

Briefing Note

Elected Member Briefing – Children’s Services Case Studies – Quarter 1 2026/27

Elected Member Briefing Note Ref. No. 2026-41

About this Briefing Note

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Date: 10 September 2026

Subject: Children’s Services Case Studies

Public / ~~Exempt~~ / Confidential

if exempt or confidential explain risks and consequences.

Purpose

This briefing note intends to provide Members with additional insight into some of the current work of the Children’s Services Directorate. This aligns with the timescales around the Children’s Services Directorate Performance Report for Quarter 4 that was presented at Education and Families Committee on 31 August 2026 for noting.

Background

Case studies have previously been included within the Children’s Services Directorate Quarterly Performance Reports. However, it is essential that these reports retain a clear and consistent focus on key performance indicators (KPIs), enabling Members to assess how effectively the Directorate is performing against its agreed priorities.

At the same time, it is recognised that the work of the Directorate extends beyond KPI reporting and the routine delivery of services. There is value in ensuring that Members remain informed about the broader range of activity being undertaken across Children’s Services, while maintaining an appropriately strategic focus.

Accordingly, this Members’ Briefing has been prepared separately, with accompanying case studies to provide insight into the wider work of the Directorate and to illustrate the impact of staff efforts in practice, without detracting from the primary performance focus of the quarterly reports.

Key points

The attached case studies include:

- Bookbug Partnerships
- Clothing Grants and Free School Meals Infographic
- Shetland Youth Voice – Culture, Creativity and the Arts Summit 2026
- Nurturing Nature Project – Cunningsburgh Nursery
- Duke of Edinburgh in Shetland 2026
- Project Search 2025/26
- Instrumental Instruction
- Shetland Library National Databank
- Community Development Spotlight on Family Learning
- DYW German Language

Overview

This briefing provides Members with a selection of case studies that highlight the breadth and impact of work undertaken across Children's Services. While the Directorate's Quarterly Performance Report remains focused on key performance indicators (KPIs) and overall performance, these examples offer additional strategic insight into how services are delivered in practice.

Collectively, they demonstrate the diverse ways in which staff support and engage with children, young people, and families, and the positive outcomes being achieved across the Directorate.

Last modified on: *8 September 2026*

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Please return this form to memberssupport@shetland.gov.uk to be logged and circulated to all Councillors.

END



Shetland Library

Shetland Islands Council



Across Shetland, strong community connections help families thrive.

By working alongside Shetland Family Centre & Mind Your Head, Bookbug is reaching families where they already feel supported, helping build confidence, encourage early literacy and create positive first experiences of the library.

Through partnership working, Shetland Library is helping families build confidence, create lasting reading habits and make the library a familiar, welcoming place from the very beginning of a child's life.

Supporting early literacy with positive partnerships



mind your head



Mind Your Head delivers the Wellbeing 1000 and Well Dads programmes, supporting parents and carers during the first 1,000 days of a child's life; a period recognised as vital for brain development, attachment, and lifelong health and wellbeing.

Library staff visit Wellbeing 1000 and Well Dads groups in both Brae and Lerwick to deliver Bookbug sessions. By bringing Bookbug into familiar community settings, families have the opportunity to meet library staff before visiting independently, making that first trip to the library feel welcoming and familiar. Many go on to attend regular Bookbug sessions, borrow books and become active library members.



Shetland Family Centre includes library visits as part of its PEEP (Peers Early Education Partnership) programme, recognising the important role that sharing books plays in children's early development.

During each Shetland Library visit, every child is registered as a library member, supporting the Every Child is a Library Member initiative and giving families immediate access to the library's collections and activities. Families also enjoy a Bookbug session, either alongside the public programme or through a dedicated session created for their group.



Our Impact

These partnerships help ensure Bookbug reaches beyond the walls of the library and into Shetland communities. By embedding sessions within existing family support services, more children can experience the benefits of books, songs, rhymes and stories from their earliest years.

Research consistently shows that sharing books and singing together supports children's language and communication skills while strengthening parent-child relationships. Introducing families to the library early also encourages lifelong reading habits and ongoing engagement with local community services.

