



Community Planning Frequently Asked Questions

These FAQs have been put together in response to common questions raised by people who are new to community planning as well as those who have been involved with the process for some time. Their aim is to provide enough information about the background and structure of community planning in Orkney to explain what it is all about.



‘Community planning is an important challenge for Orkney. It has the potential to create a more efficient structure for the public sector in Orkney and provide improved services to our communities. In such unsettling economic times all public services are expected to do more in terms of providing improved services to larger groups, yet with less financial resource. Community planning can help us to find imaginative solutions within this difficult environment, notably through better joint working. It also ensures we concentrate on those areas most in need of intervention.’

‘Community planning can be a tricky concept to grasp. This may be because it is something we do naturally here in a small community, and in fact it would seem illogical not to pull together. It’s important for you as a member of the Orkney Partnership to understand that we’re working together towards a shared agenda. Our mission is Working Together for a Better Orkney, and that is essentially what we do.’

Councillor Steven Heddle
Chair of the Orkney Partnership

If you have unanswered questions please send them to us and we'll answer them in the next update of the FAQs. Contact details for the Community Planning Business Manager are at the end of this document, and there are suggestions throughout about further resources to look at.

What is community planning?

According to the Scottish Government, 'Community planning is a process that helps public agencies to work together with the community to plan and deliver better services which make a real difference to people's lives.'

Community planning is something which has happened in Orkney since long before it was given a title. It existed in an informal way due to the small, naturally collaborative way we do things here and then became a statutory duty in 2003. Its powers were updated under the new [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#).

What does that mean in practice?

It means public service providers working together, and with communities, to improve the quality of people's lives. In community planning what matters most is the outcomes - what is actually achieved and how people's lives change as a result.

We work with local communities, businesses, charities and voluntary groups and together we plan to improve and deliver better, more joined-up public services in Orkney.

By working together in partnership we can achieve much more than we could achieve as individual organisations. In many areas individual agencies are already working well, but through community planning we can identify and target any problem areas or gaps in provision and tackle these inequalities together. We can also make a concerted effort to address large and complex challenges.

To make sure we're doing the right thing, as we go along we need to ensure our communities and communities of interest are engaged in the decisions made about the services they use. This engagement work paves the way for the path that we need to follow together.

How does it work in Orkney?

Orkney's community planning partnership is called 'The Orkney Partnership'. Sometimes known as TOP or 'the Partnership' it is the lead body for joint working in Orkney.

The Partnership is headed up by a Board, supported by an Executive Group of senior officers. Each of the Board's strategic priorities is assigned to a Delivery Group:

- Healthy and Sustainable Communities
- Positive Ageing
- Vibrant Economic Environment

From time to time the Board and the Delivery Groups set up short life working groups to address specific tasks on their behalf.

The Partnership focuses exclusively on the challenges which no single agency can solve on its own and the structure has been designed to meet an evolving process and changing priorities. Although the overall core [structure](#) will remain the same over time, the focus or number of Delivery Groups may alter to reflect current and emerging priorities for Orkney.

This is a new structure. Why did it change?

It was changed partly because of changing national expectations of community planning based on developments such as the recommendations of the Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. These placed a greater emphasis on targeting resources towards preventative activity, focusing attention on fewer priorities at any one time, and ensuring local communities have a strong voice in planning their public services. Two national review programmes also contributed to the change: the Partnership was audited by Audit Scotland, and Voluntary Action Orkney worked with the Improvement Service to improve the Third Sector's participation in community planning.

The new streamlined structure was designed to enable partners to meet their statutory obligations and also to reflect their desire to operate efficiently and effectively to address the Partnership's key priorities.

Although it's a new structure, partner agencies are still doing what they've always done – working together to improve Orkney for everybody who lives here – but in a much more focused and effective way.

Who is involved?

Community planning has a wide reach in terms of the number of organisations who are involved. The Council, NHS, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service all have a statutory duty to **facilitate** community planning.

