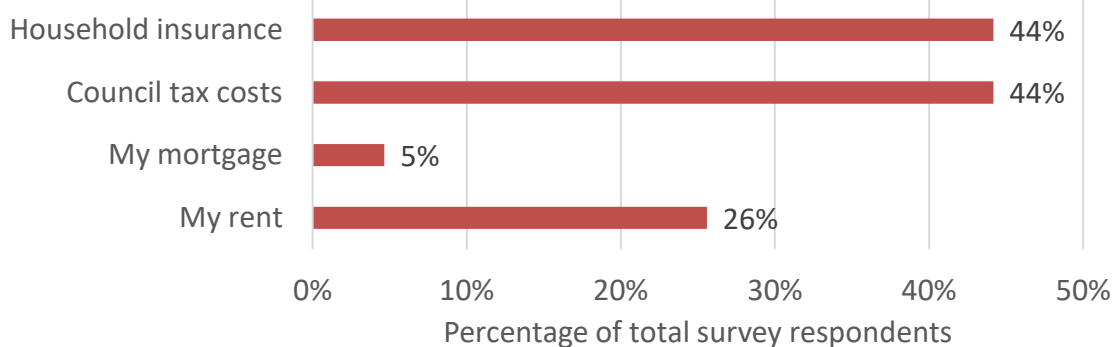


- 74% of respondents were in working households
- 10% stayed on the ferry-linked isles and 90% on Mainland
- 47% of respondents didn't have wider family support

"We had a car but couldn't afford it so had to get rid of it. My parents take us shopping etc... or we would be scuppered! I work full-time too."

"Travel to dentist is too expensive via ferry."

I can't always afford to pay...



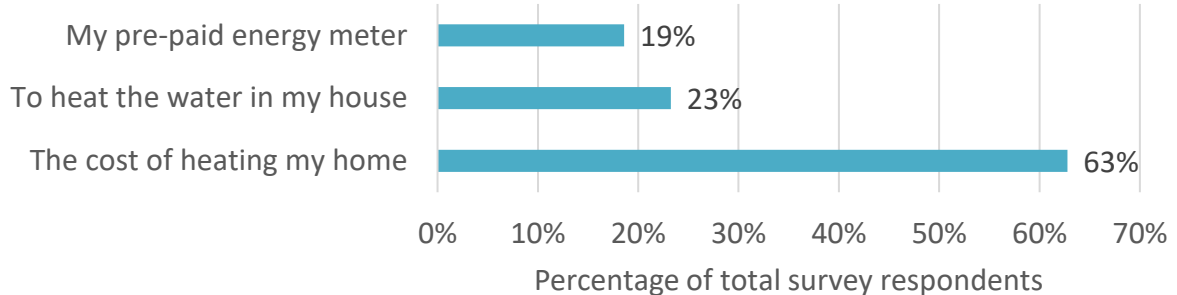
- 53% of respondents had used the Orkney Foodbank
- 42% of respondents were getting free school meals
- 50% of respondents said their children didn't qualify for free school meals

"Isles shops cost so much more than mainland shops so we can afford less."

"We cannot afford the extra money to pay for a warm school meal each day."

"Feeding my family is often a burden."

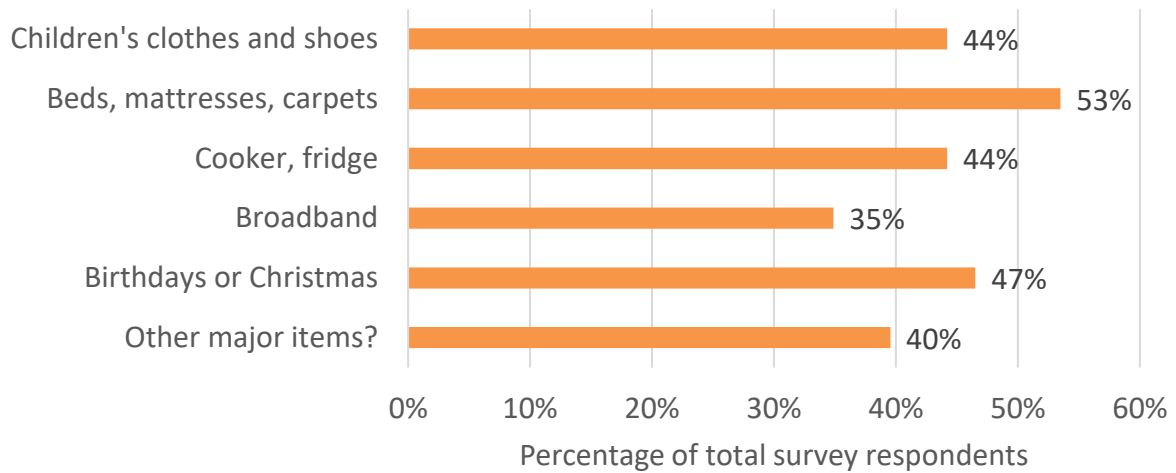
I can't always afford...



“School trips are an expense I can’t afford.”

“After school activities are a huge stretch for us. Childcare is a massive problem too. I can’t do any more hours than I already do as I’m self-employed.”

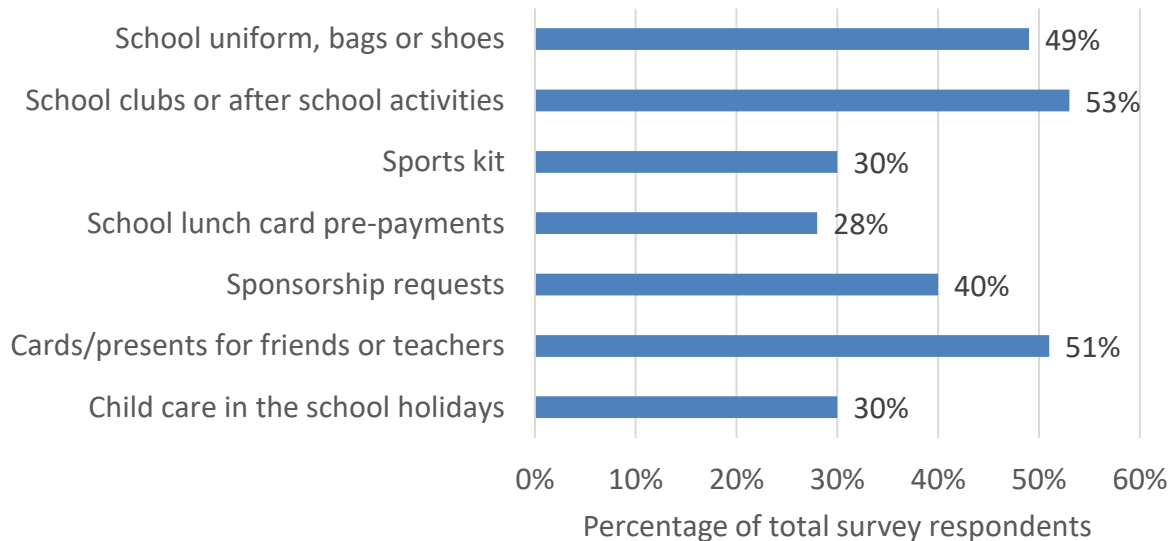
I can't always afford essentials such as...



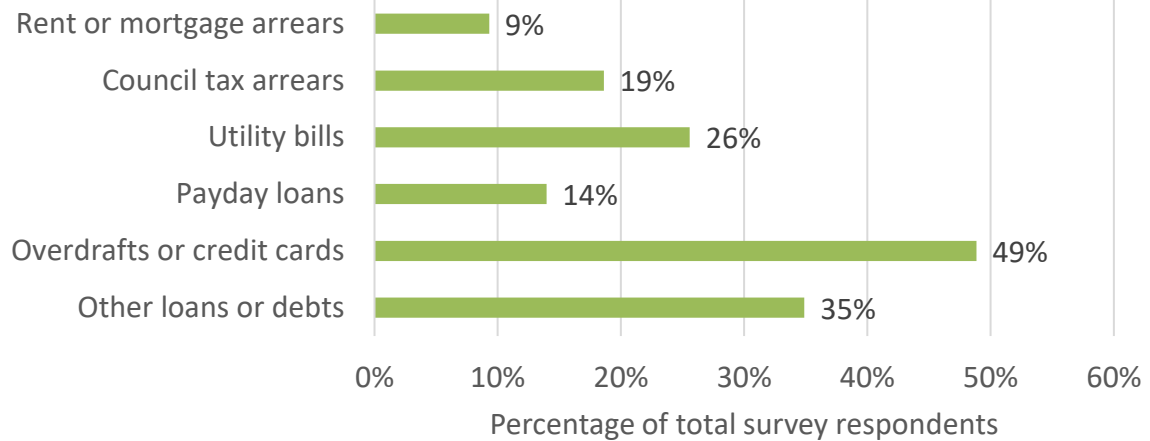
“As we don't qualify for free school meals, we don't get any help to buy school uniforms.”

“Childcare is the biggest issue - currently non-existent after school and expensive.”

I often have difficulty paying for...