Clothing Grants & Free School Meals 2025/26

How Shetland supported families across the school year



CENSUS SCHOOL ROLL

3,480
pupils



CHILDREN RECEIVING
FSM SUPPORT

734
children



APPLICATIONS
ASSESSED

425
applications



FAMILIES
SUPPORTED

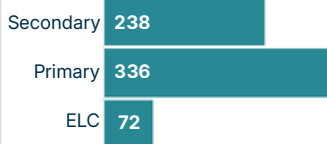
407
families



CLOTHING GRANTS

**CLOTHING GRANTS
AWARDED
£124,830**

CLOTHING GRANT AWARDS BY AGE GROUP



TOTAL 646

CLOTHING GRANT RATES 2025/26

ELC	Primary	Secondary
£150	£180	£225

Clothing Grants help with the cost of school clothing and footwear.



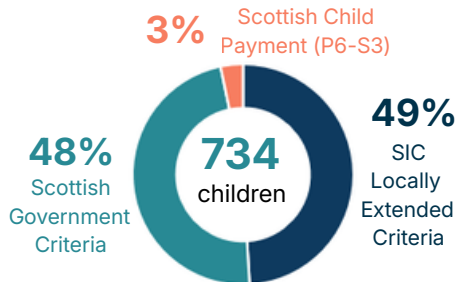
FREE SCHOOL MEALS

CHILDREN SUPPORTED BY AGE GROUP



TOTAL 734

ELIGIBILITY BREAKDOWN



Almost half of Free School Meal awards came through Shetland's locally extended eligibility criteria.



HOLIDAY FREE SCHOOL MEALS

PAYMENTS MADE FOR



734 children benefited

407 families received support

£122,015 paid directly to families

PAYMENT BREAKDOWN

SG Criteria	£55,112.50
SIC Extended Criteria	£66,902.50



More than half (55%) of all Holiday Free School Meal payments were made to families supported through Shetland's locally extended eligibility criteria.



WINTER SUPPORT PAYMENTS / ISLANDS COST CRISIS FUNDING

Eligible families with a current Clothing Grant and / or Free School Meals awards received.

£120

per child
in December 2025

£179

per child
in March 2026



£197,753

paid directly to families
through Island Cost Crisis
Funding



OVERALL IMPACT

£444,598

**TOTAL DIRECT
PAYMENTS MADE TO
FAMILIES**

WHAT PARENTS AND CARERS SAID

"The payments helped keep our home warm at a time when heating costs were very high"

"A massive help all round, reducing stress and allowing our children to enjoy everyday activities like their peers"

"In short, I can offer my children a normal life, thanks to these payments"



**SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL**



OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

1

On Thursday 26th March, Shetland Youth Voice (SYV) held its first major Summit of 2026 - this time focusing on culture, creativity and the arts, as chosen by young people in our first general meeting. The event took place at 2 venues in Lerwick which were Mareel and the Shetland Museum and brought together young people, local partners, and decision-makers to explore and celebrate local arts, culture and heritage.

2

WHO ATTENDED?

56 Young people attended representing secondary schools and many organisations throughout Shetland.

Partners included BBC Radio Shetland, Ability Shetland, Shetland Arts, Shetland Museum, Shetland Museum, Shetland ForWirds, and Slippit music festival, among many others!



KEY DISCUSSIONS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

3

Discussions highlighted the importance of raising awareness and promoting more arts based opportunities for young people in Shetland.

Young people said that workshops allowed them to think about their future and the type of job opportunities they could have within the arts.

Facilitators fed back that young people engaged well with workshops and asked appropriate questions throughout sessions which enabled thoughtful discussions.

SHETLAND YOUTH VOICE

CULTURE, CREATIVITY AND THE ARTS SUMMIT 2026



4 KEY PRIORITIES TO TAKE AWAY

- To have decision making roles for young people in arts, heritage and cultural settings in Shetland, via youth panels and consultation groups.
- Key stakeholders and partners to work closer with young people to provide engaging opportunities.
- To continue to promote and celebrate local culture, heritage and arts to young people living in the community.

