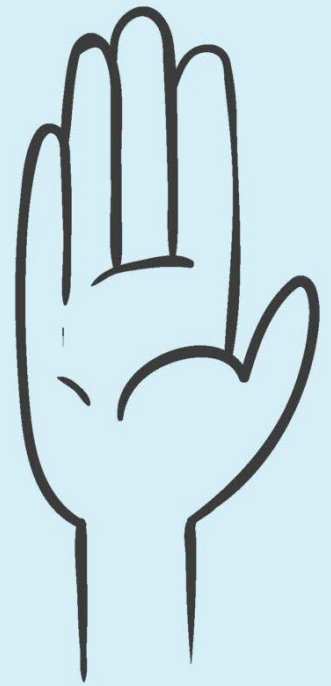


**“We grow up
loved, safe
and respected
so that we
realise our full
potential”**



Orkney's vision for all children and young people

**“The most important thing for me as
a young person who has been through
the care system is to be listened to”**

**“We were given a safe space
to be heard about issues
that matter to us...”**
Orkney Youth Forum Chair

**“Our children and young people
are the future of our communities
and their strength of voice in
shaping our services is invaluable”**
Chair of Orkney's Integration Joint Board

Orkney Children’s Services Plan

2023 - 2026

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Introduction

The guidance for the planning of children's services in Scotland specifies that Children's Services Plans must be prepared with a view to:

- safeguarding, supporting, and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people.
- ensuring any action to meet needs (including prevention) is taken at the earliest appropriate time.
- integrating services from the point of view of recipients.
- achieving the best use of available resources.

While overall responsibility for children's services planning rests with Orkney Islands Council (the local authority) and NHS Orkney (the relevant health board), the practice, ongoing expectation, and commitment is to collaboration with the whole community.

Orkney's Community Planning Partnership shared mission is: Working together for a better Orkney. With this foundation in mind, the Children's Services Strategic Plan has been prepared by the Orkney Children's Services Strategic Partnership (OCSSP; there is more about the OCSSP in section 4).

In preparing the plan, it is fully recognised that only with the help and support of the Community Planning Partnership and the wider Orkney community, as well as that of children, young people, and their families can the aspirations of the plan be fully realised.

**Orkney Children's
Services Strategic
Partnership**



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Summary of our Plan

Our Vision

- Children and young people grow up loved, safe, and respected, so that they can realise their full potential.

Our Priorities

- Child Protection
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Involving Young People
- Reducing poverty and disadvantage

Our Commitments

- Keeping our children safe
- Implementing 'The Promise'
- Incorporating UNCRC and human rights into all areas of our work
- Achieving a positive destination for all our young people



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Our Priorities

Child Protection

It is everyone's responsibility to make sure that children and young people are safe and protected from harm. While most young people in Orkney, like the rest of Scotland, grow up in safe and loving households, unfortunately, this is not always the case and it is important for everyone to be alert to signs of abuse and to respond appropriately to make sure that young people and their families get the help and support they need, when they need it.

In 2020, inspectors found the Children's Services Partners in Orkney (Police, Education, Social Work, Health Services, and voluntary organisations) to be failing in their responsibilities to ensure that children were protected. Professionals across those agencies did not always recognise when a child or young person may be at risk, organisations did not work together as well as they should and many of the basic structures to support and protect young people were not in place.

Since that time, the inspectors have been back in Orkney twice to make sure that progress is being made. On both occasions they have found that practices have continued to improve but report that there is still much to do.

We have an established improvement plan that helps all agencies to focus on the things we need to do to get it right for young people. We are also working on our policies and procedures to bring them into line with Scotland's national child protection guidance. All areas across Scotland are working on this just now.

Orkney is no different to other parts of the country in that young people, at times, need protection due to issues of domestic abuse at home, or when their parents are struggling with drug or alcohol issues or mental health problems. Some young people are physically or sexually abused by a parent or an adult they know well and some experience neglect. At such times, it is important that young people can be supported and helped to make sure that the abuse stops and that they are supported moving forward.

Our aim is to ensure that when young people need protection, our response, and the support we provide, is quick and effective. We also aim to provide early supports to children and young people, parents, families and our communities, to ensure capacity building where we assess it is required.

With reference to child protection, young people said... it would be helpful if we knew more about child protection procedures, so we know what to do if we feel we are being abused or know it might be happening to our friends



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Mental Health and Wellbeing

A growing number of young people across Orkney are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing. The full impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and the lockdown periods, where young people missed out on normal activities with other young people, is still not fully known. In addition, some young people are having to contend with the stress and strain of exams; issues of bullying which can happen face to face or online; issues of sexuality or gender as they grow and develop; and many other issues from the cost-of-living crisis to the unstable global environment.

The transition back to school for children and young people with neurodiversity was particularly difficult, as the change from Learning without social demands to readjusting to the demands of the school day was very stressful to a number of young people. This led to the creation of guidance for schools supporting vulnerable children and young people to make a successful transition back to school education.

Orkney has experienced a rise in the numbers of young people requiring support with their mental health and wellbeing. Recently the community has been significantly affected by the death of young people by suicide. Third sector organisations who provide supports and counselling to young people have growing waiting lists and our schools counselling service and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service are both experiencing increased demand.