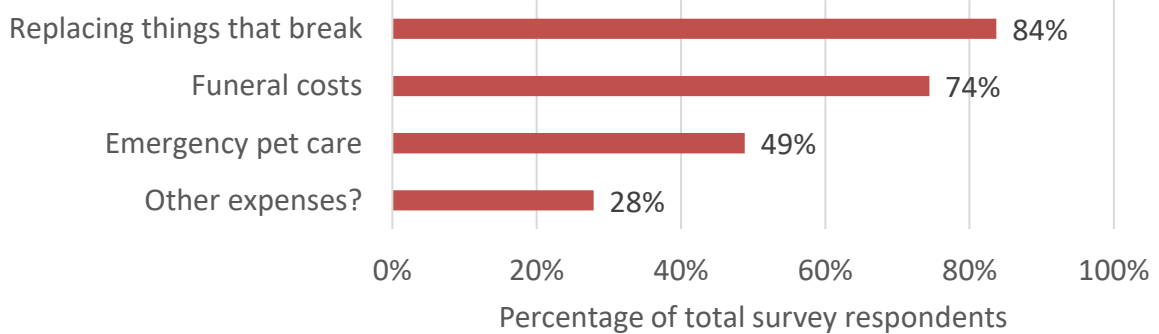
I owe money for...



“We have debts to pay which occurred during covid when reduced income due to furlough meant we had to get birthday and Christmas presents, clothes and shoes for the return to school and a new washing machine on finance.”

“Some months my salary falls twice in the assessment period resulting in no universal credits for one month. This makes budgeting even harder.”

It would be difficult for me to find money in a crisis, such as...



“THAW Orkney have been fantastic, they helped with fuel grants, food bank and hydro vouchers, I would have been so stuck if they had not helped.”

“Foodbank and Charitable Trust help so much. Very grateful for their support, couldn't survive without.”

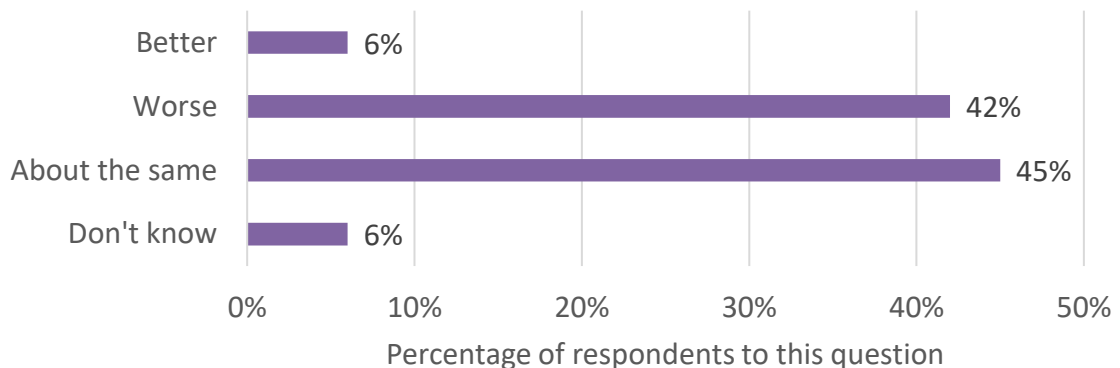
- 91% of respondents could not afford to save any money.
- 51% could not afford to give their children any spending money.
- 40% of had already received help with their finances.
- 84% of respondents felt they did not have enough money to give their children a 'good enough' start in life.

"I feel ashamed that I have had to rely on food banks, and help, as a working parent I shouldn't have to rely on help."

"No child at any age should have to worry about how much electricity we use or if we have enough food in to eat."

"We can't leave Orkney for a trip or holiday, it's hard to heat the home. Things lots of people take for granted is not an option for us."

I expect things in the next year to be...



Survey respondents were asked what support would make the biggest difference to their life. Answers included:

- Affordable and local childcare.
- A full time job that pays above minimum wage commensurate with my level of education.
- Making enough money to support and give best start in life for kids.
- Free ferry fares for dentist trips.
- More range of items from foodbanks.
- Financial help with paying to heat our home in the winter months.
- More accessible help for ASD in Orkney.
- For the government not to make things like tax credits, such an unfair system.
- More money.

A second phase of the survey is in preparation to consult children and young people directly about their experience of hardship and how it affects their lives.

What we did in 2021-22 to combat child poverty

All support agencies in Orkney refer families to partner agencies where they might be able to provide additional services, resources or assistance to the family. This might be a matter of simply providing information or, if more support is needed, perhaps making an appointment for the family and following it up. A helpsheet listing sources of support with contact details was included with the survey forms issued for the Making Ends Meet survey.⁷

The summary table below lists the actions which partner agencies carried out in 2021-22 to combat child poverty and mitigate against its effects. Most of these actions are continued from year to year. Further information on many of these actions can be found in the reports from partner agencies on the projects and services they deliver, contained in the next section of this report.

All of the actions in this list address one or more of the key poverty drivers:-

- Income from employment
- Income from social security entitlements and benefits
- The cost of living

Actions taken in 2021-22 to combat child poverty		Lead agencies
1	Advocacy services commissioned by NHS Orkney and Orkney Islands Council.	CAB Orkney
2	Maximise income by assisting clients to identify and claim their full financial entitlements.	CAB Orkney
3	Parent Employability Support for individuals and families to access information, support, welfare, training and employment.	OIC (Community Learning, Development and Employability)
4	Providing and encouraging take-up of free school meals and associated clothing allowances and support grants.	OIC (Schools Catering), OHAC
5	Regular discussions with families about finances, debt, benefits etc. Financial support provided and referrals made to CAB for benefit checks/money advice for those in financial difficulties.	OHAC (Social Work); OIC (Housing); OIC (Community Learning, Development and Employability)

⁷ <http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/communityplanning/documents/makingendsmeetsupport-sources-02-08-21.pdf>

Actions taken in 2021-22 to combat child poverty		Lead agencies
6	Support with Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grant applications, and administering the funds.	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents); OIC (Revenues and Benefits)
7	Support for individuals and families to manage relationships, improve mental health and reduce substance use plus onward referrals to other services e.g. CAB, Women's Aid.	Relationships Scotland - Orkney
8	Support for women and children affected by domestic abuse.	Women's Aid Orkney
9	Sourcing funding (local and national) to assist families to purchase items, e.g. bicycles.	OHAC (Occupational therapists, Health Visitors)
10	Assisting families to apply for Best Start grants.	Social Security Scotland, OHAC (Social Work)
11	Financial support for local children in need, including the following grant schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orkney Fund • Bairns Need Nappies • Help from Home • Every Child Should Be Warm In Bed • Every Child Deserves A Christmas • Winter Coat Fund 	Orkney Charitable Trust
12	Provision of emergency food to families referred by partner agencies.	Orkney Foodbank
13	Community Fridges established in Kirkwall and Stromness to share surplus food donated by retailers and reduce food waste.	Greener Orkney
14	Addressing poor quality housing and fuel poverty through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland (HEEPs:Abs) and Landlord Registration.	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services and appointed agents)
15	Providing information and advice on energy efficiency, tariff switching support, assistance with accessing grant funding, advocacy, income maximisation and budgeting support.	THAW Orkney

Actions taken in 2021-22 to combat child poverty		Lead agencies
16	Providing direct support to householders in fuel poverty by means of electricity vouchers (including those fulfilled by the Foodbank), Cosy Home Packs and small grants.	THAW Orkney
17	Electricity top-ups so those in receipt of food parcels can heat/cook their food.	Orkney Foodbank THAW Orkney
18	Support for families on low incomes and/or those going through tough times.	Homestart Orkney
19	Community larder boxes, pop-up charity shops, fuel voucher schemes etc. Acting as a link between the community and services, including referrals to the Foodbank from the isles.	Island Wellbeing Project
20	Enabling digital connectivity and access to mifi, laptops and other devices for digitally excluded children and families.	OIC (Community Learning, Development and Employability); OHAC (Health Visitors, School Health, Paediatric therapists)
21	Provision and promotion of free period products available locally. A new online ordering system was piloted during 2021-22.	OIC (Building Cleaning); OHAC (Health Visitors, School Health); The Orkney Partnership
22	Supported employment and skills development for adults and young people with a barrier to maintaining employment. Restart Orkney recycles, restores and sells secondhand furniture and household items and supports new tenants to furnish their property.	Employability Orkney with funding and support from OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)
23	Funding for starter-packs of essential household items.	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, and appointed agents)
24	Housing support for vulnerable families.	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)
25	Ad hoc essential clothing items for Papdale Halls of Residence pupils.	Papdale Hall of Residence staff

Actions taken in 2021-22 to combat child poverty		Lead agencies
26	Distribution of Scottish Government baby boxes to all families with new babies, containing items needed in the first six months.	OHAC (Maternity unit)
27	Support for pregnant women and families with babies and young children.	OHAC (Maternity Services and Health Visitors)
28	Hungry Baby service - baby milk, baby food, nappies etc (referred to Health Visitors where child/children under 2 years).	Orkney Foodbank
29	Childsmile - improving children's oral health.	OHAC (Dental & Oral Health)
30	Provision of an informal learning programme for young people transitioning out of school.	Voluntary Action Orkney (The Connect Project)
31	Supporting the Active Schools Network to increase the number of opportunities for all children to get engaged in sport.	OIC & SportScotland
32	ActiveLife Budget Membership scheme offering unlimited access to The Pickaquoy Centre and 11 Council-owned fitness facilities across the islands.	OIC & The Pickaquoy Centre
33	Supported Accommodation for homeless young people is provided by the Council in Kirkwall and Stromness. Residents are supported Y People to learn independent living skills, enabling them to sustain a tenancy in the future.	Y People; OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)
34	Provision of school uniform, toiletries and laundry items.	OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services, Halls of Residence, and appointed agents)
35	Facilitation of Young Scot cards, Youth Achievement Groups and the Orkney Youth Forum.	OIC (Community Learning, Development and Employability)
36	Supporting vulnerable young adults to build confidence and positive relationships while focusing on life and employability skills.	Voluntary Action Orkney (The Connect Project)

