

NHS Shetland

Meeting:	Board
Meeting date:	22 September 2026
Agenda reference:	Board Paper 2026/27/37
Title:	Children's Services Partnership Plan Annual Report 2025-26 and Local Annual Child Poverty Action Report 2025-26
Responsible Executive/Non-Executive:	Dr Susan Laidlaw, Director of Public Health
Report Author:	Jordan Sutherland, SIC Executive Manager Children's Social Work; Lucy Flaws, NHS Shetland Head of Planning

1. Purpose

The Children's Services Partnership Plan Annual Report 2025-26 is presented to the Board for:

- Approval

This report relates to:

- Government policy/directive
- Legal requirement
- Local policy
- Strategic Delivery Plan

This aligns to the following NHSScotland quality ambition(s):

- Effective
- Person-centred

2. Report summary

2.1. Situation

This is the third and final annual report on the Shetland Children's Partnership Plan 2023-26, and it fulfils the requirement on Council and NHS Shetland under Section 13 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to report annually on how services have been delivered in accordance with the children's services plan. The reporting period covers April 2025 – March 2026. The Shetland Children's Partnership Plan 2023-26 was approved at Education and Families Committee on 20 November 2023 (Min Ref: 29/23) and the NHS Shetland Board in December 2023.

Presented alongside the Shetland Children's Partnership Plan Annual Report is Shetland's Local Annual Child Poverty Action Report 2025-26.

2.2. Background

The Children's Partnership Annual Report sets out progress against the Plan's longer-term ambition of improving children and young people's life chances by achieving the following outcomes:

1. All our children have the best start in life, in a nurturing, safe and stable home environment.
2. We improve attainment and achievement for all children and young people.
3. We reduce the impact of poverty on children and families.
4. Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is improved.
5. We keep The Promise for our care experienced children and young people.
6. We place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of our work.
7. Our most vulnerable children and young people are protected.
8. Our workforce is nurtured and has opportunities to develop.

Work is well underway to develop the Children's Partnership Plan 2026-29, which will build on the learning from the current plan and focus partnership effort on a smaller number of shared priorities where collective action can have the greatest impact. The next Plan will be presented for approval in December 2026.

The Child Poverty Action Report is a more detailed document reflecting Outcome 3 above and is attached as an appendix. And there is further detail on Outcome 7, protecting vulnerable children and young people. In Shetland Public Protection Annual Report.

2.3. Assessment

The Annual Report demonstrates significant collaborative work across all eight of the priorities in the Children's Partnership Plan 2023-26, with evidence that improvement activity is now becoming embedded in practice, indicating sustainable change. The Fairer Futures Change Board was established during 2025-26, bringing senior leaders across the partnership together to drive systems change and embed a person-centred,

preventative, and coordinated approach to public services. The programme provides opportunities for leaders to explore systems change and public sector reform in Shetland.

A summary of the key achievements under each of the priorities are highlighted below:

Best Start in Life:

- NHS Shetland achieved UNICEF Baby Friendly Gold Accreditation.
- Shetland Family Centre continued to deliver improved universal parenting support, and supported parents through the PEEP Progression pathway, enabling parents to gain qualifications while developing their parenting skills.
- Enhanced support for fathers through the Mind Your Head - Well Dads programme.
- Strong breastfeeding outcomes with Shetland recording one of the highest rates in Scotland.

Education, Learning and Achievement:

- 178 Bookbug sessions with 4,581 children and carer attendances.
- Development of family learning initiatives, such as the Mid Yell Family Learning and Teatime Tuesdays.
- Record volunteering achievements with 185 young people completing more than 22,500 hours of volunteering.
- Developing the Young Workforce delivering 146 career-learning activities involving 3,364 young people and 126 employers.
- Sustained focus on improving attainment and attendance through the Excellence and Equity Framework.

Tackling Child Poverty:

- Continued investment in reducing the impact of poverty through the Anchor for Families and Shetland Family Centre
- Islands Cost Crisis Funding supporting more than 650 children through direct payments
- Over 13,000 free secondary school breakfasts provided
- Community winter pop-ins reaching 417 adults and 50 children

Mental Health and Wellbeing:

- Continued delivery of the Well Youth service (Mind Your Head), OPEN and other third-sector wellbeing services.
- 92 peer-led harm reduction workshops delivered to 1,285 pupils.
- Increased participation in Active Schools programmes, reaching 41% of the school roll.
- Strengthening nurture and relationship-based practice in schools through new guidance.
- Development of youth-led initiatives, including 'Shift Up' to tackle stigma and improve service design.

- Capacity pressures within neurodevelopmental pathways remain a significant challenge across services, and a multiagency review was undertaken resulting in plans to recruit a neurodevelopmental nurse post to support redesign of existing pathways.

Keeping the Promise and Corporate Parenting:

- Work continued to strengthen participation and co-production with care experienced young people, including a 'Making a Meid' workshop facilitated on Care Day 2026.
- The Meids Board (formerly Corporate Parent Board) became the oversight group for keeping The Promise in Shetland.
- Development of a local Promise Plan to ensure clear priorities for Shetland, and establishing a Promise Leads network to support collaboration and shared ownership.

Protecting Vulnerable Children:

- Implementing revised Interagency Child Protection Procedures and updated training.
- Introducing the Scottish Child Interview Model for joint investigative interviews to improve outcomes for children who have experienced or witnessed harm.
- Commencing the Shetland Bairns Hoose Project, which is supported by a multiagency project board.
- Shetland hosted Scotland's first multi-agency Bairns Hoose Learning Event in February 2026

Children's Rights and Participation:

- Amplifying and expanding the work of Shetland Youth Voice.
- Development of the Youth Bank initiative, enabling young people to allocate £10k of community funding.
- Child Friendly Complaints training.

Workforce Development:

- Partners continued to invest in workforce wellbeing and skill development through trauma-informed practice training, leadership development, and creation of specialist roles.
- 'Growing our Own' initiatives are in place across various services to support staff to obtain professional qualifications through their work.
- Growing local capacity to respond to emerging needs (e.g. neurodiversity, resilience and wellbeing support).

2.3.1. Quality / patient care

This Annual Report provides examples of activity and planned activity undertaken by the organisations involved working together with children, young people and their families to meet and achieve specific outcomes identified in the plan.

2.3.2. Workforce

The work described in the report includes a number of pieces of collaborative work supporting development of staff and teams and building supportive networks between teams to add resilience and improve outcomes. The Partnership recognises the importance of our teams in achieving real, meaningful change and accordingly there is a priority dedicated to workforce.

2.3.3. Financial

The Plan is implemented where possible within existing budgets using existing resources and/or reprioritising resources. External funding will however be accessed where appropriate and possible to supplement local resources. More detail on respective spend by SIC, NHS and partner agencies is included in the 2023-26 Plan – link provided at end of report.

2.3.4. Risk assessment/management

The Annual Report highlights a number of shared challenges across the partnership, including:

- workforce and recruitment pressures.
- increasing demand resulting from increased referrals to neurodevelopmental pathways
- child poverty and cost of living impacts.
- a declining child population projected over the coming decades.
- the need to reduce duplication and streamline partnerships and reporting.

2.3.5. Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

Equality and diversity; inequity, including health inequalities, are at the heart of the Children's Plan - especially reflected in the work on keeping the Promise and Corporate Parenting, Child Poverty, Mental Health and Wellbeing and Protecting Vulnerable Children and Young People.

2.3.6. Other impacts: legal

Section 13 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on local authorities and health boards to publish an annual report in relation to their children's services plan. Section 2 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on relevant authorities to publish a report every three years in relation to areas of responsibility under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 requires public authorities, including the NHS, to take proactive steps to protect children's rights. This includes ensuring that the views of children are taken into account, and that children's rights are considered in all decision-making processes.

2.3.7. Route to the meeting

This report was approved at The Shetland Island's Council's Education and Families Committee on 31st August 2026 and is due to be approved at the Policy and Resources Committee on 14th September 2026.

2.4. Recommendation

The Board is asked to:

- **Approve** the Shetland Children's Partnership Plan Annual Report 2025-26

3. List of appendices

- Appendix 1: Shetland Children's Partnership Plan Annual Report 2025-26
- Appendix 2: Shetland's Local Annual Child Poverty Action Report, Year 8, 2025-26

Supporting documents: [Shetland Children's Service Partnership Plan 2023-26](#)

Shetland Children's Partnership Plan Annual Report 2025-26



**Building a brighter future together for
Shetland's children and young people**



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Executive Summary

The 2025-26 Annual Report marks the third and final year of the current Shetland Children's Partnership Plan (2023-26). It demonstrates the significant progress made through collaborative working across partners to improve outcomes for children, young people and families, while also recognising the challenges that remain and the need for continued partnership action.

Over the course of the plan, many improvement initiatives have become embedded within everyday practice across services. During 2025-26, partners continued to strengthen early intervention and family support, improve educational outcomes, reduce the impact of poverty, support mental health and wellbeing and advance children's rights and participation. Progress has also been made in delivering national priorities including Keeping the Promise, trauma-informed practice, the Scottish Child Interview Model and the Bairns Hoose standards.

Key achievements during the year included:

- NHS Shetland achieving UNICEF Baby Friendly Gold Accreditation and maintaining some of the highest breastfeeding rates in Scotland
- Expansion of parenting support, including the PEEP Pathway programme.
- Record levels of youth volunteering, with 185 young people contributing more than 22,500 volunteer hours
- Delivery of 146 Developing the Young Workforce activities involving more than 3,300 young people and 127 employers
- Financial support reaching more than 650 children through the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund and provision of over 13,000 free secondary school breakfasts
- Continued delivery of wellbeing and mental health support through services including Well Youth, OPEN and local third sector partners.
- Strengthened participation through Shetland Youth Voice, Youth Bank and 'Shift Up'
- Establishment of the Fairer Futures System Change Board to support a more coordinated, person-centred and preventative approach across public services
- Continued progress to Keep the Promise through development of a local Promise Plan and establishing a local Promise Leads Network
- Shetland hosted Scotland's first locally led multi-agency Bairns' Hoose Learning Event
-

Alongside these achievements, the report identifies several challenges including increasing demand for neurodevelopmental assessment and support, workforce and recruitment pressures, the ongoing impact of poverty and the cost of living, and a projected decline in the child population. Partners also recognise the need to reduce duplication across partnerships and reporting structures and focus collective effort on a smaller number of priorities where collaborative leadership can have greatest impact.

As the current planning cycle concludes, partners are developing the next Children's Partnership Plan 2026-29. Building on the learning from this plan, the next phase will place greater emphasis on shared leadership, prevention, participation and system-wide collaboration, ensuring that every child and young person in Shetland has the support they need to reach their full potential.

Introduction

The Shetland Children's Partnership Plan 2023-2026 was developed to minimise duplication and bring more clarity to what we are trying to achieve as a partnership. Having considered the data and the current needs of young people in Shetland, we built our planning priorities around the following 8 themes. This annual report tells the story of work towards these priorities this year:

1. All our children have the best start in life in a nurturing, safe and stable home environment
2. We improve attainment and achievement for all children and young people
3. We reduce the impact of poverty on children and families
4. Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is improved
5. We Keep the Promise for our Care Experienced children and young people (Corporate Parenting)
6. We place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of our work
7. Our most vulnerable children and young people are protected
8. Our workforce is nurtured and have opportunities to develop

Being healthy

Being safe

Being listened to

Being treated fairly

Reaching your potential

The work within the Partnership is contingent on action to reduce child poverty, and on educational achievement and attainment, which are reported separately in the Annual Child Poverty Action Report and the National Improvement Framework. We are also very closely involved in the work of the Shetland Partnership. We will not try to replicate the reporting of these areas but will refer to them throughout the plan, in the hope that this set of local reporting can be considered an inter-related collection of work.

We have changed the structure of our annual report to include relevant data within sections rather than a dedicated data section as previously – this is in the hope that we can provide a balanced narrative and support understanding of data which can be challenging to interpret without appropriate context, and must always be used with consideration in our smaller population. We will still include stories and case studies wherever possible to illustrate the hard work of our teams working in collaboration.

We aim to always keep in mind what is important to our children and young people, and keep them at the centre of the work that we do, and in reflecting on this we are aware our work as a Partnership could be more impactful, and there are times that opportunities to have an impact are

sometimes lost in the proliferation of priorities across our various sectors. While continuing work towards our plan, we have also been considering our role and impact as a partnership, and this development work is described in the first section of this report.

Vision

‘Every child and young person in Shetland has what they need to live a happy and healthy life. Every child and young person thrives and reaches their full potential’

Priorities

- All our children have the best start in life in a nurturing, safe and stable home environment
- We improve attainment and achievement for all children and young people
- We reduce the impact of poverty on children and families
- Improvement in children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing
- We Keep the Promise for our Care Experienced children and young people
- Our most vulnerable children and young people are protected
- We place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of our work
- Our teams are nurtured and have opportunities to develop



Approach

- ...Act early
- ...Be trauma-informed
- ...Work together
- ...Listen to understand
- ...Focus and build on strengths



NPF

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

We are healthy and active

We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

Fairer Futures Shetland: Building a More Person-Centred System

During 2025-26, the Shetland Children's Partnership supported the development of the Fairer Futures Shetland programme, an initiative that aims to improve outcomes for children, young people and families by changing how services work together.



Fairer Futures forms part of the Scottish Government's approach to tackling child poverty and improving family wellbeing through public service reform, but in Shetland it has been adapted to focus on creating a more person-centred and connected system for everyone – delivering on the Shetland Partnership's 'Person-Centred Shetland' focus.

A key milestone during the year was the establishment and development of the Fairer Futures System Change Board, bringing together senior leaders from health, education, social work, community planning, the third sector and police. Rather than focusing on individual services or projects, the Board's role is to understand where the wider system helps people and where it creates barriers, and to identify opportunities for learning and collaborative improvement.

The work has built on learning from the Anchor Project and other national Fairer Futures areas. Partners have reflected on what works well locally, particularly the value of early intervention, trusted relationships and joined-up support, while recognising that long-term improvement requires changes to leadership, culture, decision-making and the way organisations collaborate.

Throughout the year, partners worked together to develop a shared understanding of the challenges facing families, explore opportunities for better alignment across services, and begin designing a practitioner learning approach that will enable staff from different organisations to learn together, solve problems together and test new ways of working.

This work is increasingly recognised as an important enabler for the future success of the Shetland Children's Partnership. While many Partnership priorities focus on improving specific outcomes for children and families, Fairer Futures provides the mechanism for strengthening how organisations work together to achieve those outcomes. By supporting more preventative, relational and coordinated approaches, it is helping to create the conditions for sustainable improvement across all areas of children's services.

Fairer Futures is not a separate programme alongside the Shetland Children's Partnership; it is becoming a key vehicle for delivering the system change needed to ensure partners can work together more effectively and improve outcomes for children, young people and families in the years ahead.

Looking Back and Looking Forward

As this Children's Services Plan cycle comes to an end, it is important to recognise the significant progress made over the past three years. Across all priority areas, partners have worked together to strengthen services, improve outcomes and embed approaches that support children, young people and families to thrive.

Many of the actions identified within the original plan have now become established ways of working. This represents an important achievement. Activity that began as specific improvement actions, including strengthened participation approaches, enhanced support for children and young people with additional support needs, developments in early intervention and family support, and more collaborative approaches to planning and service delivery, is now increasingly embedded within core business across partner organisations.

At the same time, some of the most significant developments for children and families have emerged beyond the specific actions originally set out in the plan. The partnership also recognises that, despite progress, there remain children, young people and families who do not yet have access to the support and opportunities they need to thrive in Shetland. Programmes such as Fairer Futures, the development of Bairns' Hoose, the ongoing implementation of Keeping the Promise, and wider trauma-informed and person-centred approaches have demonstrated the ability of local partnerships to respond to emerging needs while remaining closely aligned with the plan's priorities.

This experience has prompted reflection on how the partnership plans for the future.

While action plans remain important in providing focus and accountability, there is recognition that future arrangements should create greater space for learning, adaptation and collective action. The next planning cycle presents an opportunity to strengthen connections across organisations while maintaining a clear focus on areas where collaborative leadership can add the greatest value. To support this more strategic view the partnership has included a data profile towards the end of this document, while service specific data continues to be shared within team and directorate quarterly and annual updates.

Throughout 2025-26, partners explored what this could look like in practice. Discussions focused on sharing learning more effectively across services, projects and workstreams, and ensuring collective effort is directed towards issues that require a genuinely multi-agency response. Consideration has also been given to the increasingly complex partnership landscape and how the Shetland Children's Partnership relates to other strategic groups with overlapping priorities.

These conversations have highlighted the importance of making the best use of limited time, resources and leadership capacity, reducing duplication and strengthening connections between partnerships. As planning begins for the next Children's Services Plan, partners are committed to building on the strengths developed during this cycle, maintaining momentum in well-established areas and creating partnership arrangements that support collective leadership and action in an increasingly challenging environment.

1. All our children have the best start in life in a nurturing, safe and stable home environment

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Universal services – clarity of messaging and access, prevention early intervention approach.	Measured via Staff access of training and development as per workforce section, examples of work shared here.	A range of training and support opportunities continues to be available, alongside ongoing work across the Shetland Partnership to develop a more consistent approach to prevention and early intervention. This reflects learning from the Anchor project review, which highlighted the importance of clear, shared messaging across people-facing services. Examples of this include the UNICEF Baby Friendly Award, which recognises consistent staff support and advice on infant feeding. Ability Shetland has also supported families through fortnightly Peerie Stars sessions in partnership with Shetland Recreational Trust, providing opportunities for peer support and early intervention. In collaboration with the SIC Education Outreach Team, Ability Shetland delivered the Early Positive Approaches to Support (EPAtS) programme for parents and carers of pre-school children with additional support needs. In addition, five online training sessions for parents and carers of neurodivergent children were delivered throughout the year, which	Work continued in services to improve quality, and access to services for those most likely to benefit, for example: Mind Your Head continued to deliver the Wellbeing 1000 service, providing one-to-one support and weekly drop-in groups for parents and carers of young children to promote mental health and wellbeing during the early years of parenthood. The service was expanded through the introduction of Well Dads, offering dedicated peer and practitioner support for fathers of children aged 0-5 years. Mind Your Head also remained actively involved in multi-agency parenting support arrangements, working closely with the Family Centre and partner organisations to provide coordinated early intervention support for families. NHS Shetland was awarded Gold accreditation in the UNICEF baby friendly initiative. While there has been progress it is recognised that there are multiple competing similar priorities and more clarity and focused action is needed to see impactful change – this has been incorporated into the planning process, and also into the Fairer Futures approach which is building on the national

		have helped foster ongoing peer support networks.	Population Health Framework directive towards a prevention focused system.
Decreasing stigma and increasing understanding of domestic violence, alcohol and other drugs, and poverty to mitigate their impact on people's outcomes.	Availability and uptake of: Money Worries training, Scottish Drugs Forum stigma training, Safe and Together model implementation.	Work to tackle the impacts of poverty and inequality has continued through a range of local and national initiatives. Progress on expanding access to Money Worries training was affected by workforce changes, but a locally recorded training resource has been developed and provision will be reviewed. NHS Shetland children's services also participated in exploratory work with Public Health Scotland on income maximisation pathways within NHS services, strengthening local partnerships and contributing to national policy development. Alongside this, Compassionate Shetland has been established as a key workstream within the Shetland Partnership Plan to reduce stigma and support long-term change. Partnership working has also continued to address child poverty and domestic abuse, including engagement with the Safe and Together model and participation in national health equity programmes. Learning from this work contributed to a successful Fairer Futures Partnership bid, which will be progressed in 2025-26.	During 2025-26 partners continued to develop a more coordinated, system-wide and person-centred approach to supporting families through the Fairer Futures programme. A multi-agency Systems Change Board was established, bringing together partners from across organisations and partnerships to identify barriers to person-centred support and system change, strengthen early intervention and explore new approaches to reducing inequalities. Work also progressed to refresh local GIRFEC practice and support more relational, preventative and whole-family approaches with funding being secured for a GIRFEC review project which is taking place in 2026-27, externally funded and commissioned by the Fairer Futures Systems Change Board. Anchor for Families became co-located within the Shetland Family Centre, creating improved access to support and strengthening links between family support services.

We will raise awareness of the pre-conception service to maximize understanding of the benefits of seeking support when considering a pregnancy.	% uptake of women using pre-conception service from the total number of women who deliver each year (where NHS Shetland is the Board of residence).	The pre-conception service became established and received positive feedback from families; however, progress has been impacted by staffing changes within the small team. A review is underway to consider how the service is delivered in the future, including whether it should be incorporated into the midwifery pathway. Outcomes data remains limited due to the service's relatively short period of operation and subsequent changes to delivery arrangements.	This remains challenged by capacity – support continues to be offered by the maternity team on a person-centred basis.
We will develop a service that aligns to the HENRY approach so that wider parenting skills advice can be provided via the pre-conception service.	The Maternity Care Assistant supporting the pre-conception service will undertake the HENRY training and we will record how many times the whole family is supported due to a parent accessing the pre-conception service.	The HENRY approach remains embedded across Health Improvement, Health Visiting and Family Centre services, supporting joined-up work on healthy lifestyles, parenting and family wellbeing. Strong partnership working between maternity, health visiting and wider family support services has helped strengthen connections across the pre-conception, antenatal and postnatal pathways. However, progress on pre-conception services and related HENRY activity has been affected by staffing changes within a small team. A review is underway to determine the most sustainable model for delivery, including whether this support should be integrated within the midwifery pathway.	Staffing changes continue to impact delivery within maternity and preconception services, however, remains established within routine service delivery for Health Improvement, Health Visiting and the Family Centre. There is generally better reach for those having another child where initial pre-conception support is more challenging to target.

We will offer women who have previously had gestational diabetes additional support prenatally and through her pregnancy to reduce likelihood of gestational diabetes developing.	% uptake of women who have previously had gestational diabetes who do not develop it again in subsequent pregnancies (and who engage with preconception services).	Support relating to healthy weight and associated risk factors continues to be offered routinely through maternity services. While local population numbers make meaningful reporting of outcomes challenging, teams remain engaged in improving the use of healthy weight data to inform services. During the year, the maternity team has been reviewing the midwifery pathway, including follow-up care such as the six-week postnatal check for women at higher risk, to ensure services deliver the best possible outcomes for families.	This is embedded as business as usual.
We will develop a Child Health Service Priorities Plan for the next 3 years which sets out how we will develop models of care that support the principles of values-based care e.g., reducing duplication, inefficiencies.	A plan is developed, and clear models are described that set out improvements to pathways that reduce duplication/improve access for children and families that require support.	This work has not yet been progressed, due to capacity challenges.	This work has not yet been progressed, due to capacity challenges; services continue to plan and adapt to local needs and are engaged in a number of targeted improvement programmes.
Delivery of Incredible Years and Triple Parenting programme to parents/cares.	Number of parents/carers attending Impact of programme on family relationships.	This delivery continues, collaboratively, as business as usual.	This delivery continues, collaboratively, as business as usual.

Upskilling Parents through the PEEP Pathway

The Shetland Family Centre supports families through parenting programmes, one-to-one support and early intervention activities. A key part of this work is the PEEP programme, which helps parents build confidence, support their child's development and connect with other families through activities focused on early learning, communication, health and wellbeing.

Since 2020, PEEP has been highly successful in engaging parents. Feedback consistently showed that while parents gained confidence and strengthened relationships with their children, many wanted opportunities to develop their own skills and qualifications. However, barriers such as childcare, confidence and uncertainty about where to start often prevented them from taking these next steps.

In response, the Family Centre developed the **PEEP Pathway**, a new programme linking parenting support with employability and skills development. Supported through Shetland's Local Employability Partnership and No One Left Behind funding, the Pathway offers an additional 12-week course that enables parents to gain accredited qualifications while attending with their child present. This removes childcare as a barrier and helps parents build confidence, skills and aspirations for future employment.

The programme was designed not only to support children's development but also to help parents consider their own learning and career opportunities. Capacity was built within the Family Centre team to develop the Pathway and improve monitoring of participation and outcomes, helping ensure the programme reaches families who can benefit most.

Alongside this work, the Family Centre has continued to reduce stigma around parenting support through positive social media campaigns and inclusive messaging, increasing participation across its wider parenting programmes.

During 2025-26, nine participants achieved accreditation through the PEEP Pathway. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with parents reporting increased confidence, stronger understanding of child development, new friendships and peer support, and greater awareness of how everyday activities can support learning at home.

The programme will continue in 2026-27. Learning from the first year has highlighted the importance of targeting the course towards families who may benefit most, while maintaining the flexible, child-friendly approach that participants identified as essential. By combining parenting support, learning opportunities and practical barriers removal, the PEEP Pathway is helping parents build skills, confidence and brighter futures for themselves and their children.

"We really enjoyed our peep pathway course and have come away with new songs/ ideas/ games to do at home supporting development. I have more understanding of stages of her learning and development." (Parent Learner)

Giving Babies the Best Start in Life: UNICEF Baby Friendly Gold Accreditation

During 2025-26, NHS Shetland's Maternity and Health Visiting Services achieved UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Gold accreditation, a significant milestone recognising the quality, consistency and sustainability of support provided to babies, parents and families across Shetland. UNICEF's Baby Friendly programme is an internationally recognised framework that promotes evidence-based care, helping parents build strong early relationships with their babies and supporting infant feeding choices that contribute to healthy development and lifelong wellbeing.



The Gold assessment highlighted the strong foundations that have been developed across Shetland through effective leadership, a positive and supportive workforce culture, robust monitoring of outcomes, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Assessors noted clear leadership structures, strong partnership working between maternity and health visiting services, and a culture where staff and families are listened to and valued. Families' experiences are routinely gathered and used to improve services, ensuring that support remains centred on the needs of babies and parents.

A key strength identified by UNICEF was the sustained focus on helping families develop close, nurturing relationships with their babies from the earliest stages of life. Alongside breastfeeding support, services promote bonding, attachment and responsive parenting, recognising the critical importance of the first years of life for children's emotional, social and physical development. The assessment also recognised innovative local initiatives including breastfeeding peer support, antenatal infant-feeding sessions, promotion of bonding and attachment for first-time parents, antenatal colostrum collection and work to support safer infant sleep.

The assessment demonstrated high levels of staff engagement and commitment to Baby Friendly standards, with staff describing a culture of support for both families and colleagues. UNICEF found evidence that learning from audits, data and parent feedback is actively used to strengthen services and improve outcomes. The use of local and national infant feeding data helps target support where it is needed most and supports ongoing improvement.

Breastfeeding outcomes in Shetland remain positive, with 85% of babies exclusively breastfed at birth and more than half still exclusively breastfed at the 6-8 week review. These outcomes reflect the ongoing support provided by maternity, health visiting and peer support services, as well as families' commitment to giving their babies the healthiest possible start.

Achieving UNICEF Gold accreditation demonstrates NHS Shetland's long-term commitment to providing high-quality, compassionate and evidence-based care that supports children to thrive from the very beginning of life, helping lay the foundations for healthy development, strong family relationships and positive outcomes throughout childhood.

