



Annual Review 2022

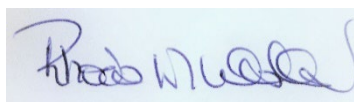
‘To work for households in all Orkney communities to reduce levels of fuel poverty and achieve affordable warmth’

Chair's Report

The year 2021/22 has been a busy and challenging year for THAW Orkney and its staff. Uncertainty about funding, increasing levels of need in the community due to the emerging energy crisis and the ongoing impact of the pandemic were challenges that shaped the year and our response. The THAW Orkney staff were amazing through it all and continued to deliver a sterling service to many despite the uncertainties. Unfortunately, reduced funding availability saw a reduction in team numbers which meant that clients have been waiting longer than we'd like to have seen and for this the Board can only offer its apologies, both to the clients and to our team delivering the service.

However, despite these factors this report demonstrates the services delivered to clients, the energy saving measures and the financial gains we were able to put in place for them.

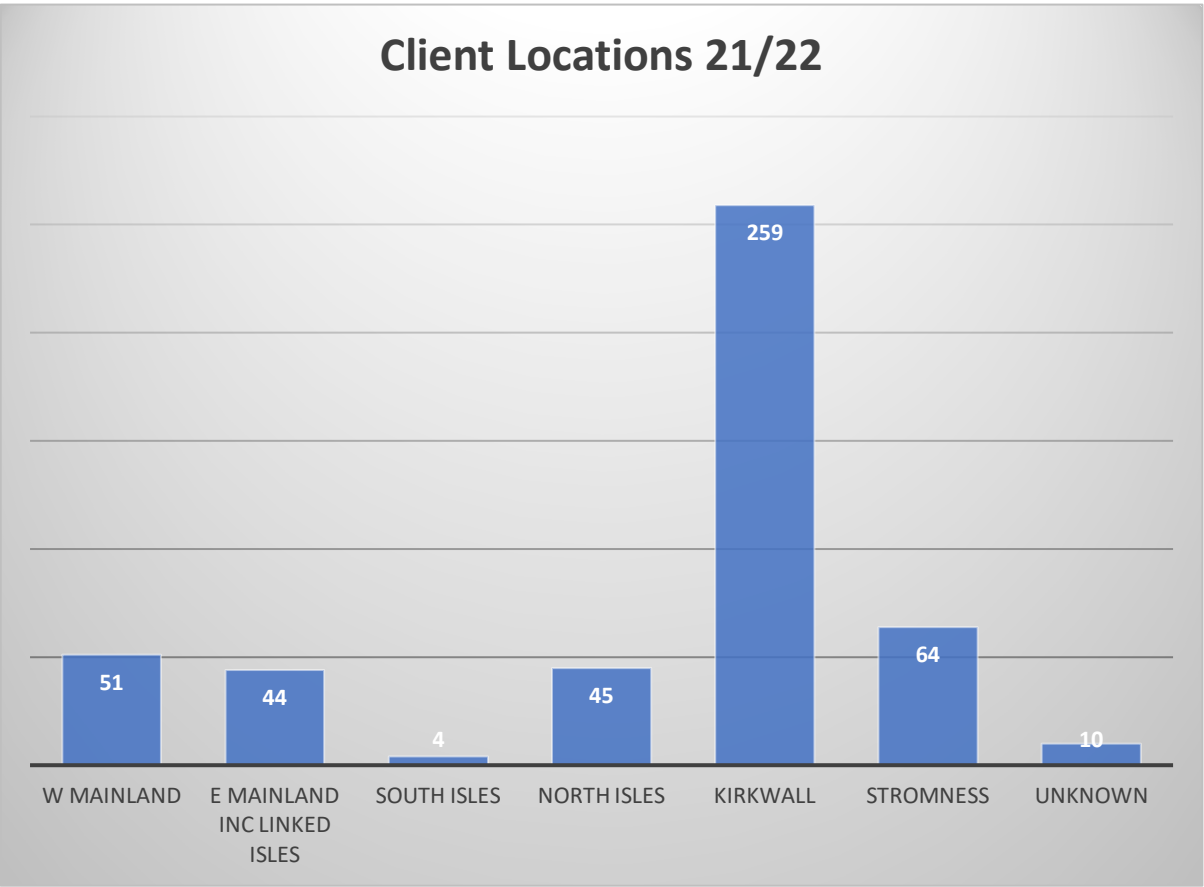
At time of report writing, we are in October 2022 and are delighted to have secured BGET funding again and have been able to increase our hard-working front line team so we can assist more who face fuel poverty in times of uncertainty due to increasing energy costs as a result of unstable national and international markets. We have new partnership arrangements with Orkney CAB and have had positive discussions with VAO and OIC with regards to the local picture and the response required.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rhoda Walker', on a light blue background.