Our engagement with young people tells us that mental health and wellbeing is the single most important issue for them. As a Children's Services Partnership, we have already provided additional funding for supports to young people; we have grown our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service resource considerably, progressing from two to twelve members of staff with a further two posts to be filled; and taken our school counselling service in house.

At present we employ two full time counsellors and continue to try to successfully recruit to the one vacant post in 2022, we established a Suicide Prevention Task Force and during this time, we have worked with partners, including Community Learning, Development & Employability, to provide more early intervention activities and opportunities.



The Mental Health Guidance for Orkney Education Staff – A Framework to support Children's and young people's Emotional Wellbeing was created. It focuses on universal approaches to wellbeing for all young people as well as drawing the attention to more targeted approaches for vulnerable young people. Following a launch to all schools a training needs analysis was undertaken to support implementation.

The See Me See Change Programme was introduced to the mainland secondary's schools and Junior High's in order to reduce stigma around mental health issues and build confidence across staff and pupils in talking about mental health.

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Together all the digital mental health support platform was recommissioned with an increased age band. Now all 16-31 years olds can access mental health support online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from any area within Orkney.

Despite the work to date, we know there is much more to do.

With reference to mental health and wellbeing, young people said... We would like our community to have a better understanding and awareness of children and young people's mental health. We would also like to know where to access support wherever you are in Orkney. It would be good to be able to meet with organisations to discuss stigma and discrimination, mental health awareness, as well as be able to access support and support guides so individuals can improve their own mental health. We also think that greater use could be made of social prescribing, as well as getting help from other people such as friends, family, professionals, a trusted adult, NHS etc. Where there are limited things to do, taking risks with drink, drugs, cars and sex can feel like the only option

Involving Children and Young People

Before the Pandemic, Orkney's Children's Services Partnership had built up strong links with children and young people to help shape and plan services and supports. Unfortunately, much of this work was paused during the COVID 19 pandemic period. Some of the great work that had been done before the pandemic has already resumed. For example, the Orkney Youth Conference was held in March of this year, the first time since 2019.

In collaboration with young people, we were able to launch the Growing Up in Orkney website during the pandemic and have recently established a Care Experienced Young People's Board. Our Community Learning, Development & Employability Services have increased coordination and activity to ensure inclusion of representative voices of young people, including the return of the Orkney Youth Conference, Young Islanders, support to our local MSYP's, with the July 2023 Scottish Youth Parliament Sitting taking place in Orkney, and the creation of a local employability lived experience panel who are influencing and informing the work of the Local Employability Partnership.



In addition, some young people are now actively engaged in work around our suicide prevention agenda and are involved in the development of a support app and working with

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NHS and Council Communications Teams in mental health awareness campaigns. Schools across Orkney have been trained in 'Talking Mats' and other non-verbal approaches to capturing the 'voice' of the child' in inclusive ways for all children and young people.

The Children's Services Partnership is committed to strengthening even further the role and voice of children and young people in developing services and supports that best meet their needs.

With reference to involving children and young people, young people said... It would be good if the wider community knew more about UNCRC and that they understood that everyone has these rights and it's their (the community's) responsibility to set a standard to uphold those rights

Reducing Poverty and Disadvantage

The current cost of living crisis is affecting families and, when families are struggling financially, this has a big impact on the lives of children and young people. The number of children living in poverty in Orkney is lower than some areas of Scotland but is growing. This means that some children and young people are going hungry at times and living in cold houses in the winter. These hardships can have a lasting impact on children and young people's growth and development, make it harder to learn and to study and can cause health issues too.

Reducing the number of young people living in poverty means supporting things that will put money in the pockets of parents. As such, the Children's Services Partnership has supported the Child Poverty Action Plan over the last few years and will continue to look at ways to better support children, young people and their families.

There are a number of other things which can disadvantage some young people more than others. Young people who are, or have been, care experienced, for example, do not always have the support of family when growing up and becoming adults. Their chances of further and higher education, good housing and job prospects can, sometimes, be affected. It is important that care experienced young people have the additional help and support they need.

Young people living in Orkney can experience some disadvantages due to our geography. Young people living on our ferry-linked isles travel to, and live on, the Orkney mainland to attend secondary schools. Starting secondary school can be a challenging time for young people and the need to be away from home and family can make this even harder. The work of our Education Services to make the transition as



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easy as possible, and our Halls of Residence as homely as possible, continues to be a big priority.

Some young people who need support with their speech and language development or require autism assessments can wait a significant amount of time. This is something we need to improve upon. Some children and young people with disabilities or health conditions, at times, require leaving Orkney to receive treatments and inputs from specialists on the Scottish mainland. Sometimes this is because we don't have that specialist support available on the island – we are simply too small a population to have a specialist in everything. We will, however, continue to explore opportunities to bring these specialists here whenever that is possible. Orkney needs to develop and implement an autism Strategy to ensure that children, young people and their families receive appropriate services within the community throughout the life cycle.