Actions taken in 2021-22 to combat child poverty		Lead agencies
37	Developing new ways of working (via telephone and online) to engage with service users and deliver services safely.	OHAC & OIC (Housing Service)
38	Moratorium on increase of rents within emergency housing.	OHAC & OIC (Housing and Homelessness Services)
39	Explore options to ensure dental and wider health services are accessible without barriers of finance.	Orkney Partnership Board
40	Money Counts – publication of “Worrying about Money?” leaflet and training for support agencies.	NHS Orkney (Public Health), Orkney CAB, Social Security Scotland
41	“Making Ends Meet” consultation with families experiencing hardship in Orkney to inform strategy development and future action planning.	The Orkney Partnership
42	Young People’s Befriending Project – supporting children and young people from the ages of 8-18 through the provision of a trained Befriender.	Voluntary Action Orkney
43	In School Counselling service expanded to make counselling available for all children and young people aged ten and over, both face to face and online.	OIC (Schools)

Reports from partner agencies

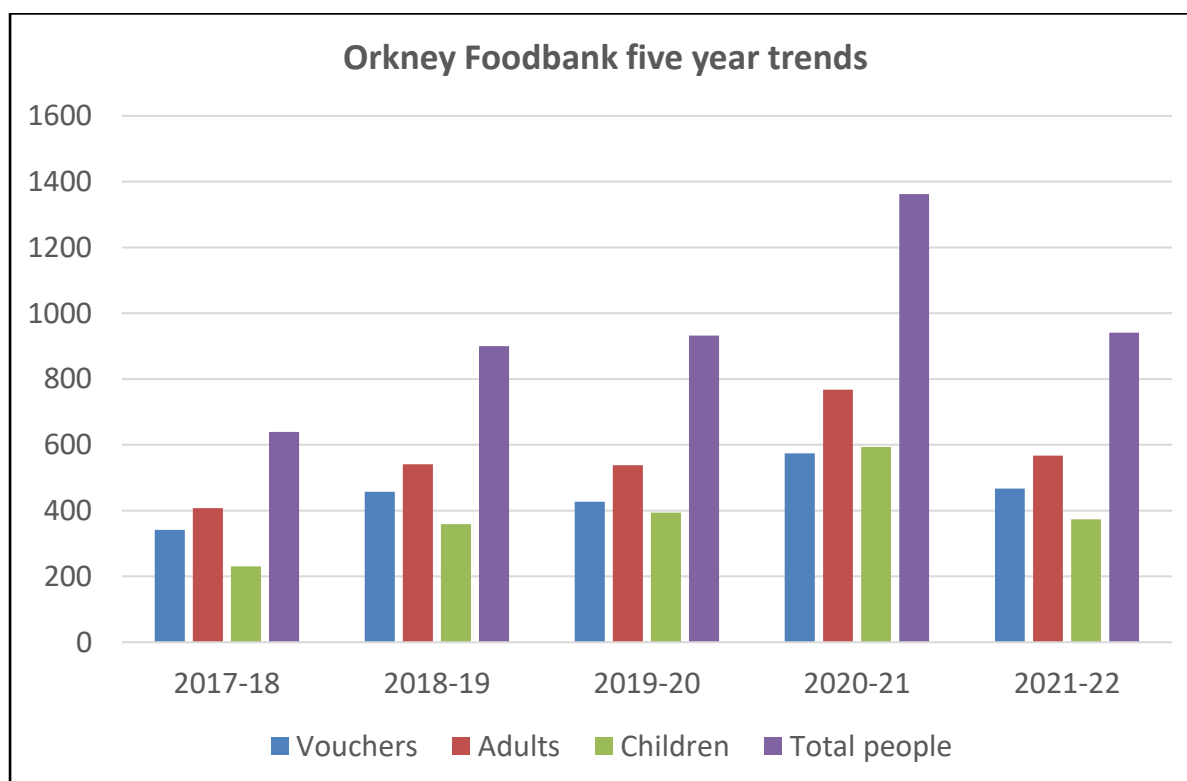
Orkney Foodbank



Orkney Foodbank supports families in a variety of ways:

- Food parcels are issued to households with children as they are referred to us.
- We issue child holiday meals, which comprise a foodbank parcel for the total number in the household where they struggle to provide enough food during school holidays.
- All children under 2 are automatically referred to the health visiting team.
- Where young children need nappies, we refer to health visitors who link with Orkney Charitable Trust to get them a month's supply.
- If any young child is needing baby milk or baby food we contact the parent to check what is required, purchase it and add to the parcel.
- At Christmas we make sure all families with children are referred to Orkney Charitable Trust to benefit from the Christmas grant.

We reported last year that demand at Orkney Foodbank reached unprecedented levels in 2020-21, the first year of the pandemic. Demand fell back in 2021-22 to a level more comparable with 2019-20.



It is likely that a number of factors contributed to this fall, including economic recovery and the further rollout of free school meals and the Scottish Child Payment.

Early figures for the first quarter of 2022-23 indicate that demand has increased again and is approaching peak pandemic levels, most likely due to the cost of living crisis.

The Foodbank fulfilled 467 vouchers and provided parcels to 941 people last year, including 374 children. Out of all the vouchers we processed, these were the number of children affected in each category:

- Benefit changes - 40
- Benefit delays - 10
- Child Holiday meals - 11 vouchers supporting 49 clients
- Debt - 12
- Delayed wages - 2
- Domestic violence - 14
- Homelessness - 39
- Low Income - 140
- Sickness 17 -
- Other - 75

Orkney Charitable Trust submitted successful grant bids on behalf of Foodbank and themselves, enabling us to offer three grants to all single parents referred to the foodbank:

- Family grant of £100 funded by Youth Scotland and Orkney Charitable Trust.
- Parent Support Grant of £50 funded by Health and Wellbeing Scotland and Orkney Charitable Trust.
- Cash for Kids Coats – a new project, with details to be arranged.

THAW Orkney

THAW's mission is:

*To work for households in all Orkney communities
to reduce levels of fuel poverty and achieve
affordable warmth*



THAW Orkney's support to fuel-poor households (electricity, solid fuel and heating oil) during 2021-22 took another jump, up from the 2020-21 total of £57,011 in 778 awards to a total of £120,603 of energy support in 1,019 awards.

Specifically for families with children during 2021-22 this included:

- A total of £11,560 in 279 electricity vouchers, broken down as:
 - 48 THAW Orkney vouchers with a total value of £2,040
 - 72 Orkney Foodbank vouchers with a total value of £3,230 plus 23 enhancements of £50*
 - 67 Child Poverty vouchers at £30 plus 67 enhancements of £90*
 - 92 Fuel Bank Foundation vouchers with a total value of £4,280 plus 40 enhancements of £50*

- 51 awards from the Scottish Government Home Heating Support Fund totalling £24,554
- 9 awards from the Fuel Bank Foundation heat fund for solid fuel and heating oil totalling £3,480
- 15 Cosy Home Packs with a total value of £1,450
- 17 Orkney Charitable Trust grants totalling £1,150
- 9 Warm Home Discount awards totalling £1,260

*A total of £9,150 in 130 enhancements from the Scottish Government’s flexible funding for financial insecurity was distributed via Orkney Islands Council to clients receiving vouchers from early January 2022 to the end of the financial year, with some awards backdated as far as 1st December 2021.

At least 296 children were supported by THAW Orkney during 2021-22, in family sizes as follows:

Family size	No. of clients
0 children	327
1 child	63
2 children	47
3 children	17
3+ children	22
Not specified	6

In 2021-22, THAW gave energy efficiency advice to 37 families, installed energy monitoring for 10 families and carried out fuel poverty assessments for 10 families and benefit checks for six families. Tariff switching advice – almost redundant in the current market – was given to three families.

Home-Start Orkney

As reported last year, many of the parents supported by our service are either on a very low wage or are not working: predominately due to health issues, but also there are those who are caught in a cycle of poverty with a family history of unemployment.



During 2021-22, as we adapted to new Covid restrictions, we were fortunate in that we were able to support families very much as we had before the pandemic, although we did have a period over Christmas 2021 and into January 2022 when we advised volunteers not to meet with families, due to the isolation restrictions in place.

Our staff team supported families on a low income by:

- Advising on financial assistance from other sources eg Social Security Scotland.
- Sourcing additional grants to distribute to those affected financially by the impact of both the pandemic and low income. This includes families where parents are working, but on a low wage.

Additionally, our staff team supported families by:

- Applying for Every Child Deserves a Christmas grants from Orkney Charitable Trust for eligible children.
- Distributing grants received from Trusts, helping families with costs such as electricity/heating and food.
- Assisting families in accessing other services, such as THAW Orkney, for further assistance and advice with heating.
- Applying for food vouchers from Orkney Foodbank for those families who struggled to afford meals for their children during school holidays, as well as some during term time.
- Distributed donations of toys/books/clothes (acting more as an intermediary).
- Distributing clothing donations made through parentship with Poundland.
- Applying for grants for specific, essential, household items, such as cookers, etc.