Our participants rated workshops as an average of 7/10

PICTURES

5



ShetlandYouthServices



ShetlandYouth



01595 744490



shetland-youth

Nurturing Nature Project - Cunningsburgh Nursery

Family Learning in Local Greenspace



Aim:

Equip Early Years Practitioners with practical tools and understanding to deliver a family learning programme harnessing the benefits of their local green space.



Participants will:

- Understand the benefits of the nurturing nature approach
- Consider ways of engaging with parents and carers in a natural environment
- Understand their role in modelling play and learning to families
- Explore practical examples of group management, risk benefit assessment and the resources required to lead these sessions
- Take away practical skills and resources to support delivery of the nurturing nature programme in their own setting

"Not all classrooms have four walls."

What happened:

The setting were offered a fully funded support package with a Learning through Landscapes trainer. This consisted of:

- 1 online meeting with relevant staff to prep for family sessions
- 1 in-person support visit to work alongside families & staff
- 1 post-project evaluation meeting

• 1 set of useful kit to facilitate sessions (value £800)

3 families completed the programme with the ELC staff and their child/ren.

There were 6 outdoor sessions. Each session had a different focus and took place in different parts of the community.



Children's voice:

"We needed crosses to see how far we needed to go. Da crosses were at da water so you need your Mummy."

"I hammered nails for the den."

"They fly in a V. Do geese take turns to fly at the front?"

"I walked from that side to that side of the burn."



Staff comment:

"The bairns that were part of the Learning Through Landscapes programme came back into the setting and shared what they had been doing during the session with their peers. It was lovely to see and hear their enthusiasm as they demonstrated and communicated new skills using words and phrases modelled by staff during their time outdoors."

Parent's comments:

"We would 100% take part again, the sessions were wonderful for parents and children. During the sessions we discovered some great ways to connect with the kids in nature."

Holding these sessions in Shetland proved that outdoors play shouldn't only be for sunny days, we had great adventures in the rain and wind too!"

"It was great to get outdoors and enjoy some different activities with my son."

There's so much to do on our own doorstep - our favourite was the tinfoil dam building!"



Next steps:

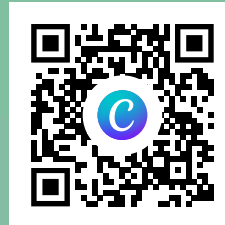
ELC staff will offer the programme to another cohort of families. This will be fully led by the staff with no further input from an external trainer.

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD IN SHETLAND



EXPEDITION SEASON 2026

HEAR FROM JOEY ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE



WHAT ARE EXPEDITIONS

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition section challenges young people to plan, prepare for, and complete a self-sufficient journey as part of a small team. Participants are responsible for route planning, navigation, campcraft, cooking, equipment management and working together to overcome challenges encountered along the way.

2026 EXPEDITIONS

In 2026, groups from Sandwick, Aith, Mid Yell and Baltasound Junior High Schools took part in their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. These groups were supported throughout the year by Youth Workers based in schools to complete their volunteering, physical and skills section of the award, which encourage young people to show commitment and dedication to the hobbies, opportunities and activities within their own lives. For the expedition, pupils are supported by youth workers, outdoor specialists, as well as volunteer teaching staff, to ensure they are well equipped and ready for their overnight trips.

Following a period of training and a practice expedition, participants complete a qualifying expedition that is remotely supervised and assessed against the Award requirements, encouraging independence, resilience, teamwork and problem-solving in a real outdoor environment.

2026 DATA OVERVIEW



DOFE CENTRE



EXPEDITION LOCATION



**29 PARTICIPANTS
COMPLETED
EXPEDITIONS**



**8 ADULT STAFF AND
VOLUNTEER
SUPERVISORS**



**70.34KM TRAVELLED
COLLECTIVELY BY
PARTICIPANTS**



**841 HOURS SPENT
VOLUNTEERING ON
EXPEDITION BY
PARTICIPANTS**



CASE STUDY

Project Search : Creating Pathways to Employment

Designed to support individuals in developing the skills, confidence and experience required to move into employment. Through a combination of classroom learning, work placements and ongoing support from the job coaches, the students gained valuable experience in real working environments while building independence and employability skills.