With reference to reducing poverty and disadvantage, young people said... More needs to be done on reducing the stigma of young people in poverty or accessing support. e.g. young people not having P.E kit, being hungry. Young people need to know which places can provide support to them and their families. It needs to be non-discriminatory for them to access this support.

Maybe it works better if poverty alleviation is in disguise, e.g. support being accessed by all rather than in target groups?

More could be done around: promoting the use of discounts etc available in Orkney ie: Young Scot Card; looking at transport for example additional buses in areas which don't have regular services so the free bus travel is more accessible; also the ferries, so that free transport is accessible for all to access services when they need to.

There needs to be more work experience from a younger age, this way young people from a younger age get the chance to try practical tasks and get used to what being in employment is like as well as know that there are other opportunities out there.

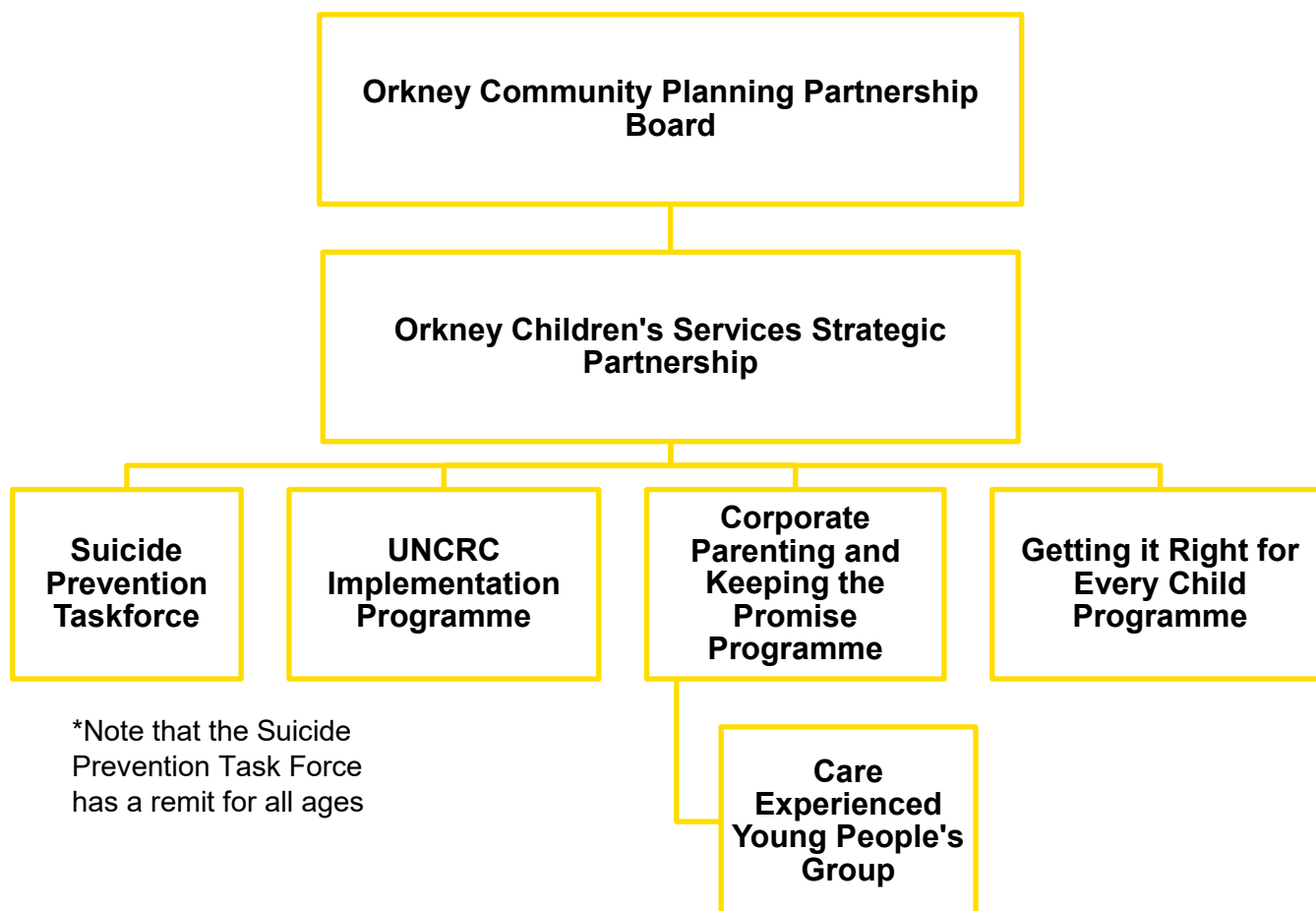
There needs to be more: opportunities for young people to access career advice; funding available to young people to attend courses etc; access to independent living skills and well-being support etc as it is felt that not all of this can be covered in school

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The Children's Services Planning Structure

The structures to support the work of Children's Services in Orkney have recently been reviewed, and the structure chart below represents the new arrangements.