We also continued to offer weekly Group Support sessions. Our Group Sessions offer a safe, secure, welcoming environment, facilitated by staff. They enable parents and children to experience activities they otherwise may not be able to access due to cost or transport difficulties. Parents may fear accessing more mainstream groups for young families, due to anxiety and other mental health issues.

We continue to offer volunteer support, both within family homes and in enabling families to access other services within the community through being accompanied by our volunteers, providing emotional support and reassurance.

Case Study

Parent A, who has two young children, resided with them and her partner in social housing, provided by the local authority. Her partner works, but is on a minimal income, and the house was affected by damp, mould and having storage heaters, electricity costs were high. In fact, A stated that they spent all their time in one room, and all slept in one room so as to keep heating costs as minimal as possible.

We helped A in her quest for either alternative accommodation or repairs to her home by supporting her in contacting the relevant housing official and making enquiries on her behalf. With her permission, we also approached her local councillor to assist her in making enquiries. With two very young children, both on the autistic spectrum and having ongoing health conditions herself, their housing situation was impacting on both physical and mental health. Due to an increase in housing stock, and the support from ourselves and other services, the family were offered a new home within their preferred area, and have now moved into this.

During the year, both whilst in their old home and since moving into their new home, we have accessed and distributed financial grants which A chose to put towards her electricity bill. She stated that one of these first additional grants had come at just the right time, and with some money left over, they had been able to provide small treats for their two children, which they wouldn't have otherwise.

The family have also benefited from the donations of clothing, books and toys, and were also recipients of the Every Child Deserves a Christmas grant. A has told us that this made a huge difference to their budget for Christmas, particularly as they were moving home and the additional costs this incurred.

The family are now settled into their new home, which has a more economical heating system, but are still concerned by the rise in the costs of living. However, they stated that our support enabled them to navigate more successfully a worrying and financially difficult period in their lives.

Orkney Charitable Trust

Our expenditure from 1 April 2021 to 31st March 2022 was £46,830. This money was used to support families or young people who live in Orkney through times of ill-health, disability or financial hardship.



From our general fund, we have supported families in crisis and in long term poverty with a range of needs and items. Examples of funded items include bedding, bed, toiletries, clothes, cots, ill-health and funeral expenses.

Our Help from Home Scheme has supported families to attend NHS appointments on the Scottish mainland, by paying for the additional costs of food and travel. This scheme is endorsed and fully supported by NHS Orkney. The scheme is embedded in our work to combat health inequalities, and was driven by local need to attend mainland hospital care.

Bairns Need Nappies started in April 2020, due to families struggling with the cost of nappies. We offer real and disposable ones. Over the two years, April 2020 - April 2022 we have supplied and bought nappies for 42 Orkney Bairns. This project is in partnership with NHS Orkney Health Visitors.

In December 2021 we increased our Christmas grant scheme, Every Child Deserves A Christmas, to £60 per child. We awarded 350 grants to local bairns throughout Orkney. Most of the total cost of £21,000 was raised locally by Orkney Charitable Trust, plus a £1,000 grant from Arnold Clark Winter Fund.

During spring 2022, our Helping Hands Grant supported 233 children all over Orkney with £50 grants. These families had recently accessed the Foodbank or THAW and the money was received with genuine appreciation. A £3,000 grant was received from Youth Scotland but we felt no child or family should miss out on these grants and therefore funded the remaining £8,650 from Orkney Charitable Trust funds.

Voluntary Action Orkney: The Connect Project

The Connect Project works with young people aged between 15-21 who are unsure of what steps to take next or are not ready to move on to employment or further training. Project staff work with the young people to develop a personal and flexible programme that meets learning needs and builds the skills and confidence to move on to their chosen area.

Standard practice in the project aims to remove potential barriers to participation:

- There are no charges for young people to take part in activities and opportunities.
- Materials such as sketchbooks are provided regularly, as well as increasing our material resources to engage with the interests of the young people.
- Appropriate wear for the activities and weather is provided if needed (boots, wellies, raincoats, socks, hats, gloves).
- Breakfast of cereal/toast is provided when needed.
- Lunch options are made available – soup, sandwich etc – if a young person is without lunch or means when attending Connect.
- Drinks are available at Connect.
- Travel cost to Connect is paid for, or where travel is difficult a young person can be collected.
- Staff awareness of family situation and families are directed to other support if needed.
- Support is given to complete forms for financial support.
- Meetings are arranged at times and locations to suit families.

Case study 1

A young person attends the Connect project. In getting to know the family we are aware of financial stress the family has, in addition to the stressful nature of the job that one parent has to support the family, and as well as two of their children with significant learning and mental health needs.

The young person attends sessions at Connect, has breakfast when they arrive and has the equipment and clothing provided to participate in the activities and there is no cost to the family. Attending these sessions has relieved tension within the home which has benefitted the whole family.

Case Study 2

We helped a young person claim maximum support to attend college because we knew they had been care experienced, and we contacted the relevant agencies to provide the letter of support as evidence. We were able to help the parent complete the forms and get these and the evidence sent to the right place by the deadline in order to receive payments. This money has helped the single parent household as well as alleviating the anxiety and stress of the young person who felt that they

would not be able to attend college but would have to get a job and may not manage to do that.

Case Study 3

A young person had the opportunity to help out on a local farm. We provided a new boiler suit for them to wear when going to work.

Voluntary Action Orkney: Young People's Befriending Project

The Young People's Befriending Project (YPBP) works with children and young people from the ages of 8-18, supporting them through the provision of a trained Befriender who meets with them fortnightly. The Project accepts referrals with wide ranging and inclusive criteria and doesn't request information or data regarding finances, employment or benefits from any of its young people or families.

The Project supports young people affected by poverty in many ways. Three key ways are:

- Most of the sessions they have with their volunteers will involve a meal, especially if the Project is aware that access to healthy food is a difficulty for the family.
- The young people are given opportunities to take part in activities that would be unattainable if the family was asked to cover the cost – for instance, climbing lessons, art lessons, entry to historic sites, cinema passes etc.
- Our older young people (14+ specifically) are encouraged to take part in volunteering with their Befriender, which increases their opportunities into employment as they get older.

Of the 13 young people that we supported through 2021-22, 12 belong to one or more of these national priority groups: Lone parents, Families with a disability, Families with 3+ children, Mothers who are under the age of 25. Of these 13 young people, we would be confident that 11 experienced the effects of poverty over the last year, to varying degrees.

Social Security Scotland: Best Start grants

Best Start grants are paid by the new Scottish Government agency Social Security Scotland (SSS). SSS has taken over the administration of certain payments devolved from the UK Government's Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).



The figures in the table below are for Best Start grants paid in Orkney during 2021-22 (the reporting period does not exactly match the financial year). Eligibility for Best Start grants for anyone over 18 is dependent on already receiving one or more of a range of qualifying benefits. Anyone who is under 18, and is either pregnant or responsible for a child under 1, is automatically eligible regardless of income.

Best Start grants	Reporting period	Number of applications	Total value of awards
Pregnancy & Baby Payment A one-off payment of £642.35 for a first child or £321.20 for a second or later child.	28 Feb 2021 to 28 Feb 2022	45	£11,145
	Total in Orkney since start date 10 Dec 2018	240	£45,945
Early Learning Payment A one-off payment of £267.65 if your child is between 2 and 3½ years old.	28 Feb 2021 to 28 Feb 2022	45	£10,063
	Total in Orkney since start date 29 April 2019	230	£37,813
School Age Payment A one-off payment of £267.65 if your child is around school starting age.	28 Feb 2021 to 28 Feb 2022	55	£9,083
	Total in Orkney since start date 1 June 2019	205	£35,833
Best Start Foods A pre-paid card to buy healthy food for anyone eligible who is pregnant or has a child under 3. Payments range from £18 - £36 every 4 weeks depending on the age of the child.	28 Feb 2021 to 28 Feb 2022	100	£19,003
	Total in Orkney since start date 14 Aug 2019	375	£36,403
Scottish Child Payment A weekly payment to eligible families for every child under 6 years of age. Up to 31 March 2022 the payment was £10, from 1 April 2022 it increased to £20.	15 Feb 2021 to 28 Feb 2022 This new payment began on 15 Feb 2021.	320	£123,670

There are other more specialised payments available to families in Orkney. For example, families with a severely disabled child are eligible for child winter heating assistance, and young people caring for someone with a disability can claim a young carer grant. From 26 July 2021, child disability payment started to replace disability living allowance for children in Scotland.

Scottish Child Payment will be rolled out to all eligible children under 16 by the end of 2022. Meanwhile, bridging payments of £130 per child are available to families eligible for free school meals and will be paid at the beginning of the Easter, summer, October and Christmas holidays.

Orkney Islands Council: Free School Meals

The Scotland-wide rollout of free school meals continued with P4s becoming eligible in August 2021 and P5s in January 2022. The Council issued a reminder to parents in July 2021 to get in touch to find out whether they were eligible for free school meals and associated benefits in the form of clothing grants and cash payments for holiday food. Parents were encouraged to register, even if their children were included in the universal provision, to be sure of receiving the associated benefits.