2. Improvement in attainment and achievement for all children and young people

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25	Update 2025-26
All partners ensure that parents and carers of two to four year olds have the correct information regarding Early Learning and Childcare services available and how to access these.	Number of eligible two year olds who are receiving Early Learning and Childcare. Number of three and four year olds who are taking up their Early Learning and Childcare places.	Efforts to improve access to early learning and childcare support have continued, including testing more flexible childcare arrangements to better meet the needs of working families. Additional investment has also been provided to strengthen community-based pre-school provision, with funding distributed to local groups across Shetland. Targeted support for children with additional support needs has been maintained through funded places at Ability Shetland ASN Holiday Clubs during school holiday periods, helping families access inclusive childcare and support within their communities.	Effective multi-agency working to ensure that information is shared with families. This includes working with health visitors, education outreach, Shetland Family Centre, community partners and ELC settings. The ELC guidance booklet has been updated to provide comprehensive information about all ELC settings across Shetland, including greater detail about individual settings, placement options and how families can access provision. Seven ELC settings offer the option of paying for additional hours in addition to the funded placement. Three ELC settings currently offer paid places for 2 year olds as part of the Early Adopter Communities project.
Literacy programmes including Vocabulary Improvement Project and Emerging Literacy are delivered. Guidance for Total Communication is	Overall Literacy and Numeracy – P1, P4, P7 combined, CORE measure in The Ambition: Excellence and Equity Plan.	Improvement work to raise attainment and reduce inequalities continues through <i>The Ambition: Excellence and Equity for Shetland's Learners</i> programme and is reported annually to the Education and Families Committee. Early progress saw primary literacy and numeracy targets achieved and attainment gaps narrowed.	Literacy, communication and numeracy remained a priority during 2025-26. Improvement activity included ongoing delivery of evidence-based literacy programmes, participation in the National Improving Writing Programme, targeted reading initiatives and professional learning for educators. Schools continued to

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25	Update 2025-26
developed and implemented. Professional learning for SEAL (Stages of Early Arithmetical Learning) is delivered. Develop quality improvement tools to enhance learning, teaching and assessment in numeracy.	Primary – overall literacy and numeracy attainment gap, CORE+ measure in The Ambition: Excellence and Equity Plan. 1 or more, Level 5, All SCQF – Additional Support Needs gap percentage points, CORE+ measure in The Ambition: Excellence and Equity Plan.	However, more recent data shows that while progress towards the 2026 stretch aims continues overall, 2024/25 targets for literacy and numeracy were not met across primary and secondary education, and improvements in narrowing attainment gaps have slowed or plateaued. Senior phase attainment remains strong, particularly at National 5 and Advanced Higher level, while the attainment of children and young people with additional support needs and those affected by socio-economic disadvantage continues to be closely monitored.	strengthen approaches to learning, teaching and assessment through use of Shetland's Standard for Learning, Teaching and Assessment, moderation activity and quality improvement tools developed through the Northern Alliance Learning, Teaching and Assessment Toolkit. These approaches are helping to improve consistency of practice and support better outcomes for learners. Shetland Library ran 178 Bookbug sessions in 2025/26, with an overall attendance of 4,581 children, parents and carers. Bookbug sessions continue to have a positive impact on early literacy, language development and family bonding within Shetland communities. Research by the Scottish Book Trust found that 87% of parents felt Bookbug helped strengthen bonding with their child, while 84% said it encouraged families to read together more often and from an earlier age. Sharing stories, songs and rhymes regularly helps improve bairns' communication and social skills, and local library sessions also give families a welcoming space to meet others and feel more connected within their community.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25	Update 2025-26
			Bookbug evidence review - Scottish Book Trust
Deliver local and national volunteering awards: Saltire Awards – national initiative for young people aged 12 to 25. VAS Volunteering Awards - The aim of the local awards is to recognise all kinds of volunteering, both formal and informal, and celebrate individuals of all ages who volunteer in Shetland. ‘Willin Haands Award’ for adults aged 26 and over ‘Peerie Trows Award’ for children 11 and under.	Number of young people receiving Saltire Award certificates for volunteering. 2022 – 67 young people received certificates. 2023 – 118 young people received certificates. Number of children receiving Peerie Trow Awards. 2023 – 14 Awards made to children.	Volunteering continues to make a significant contribution to children and young people’s wellbeing and participation in Shetland. High levels of engagement have been maintained, with increasing numbers of young people recognised through the Saltire Awards for the substantial contribution they make to local groups, schools and organisations. Voluntary Action Shetland has continued to celebrate and support young volunteers through initiatives such as the Peerie Trows Awards, while also providing support to a wide range of third sector organisations. Inclusive volunteering opportunities have been available through services such as Ability Shetland, enabling young people with additional support needs to participate in community activities and develop skills and confidence through volunteering.	Saltire Awards 2025 - 185 young people between the age of 12 and 25 received a total of 335 certificates between them recognising over 22,500 hours of volunteering they had collectively taken part in with 70 different local groups, schools and organisations. <u>Young folk celebrated after racking up over 22,000 hours volunteering Shetland News</u> VAS Volunteering Awards 2025 - 6 children aged 11 or under received a 'Peerie Trows Award' for their volunteering efforts. <u>‘Shetland wouldn’t be Shetland’ without dedication of award-winning volunteers Shetland News</u> 106 Third Sector Organisations/Group received 1:1 Support on a range of issues. 928 young people aged under 25 years registered with VAS Volunteering.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25	Update 2025-26
All partners fulfil role as exemplar employers locally, for example by offering work experience, participating in careers fairs, and exploring alternative routes into employment to tackle inequalities.	Participation in local careers fairs. Evidence of inclusion of alternative and innovative ways of increasing employment opportunities for young people within organisational workforce planning/annual reports.	Partners have continued to work together to increase awareness of volunteering, employment and career opportunities for children and young people through careers fairs, community events, school engagement and Developing the Young Workforce initiatives. Voluntary Action Shetland has played a key role in promoting volunteering and community participation, including delivery of the Youth Philanthropy Initiative across seven secondary and junior high schools, helping young people develop awareness of local charities and community needs while directing funding to local causes. Partnership working has also focused on reducing barriers to employment, with renewed engagement through local employability services. Efforts to ensure inclusive participation have continued, with organisations such as Ability Shetland supporting children and young people with additional support needs to engage in careers, volunteering and employment-related opportunities.	Partners continued to strengthen opportunities for young people and families through Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and employability initiatives, with renewed Local Employability Partnership arrangements helping to improve collaboration and create more connected pathways into education, training and employment. Mind Your Head and Voluntary Action Shetland engaged with young people through careers events and community shows, promoting opportunities, support services and positive future pathways. Voluntary Action Shetland also supported work placement opportunities, including participation in the Project SEARCH programme, and continued to promote volunteering as a valuable route for developing skills, confidence and experience that can support further education and employment opportunities. In addition, Voluntary Action Shetland remained a key local partner in the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI), supporting young people across Shetland's junior high and secondary schools to engage with local charities and community issues while

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25	Update 2025-26
			developing skills in research, teamwork and community leadership.



Mid Yell Family Learning

During 2025/26, Community Work and Adult Learning partnered with Mid Yell Junior High School to deliver a free family learning programme designed to support learning, confidence and positive family relationships. The programme was developed in response to feedback from parents and the school, ensuring activities reflected the needs and interests of local families.

Five family learning sessions were delivered between September and November 2025, bringing parents, children and pre-school children together in a welcoming environment. Through practical activities such as cooking, science experiments and games, families learned together while developing skills that could be easily repeated at home. This helped create opportunities for learning beyond the classroom and encouraged parents to play an active role in their child's development.

The programme also strengthened the partnership between families, schools and community learning services. Parents were encouraged to shape the content and timing of sessions, ensuring the programme remained accessible and responsive. Feedback showed that families valued being listened to and appreciated the inclusive, supportive approach.

Outcomes were positive for both children and parents. Families reported continuing activities at home, helping to reinforce learning and build confidence. Parents observed increased enthusiasm among children, greater willingness to try new foods, and improvements in relaxation and bedtime routines. The inclusion of pre-school children also supported smoother transitions into school, helping them become familiar with learning environments at an early stage.

By strengthening family learning, improving parental engagement and building community connections, the project has demonstrated how collaborative, family-centred approaches can support children's wellbeing, learning and development, providing a strong foundation for future success.

"I've done all the activities (from these sessions) at home with my child!"

– Parent

Tea Time Tuesdays - Bringing families together through food, fun and connection

Teatime Tuesdays is a family learning initiative developed by Community Learning and Development to provide children and families with opportunities to learn, develop new skills and build confidence together outside the school day. Initially established in Mossbank and later expanded to Brae, Ollaberry and other communities, the programme was created in response to feedback from families who identified a lack of accessible after-school opportunities, particularly in rural areas where transport and service availability can be barriers to participation.

The programme was co-designed with families, ensuring activities reflected local interests and needs. Sessions combined practical learning experiences such as cooking, arts and crafts, and physical activities with opportunities for families to share a meal and spend time together. Activities included preparing healthy food, creative projects such as clay modelling and lino printing, and sports including boccia, archery and golf. These experiences encouraged children and adults to learn new skills together in a supportive and enjoyable environment.

A key strength of the programme has been the partnership approach involving Community Learning and Development, Active Schools, school staff and the Library Service. By using school and community facilities, families became more familiar with local learning resources and services, helping to strengthen connections between home, school and the wider community.

The project has made an important contribution to learning and achievement. Parents reported increased confidence in supporting learning at home and valued the opportunity to learn alongside their children. Families described gaining practical skills, trying new activities and developing greater confidence to participate in community life. Regular attendance and repeat participation demonstrated sustained engagement, while children benefited from experiences that supported creativity, teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills.

The programme also helped families become more comfortable engaging with schools and support services, creating stronger relationships that can positively influence children's educational experiences. By providing accessible, family-centred learning opportunities, Teatime Tuesdays has supported children's development, fostered positive attitudes towards learning and created conditions that help children and young people thrive both at home and in school.



“Teatime Tuesdays has given us the opportunity to learn together as a family. The activities are fun and practical, and it’s great being able to learn new skills alongside my children. It has also given us more confidence to try things together and connect with other families in our community.”

Parent, Teatime Tuesdays

Celebrating Shetland's Young Volunteers

During 2025, the Saltire Awards recognised the outstanding achievements of young volunteers across Shetland, highlighting the important contribution volunteering can make to learning, attainment and future opportunities. A record 185 young people received 335 Saltire certificates after completing more than 22,500 hours of volunteering with 70 organisations across the islands.

the Saltire Awards provide a structured pathway that recognises achievement at different stages of volunteering, from initial participation through to significant milestones of 50, 100, 200 and 500 hours. Young people gain accredited recognition of their contribution, creating a valuable record that can support college, university and employment applications.

Beyond the certificates themselves, volunteering enabled young people to develop a wide range of transferable skills that contribute to wider achievement and attainment. Participants gained experience in leadership, teamwork, communication, planning and problem-solving through activities such as leading sports sessions, supporting school events and delivering community improvement projects. Young people also took on visible leadership roles during the awards ceremony, helping to present awards and share volunteering stories with a large audience.

Feedback from participants demonstrated the impact on confidence and personal development. Young volunteers reported feeling proud of their achievements, gaining confidence through new experiences and developing skills that supported progression into further education and employment. One participant highlighted that volunteering helped with a college application, while another reported that it contributed to securing both a college place and a job.

Developing the Young Workforce Shetland

During 2025/26, **Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Shetland** supported young people to develop the skills, knowledge and aspirations needed to achieve positive outcomes in education, training and employment. Working in partnership with schools, Skills Development Scotland, employers and community organisations, DYW provides experiential career learning opportunities that help young people understand how learning in school connects to future career pathways.

Recognising concerns raised by young people about unequal access to career opportunities and the influence of family networks on employment choices, DYW focused on widening opportunities and ensuring all young people could access information, experiences and employer connections. This helps raise aspirations and supports attainment by enabling young people to make informed decisions about their futures.

During the year, DYW delivered **146 activities**, engaging **3,364 young people** and **127 employers** across Shetland. Opportunities included careers fairs, workplace visits, sector-specific events, entrepreneurial challenges and employer-led learning activities. Young people gained direct experience of industries such as healthcare, engineering, aquaculture and hospitality, helping them understand the skills, qualifications and pathways required for different careers.

The programme has demonstrated a strong impact on achievement and attainment. Evaluation showed that between **81% and 90%** of participants reported increased confidence about the world of work, while **89% to 98%** reported improved knowledge of career opportunities. At the Shetland-wide Careers and Opportunities Fair, **93%** of young people reported better understanding of the world of work and **82%** felt better prepared for future employment and career decisions.

A particularly powerful example involved a young person at risk of not achieving a positive destination. Through targeted support, employer engagement and workplace experiences, the young person secured a place on a Skills for Work course and developed greater confidence, motivation and aspirations for the future, illustrating how career learning can help overcome barriers, improve engagement and support positive educational and employment outcomes.

3. We reduce the impact of poverty on children and families

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Support our Anchor for Families Team to walk alongside families who are feeling under pressure, to build their strengths and capacity to achieve the goals they want to achieve, develop a more positive pathway and halt further deterioration in their situation. This is funded through the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. NB: this work links strategically with Shetland's CLD Strategy, and operationally with CLD staff across Shetland.	Number of families supported / year . Evaluation as per Anchor for Families Logic Model.	The Anchor for Families service has continued to provide support for families across Shetland and has been brought together under the Shetland Family Centre to strengthen collaborative working and provide more joined-up support. Building on learning from the Anchor programme, Shetland has been accepted as a Fairer Futures Partnership site, enabling partners to progress wider systems-change work aimed at reducing inequalities and improving outcomes for children and families. All key partners are actively engaged in this work.	Anchor for Families continued to provide intensive whole-family support to families experiencing pressure, helping them build confidence, access practical support and identify their own goals. During the year the team became co-located within the Shetland Family Centre, creating a more accessible single point of support alongside parenting programmes and other family services. Learning from Anchor has also informed Shetland's Fairer Futures work, with partners establishing a Systems Change Board to explore how services can work together more effectively to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities for children and families. Our local third sector continue to provide targeted assistance to ensure young people experiencing poverty have access to the same opportunities as their peers, including the Vaila Fund – Funding to provide financial assistance to support young people to travel – 7 awards distributed totaling £4,295.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Develop an innovative test of change project to find financially vulnerable households, supporting them holistically, to improve their finances and employment, as a collaboration between Anchor for Families, Employability Pathway and Third Sector. This funded through the Scottish Government Child Poverty Fund, formally known as Parental Employment Support Fund.	Monitoring for this Project will be put in place.	Work to improve employability opportunities for parents and families has continued through partnership approaches linked to the <i>No One Left Behind</i> agenda. Early activity focused on developing employment and traineeship opportunities, while more recently partners have worked through the Shetland Local Employability Partnership to support funding decisions and community initiatives that reduce barriers to employment. Voluntary Action Shetland continued to play an active role in this work, helping to strengthen local employability support and opportunities for those furthest from the labour market.	Employability partners continued to work collaboratively through No One Left Behind and Local Employability Partnership arrangements to support families experiencing financial pressure. Shetland has played an active role in national employability work, helping shape local and national approaches while continuing to develop joined-up pathways between family support, employability and wider community services.
Increase the capacity of frontline staff to recognise signs of poverty and ensure they are on an income maximisation pathway. This capacity will be built by, for example, our Anchor for Families Team, implementation of GIRFEC, Money Worries Training and Cost of the School Day.	Attendance at Money Worries Training (number / services represented). Number of Cost of the School Day Events / Sessions. Evaluation of System Change, as per Anchor for Families Logic Model.	Support to reduce the financial impact of poverty continued through a combination of staff resources, income maximisation pathways and access to community wellbeing opportunities. Resources for frontline staff remain available, and partners continue to promote local income maximisation support	The Community Development Team supported adults, including parents and families to maximise their income, through delivery of Budgeting Skills sessions, Cooking On A Budget sessions, Family Learning sessions in conjunction with Schools; Skills Development support around job applications and interviews; and support to complete Benefit Check Forms (in partnership with Shetland CAB). This

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
NB: this work links strategically with Shetland's CLD Strategy, and operationally with CLD staff across Shetland. This is Shetland's approach to reduce levels of Food Insecurity and the Scottish Government's Cash First Approach / Good Food Nation approach.	Uptake of income maximisation services (SICAB, SIC Children's Finance, Social Security Scotland, Fuel Bank Vouchers, SIC Finance, Free Period Products, free ELC for eligible two year olds) Uptake of Access to Leisure (SRT, SADA, Summer Activities) Uptake of CLD Skills Development to complete benefit forms	through Citizens Advice Bureau services. NHS Shetland has also worked with Public Health Scotland to explore and strengthen income maximisation pathways within healthcare settings, helping to inform national learning while building stronger local connections between services. Alongside this, the Access to Leisure programme continued to provide significant support for eligible residents, with around 1,200 members making over 21,000 visits to leisure facilities during 2024/25, helping to improve access to physical activity and wellbeing opportunities across Shetland.	work has had a positive impact on adult learners by improving financial confidence, practical life skills and with learners feeling more confident in seeking and securing work. Participants have developed better budgeting and cooking skills, helping them manage household finances more effectively and make their income go further. Through support with benefit checks, individuals have been able to maximise their income and access additional financial support. Family learning sessions have strengthened parents confidence in a range of areas, including engaging with the school and supporting their children's learning.
Support the implementation of Shetland's response to the Cost of Living Crisis Plan, 2023/24, including an easy to use website, and dedicated phone line.	As per Cost of Living Crisis Plan (SRT / Summer Activities).	Delivery of this work has continued as planned across both reporting periods, with learning from earlier activity used to inform the development and implementation of support measures, including winter support arrangements. Partners have maintained delivery of agreed actions and seasonal	The Community Development Team delivered 43 Community Winter Pop-ins across Shetland as part of the local Islands Cost Crisis response. Sessions were attended by 417 adults and 50 children and have had a positive impact in reducing loneliness, strengthening community connections, supporting emotional wellbeing and improved access to practical support. Attendees have benefited from advice on

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
		support programmes to meet the needs of local communities.	maximising household income, including benefit checks and access to food and fuel vouchers.
Continue to support key Third Sector organisations: SICAB, Shetland Food Bank and Food for the Way.	Funding and staff time from partner organisations Number of clients CAB supported. Number of food parcels distributed. Attendance at activities – Food for the way.	Partnership working with the third sector remains strong, with ongoing engagement through funding arrangements, local partnerships and strategic planning structures. Third sector organisations continue to play a key role in delivering support and services across Shetland, supported by strong representation from the Third Sector Interface and collaborative working across partner organisations.	VAS represented on a range of strategic partnerships to support multi-agency approaches to supporting children and families. With various Charities there is commissioned Funding from LA and external funding sourced to support local demand activity. See Charities Annual Reports for further information (Lynn VAS)
Support Shetland's CLD Strategy to close the digital poverty gap.	As per CLD Strategy	A range of support continued to be available to help reduce digital exclusion across Shetland. This includes regular digital drop-in sessions at Shetland Library and Jobcentre Plus, tailored one-to-one support delivered by Adult Learning in homes and community settings, access to digital devices through the library, and digital assistance provided through winter support initiatives. These services help individuals build digital confidence, access	Adult Learning supported over 400 adults across Shetland to develop their digital skills via: weekly Lunch-time Learning Drop-in sessions at Shetland Library, monthly Digital Support Drop-ins in community venues across Shetland, monthly digital drop in sessions at Job Centre+, Family Learning programmes, classes and workshops, and tailored one to one digital skills support. This work has made a meaningful difference by increasing confidence, independence and participation. Participants have gained

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
		online services, and develop skills for everyday life, learning and employment.	practical skills in using devices, setting up emails, browsing the internet, and reducing barriers to accessing essential services. Many individuals are now better able to manage day to day tasks such as internet banking, managing finances, searching for employment, supporting their children's learning and organising personal information. This work has strengthened social connections, enabling people to make video calls and stay in touch with family and friends, helping to reduce isolation and empowered adults with the skills and knowledge needed to engage fully in a digital world. Range of support to digitally isolated individuals including • weekly digital drop-in sessions and bookable appointments with library staff, supporting individuals to resolve a range of issues and develop their digital skills. • a free device lending library which includes Chromebooks, tablets, Mifi units and podcasting equipment. • access to Windows 11 PCs with a range of office programs plus printing and scanning equipment.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
			• help with accessing NorthLink ferry vouchers. • as of May 2026, the library is a National Databank Hub, providing free SIM cards and data top-ups to eligible low-income households.
Use opportunities such as Anchor for Families, Employability Services and Cost of Living supports to enable children and their families to be involved in shaping local policies and measures to reduce the social and economic impact of poverty.	Number of examples of changes to local policies and services as a result of involving children and families under pressure	Children and young people's participation and influence remain important to all partners – work to embed participation within local partnership structures and organisational culture progressed. Shetland Youth Voice continued to play an important role in shaping local policies and decisions, with support from Ability Shetland helping to ensure that children and young people with additional support needs and disabilities can participate fully. This work helps ensure that a diverse range of young people are able to share their views and influence issues that affect their lives and communities.	Feedback continues to be gathered routinely, recognition that there are challenges in translating this feedback into influence on policies has led to development work to ensure feedback, consultation and participation across themes is used to influence planning. Considerable time has been spent in 2025-26 exploring how to support lived experience participation in appropriate ways to protect those people wishing to participate and share their experience. OPEN's Making Shetland Fairer peer research project ran interviews and focus groups with 49 young people aged 14-25 from across Shetland. Young people spoke openly about what feels fair about life in Shetland and what creates inequality. Personas were developed as part of this project and Fairer Shetland and Shetland Partnership.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Public Health and Maternity teams work to improve local use of data from national systems around financial support in pregnancy – particularly Badgernet recorded data and Best Start support uptake – to inform improvement	National data informs local improvement and targeted support.	This is embedded as business as usual, with regular meetings between teams to build connections, review data and understand any changing need.	This is embedded as business as usual.
Maternity team has awareness, confidence and skills to recognise signs of poverty, discuss money worries and support effectively (targeted individual support).	Uptake of Money Worries training. Local uptake of Best Start support.	Review of delivery, reach and impact, and planning for refreshed approach took place in 2024-25, with hopes to restart delivery locally in 2025-26. Capacity within team is a risk to delivery.	Money Worries training content has been reviewed in 2025-26 with a view to making this available digitally in 2026-27 so delivery is more flexible and accessible, and less dependent on limited staffing capacity.
Continue routine enquiry about money worries or financial concerns regularly throughout pregnancy and in postnatal period, with signposting/referral to appropriate income maximisation support (opportunistic individual support)	As above.	Work has continued to strengthen the links between health improvement, maternity services and wider support pathways. nData developed to support health improvement and maternity teams has informed local understanding of need, while collaboration with Public Health Scotland on income maximisation pathways has helped identify opportunities to better connect local services and ensure families can access financial support and advice more effectively.	This is embedded as business as usual.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
HENRY programme workshops including Eat Well for Less are available to parents and prospective parents.	No of workshops run, attendance, inclusion of antenatal families on these.	Workshops continue to run – attendance and activity will be reported in Health Improvement team activity report.	These continue as business as usual, detail in Health Improvement Activity Report .

Happyhansel Breakfast Club

The Happyhansel Breakfast Club demonstrates how access to reliable childcare can help to improve opportunities for families while improving outcomes for children. Established in September 2024 through the Early Adopter Communities Project, the club provides a daily, term-time breakfast and childcare service at Happyhansel Primary School, addressing a longstanding gap in provision within the West Mainland community.

Before the service was introduced, many families faced challenges balancing work and childcare responsibilities, with limited local childcare options available. These barriers could restrict parents' ability to access employment, training and financial stability. By extending the school day and providing dependable childcare, the Breakfast Club has enabled parents and carers to take up and sustain employment, helping to improve household income and reduce financial pressure.

The impact on families has been significant. Parents report that the service allows them to get to work on time, reduces the stress of managing childcare arrangements and provides greater stability in daily routines. One parent described the provision as "life changing", explaining that it enabled a move into full-time employment that would otherwise not have been possible. This improved not only family finances but also mental health, self-worth and overall wellbeing.

Children have also benefited from the service. Attendance at the Breakfast Club provides a safe, supportive and structured start to the school day, helping establish positive routines and supporting wellbeing. Parents reported improvements in confidence and social connections, with children benefiting from additional opportunities to interact with peers and trusted adults before lessons begin.

With 14 of the school's 17 families regularly using the service, the Breakfast Club highlights how targeted, community-based childcare provision can help tackle the practical causes and consequences of poverty by supporting parental employment, reducing family stress and creating greater stability and opportunity for children.

Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund

During 2025/26, funding from the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund helped Shetland families manage the effects of poverty and the high cost of living, with a particular focus on supporting children and ensuring they could access the essentials needed to thrive.

A key element was direct financial support for families with children receiving Free School Meals and School Clothing Grants. Payments were made to more than 650 children on two occasions, helping families afford essentials such as food, heating, clothing, school activities and transport. Parents reported that the funding reduced financial stress and enabled them to provide opportunities and experiences for their children that might otherwise have been out of reach.

Investment in free secondary school breakfasts also helped address the impact of hunger and access to food on learning. More than 13,000 breakfasts were served, ensuring that young people started the school day well-fed and ready to learn. Schools reported positive effects on concentration, behaviour and wellbeing, while the universal approach removed stigma and supported all young people who needed it.

Additional support was provided through community pop-ins and the Youth & Employability Hub, where children, young people and families could access food, toiletries, warm spaces and advice. These services helped reduce immediate hardship while connecting families with wider support, including food and fuel vouchers and income maximisation advice. Young people particularly valued having safe spaces with food, warmth and opportunities to socialise.

Together, these initiatives helped reduce the impact of poverty on children and families by improving access to food, increasing household financial resilience, supporting wellbeing and ensuring that financial pressures did not prevent children from participating fully in school and community life.

4. Improvement in children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Identifying those in need of support and improving attendance through a test of change improvement model.	Report on the test of change.	Anderson High School developed and implemented an attendance improvement project focused on identifying and supporting young people experiencing attendance difficulties. Strategic Equity Funding enabled additional clerical capacity within the Pupil Support Department, supporting more effective tracking and follow-up of attendance concerns, reducing discrepancies in attendance records and allowing pastoral staff to focus more on supporting pupils. Feedback from staff has been consistently positive, with improvements in attendance monitoring processes and reduced administrative burden.	Improving attendance remained a priority during 2025-26. Schools with the highest absence rates undertook targeted improvement activity, supported by strengthened attendance monitoring, updated guidance and workforce development to promote consistency and earlier intervention. A full update is included within Education and Equity report.
Reducing the number of children with below 80% attendance.	The number of children and young people with less than 80% attendance, core + measure in the National Improvement Plan.	Despite ongoing work to improve attendance, the number of children and young people with attendance below 80% increased from 153 to 193, and subsequently to 209, meaning local targets were not achieved and the 2026 stretch aim is unlikely to be met. Schools have continued to develop attendance improvement approaches, including publication of attendance guidance and targeted work to support pupils experiencing barriers to attendance.	A full update is included within Education and Equity report.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Understanding use of alcohol and other drugs, including vaping, to inform action.	Reduction in the number of pupils smoking and vaping. The Warwickshire-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing survey annual results, core + measure in the National Improvement Plan. Widespread sharing of local peer research outputs, evidence this has informed decision making.	The OPEN Project worked with the Alcohol and Drug Partnership to undertake youth-led peer research on alcohol and other drug use, while Healthy Shetland developed and delivered vaping workshops in response to concerns raised by young people and school staff. Findings from the peer research informed the establishment of the Live Working Group, bringing together young people and strategic partners to develop actions aimed at reducing stigma and improving understanding of alcohol and drug use. The group adopted an equal partnership approach between young people and professionals and began implementing recommendations arising from the research.	The Health Improvement team worked with education, school nursing colleagues and pupils to design vaping education workshops for targeted delivery in schools. OPEN's Alcohol and Other Drugs Project continued to support young people to influence change through the development of Shift Up, a partnership bringing together young people with lived experience and professionals from NHS Shetland and Shetland Islands Council. Building on findings from OPEN's peer research, the group developed a project charter and workstreams focused on improving support and access to services for young people. During the year, Shift Up co-produced practical tools and resources, including a trusted adult exercise, service information through social media content, and approaches to support community conversations, helping create new ways for young people and professionals to work together.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
			The OPEN Alcohol and Other Drugs Project continued to take a youth-led approach to increasing awareness and understanding of alcohol and drug-related issues. The project focused on ensuring young people feel heard and valued, strengthening wellbeing, and reducing stigma through education, participation and increased public awareness.
To implement the Active Shetland strategy.	Increase number of children who are a healthy weight in P1. Availability of and attendance at FAST sessions.	Work to support physical activity and wellbeing has continued through a range of inclusive opportunities. Weekly FAST sessions provided targeted support for young people who may not engage in mainstream activities, while partnership work improved accessibility and participation. Ability Shetland delivered inclusive activities in schools and youth groups, supported participation in initiatives such as Bikeability, and provided tailored support and equipment to reduce barriers to physical activity for children and young people of all abilities.	Sport and leisure opportunities continued to make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of children and young people across Shetland. Through Active Schools, 1,323 children and young people, representing 41% of the school roll, participated in activities supported by a strong network of coaches and volunteers. A wide range of activities, including Summer Picnic & Play sessions, Basketball Blast, fencing camps, rowing taster sessions and school sports competitions, provided regular opportunities for children and young people to be active, develop new skills and build confidence. Targeted programmes such as FAST, Care Experienced Fun Days, Targeted

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
			Swimming and small-group activity sessions supported young people who may benefit from additional support, helping to strengthen relationships, communication skills and social connections. Inclusive initiatives including Kit for All, Bikeability and hockey development programmes helped reduce barriers to participation and increase access to sport and physical activity. Community-focused activities such as Teatime Tuesdays, Chatterbox, transition events and Community Sports Hub programmes also helped strengthen connections between young people, families and communities. Ability Shetland continued to deliver inclusive clubs, holiday programmes and activities for children and young people with disabilities, promoting participation, friendship, confidence and social inclusion. Shetland Recreational Trust also provided a broad range of opportunities through swimming, fitness and sports programmes. Affordable access schemes, including MORE4Life and Access to Leisure, helped reduce financial barriers and enabled more

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
			children and young people to participate in activities that support their physical, social and emotional wellbeing.
Continue to support and work in partnership with key Third Sector Organisations supporting children and young people: Mind Your Head, OPEN, relationship Scotland, Ability Shetland, Shetland Women's Aid, Shetland Bereavement Support Service, Autism Understanding, VAS Shetland Befriending Scheme, Shetland Compass Centre and VAS Shetland Carers	Funding and staff time from partners. Number of children and young people accessing support within the Third Sector Organisations. Outcomes for children and young people having accessed support. Number of peer education workshops delivered in schools.	Strong partnership working with local third sector organisations has continued to support children and young people's wellbeing. Partners have worked together to understand local need, commission services where funding allows and develop responsive support. OPEN delivered extensive peer education programmes in schools covering mental health, relationships, online safety, alcohol and drugs, while a range of organisations, including Mind Your Head and Shetland Women's Aid, continued to provide therapeutic, preventative and community-based support to children, young people and families. Fifteen third sector organisations were commissioned or grant funded during 2024-25 to contribute to this work.	Third sector partners continued to play an important role in supporting the wellbeing and resilience of children and young people across Shetland. OPEN delivered 92 peer-led harm reduction workshops across all seven junior and secondary schools, engaging 1,285 pupils and increasing awareness of risk, wellbeing and informed decision-making. Mind Your Head continued to deliver the Well Youth Service, providing one-to-one mental health and wellbeing support for young people aged 10-25, including delivery of the LIAM programme. In addition to individual support, the service engaged 369 young people through workshops, events and wellbeing activities, including contributions to the Violence against Women and Girls programme. Voluntary Action Shetland continued to strengthen partnership working through its role as Shetland's Third Sector Interface, supporting collaboration

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
			across a range of strategic partnerships. Shetland Women's Aid delivered 30 prevention and education sessions within Anderson High School, reaching 242 pupils. Sessions focused on healthy relationships, consent, emotional wellbeing, domestic abuse awareness and recognising harmful behaviours. Alongside this preventative work, tailored therapeutic and practical support was provided to children and young people affected by domestic abuse, family breakdown, substance misuse and other adverse experiences. Support included one-to-one interventions, advocacy, emotional wellbeing support and activities designed to improve safety, resilience and confidence. The organisation also facilitated a local Junior Craftivism group, using creative approaches to promote emotional wellbeing, social connection and self-expression within a trauma-informed environment.
Partnership approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health.	Reduce inappropriate referrals to tier four services, informed by referral/service activity audit.	A multi-agency referral review group has remained in place and continued to operate effectively, supporting appropriate referrals and coordination of support. Early feedback and outcomes from services such	Multiagency referral group is embedded as business as usual. And work continues to strengthen nurturing, relational approaches across schools through implementation of Shetland's

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
	CYP experience of services (case studies, stories and service outcome measures).	as Mind Your Head's Well Youth service have helped inform ongoing development of the partnership approach to children's emotional wellbeing and mental health.	Nurturing Relationships and Promoting Positive Behaviour Guidance. Developed with input from young people, the guidance supports schools to promote positive relationships, inclusion and wellbeing, recognising the importance of strong relationships in supporting learning and mental wellbeing.
Neurodevelopmental pathway, change implementation and identification of resource	CYP and family experience of services, waiting times for assessment and support.	Progress in developing a sustainable neurodevelopmental pathway has been significantly constrained by increasing demand and limited capacity. Throughout both years, partners have worked to raise awareness of local and national challenges, share evidence with decision-making groups and explore options for improving assessment and support. Work has also been undertaken to improve support for people waiting for assessment, but workforce and resource pressures continue to present a significant challenge.	Neurodevelopmental pathway review took place over a number of multi-agency workshops, looking to map and understand challenges, build connections, and make appropriate decisions around resourcing opportunities. This resulted in development of an ND Nurse post which was entering into recruitment in early 2026/27. The postholder will triage referrals for assessment and revise current ND Pathways considering a wider pathway around support and diagnosis for Shetland – the group continue to meet into 2026-27 for targeted work. The learning from this work is being considered alongside similar work on adult ADHD pathways and management.