Each group meet independently, with the chair from each group, along with representatives from the key services and agencies across the Children's Service Sector, meeting each quarter as the Orkney Children's Services Strategic Partnership (OCSSP) to:

- Support collaborative planning
- Monitor progress with Children's Service Plan
- Provide quality assurance
- Prepare progress reports and updates as required

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Orkney Context

Strengths

- Orkney's small size (see [Population](#)) provides a unique opportunity for us to work together, as a partnership, to achieve our vision that all children and young people here grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential.
- It is easier in Orkney to develop strong relationships with colleagues across organisations, so that we can all work together to support our children and young people.
- We, as a community, have strong collaboration across agencies, public services, third sector and voluntary to support those in need of support.

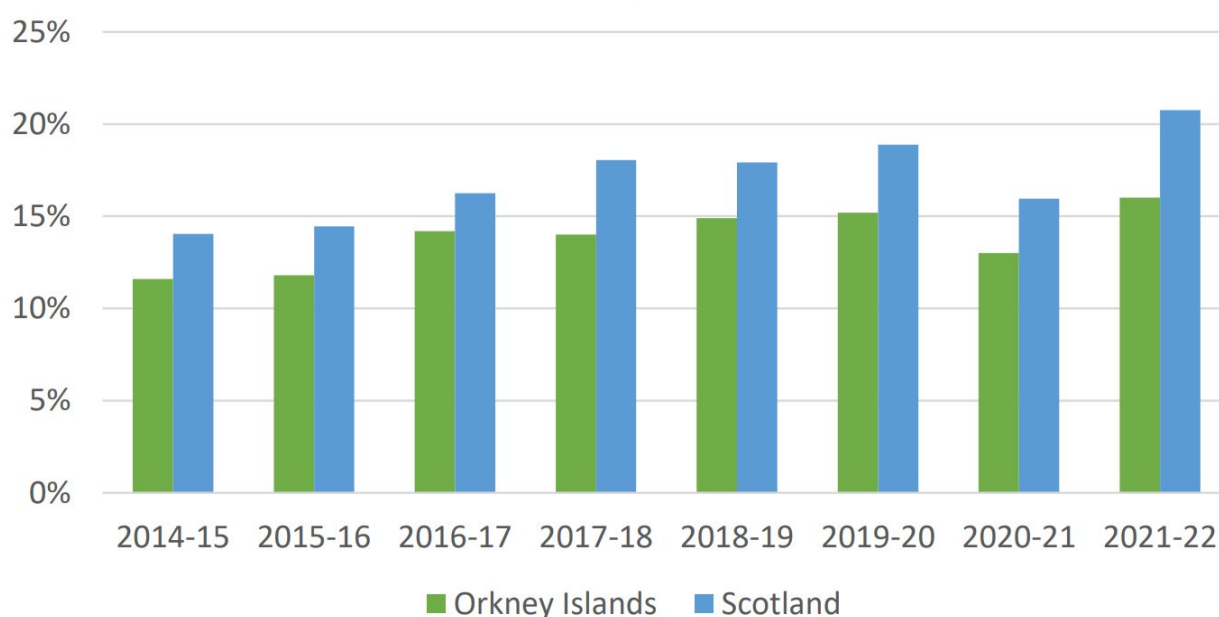
Challenges

- There are workforce challenges across all services, but this presents an opportunity for us to work closer together and in creative ways that we might not have previously tried.
- Our geographical spread can make it difficult to have equality of access to services.
- Our remoteness can present additional challenge for those experiencing isolation or social exclusion within the community.

Poverty

'There is a perception that Orkney is an idyllic place to live and bring up children, and for many it is. However, we cannot ignore evidence of an undercurrent of poverty in our islands. It may be less visible than in other areas, but it exists and is rising' ([Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022 to 2026](#))

Percentage of children in Scotland and Orkney living in relative poverty



Source: Orkney Local Child Poverty Action Report 2022-23

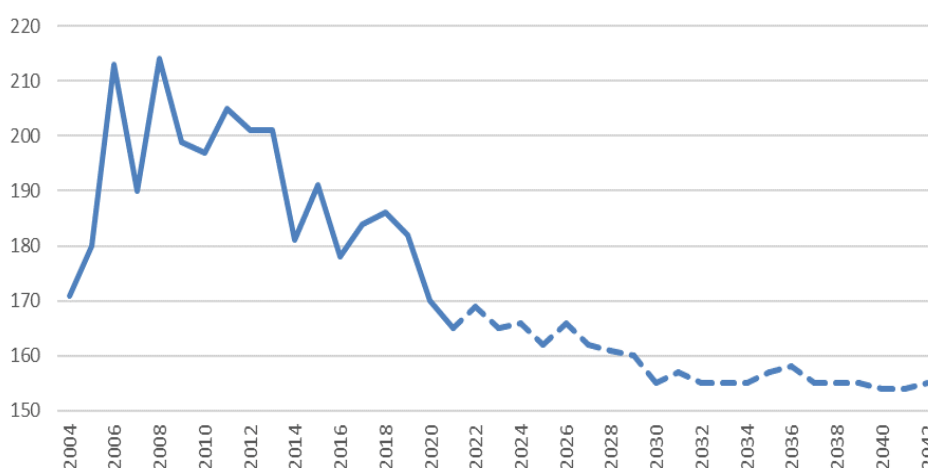
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Population

Isles populations by age group (estimated at January 2021)			
Age Group	Mainland and linked south isles	Ferry-linked isles	Orkney Total
0 - 15	3,189	393	3,582
16 – 59	10,525	1,250	11,775
60 - 74	3,781	700	4,481
75+	2,032	400	2,432
Total	19,527	2,743	22,270

Births by Year 2004 to 2042



The drop and projected drop in the number of children in Orkney is reflected in school rolls and the school roll forecasts for Orkney's primary and secondary schools. The actual number on roll continues to be balanced however, to some extent by, inward migration. The net impact is short term upturn in secondary numbers and the overall nursery/school population remaining at around 3000 for planning purposes.