The Council maintains records of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, but we do not record whether or not eligible pupils take up their entitlement. Nursery pupils are eligible for a free meal if they stay for a whole session (both morning and afternoon) but not if they only attend for one of the sessions (either morning or afternoon).

All Primary 1-4 pupils were eligible for universal free meals throughout the year, and Primary 5 were eligible from January 2022. Primary 6 and above were eligible if in receipt of qualifying benefits. The numbers eligible in total during 2021-22 were:

Nursery (All pupils eligible when attending for a whole day)	463
P1 (All pupils)	194
P2 (All pupils)	222
P3 (All pupils)	207
P4 (All pupils)	234
P5 (All pupils from January 2022)	210
P6	25
P7	19
S1	12
S2	20
S3	20
S4	17
S5	8
S6	2
Total	1,653

Orkney Islands Council: Scottish Welfare Fund

The Scottish Welfare Fund provides assistance to people who are on benefits or a low income. The Council administers the fund on behalf of the Scottish Government and provides two types of grant:

- Crisis Grants provide a safety net in the event of a disaster or emergency, for example a fire or flood, losing all your money, or having to visit a sick child in hospital. You may be given money or another form of support, for example, a voucher, fuel card, travel ticket or furniture.
- Community Care Grants provide help to leave care and live on your own, or to continue living in your own home, for example if you are about to leave care, after being in hospital or in prison, or don't have the money to buy essential household items like a cooker or washing machine.

During 2021-22 the council also distributed COVID-19 Self Isolation Support Grants on behalf of the Scottish Government to workers earned less than the Real Living Wage or were in receipt of a low income benefits, and who experienced reduced earnings as a result of them, their child or the person they were caring for being required to self-isolate.

Data for Scottish Welfare Fund expenditure in 2021-22 was published on 26 July 2022 and can be found on the Scottish Government’s website⁸. Summary statistics for Orkney are:

Community Care Grants 2021-22		Crisis Grants 2021-22	
	Orkney		Orkney
Accepted	95	Accepted	40
Rejected	20	Rejected	55
Total applications	115	Total applications	100
Proportion accepted (%)	81%	Proportion accepted (%)	42%
Total spend this year (£)	£77,324	Total spend this year (£)	£7,315
Average award (£)	£823	Average Award (£)	£174

Orkney Islands Council: Community Learning, Development & Employability

The Council’s Community Learning, Development & Employability Service provides a wide range of services which support people – both directly and via partner agencies – to improve their family’s income and prospects.

Income maximisation

During 2021-22, the Service procured income maximisation support services through CAB Orkney for parents and families within identified priority groups: lone parents, young parents < 25, larger families, families with a child under 1 and families where a family member has a disability. Through this route, 85 parents/families received support to increase their household income.

Support for families

The CLD team have worked in partnership with Homestart and the CLD Youth and Family Learning officer to plan and run an eight week Confidence to Cook Course, focusing on healthy meal preparation, skills development and cooking on a budget.

Orkney Association of Youth Groups, with support from CLD, applied to Youth Scotland for funding to run a partnership project with Orkney Charitable Trust for the Winter Coat Fund. CLD also facilitated a a Pop-up Prom Shop with donations from the community for young people and their families to save them having to purchase a Leavers’ Prom outfit. This opened in May 2022.

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-welfare-fund-statistics-annual-update-2021-22/>

The Council received Scottish Government Youth Work Education Recovery 'Get into Summer' funding to provide free holiday activities to groups of young people. CLD worked in partnership with Outdoor Education to encourage participation by Young Carers and other young people identified through the Children and Families team. 140 young people took part in these activities.

Almost 100% of P7 pupils were offered and issued with Young Scot cards in 2021, offering discounts to cardholders and their families. CLD worked with Kirkwall Bid to promote and encourage more businesses to sign up to offer Young Scot entitlements for young people and their families. Currently eight businesses within Orkney offer Young Scot benefits.

CLD received Mental Health Funding to carry out a project for looked after children and young people to receive additional Young Scot benefits as part of their entitlements through the YS card. This is currently ongoing. Mental Health funding is also supporting a free Friday after-school drop-in (Learn to DJ) in Stromness, in partnership with Action for Children. CLD received external funding which allowed them to offer free after-school activities at The Pickaquoy Centre on Friday afternoons.

National free bus travel is being offered for all young people aged 5 – 22, supported by Young Scot and OIC (Transport). The Council is lobbying for this to be extended to free ferry travel for families living on the ferry-linked isles, in recognition that ferries are their buses.

Following the lifting of lockdown, CLD were able to restart a number of youth clubs again although these are not offered free: there is a small charge to participate. Where we are made aware that the charge is a barrier to attendance, we would take this into consideration.

Orkney Youth Forum, supported by CLD, have been integral in the development of the GUIO website which will allow young people, families and organisations to access the information they need to access services etc.

The CLD team have worked in partnership with OHAC to plan and coordinate the establishment of an identified young parent's group, to have involvement from NHSO partners. This will start in 2022-23.

Skills and employability support for parents

The CLD Employability team has worked during the year with 31 parents within identified groups. Each parent has been allocated a designated Employability Keyworker and supported to co-produce a bespoke Individual Development Plan, working towards identified personal goals etc. Nine parents have gained a recognised and accredited qualification, seven have moved into employment, one parent has increased their working hours and one has gained promotion within their work.

The CLD Employability team worked in partnership with the Yard Nursery to plan and run a 'Funday Sunday' event. This focused on outdoor and family learning opportunities and the promotion of support/information/services available locally.

Over 70 families attended the event. Each family received a pack which contained family learning resources and information about local support organisations including the CLD Employability team.

One of the biggest barriers to entering employment identified through talking to parents and partners was lack of affordable childcare. The CLD Employability team have worked in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association, Business Gateway, the Care Inspectorate and local training providers to plan, coordinate and deliver a Childminding Course for local parents. Ten parents have enrolled and are working towards gaining the qualifications and documentation required to register with the Care Inspectorate and deliver childminding services across Orkney, including the isles.

Community Based Adult Learning (CBAL) funding allowed CLD and Voluntary Action Orkney to jointly run a number of free courses and programmes for learners who would not usually be able to access such opportunities, including Driving Theory, British Sign Language, Yoga, Digital Skills and Money in your Pocket Courses. The Learning Link continued to support adults, including parents, with adult learning and skills development, which helped them build confidence, access training and support positive progression.

Skills and employability support for young people

A Transitions Planning group has been established to ensure young people at risk of not making a positive progression from school are identified and appropriate provision explored at the earliest opportunity (Partners include Skill Development Scotland, OIC Schools, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and Third Sector partners). The CLD Employability team have worked with SEAL to support 4 young people transition from compulsory education through bespoke partnership sessions.

CLD received external Youth Work Education Recovery Funding and Education Recovery Funding, in partnership with SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning), to recruit staff to support young people, mainly in school who were at risk of not attending and/or requiring additional support through participating in additional attainment opportunities via Youth Work Awards and accreditation.

The CLD Employability Support team have worked with 55 young people identified under 'No One Left Behind' as requiring support to make positive progression towards learning/training and employment. This has been through a variety of bespoke and holistic programmes and one-to-one support. Each young person has a designated Employability Keyworker and is supported to co-produce an Individual Development Plan, working towards identified personal goals and targets. Of all those involved:

- 24 young people progressed to Employment, including 5 Apprenticeship opportunities.
- 4 young people made positive progression to Further or Higher Education
- 14 young people gained a recognised qualification.
- 7 young people engaged with a work experience opportunity.

CLD procured additional Employability Keyworker staffing through Employability Orkney – increasing local capacity and support for more vulnerable young people. In addition, 2 bespoke supported employment opportunities were funded.

CLD Employability Team have worked on a number of partnership projects to support young people to progress and develop skills. These include Bike Maintenance Project, YPG Programme, WhoCares Scotland Weekly sessions, Action for Children Impact Arts sessions etc. Driving Theory sessions and funded driving lessons were provided for six individuals, two of which were parents.

The Council has employed 7 young people to Kickstart positions within different services, including school catering, Marine Services, HR, Digital Communications and Community Learning and Development.

Digital inclusion

The CLD team managed and coordinated the local roll out of the various strands of the Connecting Scotland Scheme, securing 532 laptops and other digital devices and 475 mifi's for individuals and families in Orkney across 45 organisations. The service has applied for and delivered 136 devices and mifi devices to eligible individuals/families across Orkney. Including on the isles. CLD have offered ongoing support to ensure individuals have the skills and networks to set up and use their devices effectively and safely. Each device has been distributed with a pack from Trading Standards/ Orkney SCAM Action Group (OSAG) with advice on internet safety etc.

The CLD Employability team worked with The Learning Lab to deliver a 6-week Digital Literacies Course. Four people attended the course and completed an Internet Safety qualification through the Digital College.

The Learning Link (TLL) provided support and guidance setting up and using the new devices in small groups and one-to-one training, including online safety. TLL offer support for any adult who wants to improve their digital skills and all volunteer tutors were trained as Digital Champions to be able to offer extended support.

Orkney Islands Council: In School Counselling

A part-time in-school counselling service has been available for some time in Orkney's senior secondary schools. During 2021-22, Scottish Government funding of £166,000 was allocated to Orkney schools to make counselling available for all children and young people aged ten and over. The new in-house service saw the appointment of three full-time permanent school counsellor posts, together with part-time support staff.