Wellness Bingo – making looking after your own mental health practical and fun

During Mental Health Awareness Week 2025, the Active Shetland Strategy Group developed and promoted a Wellness Bingo Card to encourage people across Shetland to take simple, practical steps to support their mental wellbeing. The initiative brought together partners including Shetland Islands Council, NHS Shetland, Ability Shetland, sportscotland, ZetTrans and Shetland Recreational Trust, demonstrating a collaborative approach to promoting positive mental health.

The Wellness Bingo Card translated the NHS Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing into a range of accessible everyday activities that people could choose to complete in their own time. Activities encouraged participants to connect with others, be physically active, take notice of the world around them, learn something new and support others. Examples included meeting a friend, taking a mindful walk, trying a new recipe, reading a book, completing an outdoor challenge, watching a sunrise or sunset, and reducing screen time before bed.

A key strength of the initiative was its simplicity and accessibility. The card was promoted through Council and Healthy Shetland communication channels and provided a low-cost, practical way for individuals to engage with mental wellbeing activities regardless of age, location or circumstances. Participants could download or print the card and complete as many activities as they wished, allowing them to engage privately and without pressure.

The resource complemented a wider programme of Mental Health Awareness Week activities, including nature walks, cycling, rowing and self-care sessions, while also providing an option for those who preferred to participate independently. Importantly, the campaign deliberately avoided asking people to share personal experiences publicly, helping to create a supportive and non-judgemental approach to mental wellbeing.

The Wellness Bingo Card demonstrated how established wellbeing guidance can be transformed into a practical, engaging and reusable resource. By encouraging small, achievable actions that promote connection, physical activity, learning and self-care, the initiative helped raise awareness of positive mental wellbeing and provided people with simple tools to build resilience and support their mental health.



“The Wellness Bingo Card was a great way to turn national wellbeing guidance into something practical and easy for people to use every day, especially to mark Mental Health Awareness Week. Our Active Shetland Strategy Group is constantly working together to support our community, and partnering up on this project helped us reach people across Shetland in an accessible, low-pressure way”

5. We Keep the Promise for our Care Experienced children and young people

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Closing the gap between the educational outcomes of care-experienced young people and their peers.	% of young people who left school with one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5. % of young people who left school with one or more qualifications at SCQF level 6.	Monitoring of educational outcomes for care experienced young people has continued through local and national reporting arrangements. Data has been used to inform planning and support aimed at improving attainment and achievement, with progress reviewed through the National Improvement Framework and related reporting processes.	Monitoring and targeted support continues as standard, while the Meids group locally informs targeted improvement work.
Close the attendance gap for care experienced children and young people.	CORE+ measure in The Ambition: Excellence and Equity Plan.	Attendance among care experienced children and young people remains closely monitored through <i>The Ambition: Excellence and Equity for Shetland's Learners</i>. While the number of care experienced children in Shetland is small, attendance outcomes have remained a challenge and the attendance gap has widened slightly over the reporting period. Continued efforts are being made to understand and address barriers to attendance for this group of children and young people. (note these are very small numbers of individuals in Shetland and percentage data should be interpreted accordingly).	Data not available at the moment. However, this will be reported on in September in the Excellence and Equity Report.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Develop the revised work placement offer. Supporting young people with barriers to onward positive destinations.	Number of care-experienced and Care Experienced Young People who are not in Education, Employment, Training. Number and % of care leavers aged 17-21 in further education, training or employment.	Work to strengthen pathways into employment, education and training has continued through the development of work placement opportunities and closer partnership working with schools and Developing the Young Workforce. Work placement opportunities have been expanded and promoted across junior high and high schools, while partners have worked together to improve coordination of career education and opportunities. Support continued to focus on improving positive destinations and reducing barriers for care experienced young people and others who may require additional support.	The Youth and Employability team continue to monitor leaver destinations for care experienced young people and provide opportunities that match their interests and goals.
Throughcare and aftercare team supported by relevant partners ensure that all care leavers have a positive transition into adulthood. Shetland Children's Partnership will work together to meet the needs of all children and young people here in Shetland.	Number of care leavers supported by After Care service. % of Eligible for after care with up-to-date pathway plan. Reduce the number of out of authority placements.	Teams have continued to work together to support care experienced young people through transitions into adulthood. Shetland has maintained a strong focus on supporting young people locally, with no routine use of out-of-authority placements during the reporting period. Work has also progressed to improve transition planning for young people with additional support needs, helping to strengthen pathways into adulthood and adult services.	Continues as standard practice.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Ensure children's voices are at the centre of decision making.	% of children and young people who take up Who Cares Scotland advocacy service.	Advocacy continued to be offered to all care experienced children and young people to ensure their voices are heard in decisions affecting their lives.	Continues as standard practice.
Reduce placement moves for children and young people.	Percentage of care experienced children with more than 1 placement in the past year. Percentage of care experienced children with 3 or more placements in the past year.	This is minimised as far as possible and circumstances allow.	Continues as standard practice.
Ensure families have choice and control when services are involved in their lives.	Number of families who are referred to Family Group Decision Making (FGDM).	Family Group Decision Making has continued to develop locally, supporting families to take a greater role in identifying solutions and making decisions about the support they need. Referrals increased during the reporting period and a number of families were supported through family meetings or significant pieces of family-led planning work, helping to strengthen family involvement and choice.	The single FGDM practitioner left the post, and we have paused recruitment while Children's Social Work continue work to adapt existing processes to embed family group decision making locally. Children's Social Work are also contributing to the development of national standards for FGDM.
Ensure the workforce across all partners are supported to have the correct skills and knowledge for their role.	Number of staff trained in using a trauma-informed approach.	Work has continued across the partnership to strengthen trauma-informed practice and ensure the workforce has access to appropriate learning and development opportunities. Partners have worked together to improve access to trauma-	Recognising the need for development extends across organisations, and a need to engage a wider audience more effectively in trauma informed training and practice, the Meids Group continued to lead development of a local

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
		informed training, share learning and promote a trauma lens approach to supporting children, young people and families. Uptake of training and awareness of trauma-informed practice has continued to grow across services.	partnership approach to Keeping the Promise. Partners and young leaders agreed to develop a local Promise Plan focused on the priorities of care experienced people in Shetland. Work progressed on participation, partnership capacity building, reporting arrangements and performance monitoring, alongside development of a local Promise Leads Network to strengthen shared ownership across services.

Care Day 2026: 'Making a Meid'

The theme of this year's Care Day was #ConnectedbyCare. To celebrate, the Meids group hosted an event in Lerwick Town Hall during which 25 participants engaged in an activity called 'Making a Meid'.

Adapted from Shift Up's 'trusted adult exercise', it encouraged participants to reflect, individually and in small groups, on the qualities and skills that make a good 'Meid' (our term for corporate parent).

The activity built on the commitments made in the Meids Pledge, signed on Care Day 2024. The pledge sets out Meid's commitments to listen, to act with love, to collaborate well, to have high aspirations for care experienced people and to fight their corner, ensuring services 'go the extra mile'.

What makes a great Meid?

Young people and corporate parents consistently named similar qualities and skills:

Reliable, also expressed in 'being accountable and no empty promises', 'follow through', 'consistent'

Genuine, also expressed in 'realness' and being 'authentic'

Listening this was the only quality/skill named by every group

What next?

Insights from the 'Making a Meid' activity have led to the Meids group deciding to take a trauma lens to the Meids Board, with a view to refreshing how Meids meetings are run in light of the trauma-informed principles of safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment.



Nurturing Relationships in Schools: Supporting Children and Young People to Thrive

During 2025/26, Children's Services worked in partnership with Shetland Youth Voice to strengthen nurturing relationships across schools and learning environments. This work recognised that children achieve their best when they experience positive, consistent relationships with the adults around them and when their views, needs and experiences are valued. By placing relationships at the centre of school life, partners have taken important steps towards ensuring that every child grows up with strong foundations for wellbeing, learning and personal development.

The work was driven by Shetland Youth Voice, which identified Mental Health and Wellbeing as a priority area. Young people were supported by the Youth & Employability Service, Educational Psychology Service and School Counselling Service to explore what helps them feel supported in school. Their feedback was clear and consistent. Young people highlighted the importance of adults listening to them, treating them with respect, taking an interest in their lives and creating welcoming environments where they feel comfortable asking for help. They also recognised that positive relationships contribute directly to motivation, engagement and success in learning.

In response, Children's Services developed and published **Nurturing Relationships and Promoting Positive Behaviour: Inclusive Practice**, a guidance document that reflects national policy and evidence on the importance of relationships in supporting wellbeing, inclusion and achievement. The guidance promotes a whole-school approach based on kindness, respect, clear expectations and positive connections between staff and learners. It places relationships first and recognises that behaviour is best understood and addressed through supportive, restorative approaches rather than punitive responses.

To support implementation, a multi-agency Nurturing Relationships Working Group was established, bringing together staff to share learning, promote effective practice and support improvement across schools and services. The group also ensures that children and young people play an active role in shaping developments through ongoing engagement with Youth Voice and pupil groups.

Young people remained central to the work throughout the year. In partnership with staff, Shetland Youth Voice created a Nurturing Relationships film and developed **"The Pledge"**, a set of commitments designed to promote kindness, mutual respect and positive relationships within learning environments. In November 2025, Youth Voice formally presented The Pledge to the Director of Children's Services, demonstrating a shared commitment between young people and professionals to create learning environments where everyone feels valued, included and able to succeed.

This work demonstrates how listening to children and acting on what they say can help create environments where they experience belonging, consistency and encouragement from trusted adults. By strengthening relationships across schools and services, Shetland is helping children and young people develop confidence, resilience and a positive sense of self, while ensuring they receive the support they need to flourish throughout childhood and beyond.

6. We protect our most vulnerable children and young people

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25	Update 2025-26
Explore ways to improve participation of care experienced young people in the work of Shetland Public Protection Committee (SPPC).	Feedback from Meids Group workshops.	Work to strengthen the involvement of care experienced children and young people in local protection and improvement activity has continued. The Meids group, #ShetlandCrew and local professionals have worked together on issues including transitions to independent living and raising awareness of care experience. OPEN has also contributed to SPPC development work through sharing findings from youth-led research, while ongoing collaboration between SPPC and youth participation groups has helped strengthen links between young people's views and strategic decision-making.	The Shift Up group took part in a planning day with SPPC supporting review of priorities and building a plan – this supported work both for the SPPC and for the Shift Up group. Care Day – Shift Up The theme of this year's Care Day was #ConnectedbyCare. To celebrate, the Meids group hosted an event in Lerwick Town Hall. During the event, participants engaged in an activity called 'Making a Meid'. Adapted from Shift Up's 'trusted adult exercise', this activity encouraged participants to reflect, individually and in small groups, on the qualities and skills that make a good Meid. The exercise was to support the Meids in understanding what qualities and traits care experienced young people value in trusted adults, encouraging reflection and development among staff. The Meids group agreed to develop a local Promise Plan, with participation and co-development being a key component.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25	Update 2025-26
Review the Shetland Public Protection Committee Training Strategy to ensure we are supporting staff across the Partnership to keep our children safe.	Revised Strategy in place which aligns and makes best use of available national resources. Training requirements for staff agreed and implemented across the Partnership.	Progress has been made in strengthening public protection training across the partnership. The Shetland Inter-Agency Training Sub-Committee was re-established with a broader focus on protection issues, access to training information was improved through the Safer Shetland website, and additional child protection training sessions were delivered to address identified needs. Planning for a refreshed child protection training programme has also been taken forward.	Mandatory child protection and safeguarding training continued to be delivered, ensuring practitioners maintain knowledge, skills and confidence to fulfil their statutory responsibilities and support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
Complete the revision of our Partnership Child Protection Procedures, and all agreed supplementary Protocols, to ensure they fully comply with the 2021 National Guidance on Child Protection in Scotland, including the 2023 revisions.	Revised Child Protection Procedures in place. Impact understood via qualitative feedback through the Integrated Children's Services Quality Assurance Group.	Revised Shetland Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures were completed and published in line with national guidance. During 2024-25, work focused on embedding the revised procedures across services, including engagement with school clusters to support understanding, implementation and ongoing discussion about child protection and early intervention practice.	Work completed in 2024-25.
Support Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership to deliver on the six Equally Safe Outcomes locally through training and publicity and awareness raising.	Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership is required to report to the Scottish Government on Delivering Equally Safe. We will use this information to measure	Partnership activity to address domestic abuse and violence against women has continued through strong collaboration between the Shetland Children's Partnership and the Shetland Violence Against Women Partnership. Information, resources and training have been promoted through Safer Shetland, and a new Gender Based Violence	The Partnership has cross-representation into the Shetland Violence Against Women, Children and Young People Partnership so learning can be shared and activity supported. The SVAWCYP continued to lead prevention, awareness and support activity relating to domestic abuse and

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25	Update 2025-26
(Note the Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership is now known as the Shetland Violence Against Women Children and Young People Partnership (SVAWCYP))	progress with this priority.	training programme was developed and launched to strengthen awareness and capability across local services.	gender-based violence. Key developments during 2025-26 included extension of the Violence Against Women and Girls Coordinator post, delivery of public awareness campaigns, completion of a local MARAC review, expansion of practitioner training opportunities, and publication of findings from the Shetland Women's Survey to inform future improvement activity and service development.
To develop our use of local and national data on child protection to better support the work of the Public Protection Partnership in Shetland.	We will monitor local trends in child protection data against nationally published data, and use this information to inform strategic plans.	Partners have continued to strengthen the use of child protection data to support local planning and improvement. While interpretation of data can be challenging in a small population, collaborative review of local and national information has helped inform strategic discussions, improve understanding of emerging issues and support service planning. National developments in data collection continue to be monitored to identify opportunities for further improvement.	Teams continue to use data locally and nationally to inform planning and priorities – work continues in the Fairer Futures programme to explore barriers around data sharing, and use of data to target resource or activity more effectively to those most likely to benefit.
Work with HSCP colleagues to improve future planning for people with complex care needs (individual transition, and system planning).	User experience of transition between children's and adult services. Evidence of service planning informed by Children's services	Collaborative work has continued to improve planning for children and young people with complex care needs as they move towards adulthood. The Dynamic Support Register has supported oversight of future need and transition planning, while engagement with families and carers has informed wider accommodation and service planning within the Health and Social Care Partnership.	The Getting Transitions Right policy for young people with additional support needs was approved during the year. Work then progressed to develop implementation arrangements, review existing procedures and strengthen guidance to support more consistent and person-centred transitions into adulthood.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25	Update 2025-26
	(e.g. adult social care/housing).	Further work to strengthen transitions continued.	
We work together to understand need and develop sustainable solutions to offer clarity and continuity – current focus Neurodevelopmental Pathway.	Implementation of recommendations from ND project (note this is funding dependent, and identifying resource will be a considerable challenge).	Significant challenges remain in meeting increasing demand for neurodevelopmental assessment and support services. Throughout the reporting period, partners have worked to raise awareness of local and national pressures, share evidence with decision-makers and explore sustainable options for future service delivery. While efforts to improve support and develop a longer-term pathway have continued, workforce and capacity constraints remain a significant risk.	See ND Pathway work in section 4.

AHS Boys Group: Building Positive Futures Through Relationships, Trust and Early Intervention

The **AHS Boys Group** was a two-year targeted intervention developed by the Youth and Employability Service in partnership with Anderson High School and other local agencies. The project worked with a small group of young people who were experiencing a range of challenges, including poor school attendance, antisocial behaviour, social isolation and exposure to negative influences. Concerns had also been raised about instances of racism, homophobia and misogyny, highlighting the need for intensive support focused on values, relationships and personal development.

Rather than focusing solely on behaviour, the project recognised that lasting change would come through positive relationships, trusted adults and opportunities for young people to develop new skills and experiences. The aim was to help participants build respect for themselves and others, strengthen connections with their school and community, and develop the confidence and life skills needed for a more positive future.

Between 2023 and June 2025, the group took part in weekly sessions led by Youth Work staff and supported by partners including Ocean Youth Trust, Shetland Recreational Trust, Michaelswood and Police Scotland. Activities included outdoor learning, gym sessions, healthy lifestyle work, practical workshop projects, residential experiences, volunteering and community-based activities. Alongside these experiences, staff held regular restorative conversations that encouraged reflection, accountability and empathy.

A key feature of the project was the consistent presence of trusted adult role models. Staff invested significant time in building relationships with the young people and their families, providing mentoring, advocacy and support during difficult periods. Parents recognised the importance of these relationships, noting that the opportunity to engage with supportive adult role models had been particularly beneficial for the group. The impact has been significant. The young people attended 45 of the 64 sessions delivered and showed improved engagement with education, increased school attendance and greater participation in school life. Partners reported a substantial reduction in police involvement and antisocial behaviour, while parents described more settled family circumstances and positive changes in attitudes and behaviour.

The group also contributed **48 hours of volunteering** and gained accredited recognition through their work with Ocean Youth Trust. Participants themselves reflected on developing a better understanding of others, learning new skills and building positive relationships with staff.

This project demonstrates the importance of early intervention, sustained relationship-based practice and multi-agency working in supporting vulnerable young people. By providing trusted support, positive role models and opportunities to succeed, the Boys Group helped participants reconnect with education, contribute positively to their community and develop the skills and resilience needed to thrive.

Building on the success of the Boys Group, partners are exploring opportunities to extend relationship-based support to more young people across Shetland, ensuring those facing challenges can access trusted adults, positive experiences and early support when they need it most.

Multi-Agency Bairns' Hoose Learning Event

As one of the most remote local authorities, Shetland delivered the first multi-agency Bairns' Hoose learning event in Scotland led by a local partnership, bringing together 20 national experts and around 80 local participants in person. Held over two days in February 2026, the event enabled partners to develop a shared vision for Bairns' Hoose in Shetland. Funded by the Scottish Government Bairns' Hoose Development Fund, it represents a significant achievement in building national connections and progressing local implementation.

The event aimed to build a shared understanding of the Bairns' Hoose model, while exploring how a trauma-informed, child-centred approach can be delivered in Shetland. It also aimed to strengthen understanding of the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM), support learning from rural and island pathfinder areas, and gathered multi-agency insight to inform local implementation.

The programme brought together national and local expertise, including the Scottish Government Bairns' Hoose Unit, Children First, the National Joint Investigative Interview Team, Social Work Scotland, and partners from Highland and the Western Isles. This created space for shared learning, discussion, and early development of a collective vision for Shetland, grounded in both national guidance and local context.

Key learning from the event highlighted the importance of developing a shared multi-agency vision, improving joined-up support for children and families, and creating a safe, trauma-informed physical environment. Participants also identified the need for clearer communication and justice pathways, a better understanding of roles across services, and a strong emphasis on participation and children's voices. Ensuring the model reflects Shetland's unique island context was a consistent theme throughout.

While presentations were valuable, a greater balance towards facilitated discussion would have supported more engagement and shared understanding. There is also a need to focus more explicitly on translating national policy into practical, locally relevant delivery. Ongoing engagement will be essential to sustaining momentum and shared ownership across partners. Feedback suggests the event strengthened relationships across partner agencies and improved shared understanding of Bairns' Hoose locally. Feedback from other areas highlighted that this approach would have supported them to establish a shared understanding at the outset of their own implementation journey.

The learning from this event is informing the next phase of implementation in Shetland. Further multi-agency engagement is planned, alongside a follow-up event to review progress and ensure developments reflect local needs.

What is Bairns' Hoose?

Bairns' Hoose is Scotland's approach to the Icelandic 'Barnahus', which means 'children's house'. Bairns' Hoose offers holistic, child-centred support to those who have been victims or witness of abuse and to children under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused harm.

Bairns' Hoose is all about connecting services around the needs of the child by collaborating across agencies and disciplines. The four rooms approach does this by bringing together child protection, health, justice and recovery services in one setting. It's important to reduce the number of times children are asked to retell their stories as this can be difficult and retraumatising. Instead, trauma-informed practice is prioritised to support the child's recovery in a safe, respectful, friendly, and welcoming environment.



7. Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of our work

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Develop a framework to ensure that the views of children and young people have influenced and shaped service delivery and future planning.	Evidence that children and young people are engaging in activities that allow them to have a say in the development of services that they access (or may access in the future). Case studies of how services have changed because of the contributions of children and young people.	Participation and engagement opportunities for children and young people have continued to develop across Shetland. Young people have contributed to local and national discussions through Shetland Youth Voice, youth-led research projects and engagement activities on issues including mental health, transport, mobile phone use in schools, community planning and NHS recruitment. OPEN has supported peer research projects exploring young people's experiences and aspirations, while youth participation has increasingly informed service development, funding applications and strategic planning across partner organisations.	Shetland Youth Voice engagement and promotion continuing to increase with forums on the following themes (chosen by young people in Shetland): - Jobs and Fair Work - Mental health - Public Spaces for Young People - 'Shetland Youth Voice: A Year in Action!' event planned in November 2025. - Members developed leadership, teamwork, and communication skills through chairing sessions, presenting to councillors, and running workshops. Partnership working continues to develop: Stronger links with public agencies and third sector partners, improving understanding of young people's needs across sectors The first Child Friendly Complaints training was rolled out to Childrens Services leadership and Headteachers in March 2026. OPEN's Making Shetland Fairer peer research project ran interviews and focus groups with 49 young people aged 14-25 from across Shetland. Young people spoke openly about

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
			what feels fair about life in Shetland and what creates inequality. Personas were developed with young people and shared with Fairer Shetland and Shetland Partnership to inform their strategic plans. Mind Your Head – Well Youth Service attended the Shetland Youth Voice event in October 2025 to hear the views of young people on good mental health and wellbeing support to inform service review and development in conjunction with a service user involvement project aimed at making improvements to service delivery to best meet the needs of young people. We are also exploring how we can encourage young people to become trustees of MYH to strengthen their voice, utilising OPEN support for them.
Development of performance indicators to monitor progress of UNCRC across all partners.	Self-evaluation activities completed by all partners and a set of performance indicators developed.	Work has continued to raise awareness of the UNCRC and prepare organisations for implementation. Partners have promoted the use of national self-evaluation tools and supporting resources, recognising that successful implementation requires whole-system engagement across public bodies. Early development work has focused on building awareness, understanding and readiness for future reporting and monitoring requirements.	Partners continue to engage with national developments around performance monitoring and meaningful ways of understanding progress around UNCRC. Engagement with wider services remains challenging where there are competing demands – UNCRC is considered alongside other system wide requirements in current Fairer Futures System Change work, identifying barriers to implementation, and working to consolidate the practical implementation of these intersecting

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
			approaches or themes (including UNCRC, person-centred practice, GIRFEC principles, trauma-informed practice). This work has progress through 2025-26 with learning network and leadership development activity – this is continuing into 2026-27.
Undertake strategic planning ahead of national advice on UNCRC implementation.	Working group across partners to establish plan for the implementation of UNCRC.	Strategic preparation for UNCRC implementation has continued through engagement with children and young people, elected members and professionals. Learning from national organisations and rights-focused development work has informed local planning, while partners have increasingly sought to connect children's rights with related priorities including The Promise, trauma-informed practice, family wellbeing and child poverty. This has helped strengthen a more joined-up approach to planning and implementation across the partnership.	Fairer Futures Board is developing mapping exercises to integrate planning and reporting – this would include UNCRC, Child Poverty Action Report (ACPAR), The Promise, Childrens Partnership and Local Community Planning Partnerships Plans. This is also reflected in the Council's Childrens Services Plan.
Schools engagement with Rights Respecting Schools Award, and UNCRC Professional Development	Number of schools engaged in RRSA, and/or having completed UNCRC self-evaluation. % Shetland school staff having had an introduction to UNCRC.	Engagement with children's rights in educational settings has continued to develop, with an increasing number of schools participating in the Rights Respecting Schools Award programme. Alongside this, professional learning opportunities on children's rights and the UNCRC have been offered across schools and early learning settings, supported by	Schools continue to engage with the Rights Respecting Schools Award where identified within school improvement plans. Universal support has included partnership working with Shetland Youth Voice, the launch of Nurturing Relationships and Promoting Positive Behaviour Guidance and resources, establishment of a multi-agency working group to support implementation and inclusion,

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
		contributions from national organisations including Education Scotland and the Children's Parliament. Particular focus has been given to supporting understanding of children's rights within early years and additional support needs services.	promotion of youth-led initiatives including <i>The Pledge</i> , and the development of more child-friendly complaints procedures to strengthen participation, wellbeing and rights-based practice.
Implement and embed CIRCLE across all schools and settings. All partners to have an understanding of CIRCLE as a universal approach to inclusion.	% of schools and settings staff trained. % of schools and settings staff implementing CIRCLE.	Work to strengthen inclusive practice through the CIRCLE framework has continued across schools and early learning settings. Training has been provided to an increasing number of settings, alongside wider work to promote nurturing relationships and positive behaviour as universal approaches to inclusion. Progress has also been linked to broader improvement activity reported through the National Improvement Framework and local inclusion workstreams.	Training and delivery of this approach continues to be delivered – more detail is reported through the excellence and equity report.
Schools and settings are implementing our supported interventions to ensure inclusion for all.	Feedback from audits and other self-evaluation activities. All partners have an understanding of these approaches when engaging with children, young people and their families and school and setting staff.	Inclusion remains a key focus across education services. Support from Educational Psychology and Education Outreach services has continued to be available to all schools and settings, while broader review work has engaged stakeholders in identifying opportunities to strengthen support for children and young people with additional needs. Ongoing work has focused on improving the availability and effectiveness of	The Support for Learning review has identified the need to build specialist capacity in clusters to more effectively implement and support interventions to ensure inclusion. A team of staff from Education and Learning have created a job profile for Additional Support Needs Teacher – Intensive Support designed to address this gap. We are currently in the process of recruiting to these roles.