Our students have worked hard to develop valuable skills and gain nationally recognised qualifications, including:

Health and Wellbeing for the workplace (SCQF Level 4)

Stress Management for the workplace (SCQF Level 4)

Applying for a Job (SCQF Level 4)

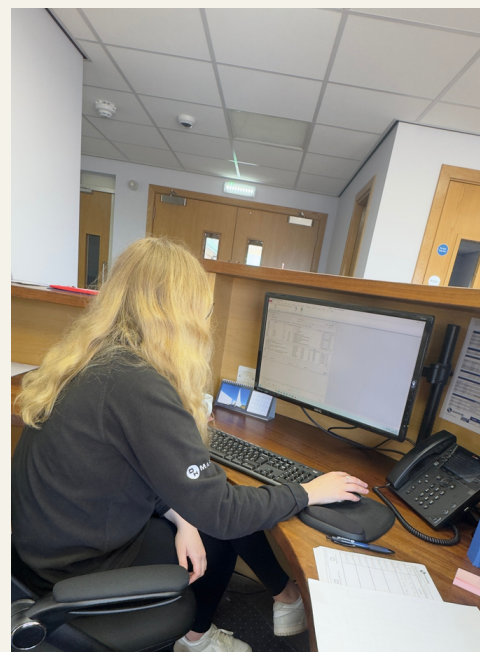
Planning for a Job Interview (SCQF Level 4)



Employer Testimony

*"The Student has demonstrated a **clear growth in confidence** during her placement. From the beginning, showed a consistent **willingness to learn**, asking thoughtful questions. Being proactive approaching team members for support. Her attendance was **excellent**, and she proved to be **reliable and dependable** throughout. With a **diligent and hardworking** attitude, she approached every task with care making a **positive contribution** to the team. She has **overcome and excelled** in some factors that she initially thought would be a challenging part of the role.*

*We are **proud of her development** during her time here and have thoroughly enjoyed having her with us, hope she has too!"* **Martha Smith - DH Marine**





Local Employers that have supported placements

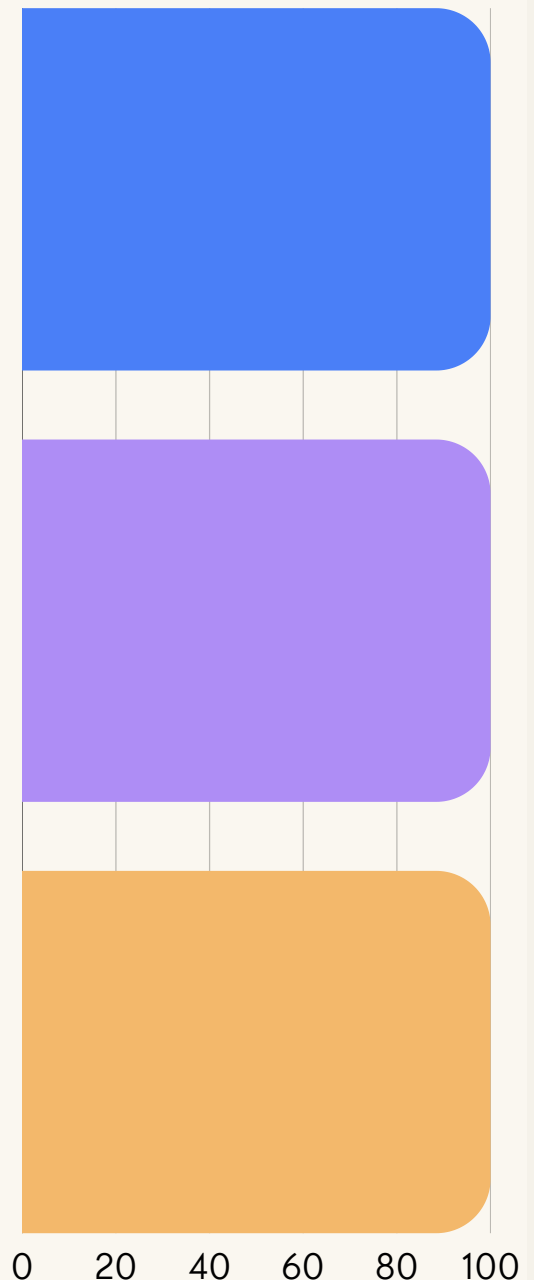


Students Evaluation

Have you enjoyed the Project search Programme?