***Rhoda Walker,
THAW Orkney Chair***

Where our clients are from

The majority of our clients are resident in Kirkwall as it keeps expanding. However, the rising cost of energy is affecting households in all areas of Orkney, and we have clients across the islands.



Service Provision and Statistics: A Partnership Approach

British Gas Energy Trust (BGET) – Supporting Communities at Risk Programme

THAW Orkney has developed a good relationship with BGET who have generously funded us over the years. Unfortunately, during 2021/22 there was a change in national policy which saw the funding available reduced. Nevertheless, the trustees remain very grateful to BGET for continuing to be our primary funder, funding our core energy advice services.

Robertson Trust – Community Support

THAW Orkney continued the project to assist the more vulnerable clients with the provision of a Community Support Officer (CSO), largely funded by the **Robertson Trust through to mid 2024**. The CSO in post assisted 131 clients during this year. Further funding to support this valuable project was secured from **Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks Resilient Communities Fund** in September 2021.

British Gas Energy Trust – Orkney Homelessness Link Worker

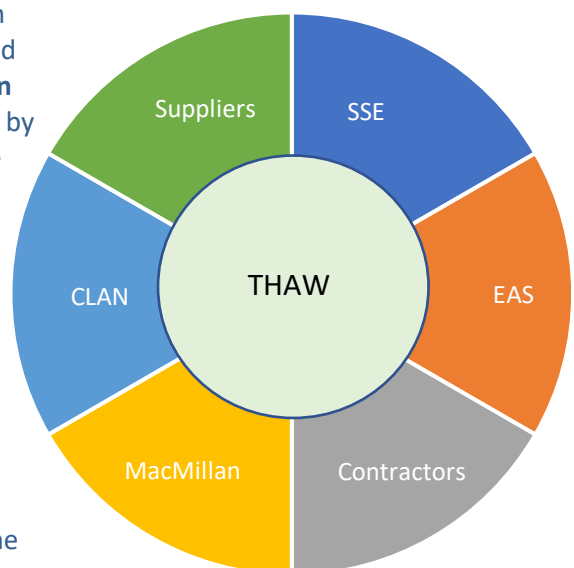
In November 2021 additional funding was secured from British Gas Energy Trust for a 6-month project providing bespoke support for individuals and families who had been placed in temporary housing due to homelessness. The project provided 35 households with >£35k of support, including 10 microwaves and 6 slow cookers to facilitate more energy efficient food preparation, and 12 countertop freezers to allow clients to store food and reduce waste.