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
		interventions that support participation, inclusion and positive outcomes.	
We communicate effectively about UNCRC and the role of the Shetland community in upholding children's rights, and advocate for a focus on UNCRC among colleagues in adult and universal services	Evidence from implementation of Shetland Partnership Plan (particularly Tackling Inequalities through Kindness strand)	Work to promote understanding of children's rights and tackle stigma has developed through the evolution of the <i>Tackling Inequalities through Kindness</i> programme into <i>Compassionate Shetland</i> . Engagement activities, staff development opportunities and community resources have encouraged reflection on stigma, inclusion and the role individuals and organisations play in supporting people with dignity and respect. This work contributes to creating an environment where children's rights are better understood and upheld across services and communities.	Partners continued to respond to national UNCRC implementation activity, alongside wider work to strengthen participation, inclusion and children's rights across local services. Local work includes efforts to strengthen children's rights-based practice through implementation of Child Friendly Complaints Handling principles. Additional staff training supported services to ensure that children and young people are listened to, their views are taken seriously, and they are supported to participate in processes and decisions that affect them.

Shift Up – Working together to improve outcomes

Shift Up brings together young people and professionals to strengthen relationships, challenge stigma and ensure that the voices of young people help shape the services and support available to them. By creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration, the group is helping organisations better understand the experiences, challenges and aspirations of young people in Shetland.

During 2025/26, the group developed a Project Charter setting out its shared purpose, priorities and ways of working. This provides a clear framework for partnership working and supports a collective commitment to improving outcomes for young people.

A number of innovative projects have been taken forward. These include a Trusted Adult Exercise, designed by young people to help professionals reflect on how they build positive, supportive relationships and how their organisations enable them to do so. The group has also developed composite case studies and personas, helping services better understand the experiences of vulnerable individuals while protecting privacy and reducing the risk of further stigma.

To improve access to services, Shift Up is working with partners from OPEN, NHS Shetland, Shetland Islands Council and the third sector to develop TikTok-style service walkarounds, making services more visible, approachable and easier for young people to navigate. The group is also exploring podcasting as a way of sharing experiences, increasing engagement and raising awareness of issues affecting young people.

Through its work, Shift Up is helping create more responsive, inclusive services and ensuring that young people are active partners in designing the support they need.

Youth Bank: Young People Shaping Decisions That Matter

During 2025, Shetland Youth Voice and partners established a Youth Bank programme that gave young people a direct role in deciding how funding should be invested in their communities. The initiative was designed to ensure that young people could influence decisions affecting their lives and see tangible outcomes from their participation.

Through the programme, Shetland Youth Voice successfully secured £10,000 of Community Led Local Development funding, which was allocated by young people to projects that reflected priorities identified by young people themselves, including transport, jobs and fair work, public spaces, and mental health and wellbeing.

To prepare for this role, nine members of Shetland Youth Voice completed an SCQF Level 5 accredited Grant Making qualification delivered by YouthLink Scotland. This equipped them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to assess applications, consider community needs and make funding decisions fairly and transparently.

A panel of trained young people then assessed funding applications from groups across Shetland. As a result, up to 13 youth-led groups received grants of up to £1,000, supporting a diverse range of activities involving sports clubs, youth groups, school pupil councils and cultural organisations. The funded projects reached communities throughout the islands and reflected the issues that matter most to young people.

The Youth Bank demonstrates how children's and young people's rights to be heard and involved in decisions can be put into practice. Rather than simply being consulted, young people were trusted to lead a real decision-making process, influence how resources were used and shape opportunities for their peers. The programme strengthened youth participation, developed leadership skills and ensured that investment in local communities reflected the priorities and aspirations of Shetland's young people.

8. Our teams are nurtured and have opportunities to develop

Our contribution to making this happen	How we will measure our progress	Update 2023-25 (combined)	Update 2025-26
Input into development of Trauma-Informed working as a Shetland approach – including via steering group and sharing learning through services and teams.	Uptake of Scottish Trauma-Informed Leaders training. Uptake of trauma-informed practice training – principally National Trauma Transformation Programme and Policy Hub Scotland resources. Number of services undertaking trauma lens service self-assessment and implementing changes. Shetland Islands Councils will monitor how many new/updated policies are viewed with a trauma lens. Children, Young-people, family and carer experience of services is improved (service satisfaction/experience measures to be agreed).	Significant progress has been made in developing a coordinated trauma-informed approach across Shetland. A multi-agency Trauma-Informed Shetland strategic group has been established and continued to lead local development, informed by national learning and evidence. A local statement of intent, trauma training pathway and implementation plans have been developed and shared across the partnership, with training opportunities promoted widely through local networks and the Safer Shetland website. Services have continued to explore the use of trauma lens self-assessment and trauma-informed approaches to environments, communications and practice, while local capacity to deliver trauma training has increased through the development of trained facilitators and community-based delivery models.	Training continues to be available, with ongoing multi-agency strategic group in place although prioritisation of this has been challenged by a number of other national and local priorities. Trauma-informed practice remains a key focus with high profile use of the trauma lens approach underway in SIC, and practical implementation of trauma informed approaches in shared processes proving successful: Shetland implemented the Scottish Child Interview Model during 2025-26, with all Joint Investigative Interviews adopting the new trauma-informed approach. Additional staff training has strengthened local capacity and work is progressing to establish suitable facilities that meet national standards. Governance arrangements have also been strengthened through joint oversight with Bairns' Hoose development work. Trauma-informed training continues to be promoted, and uptake occurs through Third Sector organisations. Continuing to support delivery of Trauma Training in the Community.

Sharing key learning to spread existing work and good practice, including: • Anchor evaluation • HENRY approach • Speech and Language Therapy universal input • LIAM (Let's Introduce Anxiety Management).	Our workforce are confident in our shared approach to support – strengths focused, early action, relationship based. Review Whole Family Support self-assessment to understand development/change. Uptake of locally delivered training (HENRY, SLT, LIAM).	Partners have continued to promote shared learning and a common approach to supporting children, young people and families. Learning from the Anchor evaluation has been shared across partnership groups and used to inform wider work on early action and prevention. Local training and development opportunities have continued to be available, helping improve awareness of approaches such as HENRY, Speech and Language Therapy support and LIAM. Work to strengthen learning across organisations has also informed the development of the Fairer Futures Partnership learning workstream, supporting a more coordinated approach to workforce development and improvement.	Professional learning opportunities continued to strengthen trauma-informed and relational practice across services. Training included trauma-skilled practice, PACE, relational approaches and wellbeing-focused interventions, supporting staff to respond effectively to children and young people who may have experienced adversity or trauma. Seasons for Growth, Resilient Kids, CIRCLE, neurodivergent peer support approaches, LIAM – with appropriate supervision and coaching to ensure quality practice and staff confidence.
We have a culture of learning and support that enables development in our services, recognises the impact of work on our staff, and promotes the wellbeing of everyone in our teams, including using supervision and access to CPD/development opportunities.	Support and promotion of staff wellbeing agenda across partner organisations. Case study reporting of good practice within annual report.	Partners have continued to place staff wellbeing, learning and development at the centre of workforce planning. Initiatives have included the ongoing delivery of vicarious trauma and proactive self-care training, development of workforce wellbeing support and increased focus on understanding staff experience through feedback and engagement mechanisms. The appointment of a Workforce Wellbeing Officer has strengthened leadership in this area, while ongoing work across services continued to promote supportive supervision, professional development opportunities and a	Workforce development remained a key priority throughout 2025-26. Progress included development of new specialist Additional Support for Learning roles, review of workforce structures and career pathways, implementation of the Enabling Leaders Framework, and ongoing investment in the Grow Our Own Teachers programme. These initiatives aim to strengthen workforce sustainability, leadership capacity and recruitment within key shortage areas.

		positive culture of wellbeing and continuous improvement.	The Enabling Leaders Framework continued to support leadership development across Children's Services. The framework provides a shared understanding of effective leadership and is aligned with national professional standards. During the year, leaders engaged in professional review conversations, self-evaluation and targeted development opportunities to strengthen leadership and support across schools and services. NHS Shetland engaged in consultation and development work relating to culture and values and compassionate care and leadership across the year.
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Children and Young People Data Profile

Population Demographics

In Shetland Islands, life expectancy at birth was higher for females (83.9 years) than for males (79.5 years) in 2022-24 and it is higher than Scotland level for both females and males.

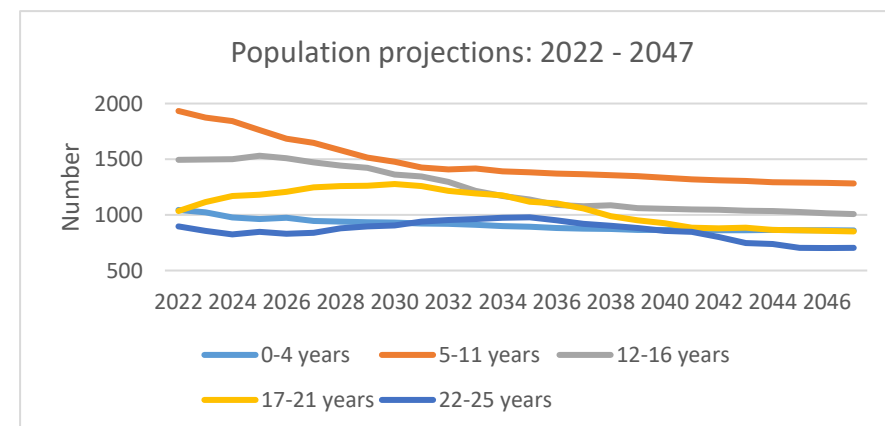
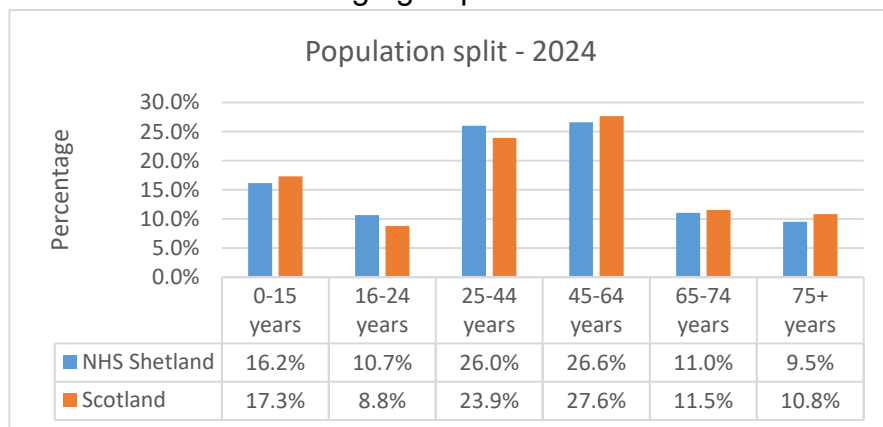
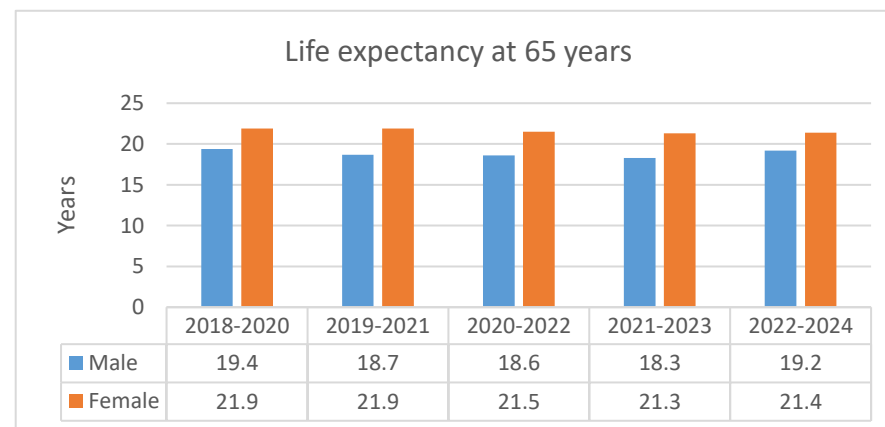
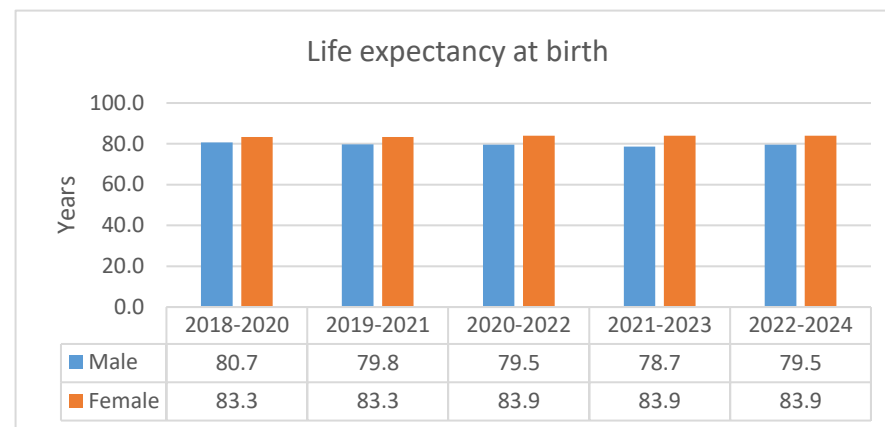
Between 2005-07 and 2022-24, female life expectancy at birth in Shetland Islands has risen by 1.7% while male life expectancy at birth has risen by 5%.

In Shetland Islands, life expectancy at age 65-69 was higher for females (21.4 years) than for males (19.2 years) in 2022-24 and it is higher than at Scotland level for both females and males.

Between 2005-07 and 2022-24, female life expectancy at age 65-69 in Shetland Islands has risen by 2.9% while male life expectancy at age 65-69 in Shetland Islands has risen by 7.9%.

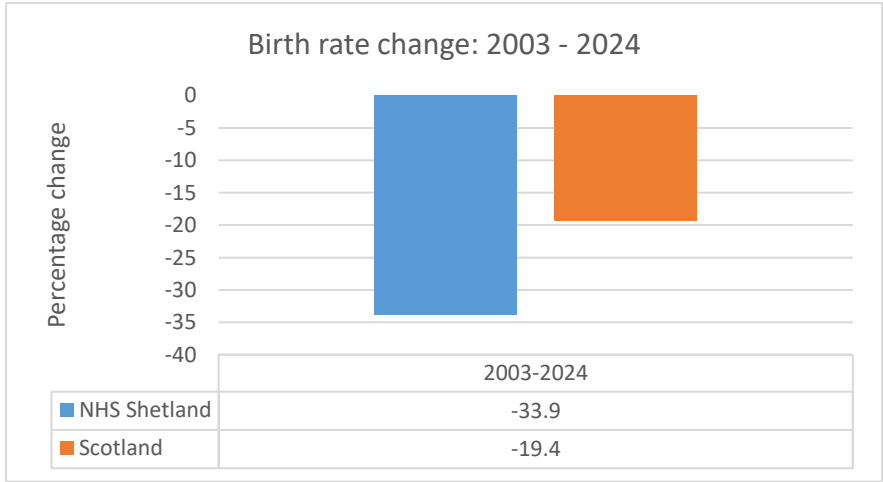
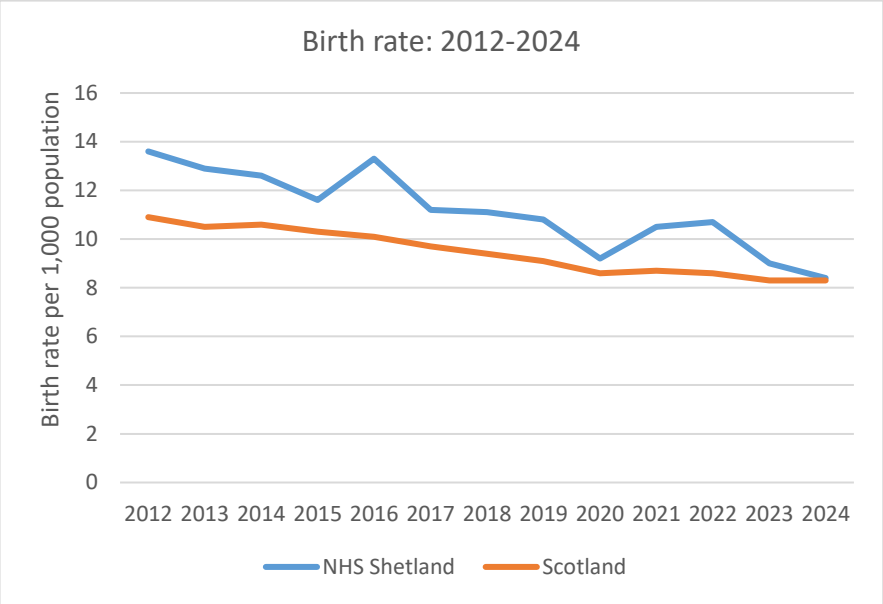
The age profile of Shetland is broadly similar to Scotland overall, with the largest proportions of the population in the 25–44 and 45–64 age groups.

Population projections suggest that there will be an overall decline in the population of all age groups between 2022 and 2047, with the largest decreases seen in the 5–11 and 12–16 age groups.



Shetland consistently had a higher birth rate than Scotland overall, although both showed a general downward trend over the period. Birth rates have declined from around 13.6 to 8.4 births per 1,000 population in Shetland and from 10.9 to 8.3 in Scotland.

Birth rates fell in both Shetland and Scotland between 2003 and 2024. The decrease was considerably larger in Shetland (-33.9%) than in Scotland overall (-19.4%).

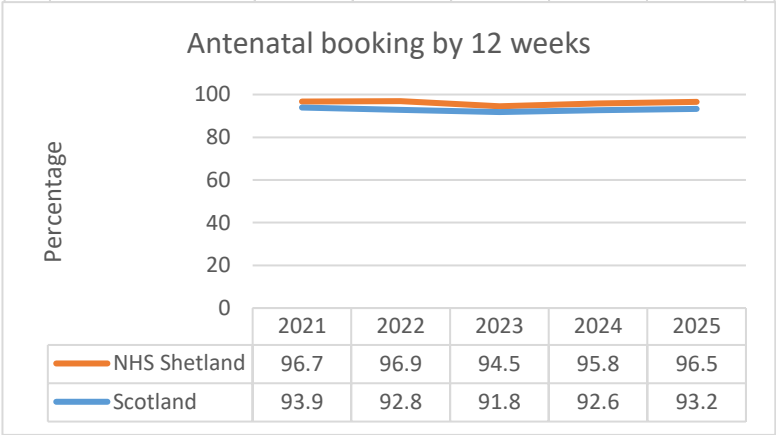
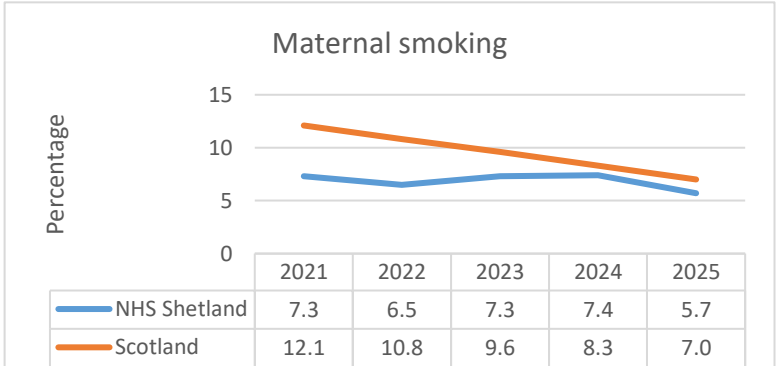
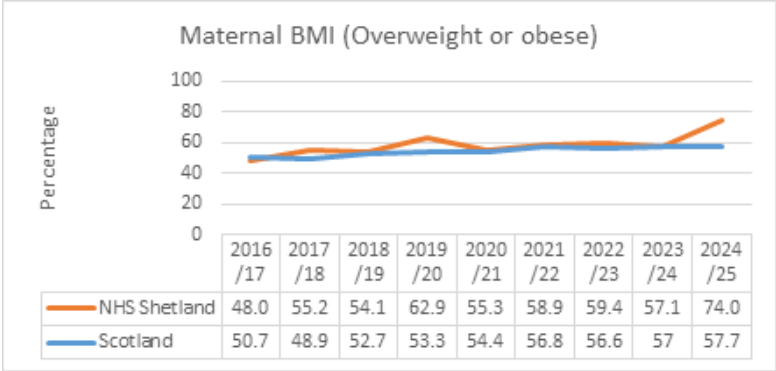


Child and Maternal Health

In Shetland, the rate of maternal smoking rates have fallen following in the most recent year, in line with the rest of Scotland, however maternal BMI remains a concern.

Antenatal booking by 12 weeks remains consistently high in both NHS Shetland and Scotland, with rates in Shetland being slightly higher.

Maternal high BMI in NHS Shetland shows a clear upward trend over time, rising more sharply than across Scotland average and reaching notably higher levels by 2024/25. In Shetland in 2024/25, almost three quarters (74%) of women were recorded as overweight or obese at their antenatal booking appointment. Nationally, over half (57.7%) of women were overweight or obese.

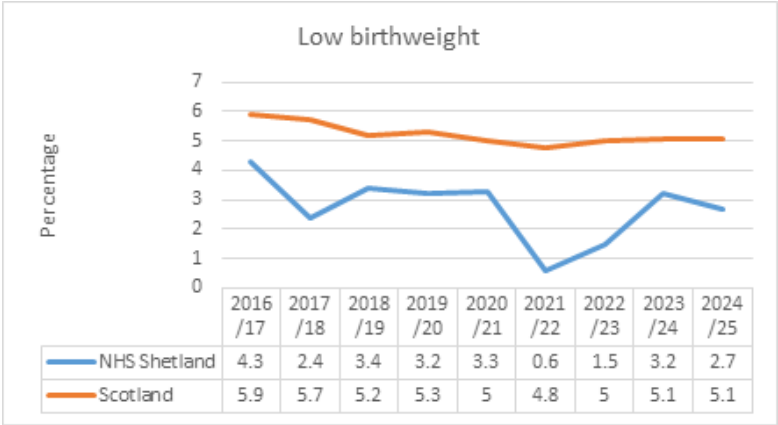
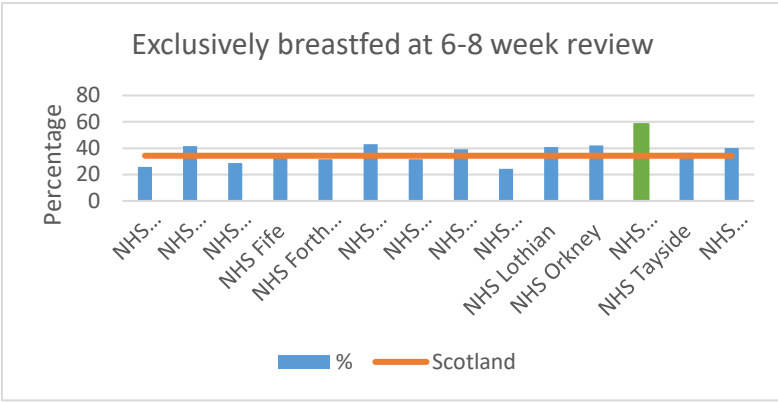
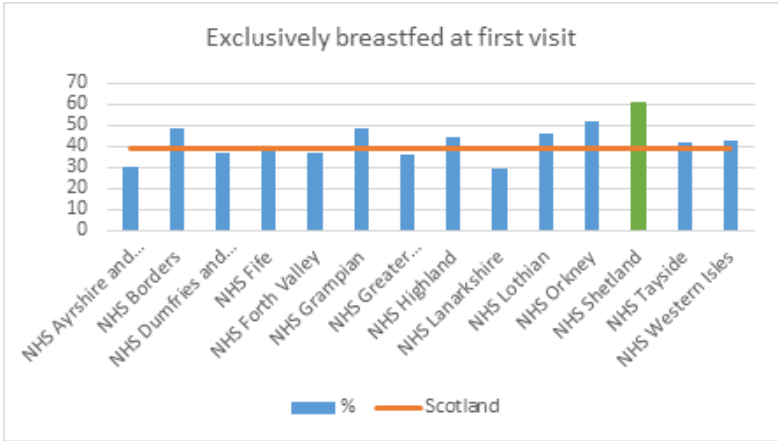


In Shetland low birthweight rates remain low and are consistently below the Scotland average.

Shetland has historically had a high breastfeeding uptake rate, with consistently more than 50% of babies being exclusively breastfed at the time of the health visitor first visit and more than 40% at the time of the 6-8 week review.

In 2024/25, Shetland has the highest breastfeeding rate at health visitor first visit – 60.4%. Similarly, at the time of 6-8 week review Shetland once again had the highest rate of babies being exclusively breastfed (58.3%).

Not only does Shetland has a high rate of breastfeeding, there is also a lower than average drop off rate between health visitor first visit and 6-8 week review. In 2024/25 the national drop off rate was 5%, however in Shetland that was -2.1% - this was the lowest drop off rate across NHS boards



Universal Health Visiting Pathway

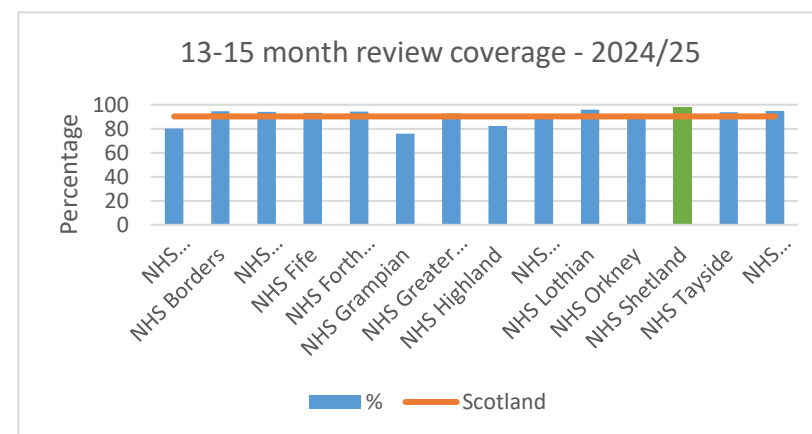
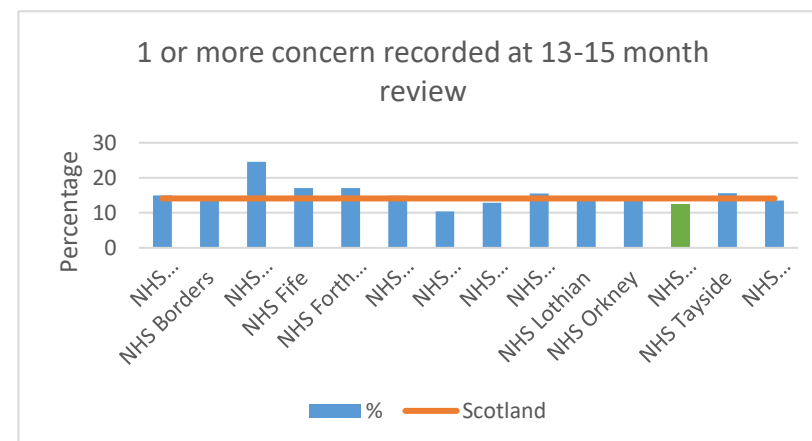
All children in Scotland are offered the Universal Health Visiting Pathway which includes a series of child health reviews, including an assessment of children's development at 13-15 months, 27-30 months and 4-5 years. These reviews involve asking parents about their child's progress, carefully observing the child, and supporting parents to complete a structured questionnaire about the child's development. At the end of the review Health Visitors record whether they have any concerns about each area of the child's development.