During 2021-22, the team offered all pupils at Kirkwall Grammar School and Stromness Academy access to In School Counselling, both face to face and online if required through periods of isolating. Counsellors flagged up issues to Guidance Staff where poverty was a current or newly experienced issue. Additional support to pupils included referrals to the FoodBank and additional access to mobile data when it was available.

The counselling team has become aware of the rising cost of living towards the end of the reporting period, leading to families who were previously coping financially not doing so now. Examples include pupils reporting poor sleep due to less food available at home. The team has detected a real sense of hidden poverty among previously better-off households, where single parents work in relatively well paid roles.

With regard to priority groups, families with 3+ children represent approximately 20% of referrals. Children and young people living with lone parents represent approximately 20%, and blended families, where a child lives with a lone parent and a step parent, are approximately 15%. Families with a disability are primarily those living with siblings with diagnosed and/or undiagnosed neurodivergent conditions.

Parental separation and difficulties caused by family breakdown are key issues. There has been a noticeable increase in young people moving to the other parent's home, or to stay with grandparents, parent and step parent etc following reported abuse and neglect. Out of 71 new referrals at KGS in the academic year, 16 involved current and/or historic abuse, domestic abuse or neglect.

NHS Orkney: Health Visiting

NHS Orkney's Health Visitor team delivers many of the national initiatives that benefit young families locally, for example:

- Families are encouraged to take up Best Start Grants when eligible.
- A Baby Box – for all parents – is delivered to their home around 34 weeks gestation. This contains everything needed for a new baby including clothing, books, toys, a new mattress, thermometer, baby-carrying sling and more.
- Free multivitamins are distributed by local midwives to all pregnant women.
- Free Vitamin D is distributed by the local health visiting team to all breastfeeding mothers, and also to all breastfed babies and children aged 1.

Extra support is provided to new mothers to enable breastfeeding for longer. There has been a big investment in this locally, supported through the Programme for Government. NHS Orkney has developed a peer support programme that is supporting local women with feeding their baby. 63% of women who have given birth since March 2022 have taken one-to-one support from this service, and over 70 women have benefited from group support. Women have reported that it has enabled them to keep breastfeeding.

We know that babies born to mothers living in poverty are less likely to be breastfed⁹. We know these families are at higher risk of mortality, are more likely to be admitted to hospital and have higher incidences of mental health problems. Breastfeeding can't prevent all these issues but it reduces sudden infant death by more than a third and it has benefits for intelligence and protection against obesity and diabetes. By supporting Orkney women to breastfeed their babies, we will

⁹ <https://ukbreastfeedingtrends.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/open-letter-uk-response-to-lancet-updated7.pdf>

hopefully go some way to reducing the health disadvantages that children born into poverty locally have across their lifespan.

Food security is an issue that affects families in Orkney. Purchasing formula milk for a baby aged 2-3 months old costs between £27 and £57 per calendar month. The costs rise as the baby gets older and consumes more milk, and a formula fed baby should take solely formula for the first 6 months of life and continue until 1 year old. (First Steps Nutrition, 2019).

The Health Visitors have been providing low cost (or no cost) baby massage classes. These classes have been provided on both Orkney mainland and the isles and ensure access to a parent and child activity that promotes bonding and relationships and encourages responsive relationships, which are so important to the health and wellbeing of children. Baby massage is an evidence-based intervention that has been shown to benefit low maternal mood¹⁰, and activities such as this are often not accessed by our poorer citizens due to prohibitive costs.

NHS Orkney: Money Counts

'Worrying About Money?' cash first referral leaflets are co-designed as straightforward resources for people facing money worries or financial crises, and their support workers, to quickly see which local agencies are best placed to help with available cash first options. The aim of this work is to reduce the need for charitable food aid by helping people access any existing financial entitlements and advice on income maximisation as a cash first response to food insecurity. Since June 2020, the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) has collaborated with local stakeholders to publish leaflets covering over 70 local authorities in Scotland, England and Wales.

Money Counts was originally developed by the Highland Money Counts Partnership, who kindly gave permission for its adoption and adaption for delivery in Orkney. Adoption and adaptation was completed collaboratively by Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Social Security Scotland, NHS Orkney Public Health and other community partners.

A leaflet and poster for Orkney were launched in August 2021 and can be downloaded [here](#). Money Counts training in Orkney commenced in February-March 2022 and helps frontline workers and volunteers to best use the leaflet to support people struggling with money worries or financial crisis.

During February and March 2022, eight training sessions were delivered to 50 participants who represented a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations in Orkney. Initial evaluation suggests that the training has increased the confidence of the participants in engaging with conversations about money worries and supported the knowledge and use of the 'Worrying About Money?' leaflet across organisations in Orkney. Due to the level of interest in this training, more sessions have been planned for delivery in 2022-23.

¹⁰ <https://www.communitypractitioner.co.uk/resources/2019/06/systematic-review-effectiveness-infant-massage-programmes-improving-mother-and>

Developing a Child Poverty Strategy for Orkney

Orkney's Child Poverty Task Force has now produced four Local Child Poverty Action Reports, for 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. A shortcoming noted in successive LCPARs has been the absence of a coherent strategic framework for the joint planning and implementation of future action to combat child poverty, and the monitoring and reporting of progress. Consequently, during 2021-22, the Child Poverty Task Force developed a Child Poverty Strategy for Orkney, with a planning period of 2022-2026. This matches the planning period of the second national child poverty delivery plan, Best Start Bright Futures.

Orkney's Child Poverty Strategy is linked with our Children's Services Plan 2021-2023 through the latter's key priority of Overcoming Disadvantage. This theme sets our child poverty work in the overall context of barriers which may prevent a child getting the best start in life, but which can be overcome with appropriate intervention.

Our strategy describes the impact of poverty on children and shows how the experience of Orkney's children and families compares with Scotland. It summarises the output to date from the "Making Ends Meet" consultation and considers what we can do locally to meet the needs identified by the survey. The strategy was adopted by the Orkney Partnership Board on 29 June 2022, and all partners made a commitment to do everything they can to combat child poverty in Orkney.

Orkney's strategy incorporates elements of the Scottish Government's national strategy for child poverty, adapted for local circumstances. The national framework has three themes: Pockets, Prospects and Places. To these, Orkney has added Prevention and Priorities.

Pockets aims to maximise the financial resources of families on low incomes.

Prospects aims to improve the life chances of children and young people.

Places aims to improve housing and regenerate disadvantaged communities.

Prevention aims to prevent the long-term persistence of poverty.

Priorities aims to focus attention on especially vulnerable children and families.

The Task Force considered each of these policy drivers in detail and developed a plan for action with five big ambitions to combat child poverty in Orkney:

Pockets Every family can make ends meet	Prospects Every child has a good start in life	Places Every family has a sustainable home	Prevention Future generations can escape from poverty	Priorities No child is left behind
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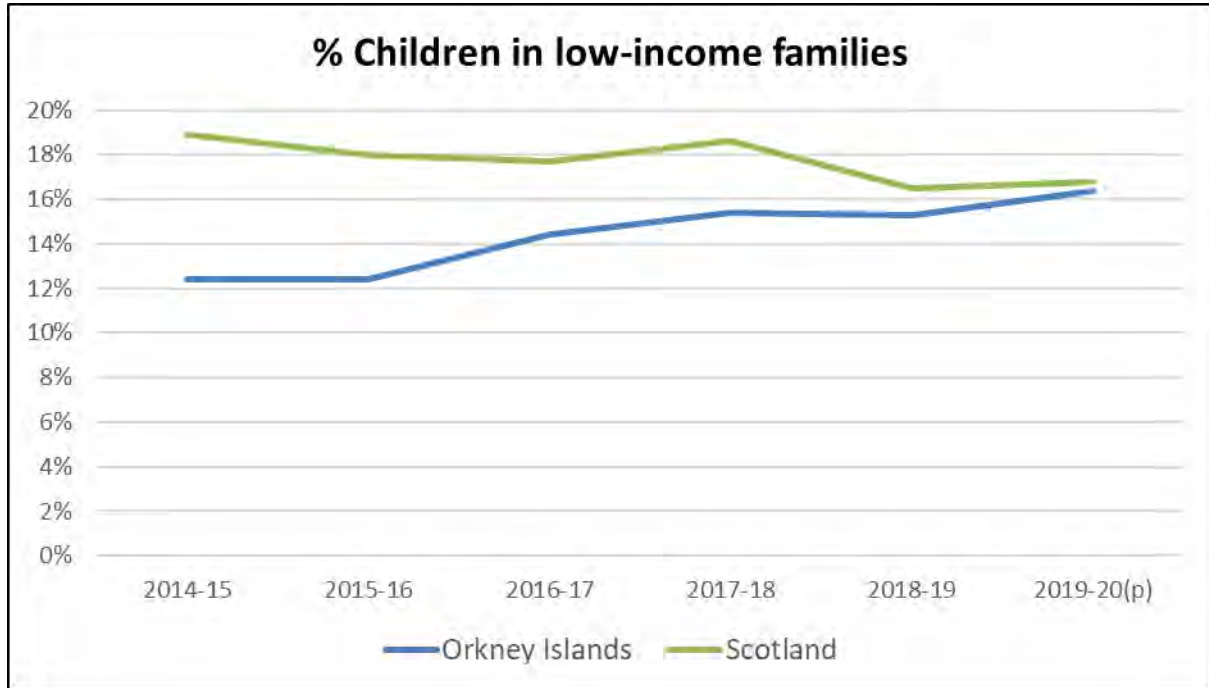
Our outline action plan sets out the actions we will take to meet immediate need and to address the longer term prevention of child poverty in Orkney.