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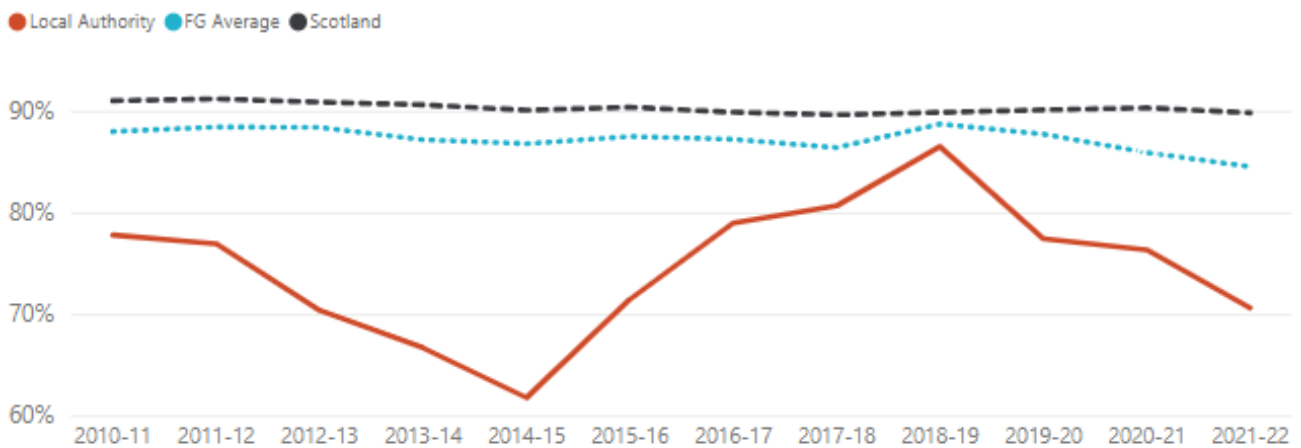
Performance

A small number of the performance measures that are included in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) are included here to assist with monitoring overall success.

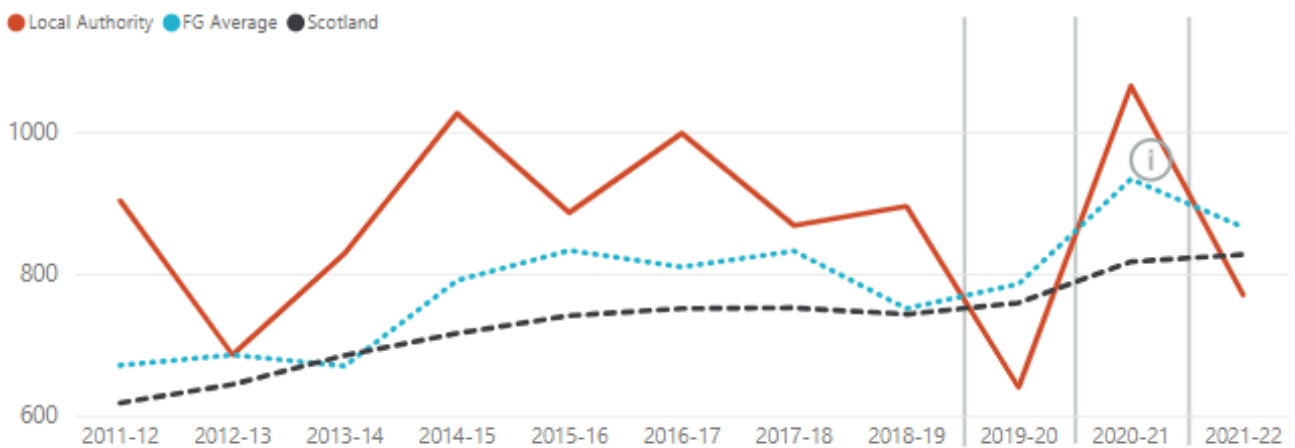
The trend data included for reference also shows the average performance for Scotland and that of the 'family group' of local authorities that Orkney sits within.

Each indicator helps set the aims and ambitions of the plan in the context of what it means to grow up in Orkney.