13 -15 month reviews

The coverage of 13-15 month reviews in Shetland in 2024/25 was higher than the national average – with 97.8% of children receiving their review. Coverage within Shetland had always been above the national level, with over 90% of children consistently having a 13-15 month review recorded.

Over recent years the proportion of children in Shetland with 1 or more concern recorded at their 13-15 month review has risen from 7.3% to 12.4%, but remains lower than the Scottish rate.

In 2024/25, 12.4% of children undergoing a 13-15 month review in Shetland had a concern recorded about at least one area of their development. This was one of the lowest rates recorded across all NHS boards, with only NHS Grampian and NHS Grampian and Greater Glasgow & Clyde having lower rates.



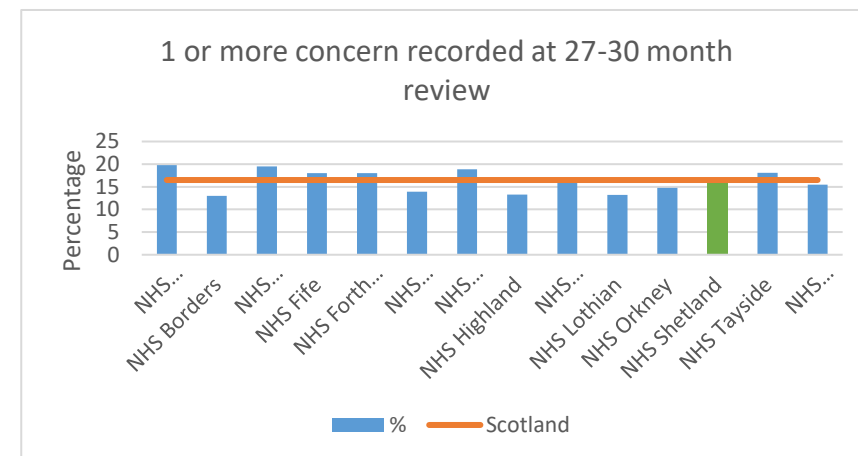
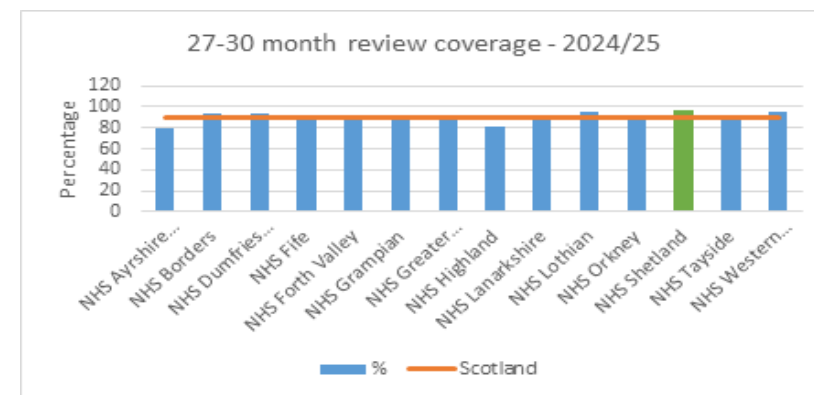
27-30 Month Reviews

The coverage of 27-30 month reviews in Shetland in 2024/25 was higher than the national average – with 96.9% of children receiving their review. Coverage within Shetland has consistently been above the national level, with over 90% of children having a 27-30 month review recorded since 2014/15. Over recent years the proportion of children in Shetland with 1 or more concern recorded at their 27-30 month review has ranged from 6.4% to 16.7% in the most recent year. In 2024/25, 16.7% of children undergoing a 27-30 month review in Shetland had a concern recorded about at least one area of their development. This was slightly above the national rate of 16.5%.

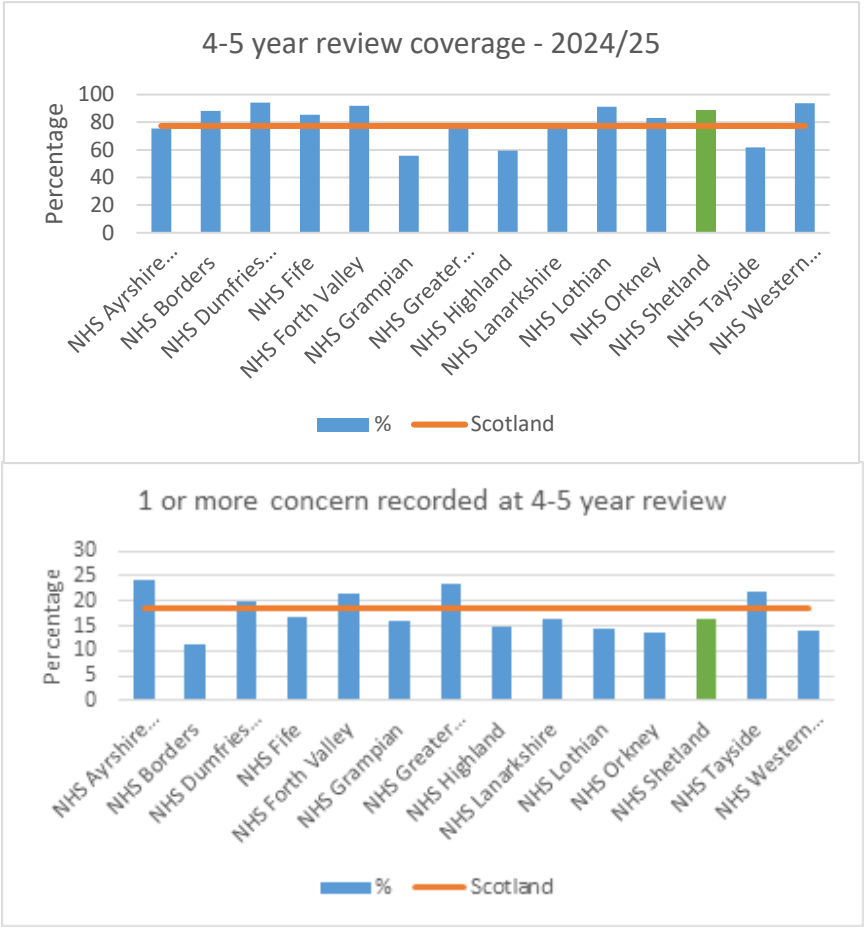
4-5 Year Reviews

The coverage of 4-5 year reviews in Shetland in 2024/25 was higher than the national average – with 88.3% of children receiving their review. Coverage within Shetland had always been above the national level, with over 85% of children consistently having a 4-5 year review recorded.

Over the last eight years the proportion of children in Shetland with 1 or more concern recorded at their 4-5 year review has ranged from 9.2% to 17.7% and was higher than the Scottish rate in 2021/22 and 2022/23.



In 2024/25, 16.3% of children undergoing a 4-5 year review in Shetland had a concern recorded about at least one area of their development. This was lower than the national rate of 18.7%.



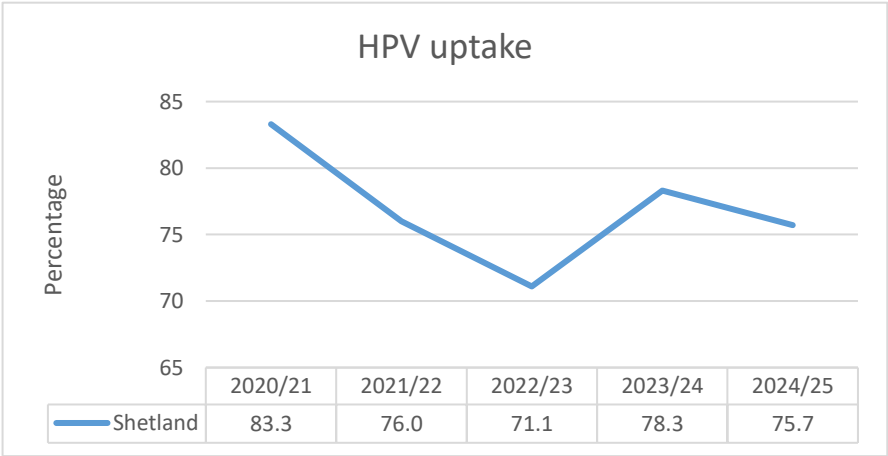
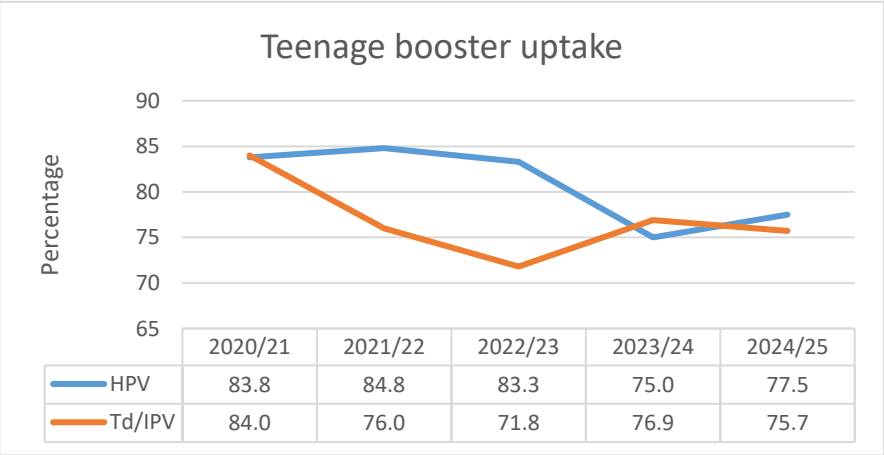
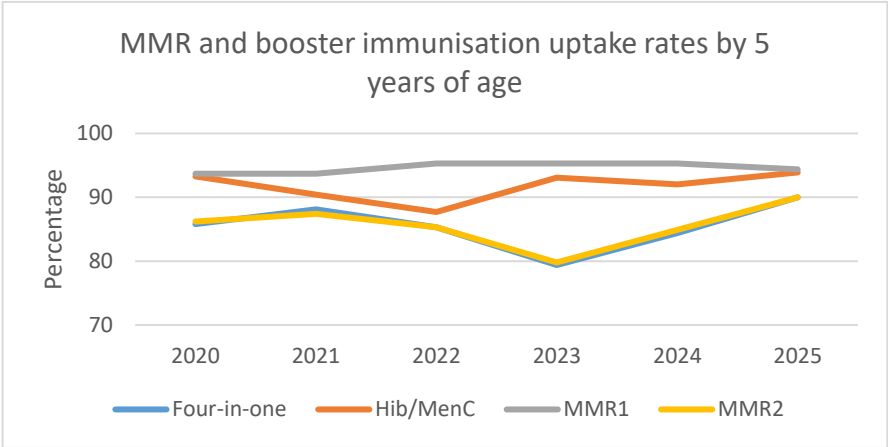
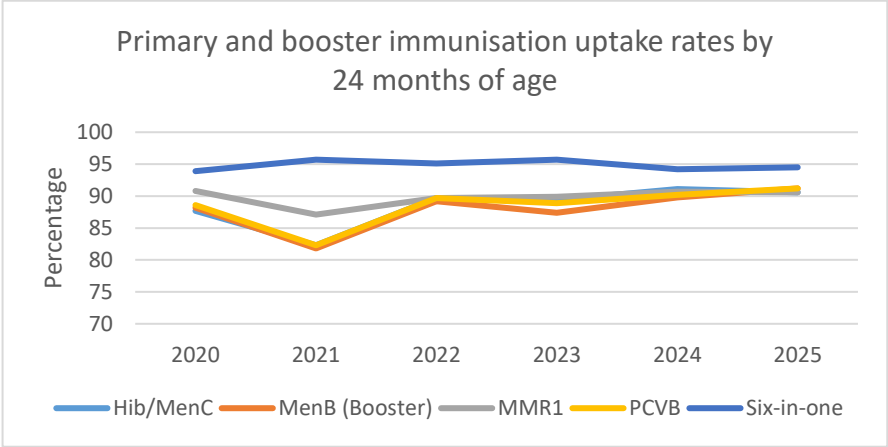
Immunisations

The most recent immunisation rates for those reaching the age of two shows uptake for the year 2025 had remained fairly stable. There was a slight decrease in uptake for some immunisations (Hib/MenC and MMR1), while it has increased slightly for others (Men B, PCV and 6-in-1). Uptake for this cohort of the different primary vaccines was between 90.6% and 94.5%.

Uptake of the pre-school booster measured at age 5 years has been low for a number of years, however 2025 saw an increase for most (4-in-1, MMR2).Uptake for this cohort of the different pre-school boosters was between 90.0% and 94.4%.

By the end of the 2024/25 school year uptake of the teenage Td/IPV Booster and MenACWY immunisation in S3 in Shetland was higher than the national rate, 75.7% in Shetland compared to 70.1% across Scotland. In Shetland there has been a decrease in uptake of both the teenage Td/IPV Booster and MenACWY immunisations between 2020/21 and 2022/23, but this has been steadily increasing since.

For the school year 2024/25, HPV vaccine coverage among female S1 pupils was 77.5%, up from 75.0% in 2023/24, but still down on 2022/23 where uptake was 83.3%. Coverage in 2024/25 was 70.0% among S1 males. Across Scotland, coverage among female S1 pupils was 75.7% and 69.7% among males.



Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

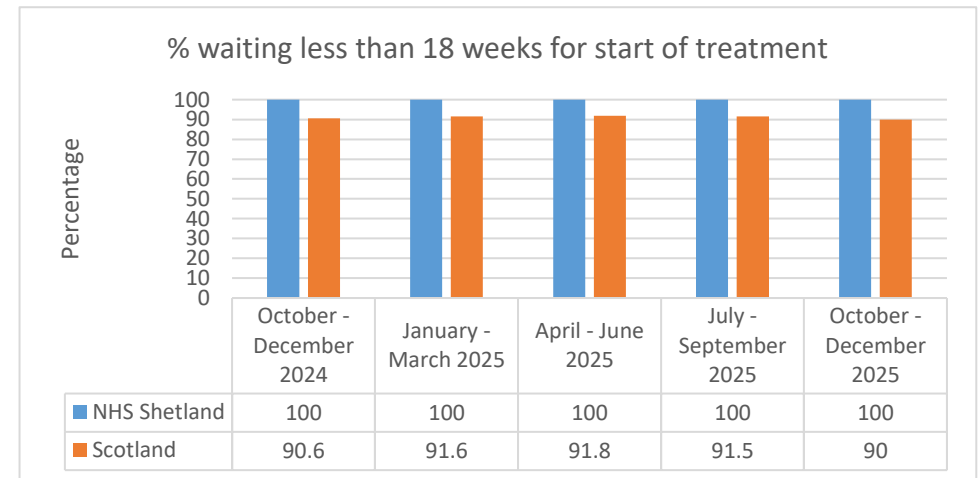
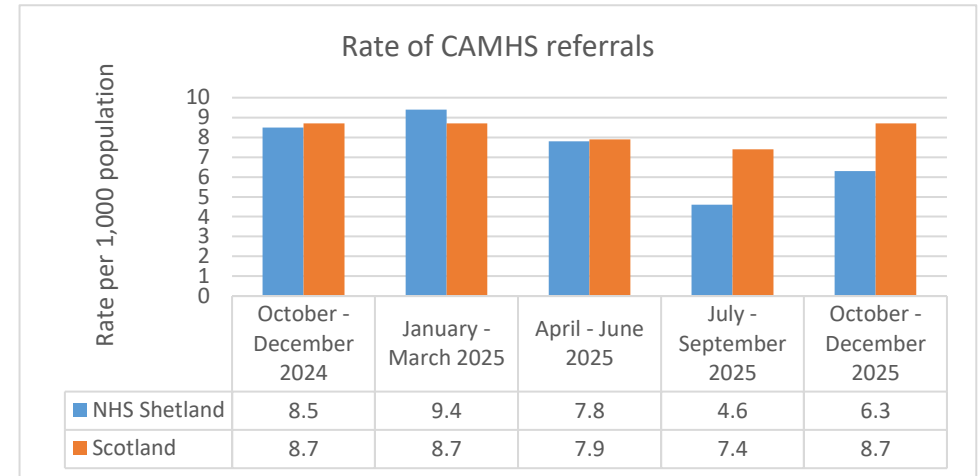
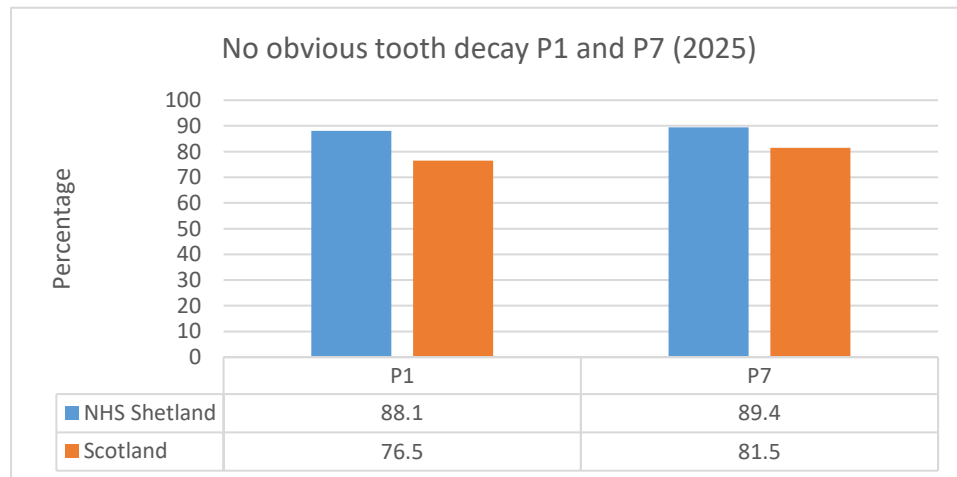
Rate of referrals has been fairly consistent to the national average, though our rate of rejected referrals is very low due to the multiagency group meetings to discuss referral and escalation. CAMHS waiting times, measured by the number of people seen within 18 weeks of being referred has been consistently better than the Scottish average.

CAMHS team also gather outcome and patient and family/carers experience data. Balancing measures of referrals into third sector and other tiers of support to understand fuller picture around mental health and wellbeing will give a more rounded picture in the future.

Autism pathway referrals have been consistently above the rate expected, and growing year on year. Waiting times for diagnosis are below the national average

Childsmile

Success of the Childsmile service is measured via the National Dental Inspection Program in schools which looks at levels of obvious tooth decay on basic inspection of Primary 1 and Primary 7 pupils. Shetland performs better than the national average in both age groups.



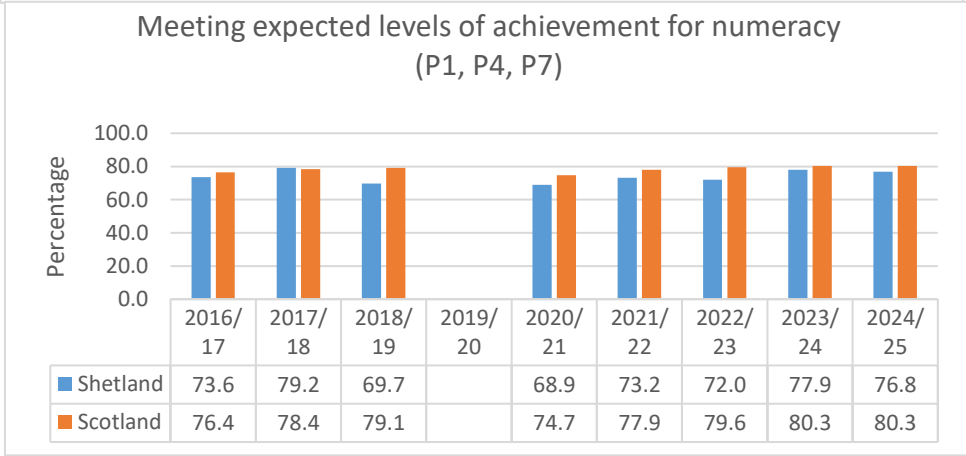
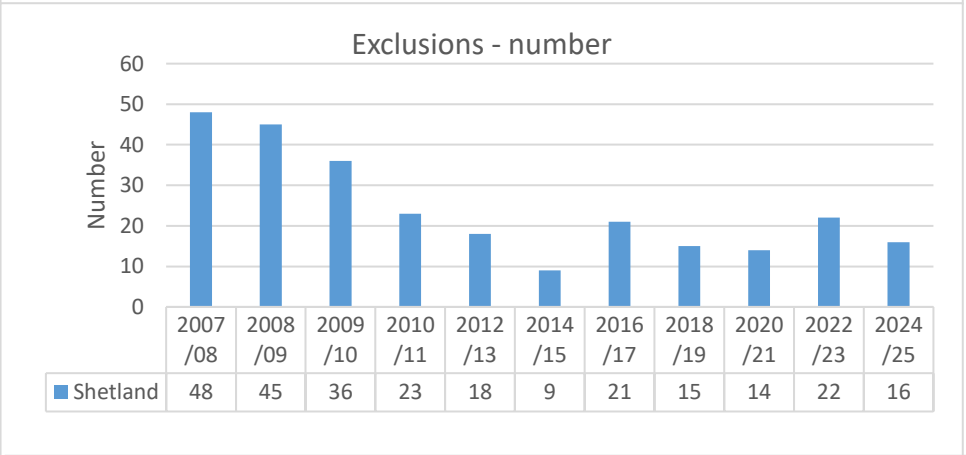
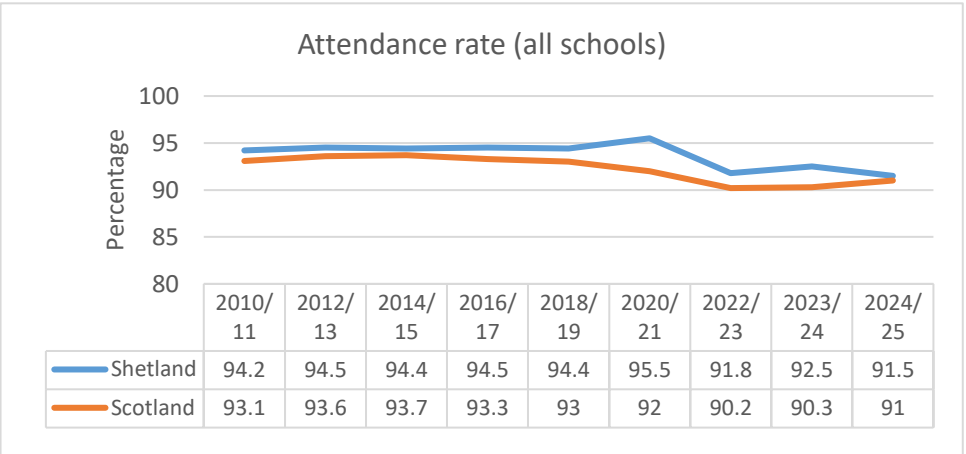
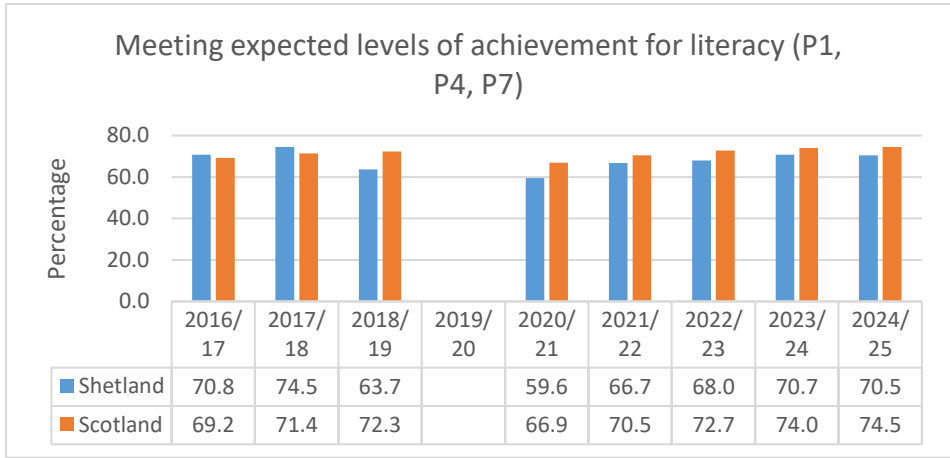
Education

Analysis of education related data, and detail on improvement work and associated targets is included within ‘The Ambition – Excellence and Equity for Shetland’s Learners’ 2022-26 strategy.

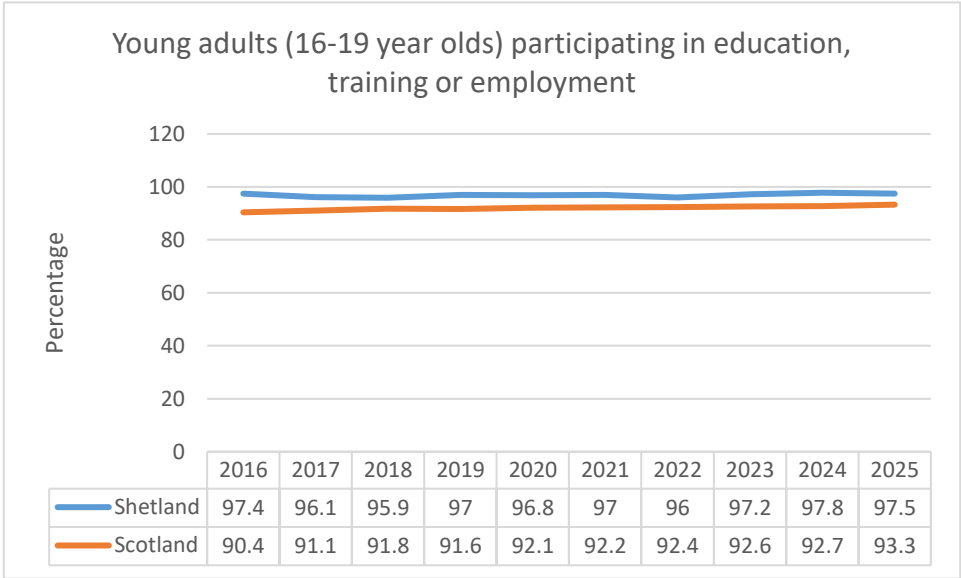
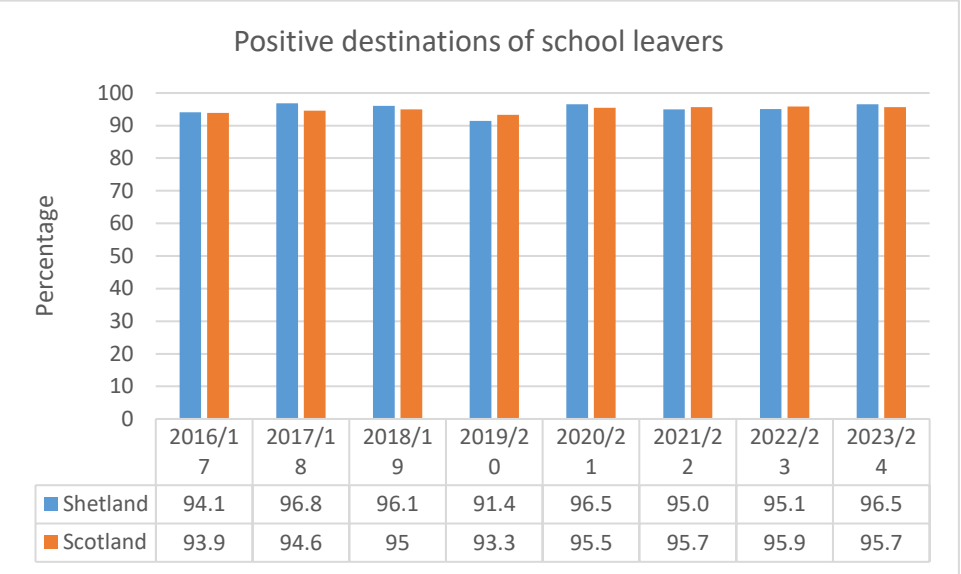
Data shows high attendance rates compared to Scotland, with Shetland attendance rates not going below 90% during the period 2010/11 to 2024/25.

There were a higher number of exclusions were highest in the earlier years (2007/08 and 2008/09) and declined overall to a low of 9 in 2014/15. In more recent years, numbers have stabilised at a lower level, generally ranging between around 14 and 22 exclusions.

Numeracy and Literacy achievement for P1/P4/P7 pupils is lower than the Scottish average. With an average of 68% meeting expected levels of achievement for literacy in the period and 74% meeting expected levels of achievement for numeracy.



Positive destinations for school leavers, and young adults in education, training or employment are both slightly higher than the Scottish average. Positive destinations for school leavers averaged at 95% during the period, while the average percentage of young adults in education, training or employment was slightly higher at 97%.