Aiming Beyond Cancer

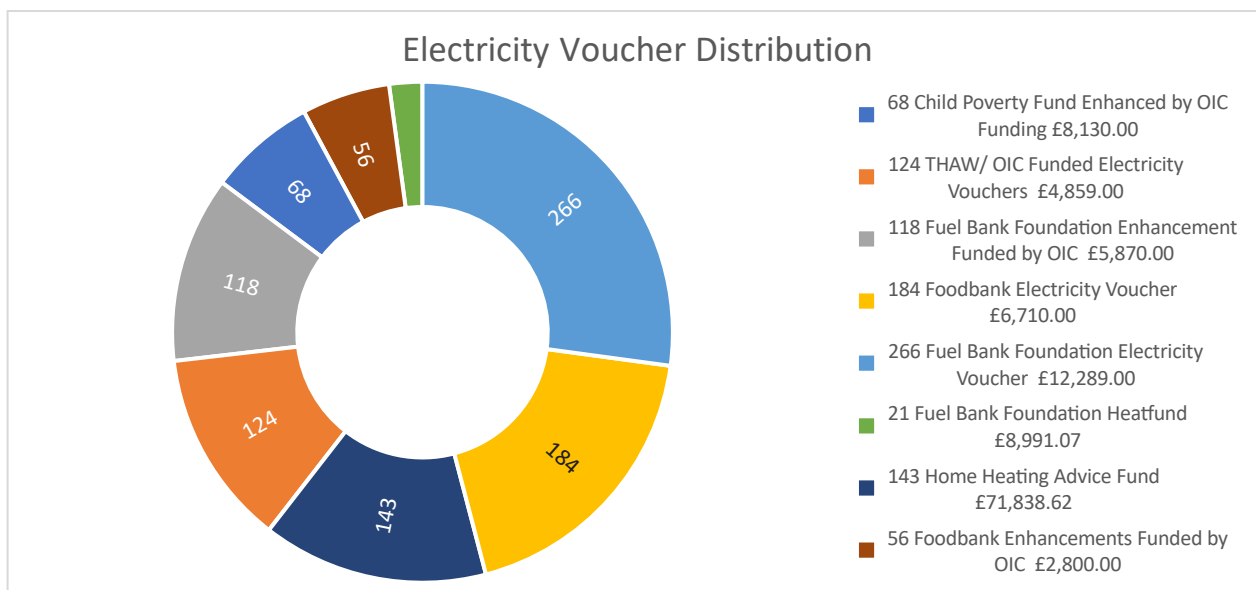
Once again, THAW Orkney was able to assist households with an active cancer diagnosis through referrals made by **Macmillan** and **CLAN Cancer Support** services. Funded by **Scottish and Southern Electric** and coordinated between Orkney and the Western Isles by **Energy Action Scotland**. However, due to restrictions set by the funder, only white goods could be installed for those eligible.

Despite some challenges still present after the pandemic, the project commenced in February 2022, with 5 white goods being installed where the referrals met the criteria set.

As ever, a huge **thank you** goes to the local **suppliers** who went the extra mile to install the heating systems and white goods. There is lack of clarity on whether we can secure this funding again in the future due to the charter mark type accreditation the funders are requiring installers to have – which is not held by anyone in Scotland let alone in Orkney.



Electricity Vouchers



The above chart outlines the number of electricity vouchers issued by THAW Orkney staff between April 2021 and March 2022.

The Fuel Bank Foundation continued to provide vouchers for clients with pre-payment meters at £49 per voucher in the winter and £30 in the summer. 266 vouchers were issued over the period, totalling £12,289.00. The Fuel Bank Heatfund has also been continued, and enabled us to assist clients whose main heating source was not electric. 21 clients received a total of £8,991 in either oil or solid fuels.

THAW Orkney continued to administer electricity funding for Orkney Foodbank. A total of 184 vouchers were issued to clients who were referred to the Foodbank by other agencies. With our relationships with electricity suppliers, we were able to assist those with credit meters as well, a service previously unavailable.

The Home Heating Support Fund continued to be administered in Orkney by THAW Orkney staff during the year. This resulted in 143 clients receiving a total of £71,839 of support to clients whether they had a pre-payment meter or monthly bills.

In addition, THAW received funding for electricity vouchers via Orkney Islands Council from the Scottish Government. This was distributed as enhancements for clients who had received a Fuel Bank Foundation voucher or Foodbank Electricity voucher and also allowed THAW to distribute our own vouchers. In addition, it was used to enhance payments to families benefiting from the Child Poverty Funding received, who were identified as having received a grant from Orkney Charitable Trust.