CHN09 - Proportion of children being looked after in the community



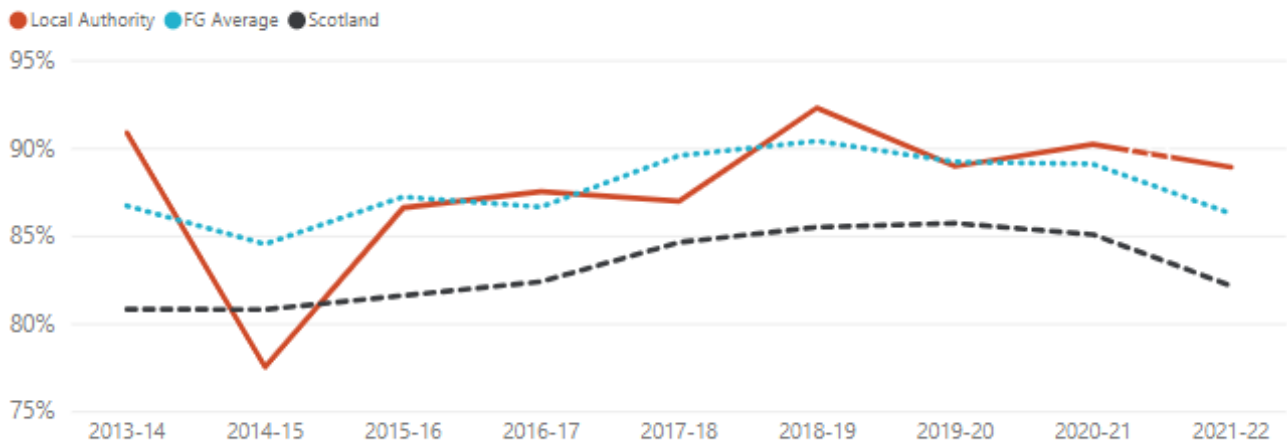
CHN12c - Average Total Tariff SIMD Quintile 2



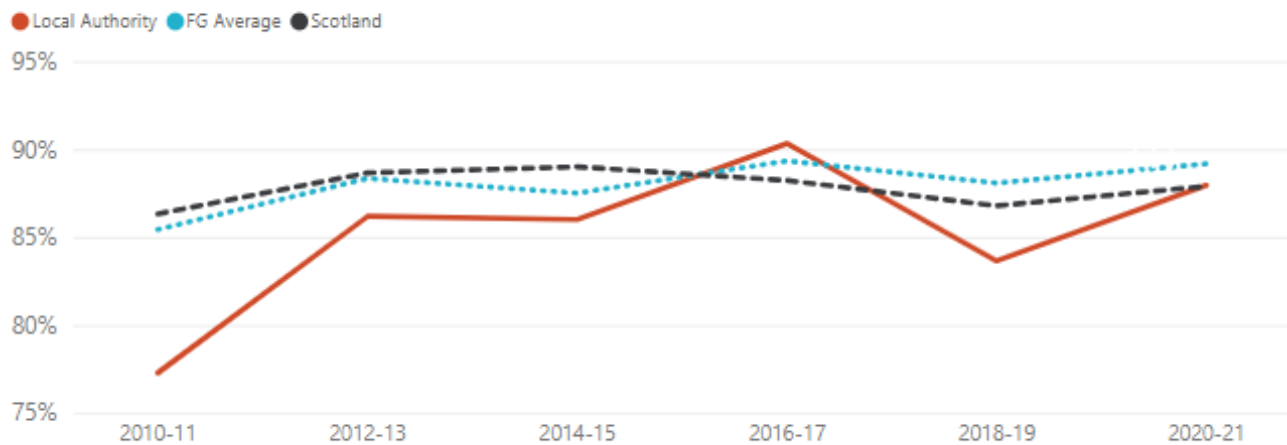
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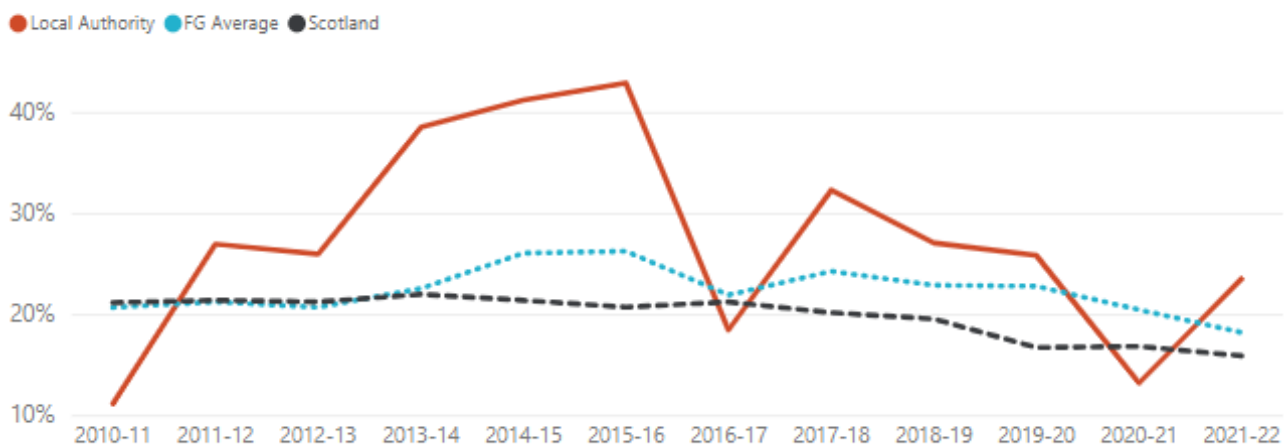
CHN17 - Proportion of Children meeting developmental milestones