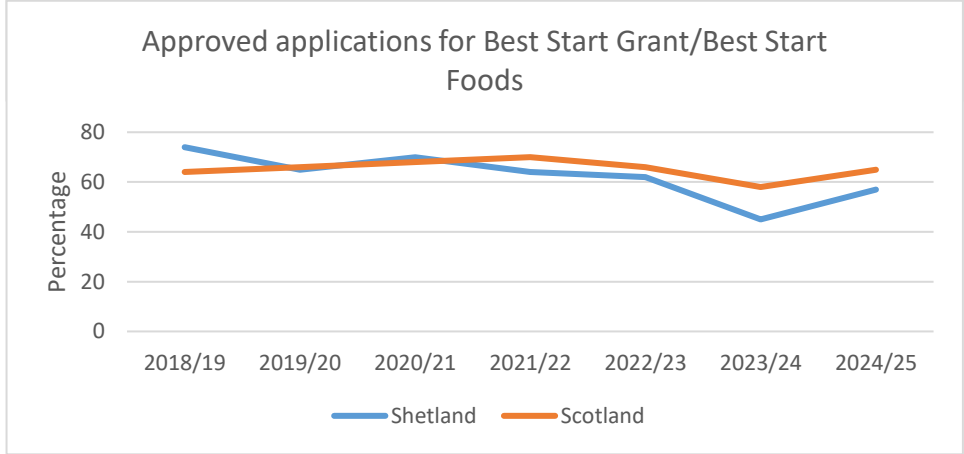
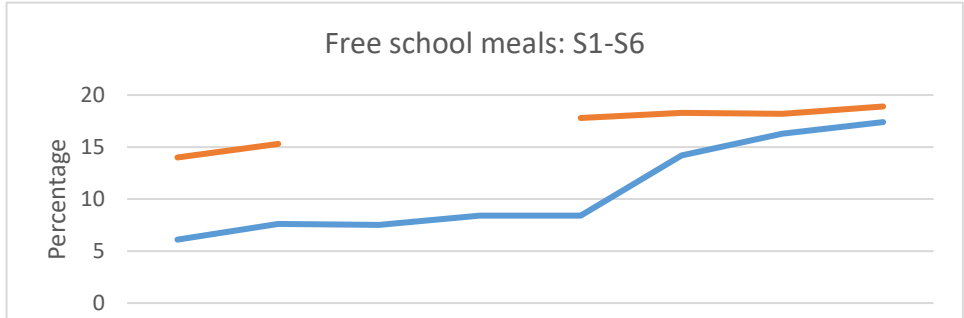
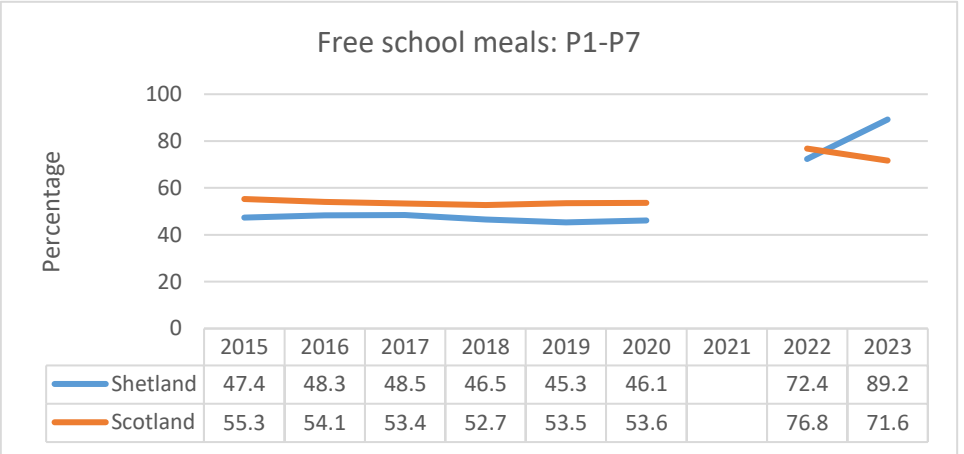


Poverty

From 2015 to 2020, primary school free school meal uptake in Shetland remained relatively stable at around 45–49%, consistently below the Scotland average. Uptake increased sharply in 2022, with Shetland rising to an all-time high of around 89% in 2023. Scotland uptake in 2023 was 71.6%.

Uptake of secondary school free school meal uptake in Shetland has increased sharply from 2022, with Shetland rising from 8.4% to 17.4% in 2025, but still remains lower than the Scotland rate of 18.9%.

The proportion of approved Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods applications in Shetland has fallen over the last number of years and has fallen below the national average. In 2024/25 there was a slight increase to around 57%, although this remained below the Scotland figure of 65%.



Protecting our Most Vulnerable

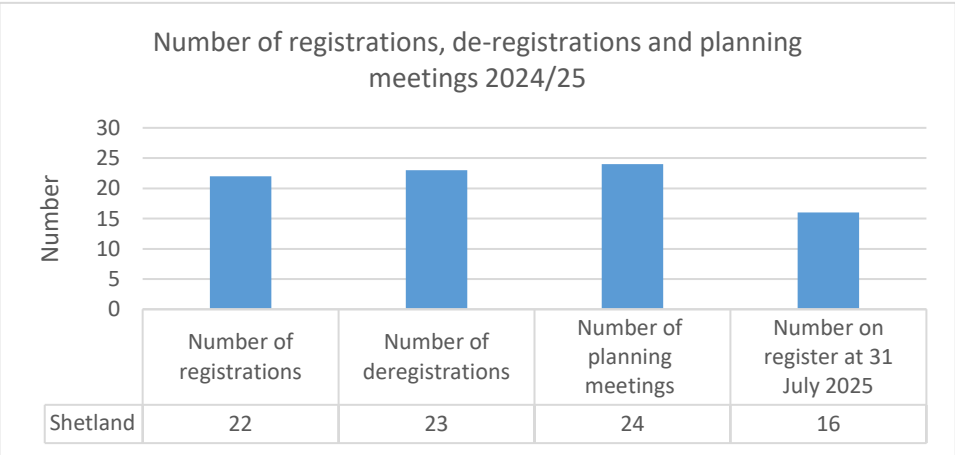
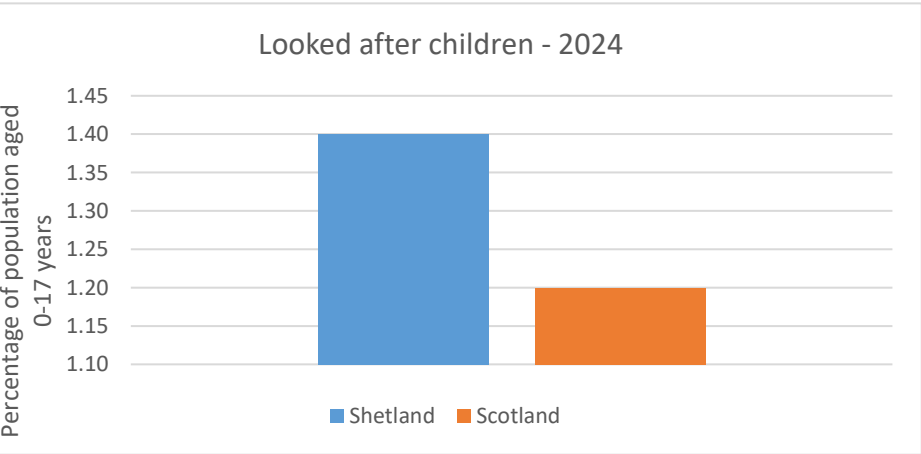
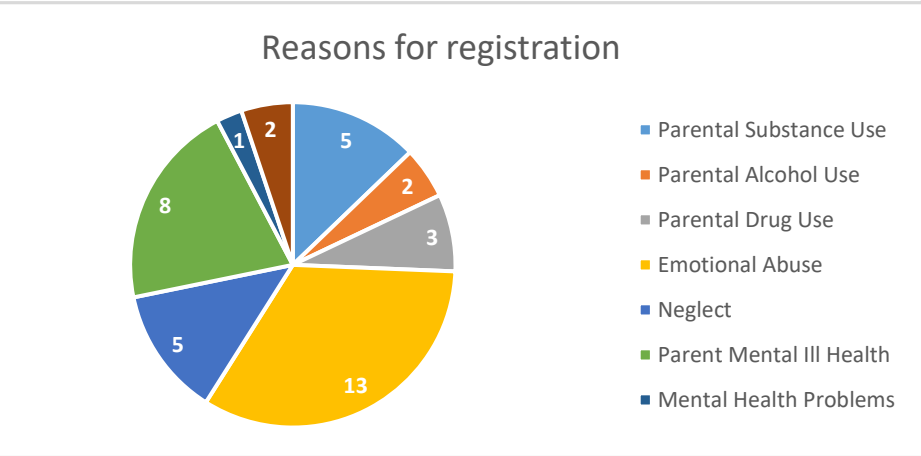
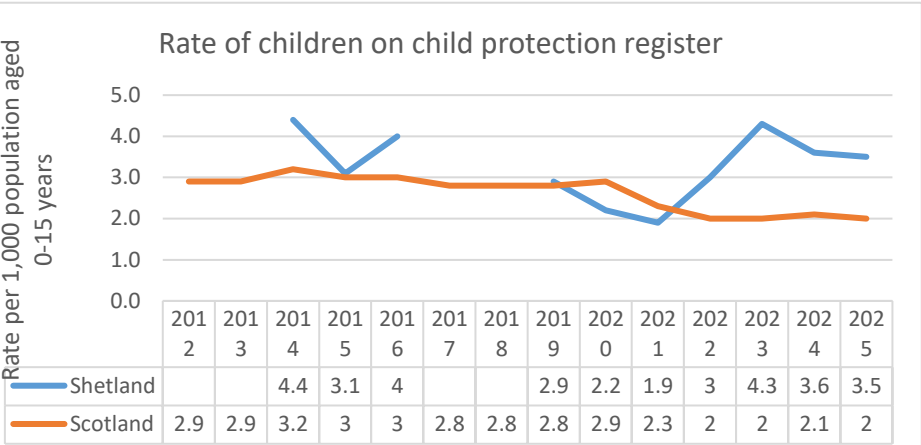
Our data around child protection must be interpreted with caution due to the small numbers involved – variations can look significant but may represent family make up rather than a change due to work that has taken place.

More than one reason can be recorded for each child and a different reason may be recorded for the same child at Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings and subsequent Reviews

The rate of children on the child protection register in Shetland has fluctuated from year to year due to small numbers. In the last four years the rate of children on the child protection register in Shetland has been higher than the national average. The Shetland rate was 3.5 per 1,000 population in 2025, compared to 2 per 1,000 population across Scotland.

Emotional abuse was the most common reason for registration, accounting for the largest share, followed by parent mental ill health and both neglect and parental substance use. Other reasons, including parental alcohol use, parental drug use, mental health problems, and domestic abuse, were less frequently recorded.

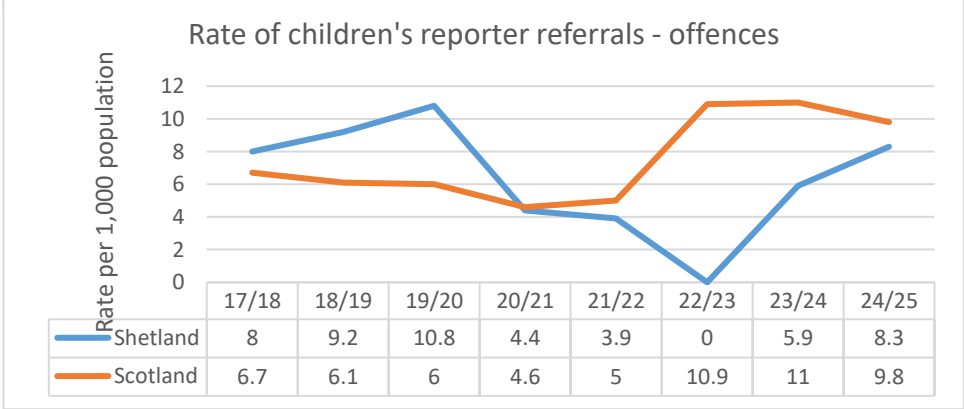
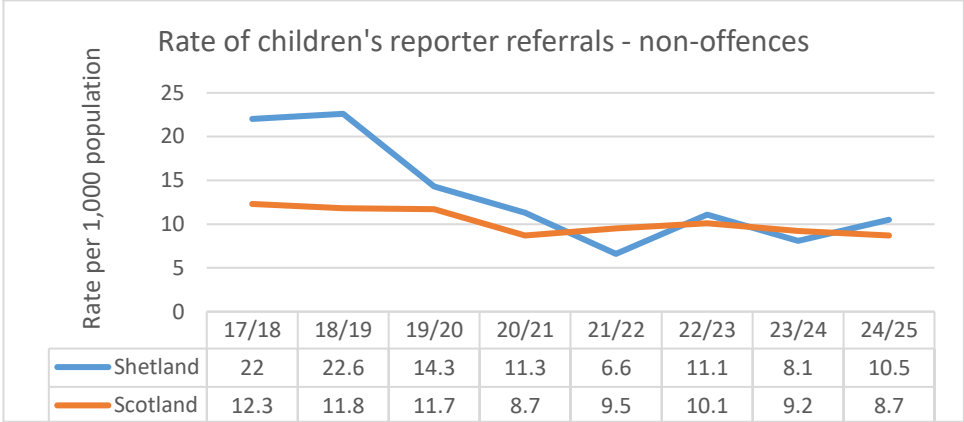
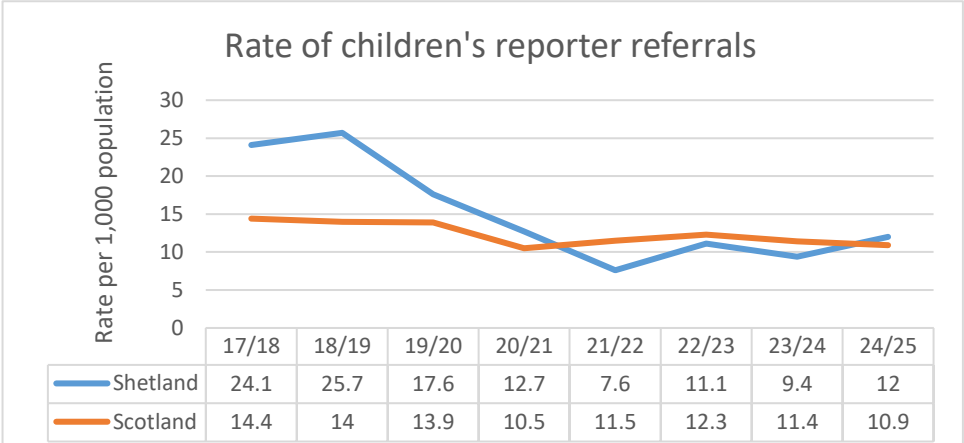
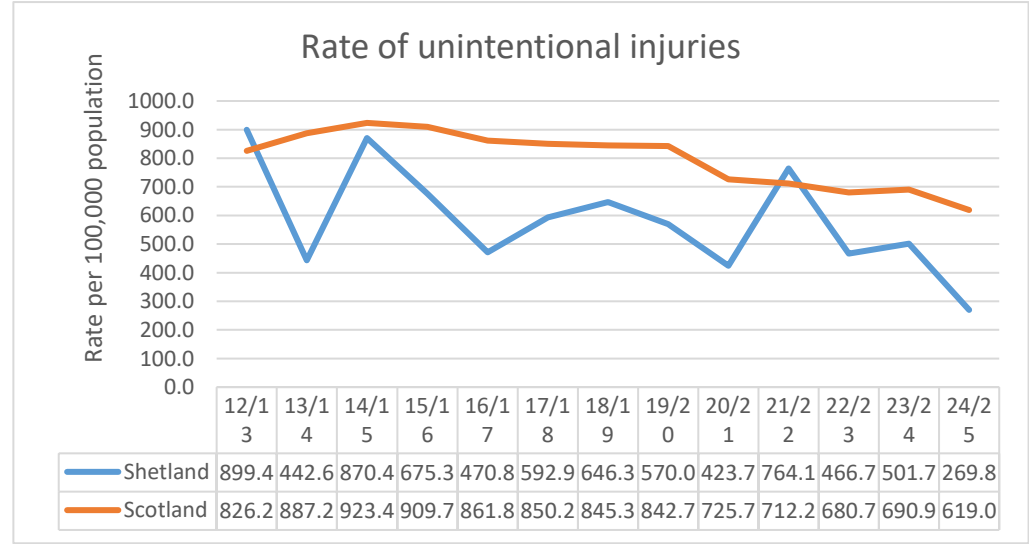
In 2024, the proportion of looked after children aged 0–17 years was higher in Shetland (1.4%) than in Scotland overall (1.2%).



The rate of unintentional injuries in Shetland has fluctuated considerably over time, with the rate in 2024/25 being 269.8 per 100,000 population. The Scotland rate is generally higher than Shetland in most years, with a rate of 619 per 100,000 population being recorded in 2024/25.

The rate of Children’s Reporter referrals in Shetland has seen a slight increase over the last four years and is now slightly higher than the Scotland rate. In 2024/25 the rate of referrals in Shetland was 12 per 1,000 population, compared to the Scotland rate of 10.9 per 1,000 population.

Historically the majority of these referrals have been for non-offences. However, in 2024/25 there was a similar proportion of non-offence and offence referrals. The rate of non-offence referrals was 10.5 per 1,000 population and offence referrals was 8.3 per 1,000 population. In the most recent year the rate non-offence referrals in Shetland was higher than across Scotland. While the rate of offence referrals was lower.



Shetland's Local Annual Child Poverty Action Report, Year 8

Reporting on 2025/26



Foreword

This eighth Local Annual Child Poverty Action Report highlights the collective efforts of Shetland Islands Council, NHS Shetland, community organisations, employers and communities during 2025-26 to reduce child poverty and mitigate its impact on children, young people and families across Shetland. It demonstrates the value of partnership working and the commitment of organisations and communities to improve outcomes for families facing financial pressures.

While child poverty rates in Shetland remain lower than the national average, poverty continues to affect hundreds of local children and young people. The data within this report reminds us that employment alone is not always enough to protect families from hardship. Many children living in poverty in Shetland are in working households, reflecting the significant challenges created by rising living costs, childcare pressures and the additional costs associated with living in an island community.

Throughout this report, there are examples of practical support that has made a difference to people's lives. These include employability and skills programmes for parents, initiatives that improve access to childcare, financial inclusion services, cost of living support, community-based projects and opportunities that help children to thrive. These activities contribute to the three key drivers of child poverty identified by the Scottish Government.

A strong theme throughout the year has been the importance of dignity, early intervention and person-centred support. Many of the activities described in this report have sought to reduce stigma and improve access to services, ensuring families can access the right support at the right time. Partners have continued to invest in workforce development, collaboration, and systems change to improve how services work together and respond to complex needs.

As we look ahead to the development of Shetland's next Child Poverty Action Plan, it is essential to learn from evidence and lived experience, and the work already taking place across our community. By working together, listening to families and maintaining a focus on prevention, we can strengthen our response to poverty and improve the outlook for future generations.

Finally, we would like to thank all colleagues, partners, community organisations and families who have contributed to this report and the work it represents. We are particularly grateful to Lewie Peterson (Partnership Officer) for coordinating and compiling this report.

Jordan Sutherland
Executive Manager, Children's Social Work
Shetland Islands Council

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Introduction

In Shetland, reducing child poverty and mitigating its impact can only happen through partnership approaches and in a way that reflects people's circumstances and needs in the isles. It is important that:

- All organisations and communities realise this issue is relevant to them, and that they each have a role to play in solving this issue.
- Children, young people, their parents (and the wider community) are actively involved in shaping projects, products and services.
- We monitor impact to inform future work – for example, recognising that testing new approaches may not always work as intended. Failing fast and sharing the learning from these experiences is as important as learning from things that work well.

Drivers of Child Poverty

Evidence tells us that the three drivers of poverty are income from employment, cost of living, and income from social security and benefits in kind ([Best Start, Bright Futures, Scottish Government 2022-2026 Child Poverty Plan, 2022](#)). The Scottish Government state that impacting these drivers will impact levels of child poverty, and a focus on them is strongly encouraged.

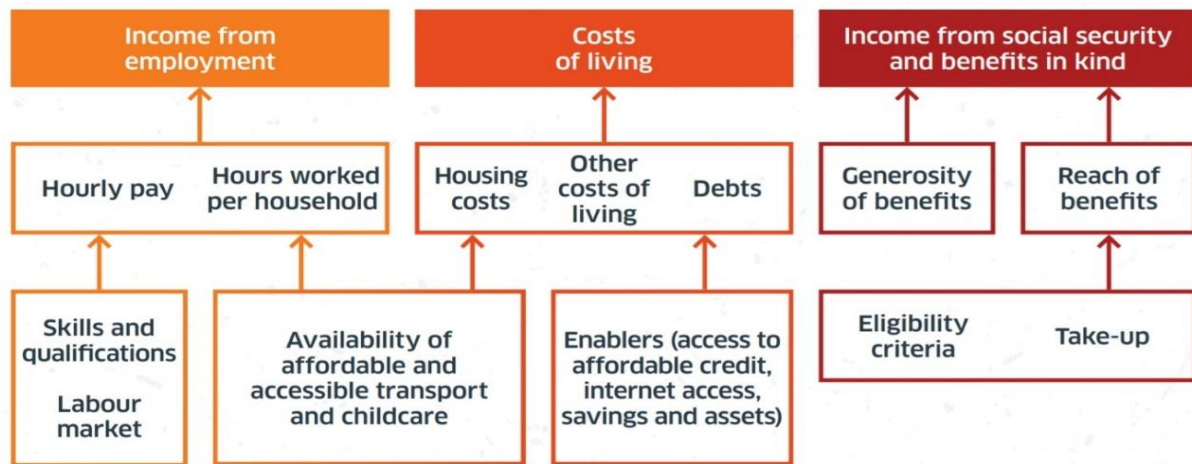
The six priority groups identified in the "Best Start, Bright Futures" plan for Scotland include:

- lone parent families,
- minority ethnic families,
- families with a disabled adult or child,
- families with a younger mother (under 25),
- families with a child under one,
- larger families (three or more children).

These groups are identified as having a greater risk of child poverty. The approach to this report focuses on supporting all families and parents but prioritising those who need most help. While much of the work below is targeting the groups above, many of the examples are looking at ways of supporting ALL families and preventing stigma/stereotyping. Due to the relatively small numbers in populations in Shetland, it is not always possible to monitor specific groups in terms of income/poverty. For the latest collated stats on where Shetland sits in terms of these groups please see <https://scotland.shinyapps.io/phs-child-poverty-dashboard/> and under the relevant sections.

In this report, we have highlighted which driver each activity aims to address. As stated in the [Local Child Poverty Action Report guidance](#), supporting families means taking a holistic approach; often activities carried out by partners and communities will influence more than one driver. When appropriate we will refer to the priority groups that work was aimed for.

The below image portrays the drivers of child poverty (Best Start, Bright Futures, 2022).



Approach on Reporting

The first section of this report introduces recent data on child poverty in Shetland and what we know.

The second and main part focuses on activity and impacts from 2025/26 by partners and communities. These are set out under three headings, as a series of updates and case studies. Mirroring Best Start Bright Futures (2022), we look at a wide range of examples of activity which contribute to:

- **providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work.**
- **maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs.**
- **supporting the next generation to thrive.**

This year's report will also refer to wider **systems change and organisation development** and values based cultural change on how to work with people/families in our community who may be most vulnerable/at risk of poverty and making sure our organisations are working better together and that people in need are receiving genuine person-centred care at the best time.

Strategic Connections

This report has direct connections to the Shetland Partnership Annual Report 2025-26, the current Shetland Partnership Delivery Plan, and the Shetland Children's Partnership Plan.

Some of the case studies in this report are featured in the Shetland Children's Partnership Annual Report (25-26), and Shetland Partnership Annual Report (25-26) as they contribute to both Partnership Priorities as well as the drivers of child poverty.

We are continuing our approach developed across partners, for the planning and implementation of future actions to address Child Poverty across our communities:

- The strategic actions required to primarily mitigate the impact of Child Poverty are set out in both this report and in the Shetland's Children's Partnership Plan (23-26), Priority Area 3 – Reducing the Impact of Poverty on Children and Families.

- The strategic actions required to support structural change to reduce Child Poverty are set out in the Shetland Partnership Delivery Plan (i.e. this delivery plan has been developed through a lens of reducing Child Poverty).
- Shetland Islands Council's Children's Services Directorate Plan (2026-29) also links through its commitment to "Reduce the number of children and young people affected by poverty".

The work being done across the community also feeds into national priorities such as The Promise and UNCRC Incorporation. The Promise Scotland was established by Scottish Ministers following the Independent Care Review in 2020 which found that the current care system was not working. On 5th February 2020, Scotland made a promise that all children would grow up loved, safe, and respected. Last year, Promise Scotland published Plan 24-30, which is built on five foundations: 'family', 'voice', 'care', 'people', and 'scaffolding'. The plan provides a route map for keeping the Promise in Scotland, with the vision that, wherever safe to do so, families are supported to stay together.



Poverty affects the community's ability to fulfil The Promise. Conditions of poverty influence a family's ability to provide for their children. Once a child is in care, a family may find themselves in very challenging financial circumstances. In some cases, financial supports were almost immediately cut off at the point when a child was removed from the care of their birth parent. Poverty-proofing For Families in or on the Edges of Care is based on research by OPFS with Child Poverty Action Group, and with The Promise Scotland providing advice and support.

It comes at a time when the cost-of-living crisis is acute for children and families, and the number of children and families interacting with the care system or on the cusp of care is expected to rise.

In the summer of 2024, the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child was incorporated into Scots Law and therefore Public Bodies across Scotland should use their maximum resource to make sure rights are met.

Poverty is one of the main barriers to a child having their rights met. Children have the right to have their family supported and to benefit from social security. They have a right to an adequate standard of living, including nutritious food and a safe warm home. They have rights to the highest attainable standard of health, to extra support if they are a young carer, or disabled, or care experienced – groups we know who are disproportionately impacted by poverty. They have the right to survive, grow and develop, and governments must do everything they can to prevent the deaths of children and young people. (<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/positions/child-poverty/>)

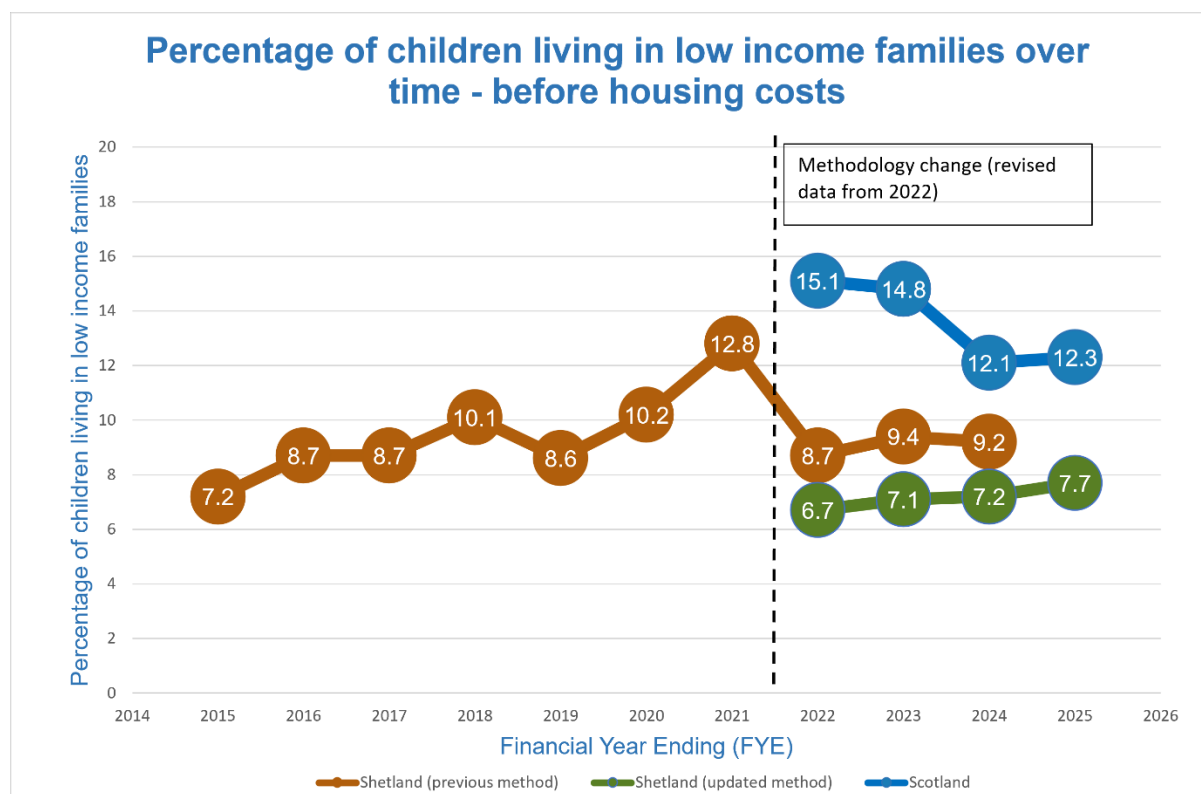


What we know: Child Poverty in Shetland

Poverty and Cost of Living Data for Shetland

Shetland has seen gradual increase in poverty rates since the early 2010s – although levels are consistently lower than Scotland as a whole, **7.7% of Shetland's under 16s population (308) were living in low-income families in 2024/25** (increasing by 0.5% from the previous year). Scotland's level averages at 12.3%.