Outline action plan for 2022-26

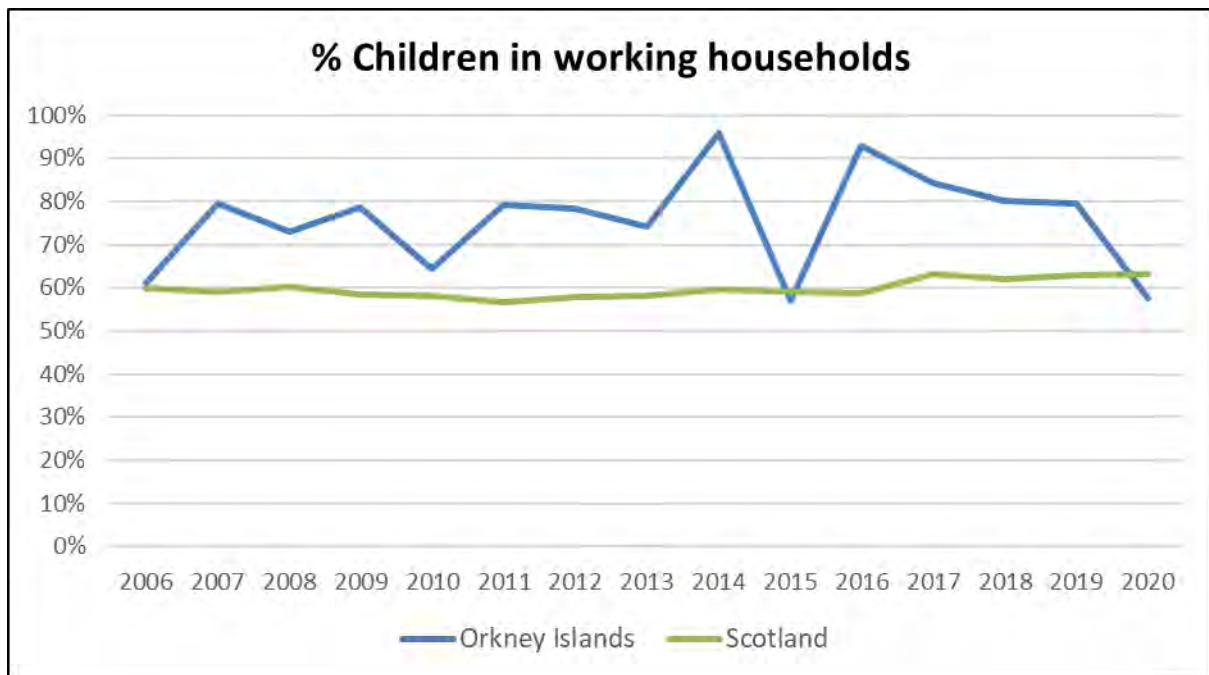
Our target outcomes	Short term actions 2022-23	Medium 2022-25	Long term 2022-26
Pockets Every family can make ends meet	Raise awareness of entitlements and maximise family incomes		
	Adopt a 'one stop shop' approach to streamline access to services and new ways to engage		
	Explore with Scottish Government the scope for piloting Minimum Income Guarantee in Orkney		
Prospects Every child has a good start in life	Remove barriers to participation in school trips and experiences		
	Improve take-up of free school meals and associated benefits		
	Remove barriers to participation in family leisure/holiday activities		
Places Every family has a sustainable home	Improve the energy efficiency of new/existing housing in the private and social rented sectors		
	Extend more employment opportunities to the isles		
	Explore options to apply the benefits from wind power developments to reduce home energy costs		
Prevention Future generations can escape from poverty	Promote good employment practice, flexibility and fair pay, and their benefits to employers		
	Increase the capacity of Orkney's advisory agencies		
	Explore people-centred strategies for local development such as Community Wealth Building		
Priorities No child is left behind	Make inter-island ferry travel affordable to children and families on the ferry-linked isles		
	Improve the availability and affordability of wraparound childcare/after-school provision		
	Prioritise early financial support for families at risk, to avert crisis and family breakdown		

Appendix 1 – Child poverty data

These graphs show how Orkney compares to the Scottish average for indicators which help our understanding of child poverty. They are extracted from the Scottish Government’s local child poverty dashboard¹¹, most recently updated in January 2022. The original source of each data set is noted under the relevant graph.

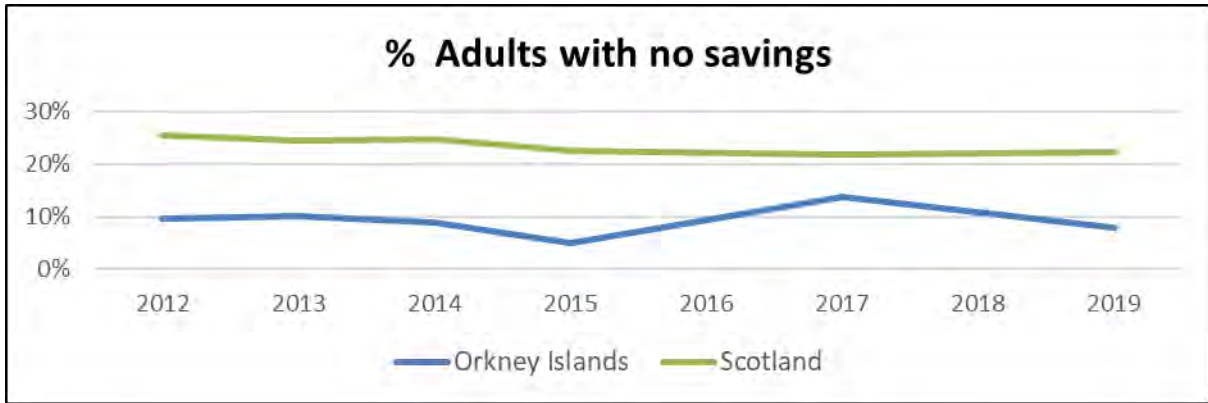


Source: DWP/HMRC children in low-income families local measure (before housing costs)

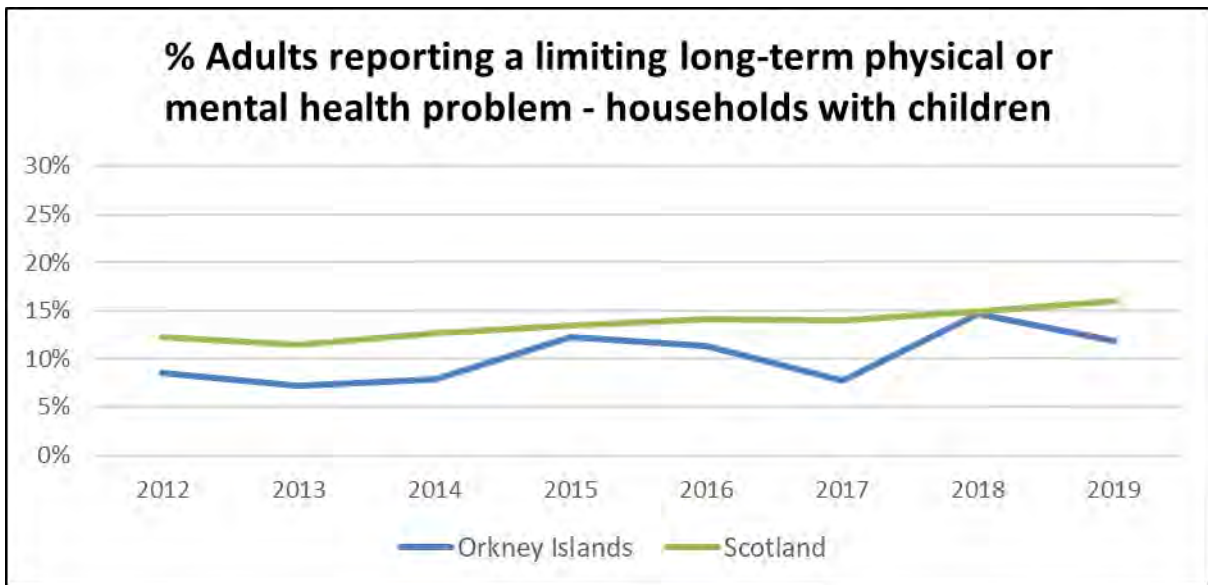


Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, household economic activity status