CHN19b - School attendance rates (per 100 'looked after pupils')



CHN23 - Proportion of LAC with more than 1 placement in the last year

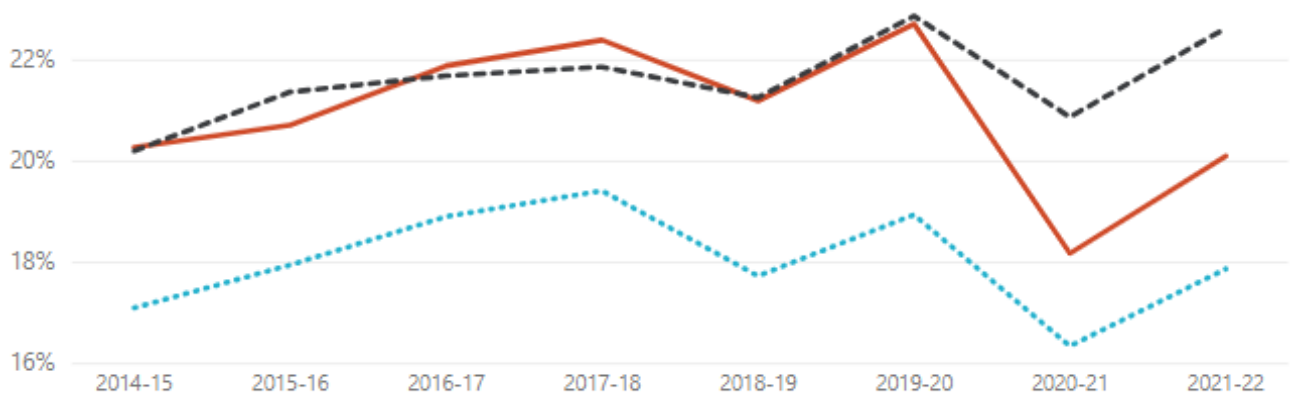


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CHN24 - Proportion of Children Living in Poverty (After Housing Costs)

Local Authority FG Average Scotland



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Our Action Plan

The tables (6.1-6.4) outline what we will do over the course of the first year of the plan. There is a focus on year one, in recognition of the need to review and update the plan annually. Each action we plan to take is aimed at improving things in at least one of the priority areas. However, we remain mindful of the fact that actions can and will have positive consequential impact across more than one priority area.

Our Vision

- Children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected, so that they can realise their full potential

Our Priorities

- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Child Protection
- Involving Young People
- Reducing Poverty and Disadvantage

Our Commitments

- Keeping Our Children Safe
- Implementing the Promise
- Incorporating UNRC
- Achieving a Positive Destination for All

Our People, Our Place

- Working Together for a Better Orkney

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6.1 Child Protection

What will we do?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will it be done by?	Outcome measure
Review all policies and procedures in line with the National Child Protection Guidance	All agencies will work together to bring our procedures in line with the National Guidance, ensuring that these can be delivered to meet the needs of Orkney.	The Quality Assurance Sub-Group of the Public Protection Committee	September 2024	New multi-agency child protection procedure available
Ensure that all professionals and support staff working with young people are alert to issues of neglect and know what to do	Embed specific 'Neglect training into the Public Protection calendar	Public Protection Learning and Development Officer	March 2024	Training sessions on the issue of neglect will have been delivered to practitioners across organisations
Raise awareness of sexual exploitation amongst young people	Provide training and increase publicity around sexual exploitation of young people	Police Scotland CLDE	June 2024	Training schedule created Sessions delivered Media posts created and viewed Evaluation and feedback

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6.2 Mental Health and Wellbeing

What will we do?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will it be done by?	Outcome measure
Create and launch a local suicide prevention app	We will work with young people to create a Suicide Orkney Support app	A short-life working sub-group of the Suicide Prevention Task Force	December 2023	An App will be developed, promoted, and engagement numbers monitored
Improve the speed of access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service	We will grow the service in line with the Scottish Government funding and improve response times for assessment and treatment.	Clinical Director, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service	March 2024	Referral to treatment times will have improved. (Baseline 80% - target 90%)
Improved support in schools	<p>Conduct a needs analysis in relation to mental health and wellbeing support needs in schools.</p> <p>Create a menu of training to support the implementation of the Mental Health Guidance for Orkney Education staff.</p> <p>Share Save a Life Training across Education staff.</p> <p>Create See Me See Change Implementation Plans in secondary schools and junior high schools.</p> <p>Establish a strategy for Support for Learning and Inclusion which</p>	<p>Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion.</p> <p>Educational Psychology.</p>	December 2023	<p>Needs analysis available.</p> <p>Strategy agreed by Council and implemented by service.</p>