Shetland has the 4th lowest level of children living in low-income families in Scotland in 2024/25 (after East Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire and Aberdeenshire), this is higher than pre-pandemic levels with fluctuations reflecting national patterns.



After housing costs, 9.3% of children in Shetland were living in low income families. This is the third lowest level in Scotland behind East Dunbartonshire (7.8%) and East Renfrewshire (8.5%). The Scottish average was 14.8%, and the highest level was in Glasgow City with 23.3%.

What are we defining as being in a low income household?

For purposes of this report Child Poverty is defined as those living in low income families (with less than 60% of median household income) (Child Poverty Action Group). It is not having enough money to buy the things your household needs and to participate fully in society (CPAG 2025).

As of 2025 the Department for Work and Pensions now calculates low income families by linking administrative data to responses to the Family Resources Survey, providing more accurate income estimates. This revised methodology has been back dated only to 2022. As a result, the updated figures should not be compared with previously released figures.

These figures do not take into account the higher cost of living in remote and rural Scotland. Almost half of people in Shetland live in households with an income less than the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) benchmark. In working households, 42% of people in Shetland lived below the benchmark, compared to 29% across Scotland. This may mean that, even in households where adults are working and earning what would be considered a decent wage, financial hardship may be a risk or already being experienced.

“A minimum standard of living in the UK today includes, but is more than just, food, clothes and shelter. It is about having what you need in order to have the opportunities and choices necessary to participate in society”.

The Child Poverty Action Group highlight that poverty rarely has a single cause and that in the recent past, child poverty levels in the UK have been significantly lower than they are today. A range of national factors including: rising living costs, low pay, lack of work and inadequate social security benefits together, mean that some people do not have enough resources.

Shetland has one of the highest employment rates in the country (**85.5% of working age in 2025 compared to 76.6% for Scotland**), one of the lowest unemployment rates (**1.9% in 2025**) and the highest youth participation measure in Scotland (**97.5% of 16–19-year-olds in Shetland were participating in education, employment, or training**).

However, employment is no longer a guaranteed route out of poverty. Out of all Shetland children living in poverty, more than three-quarters are in households where at least one adult is in work. **The number and proportion of children in relative poverty in a household where at least one adult works sits at 76.7% compared to a national average of 66.3%.**

In 2025-26, **21% of Shetland school pupils (726) were registered for Free School Meals** - an increase from 20% (698) in 24/25. This follows the alignment decision made by Shetland Islands Council in 2023 with regards to Free School Meals and Clothing Grants and to increase clothing grants by 50% in 2023-24.

Foodbank usage is still much higher than ten years ago but has decreased since last year. An average of **85 food parcels were distributed per month** by the Shetland Foodbank in 2025-26, a decrease from 92 parcels per month on the previous year. It is still significant to note that 1,620 people during the year received this support, with approximately **22% of those helped being under the age of 16.**

Locality Profile Data

For a breakdown of where each area of Shetland sits in terms of some of these statistics, the Shetland Partnership has created Locality Profiles which can be found at the link below.

<https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/locality-profiles>

Please note that due to the small scale of population, there may be skewed results or trends at times, for example, if a family moves from one area to another.

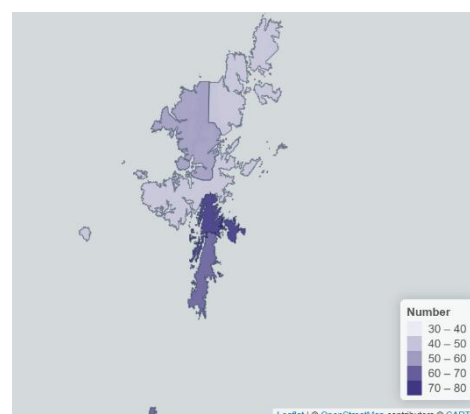
Cost of Living impacts more on our rural communities and especially on Shetland’s smaller islands communities. *(Not all individual ward details been published as up to date as 25/26)*

Locality	Children in Poverty (2024-25 DWP) %	Children in Poverty AFTER Housing Costs (24/25 DWP) %	Cost of Living (% compared to Shetland average -20-65% over UK average)	Out of Work Benefits 2023/24 (% claiming)	Median Income (2022) (% compared to Shetland average of £34,095))
Lerwick & Bressay	9.45	11.28	-13	12.2	-3.1
Central	7.18	8.22	-8	8.6	13.2
North	7.81	10.93	8	8.8	-6.6
South	6.5	8.78	-8	7.2	23.4
West	5.53	7.9	+8	8.3	-1.9
Whalsay & Skerries	8.92	9.08	+13	3.4	-22.2
Yell, Unst & Fetlar	8.45	7.24	+13	9.7	-25.7
Shetland	7.7	9.3		9.3	

While Lerwick has the highest rates of Child Poverty in Shetland (before and after housing costs) it should also be taken into account that is relatively the least expensive place to live in Shetland. The North Mainland has the second highest rates after housing costs including one of their schools (Mossbank) where over half its pupils qualify for Free School Meals.

It is now possible to Map the number of children under 16 living in relative poverty, BEFORE housing costs by 2022 Intermediate Zone. This is from the most up to date figures (March 2026). Although care should be taken on assumptions using this data. For more data related to Child Poverty in Scotland and Shetland, it is recommended to use Public Health Scotland's Prevention Dashboard, which supports local strategic child poverty planning, monitoring and evaluation.

<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/phs-child-poverty-dashboard/>



What We Have Done (2025/26)

In 2023, the attached plan for the next three years was created with priorities around mitigating the impacts of poverty on families. These were:

- **Normalising family support, and ensuring child and family centred approaches, across all of our supports.**
- **Increasing the income to our families.**

Throughout Shetland, work being carried out is informed by data, user experience and strengthened by collaboration, with any learning used to inform future plans and methodology.

The planning and delivery of actions in order to address structural changes required to reduce Child Poverty, are set out in the Delivery Plan for Shetland's Partnership Plan, 2023-2028 www.shetlandpartnership.org/downloads/file/73/shetland-partnership-delivery-plan-2023-2028

This section of the report focuses on the rationale, activity, impact and learning from 2025/26. Activities and case studies by SIC, NHS Shetland and partners, which contribute to the drivers of child poverty highlighted will be grouped into three main sections – each one reflected by the drivers below:

- **'Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work'.**
- **Maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs.**
- **Supporting the next generation to thrive.**

This report will also highlight longer term **upcoming systemic and professional development** happening across our systems and workforce and how our organisations' staff are **upskilled in how to respond to ever changing situations and needs in families** they may work with.

This report is not intended to be a complete guide to everything Shetland is doing towards fighting poverty and its impact but to shed light on the issue and highlight areas of work that may not be known or where there are key lessons learned. For more information on previous years please visit this link.

<https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/download/330/annual-child-poverty-action-reports>

Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work

Work potentially offers a sustainable route out of poverty for many families and has a strong role to play in a balanced approach to tackling poverty (Best Start, Bright Futures, 2022). The Scottish Government outline that for this to be possible, a wide range of systems need to align. This includes a strong labour market with fair and flexible employment; along with availability of affordable and accessible transport and childcare; skills and qualifications; and fair hourly pay for instance. As Shetland's rate of in-work poverty rates are significant, it is not just about targeting those unemployed but bettering the conditions and pay for those already in work.

The Scottish Government's six priority family groups for tackling child poverty are:

- lone parent families,
- households with a disabled member,
- families with three or more children,
- minority ethnic families,
- families with a child under one,
- and families with mothers aged under 25.

Over the past year, there have been examples of local collaborative working to support these groups, supporting parents into employment, increasing childcare availability/flexibility and support businesses and fair work in the island's economy.

Hidden Talent - Recruiting and Supporting an Untapped Workforce Shetland Local Employability Partnership (SLEP) and various partners

Shetland has future workforce challenges that are not always reflective of national trends. Currently the community has a high job density (more jobs than working-age people) with many local employers/services voicing concerns about recruitment and retention of staff that may require additional support.



There is a high proportion of those not in work also having an Additional Support Need, disability, or barriers accessing work due to travel or childcare. If we want to support the next generation or support households where there may be a disability/learning need, employer engagement is crucial and was identified as a priority for the Employability Partnership this year.

As part of Shetland Employability Week (February 2026) the Partnership wanted to focus on upskilling local employers and raising awareness on the diverse needs/demands of a future workforce and practical steps that can be taken to support recruitment and retention. The aim was to start engagement with interested businesses and organisations so they are better equipped to attract, recruit and maintain staff in the future and that individuals'/parents'/families' needs are taken into account and strengths recognised.

Two workshops were aimed at local employers at Shetland Museum & Archives based on these themes:

- ***Hidden Talent - Recruiting and Supporting an Untapped Workforce***
- ***Looking to the Future: Apprenticeships and Business Development***

Feedback from previous years was that local employers liked to hear from local professionals and build a network/support that could be sustained after such activities/events. Therefore the Partnership used local employability providers (Moving On Employability Project, Bridges Project, Project Search, COPE) and local expertise in areas such as neurodiversity (NHS), Justice experience (Community Justice) and local data on employability (DWP and Employability Pathway). There was also presence from universities (Robert Gordon and University for Highlands and Islands) on graduate/modern apprenticeship pathways, Skills Development Scotland shared information on developing small business and Highlands & Islands



Enterprise (HIE) presented on Shetland's future workforce demands. There was also input from local employers who had experience of some of the themes and could talk about practice in a relatable way.

The format of the session was a round table discussion where employers could talk to each professional/employer/organisation candidly about issues they were seeing and receive hands-on advice there and then. Developing Young Workforce used their network to invite potential employers and the sessions formed part of Employability Week after a previous successful employer session in 2025.

The sessions were attended by approximately 35 employing staff from a variety of organisations representing public sector, engineering, construction, healthcare, logistics, ICT and aquaculture.

The feedback stated 100% of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the workshop they attended and that the majority of them had more knowledge of issues such as Supported Employment, local support for their business/organisation and the work of the Local Employability Partnership in general.

"It was good to get chatting to people who really know about conditions our workforce might have. I would love to hear from more employers who are further on in their journey." (local employer)

"We would love to see more events like this even for staff." (HR staff member SIC)

Plans are to replicate similar sessions in 26/27 with a combination of issues that employers want to discuss and ones which the Partnership and stakeholders feel are important. Feedback strongly emphasised a demand for more of these activities with employers and to put more smaller scale engagements between professionals/experts and local business when it comes to themes such as neurodiversity and supported employment methods. Employers also requested sessions throughout the year rather than on the same week as the Careers Fair where small organisations struggle for capacity to engage fully for consecutive days.

While the aim is to support as many organisations as possible, it was noted that some of Shetland's biggest private employers were represented including NHS and SIC, which is encouraging. There will be work done in the next year between SLEP and these anchor organisations on how they can be supported in themes such as supported employment, flexible working, job carving and reasonable adjustments for individuals depending on their needs and talents.

Upskilling Parents at Shetland Family Centre – PEEP Pathway (Shetland Family Centre & Local Employability Partnership)

The Shetland Family Centre supports the community through parenting programmes, one-to-one family support, and targeted early interventions for all families (including those experiencing poverty, isolation or additional support needs). Their Peep programme helps parents to support their child's early development, learn new skills and connect with other families in their community. Each session is designed to have a planned learning focus from the 5 learning strands:

- Early maths,



- Physical Social and Emotional development
- Communication and language
- Health and Physical Development
- Early Literacy

Parents and carers are encouraged to take an active role in all these activities, learning new skills and knowledge about how to support child development while having fun together. Parents also have the opportunity to share experiences, advice and parenting tips in a supportive environment.

Since 2020, the Family Centre have been effective in engaging parents through their Peep sessions, parenting programmes, and one-to-one support with high uptake and demand for participation in their courses. Parents have consistently told them that while Peep builds their confidence and strengthens relationships with their children, they would value opportunities to progress further for themselves. Several have expressed interest in qualifications, training, and volunteering but felt barriers such as low confidence, lack of childcare, or uncertainty about where to start. Practitioners also highlighted that families want accessible pathways into learning that connect directly to their parenting role. Despite an appetite for these courses, childcare is still a large barrier for many families in Shetland (especially those as single parents or who have less of a social/support network around and where childcare provision isn't beyond school days).

This year has seen the development of Peep Pathway with a skills for work and employability focus linking with Employability Pathway's framework so that they can start to assess and deliver the course to those it will have the biggest impact to.

The aim of the Pathway is to make parents better skilled at home but also more confident and equipped to look at their future careers too. It takes the form of an additional 12 week course with free qualification units. Participants attend the courses with their child present - removing childcare as a barrier to learning and steps into or improving employment and giving them skills, confidence and accreditation and potential next steps in progressing/returning/beginning employment again.

Through Shetland's Local Employability Partnership commissioned funding (from Scottish Government's No One Left Behind), capacity was created in their team to develop the Pathway (as an additional offer for current participants on their programme) and ensure participant data was monitored so that they can check which families are benefitting from this experience over time and make sure they are reaching those who need it the most.

As part of the long-term strategy on parenting programmes, The Family Centre has increased uptake in their programmes through positive social media campaigning and messaging tackling stigma around the work they do. As a result parenting courses have been for anyone and highly sought after.

Initially any parent with a 9 month-3 year old who has done the original Peep courses is eligible for the Pathway, however with a big demand for the courses, Family Centre facilitators are planning to use a more targeted approach for this course to make sure participation is more available for those who would benefit the most. They have been working with the Local Employability Partnership to look at ways of capturing data on the five priority families and tracking outcomes for those who have taken part in the course.

In 25/26, nine participants received accreditation and there was very positive feedback on the new course and the impact it had on parents' confidence.

"It was great to learn how much our day-to-day activities contribute to my daughter's learning and development. It has made me more conscious of what I'm doing and how this can support her." (Parent Learner)

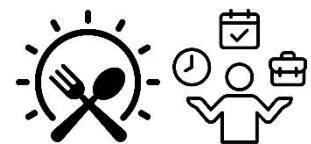
"We loved everything about the course, meeting new friends, getting to know the facilitators better, enjoying all the amazing activities and learning so much through this process." (Parent Learner)

"So useful to discuss the (often very simple) ways we can support our child's development. I enjoyed completing a portfolio and adding photos. I made good relationships with other Mums, we helped each other with reassurance and ideas." (Parent Learner)

The course delivery and content were well received and the Family Centre will be continuing the Pathway programme for 26/27. Some of the priority families were reached through the programme and most said that childcare not being a barrier was essential in being able to take part. However, one thing that has been questioned by staff was if the participants necessarily needed the qualifications as many of them were in potentially highly paid or skilled professions. In the next year, Family Centre staff will look at how they reach families who may require the most support. This will ensure the Pathway has greater impact in the longer term for Shetland families.

Early Adopter Communities – Breakfast Club at Happyhansel Primary School SIC's Early Learning & Childcare and Happyhansel Primary School

The Happyhansel Breakfast Club has been in operation since September 2024 and is a part of the Early Adopter Communities Project, which is funded by Scottish Government until March 2027 and aims to design and test, place-based approaches to childcare, which is a prevalent barrier in rural communities for parents getting sustainable employment.



The Happyhansel Breakfast Club provides a consistent, term-time childcare offer that supports children to start the school day in a safe, structured environment, running from 8:15am-8:40am daily. It enables parents and carers to access employment and training by extending the school day and has become an important part of local childcare infrastructure, particularly in a rural setting where flexibility and reliability are essential.

The key challenge being addressed was the lack of consistent out of school childcare in rural communities, alongside the need to support parents into and sustain employment while ensuring children have a positive, supported start to the school day.

The West Mainland, where Happyhansel is located, was identified as a target area for the Early Adopter Communities Project following a previous local childcare consultation, which highlighted significant gaps in provision and barriers to access in this community. As a result, the development of childcare solutions in this area has been a key focus of the Project.

Previously there was no local childcare provision available in the community and families faced significant challenges in balancing school routines with working hours. The aim of the Breakfast Club is to reduce barriers to employment and improve family wellbeing by extending the school

day in a way that is reliable and locally accessible. For example, the earlier start time better accommodates travel distances in a rural setting and gives parents sufficient time to drop off their children before travelling on to work without undue pressure.

Feedback from parents and carers has directly informed the design and continuation of provision, particularly in relation to reliability, timing, and the need for consistent, trusted local childcare.

School staff play a key role in delivery, ensuring the club is embedded within the school environment and aligned with the wider learning day. The Early Adopter Communities Project provides funding, coordination, and ongoing evaluation support, including the collection of feedback data to inform continuous improvement.

Families have also contributed through informal feedback and engagement, highlighting the importance of trusted local provision and continuity of staffing.

As well as making management of school drop-off and work commitments more effective for parents/carers. It has also contributed to reduced stress for families and improved routine, stability, and a positive start to the school day for children.

Attendance data demonstrates consistent and sustained uptake across multiple school terms, indicating strong demand and the reliability of provision. For example, 14 out of 17 families at Happyhansel Primary School regularly use the Breakfast Club.

Qualitative feedback highlights clear benefits:

- ***“The breakfast club helps us to do school drop off and get to work on time.”***
- ***“This has been a huge support to my family... it’s a great asset to the community.”***
- ***“It has allowed me to move into full-time employment... this has had such a positive impact on my mental health and self-worth.”***

One parent described the impact of the Breakfast Club as “life changing”, explaining that without the provision they would not have been able to move into full-time employment. They highlighted improvements in mental health, self-worth, and family stability as a result of having access to reliable childcare.

They also noted the positive impact on their child, who benefits from a “soft start” to the day, building relationships with staff and peers and starting the school day in a calm and supportive environment.

“This provision has, for me as mum, been life changing. I am now in FT employment doing a job that I am proud to do. I feel valued in the Shetland community and am actually using my brain (and skills and experience). This has had such a positive impact on my mental health, as well as my self worth. I would not have been able to move into this role if these clubs didn’t exist. The impact on the family has been positive as having a happier mum means there is less stress in the home. Our child that attends these clubs has had such a great range of experiences their confidence has grown. It has also reduced the stress levels throughout the family as we are doing less ‘juggling’ as parents.” (Parent)

This work demonstrates that relatively small scale interventions, such as extending the school day by a short period, can have a significant impact in rural communities. What has worked well is the consistency and reliability of delivery, alongside strong relationships between staff, children, and families. This has supported sustained engagement and high levels of trust in the service.

A key learning is the importance of workforce stability and sustainability in maintaining provision. Recruitment and retention challenges in rural areas remain a risk to continuity, particularly for wraparound services. Going forward, continued focus on flexible staffing models and sustainable delivery structures will be essential to maintaining and expanding provision in line with demand.

Business Development for Women – Realise Programme

Business Gateway, Economic Development Shetland Islands Council

While many of the child poverty interventions supporting parents into employment either target individuals or employers, entrepreneurship remains an under-developed theme in this area, locally.

One of the local services working directly to promote this is SIC's Economic Development, Business Gateway team, who support individuals and businesses in Shetland with quality, practical advice and guidance. Whether someone is starting or growing a business, they provide access to a range of publicly funded business support services. Their *Realise* programme has been running for five years and supports women in business help address some of the gaps in tailored, relationship-based business support.

This is part of tackling wider systemic inequalities and perceptions. Despite girls consistently having higher levels of attainment at school (SCQF 4,5,6) than boys across all subjects, a gender pay gap remains nationally and is reflected locally. A local survey from Shetland Women's Aid stated that several respondents reflected the issue that domestic responsibilities and "*childcare tends to fall disproportionately on women*". Decisions about working hours, career progression, training opportunities and financial stability were frequently and that this makes their career progression and choices more likely to be directly influenced and limited by caregiving responsibilities, childcare availability, flexible hours and home situation.

Realise was launched by Business Gateway Shetland at the end of 2020, in response to the economic disruption and personal pressures experienced by women in business during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is a first-of-its-kind initiative in Shetland, and was designed to provide a free, focused and supportive space to help women adapt, sustain and grow their businesses, while also recognising the importance of personal development. The format is getting eight local businesswomen together and combining facilitated group sessions with peer discussion. Six sessions are delivered every four to six weeks, creating time and space for reflection, shared learning and exploration of common challenges and opportunities.

This last year has seen the 5th cohort participate in the programme with many of the participants being those with dependents. Each year has seen the work evolve based on feedback. It is now delivered fully in person, allowing participants to get much more out of networking, helping them have more open conversations and build stronger relationships. The facilitation is also now completely locally based.



The most recent cohort comprised women business owners from a range of sectors and stages, creating a supportive and diverse learning environment. A conscious decision was taken to select a more relaxed and informal setting and sessions were held at Blyde Welcome, a venue run by Celia Smith, who participated in the original *Realise* pilot cohort. This helped demonstrate the longer-

term impact of Realise and how earlier cohorts have gone on to play an active role in supporting other women in business locally. Participants particularly valued:

- **The quality and style of facilitation, described as supportive and encouraging**
- **The informal, welcoming venue and setting**
- **The small group size and the diversity of experience within the cohort**
- **Dedicated time and space to step back from day-to-day business pressures**
- **Building trusted relationships with other women in business**

Personal benefits reported included increased confidence, reduced feelings of isolation, improved self-belief and a reduction in imposter syndrome. Business-related impacts included greater confidence in decision-making, improved resilience when facing challenges, and clearer thinking around future plans and direction. Participants also noted the reassurance of having a trusted peer group to draw on for advice and support.

While feedback was very positive overall, some minor areas for consideration were identified:

- Session timing and spacing, to support participants with particularly busy workloads
- Occasional disruption to in-person sessions due to weather

Many participants commented that there was little, if anything, they would change and expressed strong satisfaction with the programme as delivered.

An important longer-term impact of *Realise* is the extent to which cohorts continue to support one another beyond the formal delivery period. It is known that several cohorts remain in regular contact, either meeting informally or maintaining connection through messaging platforms such as WhatsApp to share challenges, seek advice and exchange best practice. Even the original cohort from 2020 continue to meet socially on a regular basis. This ongoing engagement demonstrates the strength of the relationships formed through *Realise* and highlights the programme's role in fostering sustainable peer networks rather than one-off interventions.

The Realise Programme contributes to reducing the gender pay gap by supporting women/parents to develop the skills, confidence and connections needed to grow their businesses and access higher-value opportunities. This is particularly important in addressing the wider structural barriers that can limit women's economic participation, including disproportionate caring responsibilities and childcare constraints, which often influence career, training and business decisions. By helping women/parents overcome these challenges and increasing participation in entrepreneurship and leadership, the programme enables local women and parents to achieve greater financial independence and long-term economic resilience.

Maximising the Support Available for Families to Live Dignified Lives and Meet their Basic Needs

Mitigating the Cost of Living – Islands Cost Crisis Fund (25/26)

In 2025/26, Shetland Islands Council received £222,000 funding from the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund for the fourth consecutive year with the aim of helping to fight the impacts of poverty driven by the relative high cost of living in island populations. The focus of the funding and its use is based on community need and working in partnership with the community. Last year Shetland Islands Council used its funding in the following ways:



Cash First – Winter Payments

Two payments were made to households with children in receipt of Free School Meals & School Clothing Grant (from 2+ years):

- **£120 to 653 children/young people from 351 families** in the week before Christmas.
- **£179 to 663 children/young people from 355 families** on 25th March 2026.

This was carried out through Children's Services Finance team, which meant processes are quick and not invasive for families to benefit from the scheme. The impact of these payments has made a huge difference to families:

"The payments have been tremendously helpful and enabled us to afford to pay for heating to keep our home warm. This has been a tremendous relief at a time when heating has become very expensive." (parent)

"As a single parent it feels impossible for me to earn enough to offer my children the same standard of living as their friends from two parent families enjoy. I work 35 hours a week in a professional role, but my earning potential was set back ten years by a controlling marriage where I was not allowed to earn my own money...the payments from the council make up for this: allowing me to provide nutritious meals, replace clothes and shoes with new whenever required, and even rent a house close to my frail mother, and closer to town and to a bus stop so my kids can now more easily access activities and enjoy increasing independence. I can afford to pay for my son to go on his school trip, I can afford to give my children a little pocket money. In short, I can offer them a normal life, thanks to these payments." (parent)

Free School Breakfasts

Funding was also used to provide roll out of free school breakfasts to secondary schools/departments between October 2025 and March 2026. This was a universal offer for all children in secondary schools to remove any stigma as a barrier to uptake.

The rationale of this intervention is that there is recent evidence that many young people in the isles are not going to school having eaten. In a 2021/22 census of young people across Scotland, 8.6% of Shetland respondents said they went to school or to bed hungry always or often; a further 29.3% said sometimes. That means just under 38% reported experiencing some level of hunger – slightly higher than the Scotland-wide figure of around 34%.

Over 13,000 Breakfasts were served over the six months with positive feedback from schools on the effect it had on learning, behaviour as well as the financial incentive:

"It helps to contribute to a calm social environment especially at times when pupils cannot go outside due to the weather. Tuck shop takings are down as pupils are having breakfast, which can only be good for parents and their finances. Pupils do not start the day hungry so learning and behaviour is positively affected." (Headteacher)

Community Pop-ins

Resources and Community Pop Ins over the Winter were laid on for anyone who wanted to attend. These were delivered in community halls across Shetland. This provided a warm space for anyone to drop in for a cuppa, some food and company. Some sessions provided opportunities to join in with fun activities, e.g. crafts and games, hear from visiting agencies or access sports clothing from the Kit for All initiative. All sessions provided information, support and signposting around cost of living, including access to food vouchers, support with the completion of benefit check forms, access to free period products, clothes and other essential items.



A total of 15 partner agencies supported or helped in the delivery of the sessions, including – Citizens Advice Bureau, Home Energy Scotland, Local Energy Scotland, Scambusters, Kit 4 All (Sport and Leisure), RNID, RSPB, Living Well Hubs and SIC's Children's Services Finance Team.

In total, **43 Community Pop-ins** were delivered across Shetland between October 2025 and March 2026. Sessions were attended by a total of **467 people, including 50 children, with an age range from a few months old to 80+ years.**

Five individuals were supported to complete benefit check forms, 22 individuals were issued with food vouchers, 28 individuals were referred on for fuel vouchers, 5 individuals were referred to other agencies for more specific support. Key outcomes for individuals recorded include:

- **Increased social connections:** many people reported that pop-ins were the highlight of their week and got them out of the house. For example some isolated individuals have connected and in one location, plan to start their own weekly coffee mornings.
- **Loneliness and isolation:** many people expressed that they are lonely and how the pop-ins provide a welcome, safe space to connect with others, share food together, without the pressure to spend money. Others reported that they felt less alone after being able to speak about everyday challenges around cost of living and health issues
- **Health and wellbeing:** there were many conversations about bereavement, mental health, and changes in personal circumstance, with people expressing gratitude for the chance to speak.
- **Maximising household income:** through initiating benefit checks, providing access to food and fuel vouchers, and access to specialised support.
- **Access provided to a range of support agencies** for whom participants have had no prior knowledge · Signposting via guest speakers and leaflets has broadened awareness of the support available to households on a range of issues.

There were challenges faced in delivery and/or reaching intended participants and reaching individuals who are isolated or experiencing loneliness is inherently difficult. Staff are looking at

how to increase participation, particularly amongst those who would benefit most. Reaching people who are not digitally connected was also a key barrier to participation and that word of mouth in small communities is often the most effective means of reaching people. There was also an appreciation that delivering short term projects such as this – over winter months - makes it harder to build the trust and relationships.

Several issues were raised consistently across all winter pop-ins. These include: cost of living, knowledge and understanding of the benefits system, access to support for older people, support for young mums, loneliness and isolation, difficulty making connections if new into a community, keeping active in older age, cost of heating homes, dementia support needs, access to activities including transport issues.