Home Visits After the Pandemic

Home visits and energy cafés had to be put on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic, although with the installation of energy monitors, in continued partnership with Community Energy Scotland, some visits recommenced as the Pandemic rules relaxed. While the THAW office generally remained closed to the public, clients who require additional support have been attending for face-to-face assistance and we continue to use phone and video calls.

Energy Improvements

Our staff regularly refer clients to WarmWorks and Home Energy Scotland to access grants towards replacing old heating systems and insulation measures. Although a small number, 7 Clients received a total of £45,256 towards these measures, providing an average annual saving of £440 per year.

Cosy Home Packs

THAW Orkney continues to provide the Cosy Home Packs (CHPs), which have proved very effective in assisting those households in fuel poverty. **36 CHPs** have been distributed this year.



Achieving affordable warmth in Orkney

As last year, 2021-22 continued to present significant challenges in service delivery and restrictions. Some staff were furloughed during the year when restrictions reduced the ability to provide direct services.

The main factors around whether folk can achieve affordable warmth in their homes continue to be the cost of the energy source they have access to, the energy efficiency of the property that they are heating, the income level of the household, and how the energy is used by the household – ‘human behaviour’.

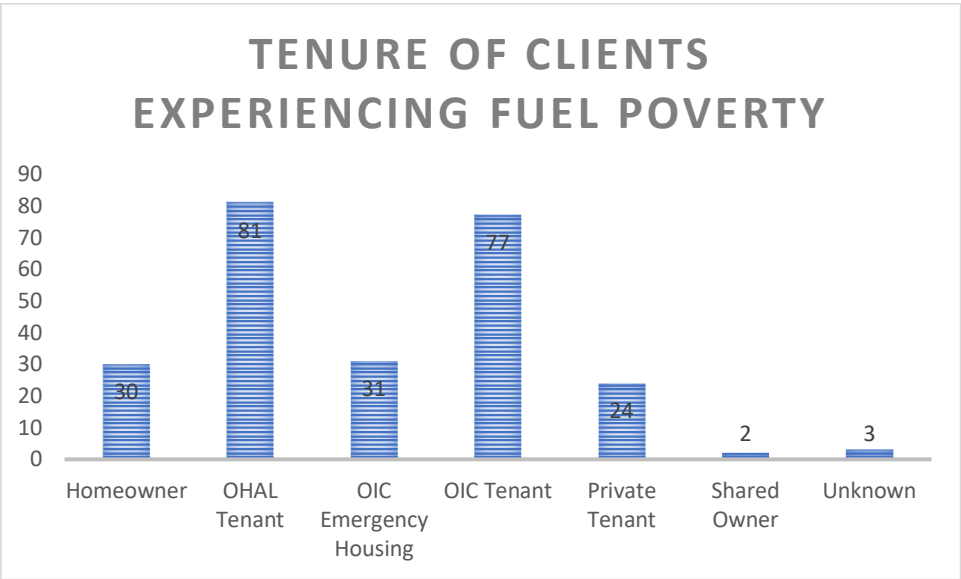
Alongside the increasing electricity prices, changes to UK regulations around energy efficiency installations and removal of Scottish Government support for certain types of heating replacements have continued to complicate the landscape that was already difficult to navigate. Home schooling, home working and restrictions in available working hours for the public were factors that added additional financial burdens across the community.