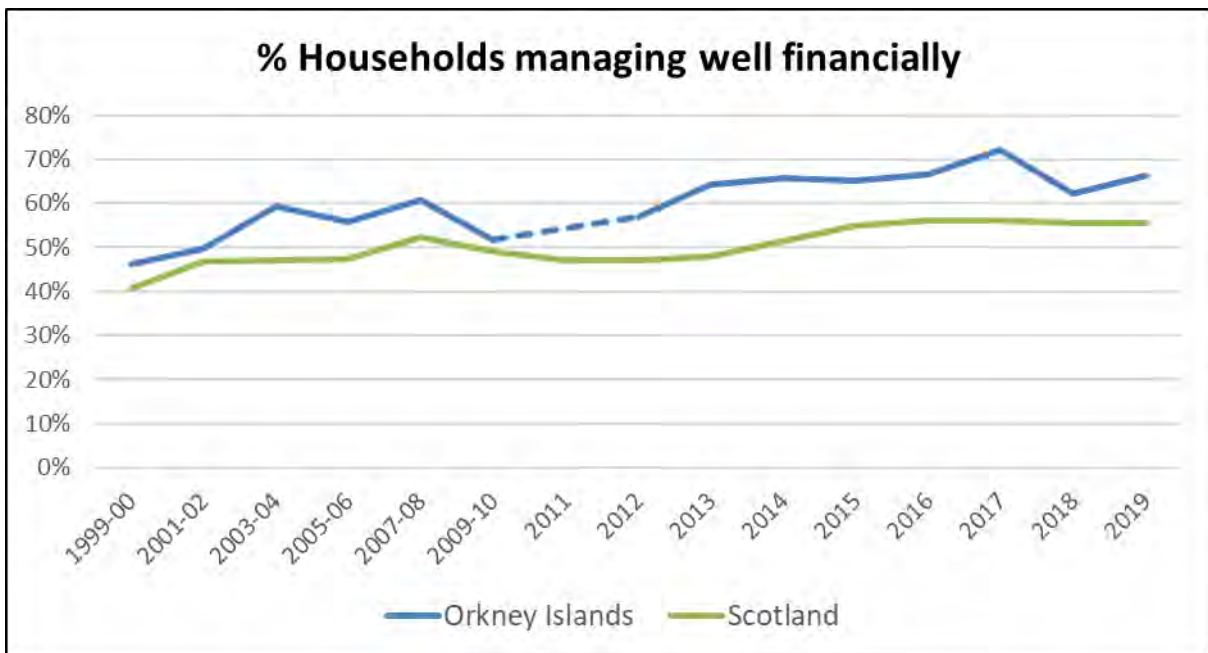
¹¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-child-poverty-statistics-january-2022/>



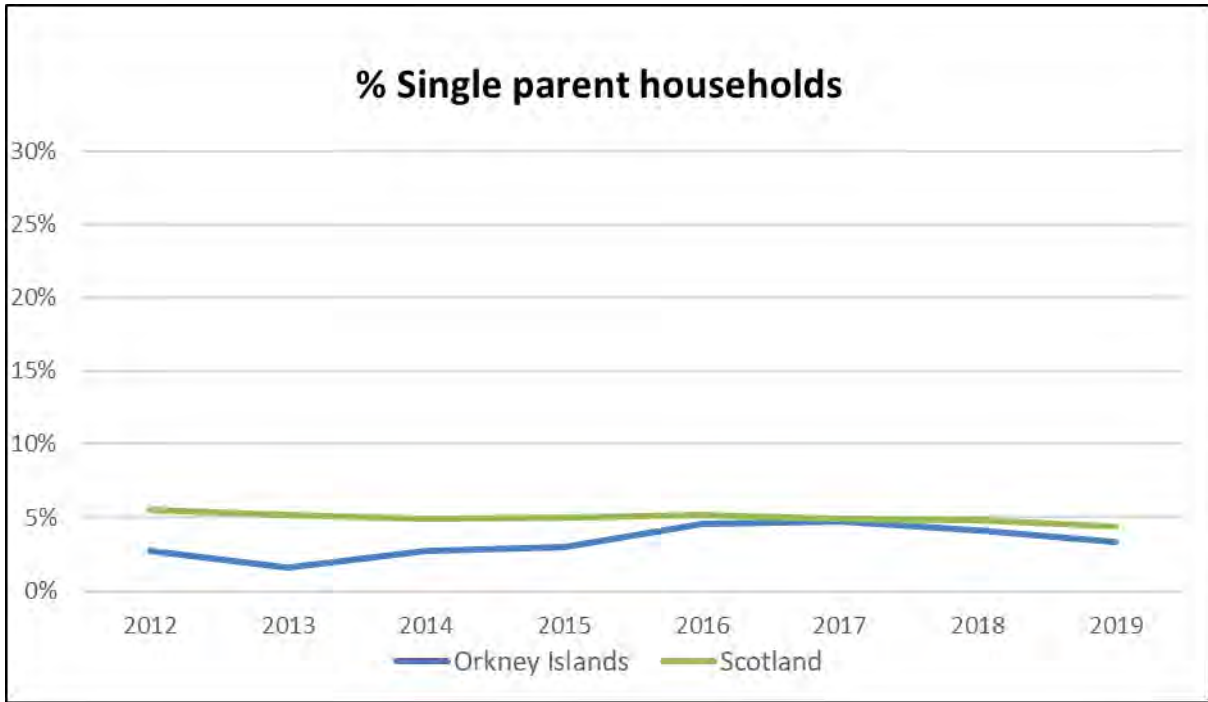
Source: Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey - Adults dataset



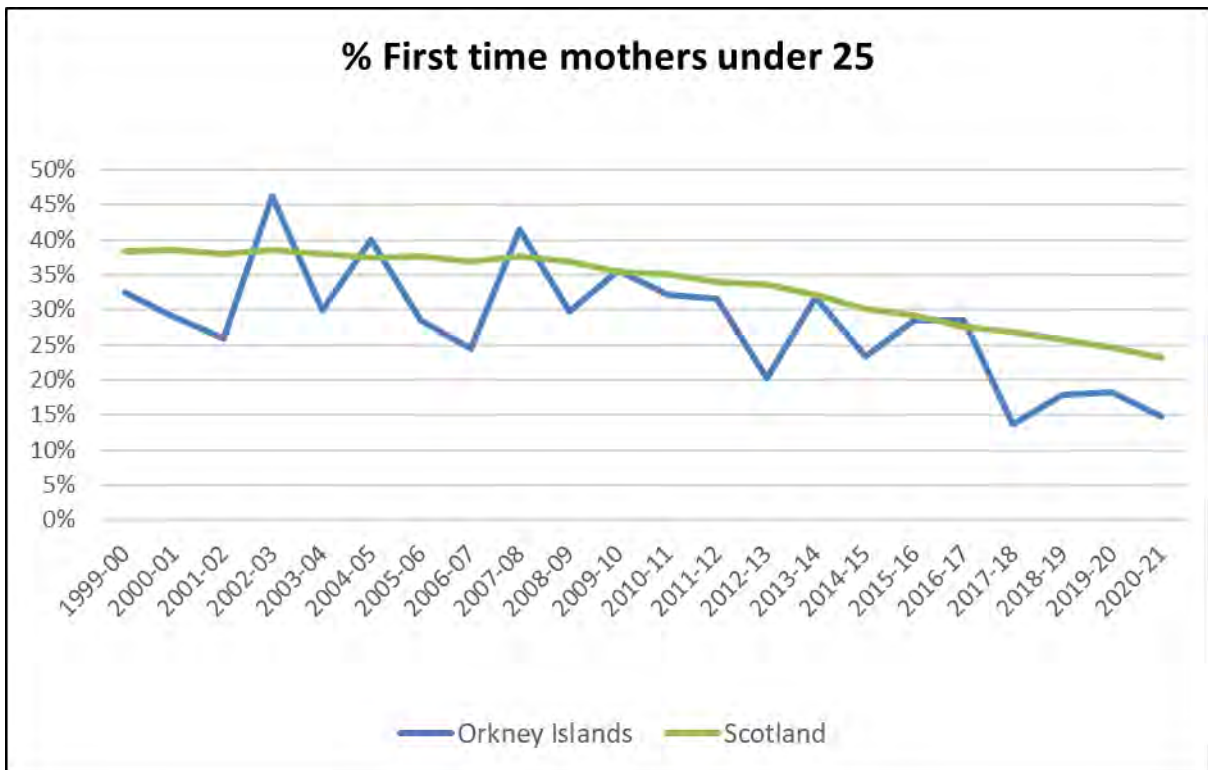
Source: Scottish Government, Scottish Surveys Core Questions



Source: Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey - Adults dataset




Source: Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey





Source: Public Health Scotland, Scottish Morbidity Record 02

Appendix 2 – Child health indicators

ScotPHO Health indicator	Reporting period	Orkney	Scotland	
Healthy birth weight 3 year rolling average percentage	2018-19 to 2020-21	74.5	84.2	
Child healthy weight in Primary 1 Percentage whose BMI is within the healthy reference range for their age and sex	2019-20	77.2	76.2	
Drug-related hospital admissions, age 11-25 3 year rolling average age/sex standardised rate per 100,000	2018-18 to 2019-20	120.6	162.2	
Alcohol-related hospital admissions, age 11-25 3 year rolling average age/sex standardised rate per 100,000	2018-19 to 2020-21	477.8	270.0	
Scottish Housing Quality Standard Households with children in homes that fail the SHQS, 3 year rolling average %	2015-17	35.0	38.0	
Teenage pregnancies 3 year rolling average per 1000 females age 15-19	2017-19	12.3	29.2	
Child dental health in Primary 1 Percentage of P1 children showing no obvious signs of tooth decay	2019-20	85.0	72.4	

 Orkney doing better than Scotland

 No significant difference to Scotland

 Orkney doing worse than Scotland