Food and Resources for Learners at The Youth & Employability Hub

Funding also provided young people, parents and vulnerable adults with access to food (breakfasts, lunch, snacks, warm food as well as toiletries/hygiene products) at the Youth Hub in Lerwick. This took the form of available food for employability participants but also young people attending the Hub as a hang-out. Up to 20 young people attended the later drop-in evening sessions per night. This was extended to access for partners including OPEN Peer Education Trust's Cafe and Ability Shetland (hosting their social sessions monthly on Saturday). There was also involvement from Shetland Women's Aid with them hosting 1-2-1s and small group work.



There has been a noted increase in parents using this resource and receiving food/provisions/toiletries when they have been at the Hub for employability activities and advice. Staff have noticed that has also been a useful conversation starter for getting people to open up about cost of living and personal finances when meeting with a support worker.



"A valuable resource for those who need a bit of extra support." (Service user)

"Thanks so much - it is taking the pressure off this week." (Member of Parental Employability Group - TGITS)

"Our Project Search intake of young people tend to have additional learning needs and neurodiversity as well as a proportion being from low-income families. Being able to have a breakfast or snack while here for classes has helped concentration and the fact that they often eat together at the Hub has increased their ability and motivation to socialise as a group. For some their lives may be quite chaotic so knowing they can have something to eat when here is a relief." (Project Search - Job Coach)

"Young people have consistently said they want safe, warm spaces where warm food and wifi are accessible. Having warm food at our Youth Hub evenings definitely helped get young people in the door and socialise with others. Having this resource has also helped young people who require extra 1-2-1 support and time out of mainstream education. It has allowed our Youth Development Workers to support them for longer periods of time when required." (Senior Youth Development Worker)



Xmas Dinners in the Community

Funding also helped support the Council's Catering and Cleaning Team to provide free Christmas Dinner to households on low income or at risk of isolation during Xmas Day. Up to 105 Christmas dinners were prepared and these were delivered by volunteers to households in Lerwick, Scalloway, Gulberwick, Bressay and Burra. A small selection box was also gifted along with this.



Maximising Income and Advice through SICAB (25/26) Shetland Islands Citizens Advice Bureau

Given that a significant proportion of children living in poverty locally are in households where at least one parent is in work, and recognising the high cost of living in Shetland, it is increasingly important that families are aware of the financial support and entitlements available to them. Providing support to help families maximise their income can play a vital role in helping them make ends meet. This is particularly important for priority groups, including households with a disabled family member and families with children under one year of age.

Last financial year SICAB **supported 555 people** through their Financial Health Service and Fuel Poverty Service and managed to support individuals to **gain over £700,000 through free, impartial and confidential advice**. Their recent client satisfaction survey showed over 80% of clients felt the advice provided by SICAB provided them with; peace of mind, an increased ability to help themselves, improved health and wellbeing, increased income (for example, through employment, access to benefits) and more able to manage money.

Below is an anonymised case study, provided by SICAB, to demonstrate what this support can look like locally for parents who are in difficult situations or circumstances:

Maximising Entitlements to Support a Disabled Child and Carer: Case Study

The client is a single parent devoted to caring for their young child, who has significant disabilities. As the child's main carer, they carry the full responsibility of meeting their child's complex needs, while also coping with their own mental and physical health conditions.

Balancing these demands is incredibly challenging. The client is only able to work part-time, as their caring responsibilities and health limit what they can manage. As a result, they live on a low income, relying on Universal Credit (UC), Child Benefit, and the Scottish Child Payment to get by. Their Universal Credit award contains a standard element for themselves, a child element, and a housing element for their social rented home.

Despite this, the client was struggling to make ends meet. The pressure of rising costs left them feeling anxious and overwhelmed. At one point, they considered increasing their working hours out of financial necessity. However, they knew this would come at a cost - to their own health and to their child's wellbeing. Their child would find it extremely difficult to cope with a childminder, and the client feared the impact this change would have on them both.

Feeling stuck and under significant stress, the client reached out to SICAB for advice and support.

A full benefits check was carried out and identified that the client's child may be entitled to Child Disability Payment (CDP), a benefit designed to support children with additional care and mobility needs. An advisor guided the client through the application process, helping them to gather detailed supporting evidence from medical professionals and the child's school.

The application was successful. The client was awarded CDP at the middle rate care component, increasing their income by £320.23 per month.

The client was then supported to update their Universal Credit claim. This led to further financial support, including a disabled child element of £158.76 per month and a carer element of £201.68 per month. **The client's total additional monthly income as a result of this advice is £680.67.**

This additional income has made a profound difference to the client's life. They no longer feel forced to choose between their health, their child's needs, and financial survival.

With reduced stress and greater stability, the client is now better able to focus on what matters most - caring for their child and managing their own health. The support has not only improved their financial situation but has also had a meaningful impact on their overall wellbeing and quality of life.

Supporting the Next Generation to Thrive

Youth Bank for Shetland – Funding from Youth to Youth

Youth Voice, Economic Development, Youth & Employability, Community Led Local Development

The Youth Bank involved establishing a youth-led grant programme, enabling young people across Shetland to apply for funding for activities, events, and community projects. Young people were trained to assess applications against Shetland Youth Voice and Community Local Led Development priorities, ensuring funding supported youth participation, community development, and positive opportunities for local young people.

The main aim of this project was to give young people a voice and influence on decision making that can directly affect them. Each year Shetland's Community Led Local Development partnership received funding through the Scottish Government with priorities on:

- Helping families and services through the cost of living crisis
- Increasing community capacity to address rural challenges,
- Transforming the economy to deliver net zero
- Creating sustainable public services.

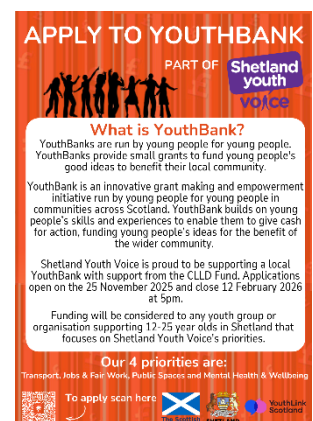
Shetland Youth Voice (SYV) is a youth-led organisation giving 12–25 year-olds in Shetland a direct role in shaping the place they live. It connects young people with decision-makers, ensures their priorities are heard, and turns those priorities into action. SYV currently has over 100 members from across Shetland, stretching from Fair Isle to Baltasound. They were successful in applying for £10,000 from the CLLD Partnership to allocate towards their own priorities (2025):

- Transport
- Jobs & Fair Work
- Public Spaces
- Mental Health & Wellbeing

A group of young people from SYV's membership would decide how this money was spent through an application process where young people and groups for young people could apply for up to £1000 on activities that met both SYV and CLLD priorities.

To support the decision-making process of all applicants, nine members of Shetland Youth Voice took part in an SCQF Level 5 accredited course in Grant Making, delivered by YouthLink Scotland which provided them with the knowledge and skills required when looking over a number of different funding applications, considering all of the different needs and aspirations attached to the different groups.

Shetland Youth Voice were supported by Youth & Employability staff to apply for CLLD funding after Shetland Islands Council's Economic Development had seen similar practice in other areas of Scotland. It was felt that giving young people something tangible that they can have an influence over and see direct impact from would be a positive step for the organization and also ensure that young people's views were represented in the overall CLLD funding received by Shetland. Due to the tight time-scale to use the funding, SYV were the most appropriate group to distribute the funding as they are already an active youth-led group with strong engagement across all of Shetland.



Up to thirteen youth-led groups received funding up to £1000 on projects that supported themes on the priorities above. These were all assessed and scored by the trained panel of young people giving them a tangible influence on local led development opportunities. The recipients of the funding represented all corners of Shetland and types of groups ranged from sports teams to youth clubs, interest groups such as Junior Up Helly Aa and school pupil councils.

This training provided by Youthlink Scotland not only provided the group with the confidence and skills to make these decisions, it provided the group with an accredited certificate that would support their own development in the future.

While the scale and annualised nature of the funding probably limited some of the projects that could apply, this model demonstrated young people being active and engaged leaders in the community as well as small amounts of funding having a significant impact on young people and the groups they participate in. The wide range of applicants demonstrated the diversity of needs in the community and also raised the profile of young people in a positive light. The training was also really important in ensuring young people could allocate and score funding effectively. If this is to be done in the future again, a longer turnaround for applications would be appreciated.

Breaking the Cycle through Developing our Young Workforce

Developing Young Workforce (and various partners)



Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Shetland is an employer-led partnership dedicated to preparing young people for the future world of work. Led by a strategic board comprising local employers and key stakeholders, DYW coordinators are based in schools and works closely with staff, Skills Development Scotland, businesses and community partners to ensure young people have access to high-quality, experiential career learning opportunities that reflect the needs of Shetland's economy.

By raising young people's attainment and equipping them and their parents/carers with more career information and skills to enhance a career, future generations can be supported to gain better income and navigate a fluctuating or uncertain employment landscape.

One of the issues highlighted by young people in Shetland at Shetland Youth Voice's Job & Fair Work Summit (2025) was that career pathways education and progression often favoured those with family or personal connections to local industry and that in small communities there is a perceived culture of nepotism or cronyism meaning some young people feel disconnected or disadvantaged. Recent Skills Development Scotland research also suggests 'parents' were identified as one of the biggest influences for young people when choosing what to do after school.

DYW staff aim to tackle this perceived barrier through a diverse programme of careers fairs, workplace visits, career talks, entrepreneurial challenges and additional work placement opportunities. The aim is for young people furthest away from a potential career developing confidence, aspirations and the skills needed to succeed. They also work with parents and carers to raise awareness of the wide range of education, training and employment pathways available, helping them to support informed career decisions.

During 2025/26 they have provided a diverse programme of experiential career-learning opportunities to help young people and families explore a wide range of education, training and employment pathways. While many people are aware of the larger scale annual Shetland-wide

Careers Fair at Clickimin (February) they have also held smaller scale events in more rural locations such as Whalsay and supported:

- **146 activities,**
- **engaging 3,364 young people**
- **worked with 127 employers across Shetland.**

This was done in partnership with schools, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), youth workers, employers and community organisations.



They also held sector-specific events in aquaculture, engineering, NHS, Languages and the Armed Forces (all responding to labour market or young person needs). These sessions provide hands-on activities and direct engagement with industry professionals, helping pupils understand the breadth of careers available within each sector, the skills required and the different routes into employment, apprenticeships, further education and training.

DYW also worked with schools and employers to enhance curriculum delivery through workplace visits and employer engagement activities. Pupils visited workplaces including Lerwick Port Authority, Malakoff and the Sullom Voe Terminal, giving them first-hand experience of local industries and helping them understand how learning in the classroom connects to real-world careers.

In addition, entrepreneurial learning was promoted through initiatives such as the COPE Entrepreneurial Challenge, allowing young people to develop creativity, teamwork, problem-solving and business skills in partnership with local employer and social Enterprise company.

Feedback demonstrates that participation has increased young people's confidence, understanding of the world of work and preparedness for future employment:

- **81% and 90% of young people** reported **increased confidence around the world of work**
- **89% to 98%** reported **improved knowledge of job opportunities and the world of work.**
- The Shetland-wide Careers and Opportunities Fair saw **93% of young people reporting improved knowledge of the world of work, with 82% feeling better prepared for future employment and career decisions.**

One particularly powerful example involved a young person who was identified by school staff and the DYW School Coordinator as being at risk of not achieving a positive destination. The young person came from a household with no experience of employment and had little belief that they would be successful in finding work themselves. Through participation in an NHS careers event, organised in partnership with DYW, the young person spoke directly with staff working within hospital hotel services. Learning about the role, career opportunities and potential earnings challenged their perceptions about employment and, for the first time, helped them see work as an achievable and worthwhile goal:

A local DYW school co-ordinator worked with school staff and a local Hotel to arrange a bespoke workplace visit aligned to the young person's interests. During the visit, the young person gained hands-on experience of a working kitchen, met employees and demonstrated enthusiasm and a willingness to learn. As a direct result of this engagement, they were offered the opportunity to work within the hotel kitchen.

The impact on the young person has been significant. Their confidence, self-belief and aspirations have increased, and they have begun to view employment as an achievable future pathway. They have since applied for and secured a place on a Skills for Work course, strengthening their progression towards further learning and employment. This example demonstrates how employer engagement and experiential career learning can help break down barriers, widen horizons and create life-changing opportunities for young people who may not otherwise see employment as a realistic option. The DYW school co-ordinator will continue to engage with this young person. They are already planning visits to the hospital kitchen and hotel services.

"This experience allowed them to explore a career area of interest in a supportive and welcoming environment...The opportunity enabled them to make meaningful connections between their learning in school and potential future career pathways, helping to increase their motivation and aspirations. Overall, the workplace visit was highly beneficial. The young person embraced the opportunity and left with increased confidence in their abilities and a clearer understanding of future employment possibilities. The support provided by DYW played an important role in facilitating this successful and rewarding experience." (ASN Teacher)

Mid Yell Family Learning: Building Confidence Through Learning Together SIC Adult Learning, Community Development Team and Mid Yell Junior High

During 2025/26, Community Work and Adult Learning worked in partnership with Mid Yell Junior High School to develop a programme of free family learning sessions, helping parents and children learn together in a relaxed and welcoming environment. By bringing families together outside the school day, the project strengthened relationships, built confidence and encouraged learning to continue at home.

The need for the project was first raised by the Head Teacher of Mid Yell Junior High School at a North Isles Learning Partnership meeting. This was followed by consultation with parents at a school event, where families completed questionnaires and discussed the type of provision they would find useful.

The programme included five publicly advertised evening sessions between September and November 2025. Each invited local families to make food, try a hands-on science activity and play a game together. Alongside practical activities and opportunities to socialise, families could access information from wider support agencies. The informal, inclusive format used low-cost ideas that could be repeated at home, helping people feel comfortable participating whatever their previous experience.

The partnership between Community Work, Adult Learning and Mid Yell Junior High School ensured that education staff and community learning practitioners could work together to support families in ways that complemented learning both in school and at home. Parents continued to shape the programme, with feedback gathered after each session and used to adapt the activities and delivery where needed.

The project resulted in strong attendance and growing participation over time. Parents reported using the activities at home with their children, demonstrating that learning had extended beyond the sessions themselves. Parents also described positive changes at home, including children showing greater enthusiasm, being more willing to try new foods and, for some families, improvements in relaxation and bedtime routines. Attendance increased as the programme progressed, with both parents from some families attending and school staff joining several sessions. Parents also valued being listened to, with changes such as moving the sessions to an earlier time being introduced in response to their feedback.

The programme also strengthened community connections by helping parents build relationships with one another, school staff and Community Learning and Development workers. Including pre-school children supported smoother transitions into school, while the positive feedback generated interest from another primary school, which requested support to develop a similar programme in its own community.

The project demonstrated the value of designing services alongside families and adapting delivery in response to feedback. By working collaboratively across education and community learning, partners created an inclusive programme that strengthened family learning, built confidence and provided a model that can be replicated elsewhere in Shetland.

Adapting the System to respond to Family/Child's needs

Professional Network - Transitions

(Fairer Futures and Local Employability Partnership)

Despite all the activity and good work that goes on locally, it is important that organisations and partnerships in the islands are looking to the future and making sure that systems work for the people they are supposed to work for and allow staff to make the best use of their talents and time.

Fairer Futures is part of the Scottish Government's approach to public service reform, supporting local areas to take a whole-systems, place-based approach to eradicating child poverty. It is intended to prevent issues earlier and provide more person-centred, joined-up support.

In Shetland, Fairer Futures is being used as the Shetland Partnership's framework for delivering *Person Centred Shetland*, with a local focus on reducing inequalities across generations. It builds on learning from earlier work, including the Anchor Project and the intended outcomes are improved coordination and consistency of support, stronger alignment between leadership and practice, more effective use of learning and insight to inform decisions, and a strengthened focus

on prevention and early intervention, contributing over time to improved experiences and outcomes and reduced inequalities.

Since its inception last year, the Fairer Futures work has focused on establishing the foundations for sustained system change. The last year has seen:

- **Establishment of the Fairer Futures System Change Board**, with a regular meeting cycle in place. This has created a dedicated space for strategic oversight, alignment and challenge across partner organisations. It is made up of senior leaders from health, local authority, third sector and police.
- Commissioning and commencement of **strategic leadership development support**, focused on strengthening shared purpose, joint accountability and the removal of systemic barriers to person-centred, preventative working.
- Development and agreement of a **Practitioner Learning Network** proposal, setting out a set of connected workstreams to support practitioner learning, distributed leadership and system learning.

An example of this work was an initial **joint practitioner learning session**, in partnership with the Local Employability Partnership as part of Shetland Employability Week. The discussion was focused on Transitions from youth to adulthood as this had been highlighted by both Partnerships as a long-term issue that required partnership problem solving and planning.

The session was held in February and brought together 35 participants, including operational staff, managers and leaders from a range of services and partner organisations working with young people or vulnerable adults.

The purpose of the session was to bring together services and partners to:

- Learn more about each other's roles in supporting young people and families
- Explore how Shetland's new Transition Policy can be put into practice
- Share perspectives on the local employability landscape and key challenges
- Identify opportunities to work more effectively to support individuals and families

The session identified common themes and issues that will be then worked on throughout the year such as:

- Person centred planning, relationships and environments
- Coordination, shared accountability and system working
- Timing of planning and early identification
- Information, data and visibility:
- Thresholds and the role of prevention
- Shared learning and 'closing the loop'

Participants were clear that the session itself was valuable and should not be a one off. Inter agency learning and networking were seen as essential for improving understanding and collaboration. Post-session evaluation demonstrated the session was:

- Useful and thought provoking, particularly in hearing other perspectives
- Reassuring, in highlighting shared challenges across services
- Frustrating at times, reflecting how long some issues have been recognised
- Motivating, with a clear appetite for more joined up working and continued shared learning.

There was a strong sense that staff care deeply about supporting young people and families well, and see improving transitions as a collective responsibility. Next steps were suggested by participants including:

- Further learning network sessions focused on practical transition processes, family and young person perspectives, readiness for work, use of GIRFEC/With You For You, and navigating consent and escalation
- Greater involvement of young people and employers in future discussions, e.g. an annual event focused on transitions
- Sharing local good practice examples
- Strengthening links between policy, operational guidance and day to day practice.

As well as complementing work on transitions, Fairer Futures will focus on development of the GIRFEC Refocus project, which provides a practical opportunity to test and apply many of the principles emerging through Person-Centred Shetland, particularly around whole-family support, coordination and early intervention.

Strategic alignment work is helping identify opportunities to strengthen coherence between existing partnerships, plans and priorities, reducing duplication and maximising collective impact. A key consideration will be how organisations create the time, capacity and support needed to implement any agreed changes in practice.

Looking Ahead: Planning for 2027 and Beyond

This report demonstrates the huge amount of activity and effort from various organisations in Shetland to reduce child poverty, mitigate its impact on families and tackle the causes.

The case studies in this report demonstrate this commitment from organisations, communities and staff as well as a willingness to work in partnership. Poverty is a complex and multifaceted issue which includes a combination of social, economic and psychological factors. Reducing child poverty is therefore a partnership endeavour, and an ethos of working better together will remain central to our approach in the context of less funding, resources, and competing priorities.

Despite the difference that these activities have made to people's lives and relatively better off rates than most of Scotland, child poverty has worsened over the last decade. As we prepare for our next Action Plan in the next year, it is important we are examining the data available to us (both quantitative and qualitative) and that we are listening to the voices of those being affected in our community. It is also vital we continue to adapt and learn from all activity and analyse what worked well, and what could be improved.

We need to continually ask the key questions:

'How can we support parents to enter, sustain and progress in work?'

'How do we support families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs?'

'How do we support the next generation to thrive?'

We also need to ask what all this looks like. **What are the indicators and outcomes we want for our community and who is doing what?**

In 2024/25, Shetland was awarded funding to become **Fairer Futures** partner. This means supporting public service reform to tackle child poverty. This will support testing new ways of working in collaboration with local authorities and third sector partners so that we can provide

holistic support to families in the place and at the time they need it. While the national emphasis of Fairer Futures is on reducing child poverty and driving public service reform, the approach in Shetland will look more broadly at person-centred approaches to reducing inequalities.

Shetland's priority for the coming year focuses on the way services use Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and Getting it Right for Everyone (GIRFE) processes to deliver person-centred support tailored to individual needs. There will also be work around how we use and share data between organisations and services more effectively, and a learning network will be formed to support practitioners to problem solve and plan more effectively.

Next year will also see development of a new Children's Partnership Plan, Shetland Local Employability Partnership Delivery Plan as well as Shetland's Poverty Action Plan for the next three years. With so many local and national priorities, it is also important these plans and priorities complement each other and that we connect policy and practice. For example, staff realising the link between UNCRC, Poverty and being Trauma Informed or being more aware of Shetland Partnership and its aims and values.

One of the barriers that we have heard from some services/organisations in making such connections and forward planning is the way some of the activities are funded. While additional resource in the form of external or government funding is welcomed, planning any actions without knowing the extent of resources available year on year has been difficult for some services. The specific funding conditions have also been cited as limiting some of the scope of the work done in some areas. It is important that we continually feedback to national partners around any limitations in order to make progress on this.

Appendix 1: Background and Legislative Requirements

The requirement to produce an Annual Child Poverty Action Report (ACPAR) is set out in the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#)¹.

The legislation states that the report must ‘**describe any measures taken in the area of the local authority during the reporting year for the purpose of contributing to the meeting of the child poverty targets.**’ The Act also requires local authorities and NHS Boards to set out, in their local child poverty action reports, information on measures that they plan to take to contribute to the meeting of the Child Poverty reduction targets set out in the Act, with the aim of ensuring the reports provide a strategic forward look as well as an account of progress to date.

The Act sets out a **clear agenda for tackling, reporting on and measuring child poverty**. The Act:

- Sets out four statutory income targets, to be met in the financial year beginning 1 April 2030.
- Sets out four interim income targets, to be met in the financial year beginning 1 April 2023.
- Places a duty on Scottish Ministers to publish child poverty delivery plans in 2018, 2022, and 2026, and to report on those plans annually.
- Places a duty on local authorities and health boards to report annually on activity they are taking, and will take, to reduce child poverty.
- Sets out that a statutory Poverty and Inequality Commission will be established from 1 July 2019, with functions related to the child poverty reduction targets.

The Act sets out four statutory, **income-based targets (all after housing costs)**, to be achieved by 2030:

- Less than 10% of children are in relative poverty
- Less than 5% of children are in absolute poverty
- Less than 5% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation
- Less than 5% of children are in persistent poverty

The Act also sets out **interim targets**, to be met in the financial year beginning on 1 April 2023 – which is the halfway point between the position at the time the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act was passed and the 2030 target date for the meeting of the targets - as below:

- Less than 18% of children are in relative poverty
- Less than 14% of children are in absolute poverty
- Less than 8% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation
- Less than 8% of children are in persistent poverty.

[Guidance](#)² on the approach and content of the ACPAR is available. The key considerations are:

- Production of one Report for Shetland (the first covering 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019);
- The Council and NHS Shetland are required to jointly prepare and publish a report, but are encouraged to involve all partners contributing to reducing Child Poverty (through Community Planning);
- Aim to publish by 30th June each year, after local approval by the Council and NHS Shetland;

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2017/6/contents/enacted>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-child-poverty-action-report-guidance/>

- Feedback will be provided from the Scottish Government;
- Links should be made with implementation of the:
 - Fairer Scotland Duty
 - Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
 - Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, and
 - Education (Scotland) Act 2016;
- Evidence must be provided that shows consideration is being given to the different barriers that parents with different protected characteristics³ may face and specifically include action to help parents to maximise income, by accessing financial inclusion services;
- Evidence that shows lived experience of poverty is being brought into strategic decision-making;
- In addition, the guidance highlights the following for inclusion:
 - Sharing 'what's working' and 'lessons' learnt
 - Reference to work to tackle Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
 - The building and nurturing of relationships across the partnership, and
 - Demonstration of partner involvement in activity to meet poverty targets.

The [Scottish Government's Delivery](#)⁴ Plan identifies a number of priority groups being targeted as particular beneficiaries of the Plan's commitments:

- Lone parents
- Families where a member of the household is disabled
- Families with 3 or more children
- Minority ethnic families
- Families where the youngest child is under 1
- Mothers aged under 25

Living in areas of high material deprivation and remote rural locations were also identified as additional barriers faced by families in these groups.

³ Age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/>

Appendix 2: Plan for 2023-26

A new approach has been developed by partners, for the planning and implementation of future actions to address Child Poverty across our communities.

We have mentioned that levels of children living in low income families are higher than pre-pandemic levels and our cost of living is high. We also know that stigma and pride are significant barriers to families accessing support. This has informed our priorities, which are:

- Normalising family support, and ensuring child and family centred approaches, across all of our supports; and
- Increasing the income to our families.

This summary table sets out the collaborative strategic actions to be undertaken in Shetland, to (primarily) mitigate the impacts of Child Poverty. These actions are also set out in Shetland's Children's Services Partnership Plan, Priority Area 3 – Reducing the Impact of Poverty on Children and Families.

What Action Will Be Taken?	Which Groups Will be Targeted to Reduce Poverty?	Who Will Carry Out the Action?	What Resources Are Required?	Timescale	Poverty Driver	Impact Will Be Assessed by....
Support our Anchor for Families Team to walk alongside families who are feeling under pressure, to build their strengths and capacity to achieve the goals they want to achieve, develop a more positive pathway and halt further deterioration in their situation.	All families in Shetland living in poverty and feeling under pressure due to the increase in cost of living	Council's Children & Families Social Work Team , in partnership with other services and communities	Whole-Family Wellbeing Funding	Funding in place until March 2026	All drivers, by taking a family-centred, holistic and flexible approach	Number of families supported / year Evaluation as per Anchor for Families Logic Model

Providing the opportunities and integrated support adults need to enter, sustain and progress in work						
Develop an innovative test of change project to find financially vulnerable households, supporting them holistically, to improve their finances and employment, as a collaboration between Anchor for Families, Employability Pathway and Third Sector.	Low-income families with children	Council's Youth & Employability Service , in partnership with other services and communities	Scottish Government Child Poverty Fund	Funding in place until September 2024	Out of Work and In Work Poverty Cost of Living	Monitored within Employability Pathway Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
Maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs						
Increase the capacity of frontline staff to recognise signs of poverty and ensure they are on an income maximisation pathway. This capacity will be built by, for example, our Anchor for Families Team, implementation of GIRFEC, Money Worries Training and Cost of the School Day.	All those people in Shetland facing poor outcomes because of inequalities, including children living in poverty	SIC, NHS Shetland, CAB, Shetland Recreational Trust, Shetland Arts Development Agency and Others	Within Existing Staff Resources	Ongoing	Cost of Living Low Income	Attendance at Money Worries Training (number / services represented) Number of Cost of the School Day Events / Sessions Evaluation of System Change, as per Anchor for Families Logic Model Uptake of income maximisation services (SICAB, SIC Children's Finance, Social Security Scotland, Fuel

						Bank Vouchers, SIC Finance, Free Period Products, free ELC for eligible two year olds) Uptake of Access to Leisure (SRT, SADA, Summer Activities) Uptake of CLD Skills Development to complete benefit forms
Support the implementation of Shetland's response to the Cost of Living Crisis Plan, 2023/24, including an easy to use website , and dedicated phone line.	All families in Shetland living in poverty and feeling under pressure due to the increase in cost of living	Council's Community Planning & Development Service in partnership with others services	Dependent on resources from Scottish Government (awaiting information)	Action Plan under development	Cost of Living Low Income	As per Action Plan
Support Shetland's Community Learning and Development (CLD) Strategy to close the digital poverty gap.	All families in Shetland living in poverty and feeling under pressure due to the increase in cost of living	Through the Community Learning and Development Strategy	Within Existing Resources	Ongoing	Cost of Living Low Income	As per CLD strategy

Continue to support key Third Sector organisations: SICAB, Shetland Food Bank and Food for the Way.	All families in Shetland living in poverty and feeling under pressure due to the increase in cost of living	Funding and staff time from partner organisations	Within Council budgets	Ongoing / timebound contracts in place	Cost of Living Low Income	Contract monitoring in place
Supporting the next generation to thrive						
Use opportunities such as Anchor for Families, Employability Services and Cost of Living supports to enable children and their families to be involved in shaping local policies and measures to reduce the social and economic impact of poverty.	All families in Shetland living in poverty and feeling under pressure due to the increase in cost of living	All	Within Existing Resources	Ongoing	Cost of Living Low Income	Number of examples of changes to local policies and services as a result of involving children and families under pressure

The planning and delivery of actions in order to address structural changes required to reduce Child Poverty, are set out in the [Delivery Plan for Shetland's Partnership Plan, 2023/2027](#).