Are you more confident in applying for employment?

Do you feel supported by the Project Search Job Coaches?





Parent Testimonies

"I would just like to thank the job coaches and all involved in Project Search. As a parent it has been great to see the support, encouragement and room for growth that has been given to all the young adults. My son started last year as a bit lost, unsure of his place in an adult workforce and he is leaving with his spring back on his step, much higher confidence and believing he has skills to contribute in any team."

"I felt informed about my young person's progress, and the skills I felt my young person developed most during the programme were independence, communication skills, confidence and team work."



Graduation Celebration

This year marked an important milestone for Project Search at Shetland Islands Council as we celebrated the graduation of our latest cohort of five students. The graduation recognised not only the achievements of the students but also the commitment of local employers and partners who have worked together to create meaningful employment opportunities for young people with additional support needs.



The **graduation ceremony** provided an opportunity to celebrate these achievements alongside **families, colleagues, employers** and **partner organisations**. It highlighted the **dedication** and **resilience** shown by each student throughout the programme and recognised the **collaborative approach** that makes Project Search a success.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES

INSTRUMENTAL INSTRUCTION



WHAT WE DO

- Free weekly 25 minute lessons to pupils from P5 and up
- 20 instruments available to learn
- Support for progression through music qualifications

IMPACT

- 572 pupils are currently receiving free instrumental instruction
- More opportunities for children without the financial pressure
- Encourages creativity and a love of learning

LOOKING AHEAD

We continue to work closely with schools, music instructors and parents/carers to ensure children can access music learning accross Shetland.

BENEFITS

- Builds confidence & self esteem
- Supports concentration and memory
- Develops communication skills
- Encourages teamwork, creativity & self expression
- Strengthens engagement within school

INSTRUMENTS OFFERED

- Accordion
- Brass (baritone horn, euphonium, cornet, tuba, tenor horn & trumpet)
- Drums
- Fiddle
- Strings (violin, viola, cello & double bass)
- Piano
- Voice
- Woodwind (clarinet, flute, saxophone, oboe & recorder)

Introduction

Shetland Library is now a National Databank Hub, part of the National Digital Inclusion Network. The network, made up of thousands of organisations across the UK, is supported by the Good Things Foundation charity and is free to join.



What is the National Databank?

The National Databank provides free data to members of the Digital Inclusion Network, so they can provide free access to the internet to those who are unable to get online.

Virgin Media O2, Vodafone and Three have donated 47m gigabytes of data. The aim is to support over 500,000 people nationwide with free data.



Who is eligible?

Someone receiving free data through the National Databank must be:

-  **18+ years old**
-  **From a low-income household**
-  **Has not already received the maximum of 24-month of gifted data**

And qualify in at least one of the following statements:



Has no access or insufficient access to the internet at home

Has no or insufficient access to the internet when away from home

Cannot afford their existing monthly contract or top up

Our Ambition

This project aligns with our Directorate's commitment to reduce the number of children and young people affected by poverty and the wider Council ambition for a fairer Shetland and improved digital connectivity.

Progress

We coincided National Databank appointments with our weekly Help Hub drop-in sessions, which our partners from Citizens Advice Scotland also attend once a month.

Since the official launch on 30 May 2026, we have had **12 appointment requests**.

Promotion of the service is being carefully considered and regularly evaluated to ensure it reaches those who need it most.



SIC Community Development Spotlight on Family Learning

Helping families build on their strengths through learning, connection and early support.



OUR AIM

To enable families to thrive through shared learning experiences that build confidence, develop skills and strengthen relationships, leading to improved outcomes for children, families and communities.