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	further develops relationship-based approaches (nurture, restorative practice etc.			
Increase awareness and support for young people to promote and sustain positive health and wellbeing	Coordinate mental health awareness training to upskill people, reduce stigma and promote an understanding of mental wellbeing	Community Learning Development & Employability NHS Orkney Voluntary Action Orkney	Sept 2024	Programme of training developed Number of sessions delivered Number of participants Participant feedback
Expand and develop an array of opportunities and experience to support young people health and wellbeing	Work with partners to coordinate and develop health and wellbeing programmes and activities	Community Learning Development & Employability Educational Psychology	March 2026	Programmes developed Opportunities offered Sessions delivered Participants attendance Participant feedback Partner feedback

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6.3 Involving Children and Young People

What will we do?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will it be done by?	Outcome measure
We will establish a Care Experienced Young People's Group	We will work with young people to establish a group that has a powerful voice in the newly established Children's Services structure.	Team Manager Fostering & Adoption	September 2023	A Care Experienced Young People's Group will be in place and linking with the Corporate Parenting Board. This group will have a clear purpose and terms of reference.
Improve youth voice opportunities and representation across Orkney	Develop a relevant, coordinated and representative youth voice structure	Community Learning Development & Employability and partners	June 2024	<p>Youth voice structure created</p> <p>Number of participants</p> <p>Organisations represented</p> <p>Young peoples feedback</p> <p>Training events</p> <p>Input into decision making</p>

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6.4 Reducing Poverty and Disadvantage

What will we do?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will it be done by?	Outcome measure
We will improve access to supports and services	We will work with key professional groups to develop plans and improvement trajectories on waiting times for Autism Assessments and Speech and Language Therapy, we will create an Autism Strategy for Orkney, ensuring children and families receive the right supports at the right times.	Lead AHP/Service Manager, Children's Health, Principal Educational Psychologist.	Sept 2023	Plan and improvement trajectories for both areas of service will be available.
Increase access to support and opportunities for priority groups to achieve positive outcomes	Deliver life skills courses and free learning opportunities to help people most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis	Community Learning Development & Employability	Sept 24	Number of life skills courses delivered Number of free learning courses Number of participants Participant feedback
Maximize family's income so that everyone is aware of the benefits they are entitled to and know of support that can	Regular media and communications through OIC and schools' channels Let's talk Money group with partner agencies	Quality Improvement Officer, Achievement and Attainment with Let's talk money Orkney team.	Monthly from Aug 2023 – July 2024	Agencies will report an increase in uptake of their services.

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be accessed when needed.				
Upskill education staff's knowledge of benefits and money support so that they can provide signposting to services for families.	<p>Deliver poverty awareness training.</p> <p>Signpost schools to the Child poverty action group – ilearn courses.</p>	Quality Improvement Officer, Achievement and Attainment with Let's talk money Orkney team.	Aug 2024	<p>Number of participants on course</p> <p>Increased referrals to support agencies.</p>
Ensure equity of access to all school activities.	Encourage schools to participate in the Cost of the School Day toolkit resulting in considered cost implications for all families	Quality Improvement Officer, Achievement and Attainment with Let's talk money Orkney team and Headteachers.		<p>Increased number of schools using Cost of the School day toolkit</p> <p>Increased creative examples of equity of access being created</p> <p>Targeted children and young people participating in all activities.</p>
Reduce the attainment gap for children and young people in receipt of FSM	Work in partnership with schools ensuring impactful spending of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)	Quality Improvement Officer, Achievement and Attainment with Let's talk money Orkney team. partnership with all.	Aug 2026	Increase attainment in literacy / numeracy reaching local authority stretch aims

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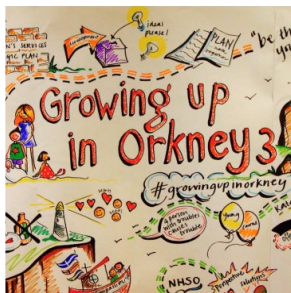
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Related Plans and Strategies



Orkney CLD
Partners Plan

Orkney's Child
Poverty Strategy



Orkney's Good
Parenting Plan

The Raising
Attainment Strategy



Orkney Schools
Attainment Report

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Context and Links to National Policies

The Scottish Government's ambition, as stated in The Promise is that Scotland will be the best place for children and young people to grow up – that every child will grow up loved, safe and respected so they realise their full potential.

The aim is that better outcomes for children and young people will be achieved through Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), Scotland's approach to improving child wellbeing. The upholding of rights is the foundation for better wellbeing, and GIRFEC is underpinned by rights, and is aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Our plan aligns with this ambition with its focus on improving outcomes for all those children and young people who may need additional support to achieve improved wellbeing. We have a commitment to incorporate UNCRC and human rights into all areas of our work.

In Orkney, Getting it right for every child is well embedded, but with the release of revised guidance in late 2022 we will review our multi-agency processes and revise these where necessary to ensure that these continue to reflect national guidance.

Other national developments include Framework for Inclusion; the introduction of a National Service Specification for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS); and The best start: five-year plan for maternity and neonatal care.

In Education, we have a Framework for Inclusion Working Group which will lead on actions aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people with additional support needs.