The following organisations have a statutory duty to **participate** in the process: Scottish Natural Heritage, Sportscotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Historic Environment Scotland, Orkney Health and Care, University of the Highlands and Islands, HiTrans, Skills Development Scotland and VisitScotland. In addition to all of those specified in the statute, we have included Voluntary Action Orkney and Orkney Housing Association Limited in the essential core group of organisations who participate in community planning in Orkney.

The Chief Executive of the Improvement Service has been co-opted to advise on good practice. The Improvement Service is the national improvement organisation for local government in Scotland and provides advisory services to councils and their partners. You can read more about the support they provide to community planning partnerships [here](#).

A range of other organisations also play an important part in the Orkney Partnership as members of the Delivery Groups, for example: Job Centre Plus, Orkney Blide Trust, Age Concern, Orkney Care and Repair, the Pickaquoy Centre Trust and Community Development Trusts. This is by no means a complete list but illustrates the wide range of service providers who contribute towards the process.

What is the Orkney Partnership doing to make a difference on the ground?

Every community planning partnership is required to publish a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). Orkney's LOIP is incorporated in the Orkney Community Plan 2016-19, a three-year rolling plan that is refreshed, updated and reissued every year. It's produced by the Partnership as our commitment to the people of Orkney and sets out what we hope to achieve by working in partnership, over and above what we could achieve as individual organisations. Some of the developments

described in the plan will be part of our lives for decades to come as it includes our long term vision for Orkney as well as our current strategic priorities.

We demonstrate through the LOIP how our planned activity will contribute towards Scotland's National Outcomes. We also include a small number of performance indicators which the Board can track in order to see whether the Delivery Groups are making progress towards their planned outcomes.

The Delivery Groups each have their own outcomes and activities. For example, the Positive Ageing Delivery Group supports a number of projects including exercise classes for older people, the Men's Shed initiative, an older people's forum and walking football; the Vibrant Economic Environment Delivery Group is working on an Orkney Research Campus project, supporting apprentices and attracting research and development projects to Orkney; and the Healthy and Sustainable Communities Delivery Group are developing programmes for healthy eating, reducing alcohol consumption and increasing physical activity. The Board takes the lead on a number of priorities where the issues are too big for local action alone and the Partnership needs to liaise with the Scottish Government. These include: support for remote and rural housing development, addressing fuel poverty, external transport provision and strengthening our grid capacity to support our renewable energy industry.

When we published our first community plan in 2003 our most pressing aim was to reverse the population decline of the previous century to ensure Orkney's survival and sustainability. By the time of the Census in 2011 the population had reached 21,349, an increase of almost 11%, and is still continuing to rise.

You can find out more about [our plans](#) on the Orkney Partnership section of the Orkney Communities website.

What's my role?

Your role in community planning will vary depending on which group you're involved in. You may be a member of a Delivery Group which contributes towards a particular priority, for example Positive Ageing, or perhaps you're on a short term working group. Or you may be a member of the Board, which is the decision making body. You may be involved as an officer representing an organisation, as someone representing a community, or an Elected Member.

The best way to find out about your role and where it fits in the structure is to refer to [the Orkney Partnership Terms of Reference](#). Alternatively, you can contact the Community Planning Business Manager for a chat about what the group does and what your role will be.

If you're not on a group you still have a role. Consultation and engagement is at the heart of community planning and we want everyone to have the opportunity to let us have their views on matters that are important to them - whether as part of a group such as a hall committee or as an individual. You can do this by responding to consultations or by getting in touch with us at any time.

What can community planning do for me?

Community planning has the potential to better align the priorities of all the organisations involved in the process. In a place as small as Orkney, it's often neither efficient nor cost effective for each organisation to undertake work or community engagement alone. The benefits to you, whatever your role, include:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of what other organisations are doing in your area of work.

- More efficient ways of working, for example through joint working. As you'll know, living and working in a small place depends upon this collaborative approach to problems.
- Getting things done which your organisation would not be able to do on its own.

How can I get more information?

A wide range of information is available on [the Orkney Partnership](#) section of the Orkney Communities website.

You can also contact the Community Planning Business Manager by e-mail on corporateservices@orkney.gov.uk or by telephone on 01856 873535 extension 2153.