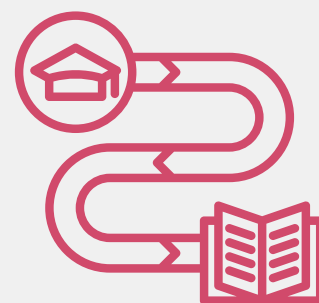
OUR OFFER

We deliver person-centred family learning opportunities that start where families are, building on their strengths, experiences, interests and aspirations. Our offer includes:



- **Learning opportunities** tailored to local needs, enabling families to engage in learning at home, at school and within their communities
- **Literacy, numeracy and digital learning opportunities** that build confidence and practical skills for everyday life, e.g.: developing story books, internet safety, cooking together
- **Health and wellbeing activities** that promote resilience, confidence and positive family relationships, e.g.: healthy snacks, physical activity, mindfulness, nature trails

- **Parental engagement** that helps parents and carers build their confidence to support their children's learning at home and school
- **Lifelong learning pathways** that encourage adults to re-engage with learning and progress to further opportunities
- **Early intervention and preventative support** that helps reduce barriers to learning and participation



- **Partnership working with schools and other agencies** to ensure a coordinated approach
- **Support for School Improvement Plan priorities**, including improving parental engagement, raising attainment and helping to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap
- **Opportunities for community participation and connection**, helping families build networks, reduce isolation and contribute to their local communities



28 family learning sessions delivered across 8 schools and 1 partner settings



284 children participated



190 adults participated (including parents, carers, extended family)



474 adults and children participated in family learning during this quarter

DELIVERING ON

Shetland CLD Plan 2024 – 2027

Priority 3: Poverty and Inclusion

Action 3.1

Maximise delivery and impact of family learning approaches to support families most in need.

OUR LEARNERS SAID

“We enjoyed the sunflower growing activity, It was great fun learning how to plant and care for the sunflower together. We continued the activity at home by measuring its growth each week and drawing it at different stages in our sunflower diary. It was a lovely way to learn and spend time together.”

“We now feel more comfortable to speak about online safety as a family, after creating a Digital Family Agreement together. Before it was a bit of a standoff.”

“Making something to eat together is great as (my child) will try or eat something new when seeing others eating it.”

“I feel a lot more confident in how to keep my bairns safe online. Being able to speak with other parents too has been great.”

“We both looked forward to coming each week. It has brought us closer together and given us something positive to share. I’ve done all the activities at home with (my child)!”



www.learnshetland.com



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Anderson High School German Learners Welcome International Visitors to Shetland

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Shetland partnered with the Lerwick Port Authority and the Languages Department at Anderson High School to provide pupils with a unique opportunity to use their German language skills in a real-world setting. By welcoming German cruise ship visitors to Shetland, the pupils have the opportunity to engage in genuine conversation and develop their language skills. Through real-world experiences, young people develop confidence, communication, and problem-solving skills while gaining valuable insight into customer service, the tourism sector and the importance of languages in future careers. Acting as ambassadors for Shetland, pupils connect classroom learning with the world of work and gain a deeper understanding of the skills and attributes employers value.

When young people are given the opportunity to apply their learning in authentic workplace settings, they develop the confidence, skills and aspirations needed to thrive in education, employment and life.



DYW

SHETLAND
Developing the
Young Workforce



L_{ER}WICK
PORT AUTHORITY

"I can see how much the practical skills will benefit the students and the guests are loving it too."

Melanie Henderson
Cruise & Marketing
Manager



DYW

SHETLAND
Developing the
Young Workforce



L_{ER}WICK
PORT AUTHORITY

"Thank you for making this possible for
our pupils. Their confidence has grown
greatly."
AHS Teacher

"It was hard at first, but I got more
confident and asked them questions."
AHS Learner

4 cruise ships
12 young people
100s of visitors engaged
144 number of hours of volunteering

28 May - AIDASOL
5 June - AIDALUNA
30 June - AIDASOL
8 October - AIDASOL



Watch Harrison's Story Here