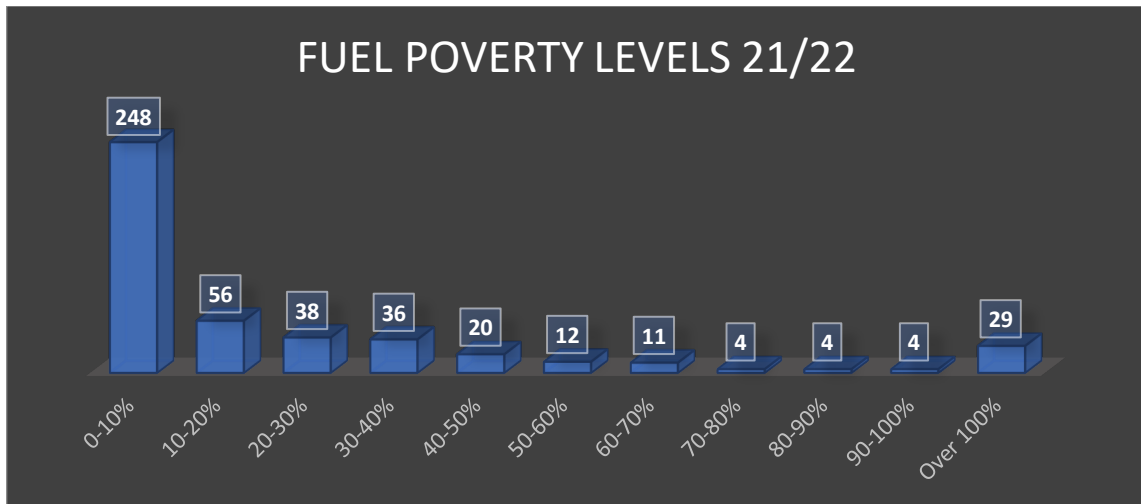
Income levels have not increased at the same rate as energy and food and other prices have risen, and certain types of income and employment support that were brought in during the pandemic also disappeared.

In the face of all that, managing energy usage in the home is possibly the only way that many households in Orkney are going to be able to survive without adequate levels of support from elsewhere, including statutory services and the Third Sector.

As long as we have funding to provide the services that we do, THAW Orkney will strive to help folk towards the ultimate goal of an affordably warm and healthy home.

The table below shows Clients experiencing Fuel Poverty and the Housing Status. Although the number of Homeowners living in Fuel Poverty is relatively low, with the rising cost of energy bills, many more are experiencing the challenges now.





The table above shows the fuel poverty levels of clients who have approached THAW Orkney for assistance this year. Although 52% would be classed as being at risk of fuel poverty rather than being fuel poor, the severity of the issue among those households unable to achieve affordable warmth is stark, with 6% experiencing over 100% fuel poverty. These figures are highly likely to change due to the predicted rise in the cost of energy in future.

Case Studies and Comments on our services:

Client A is a 63-year-old lady living on one of the outer isles, in receipt of DLA and Carers allowance, who was struggling with heating costs. Her partner and children also have disabilities, and therefore the heating had to be on regularly due to health issues. The house was poorly insulated, and windows were in need of repair. Referrals were made for the client for insulation, which is now being carried out. THAW secured funding for oil and gas through the FuelBank Foundation Heat Fund and provided electricity vouchers. In addition, the Home Heating Advice Fund cleared a significant debt from the meter.

Project Outcomes

- Client received THAW energy vouchers
- Client received Fuel Bank Heat fund delivery of oil
- Referral to WarmWorks and Home Energy Scotland for insulation
- SSE Priority Assistance Register
- Warm Homes Discount
- Client received Home Heating Advice Fund grant

“Without THAW’s help, we would have been lost. The staff are so supportive and kind, and we were never made to feel like we were asking for a handout. We cannot thank them enough for all their help.”

Client B is a single working-age male in receipt of Universal Credit, who had initially contacted us during the pandemic, but was now struggling again due to rising costs. Emergency pre-payment electricity vouchers were provided and an application was made to the Home Heating Advice Fund, from which he was awarded £430, distributed to him over 10 weeks. The Client has been extremely grateful for the additional gain he has received.

Project Outcomes

- Electricity vouchers
- Warm Home Discount
- Home Heating Advice Fund Vouchers

"I can't thank you enough, this extra money means I can turn my heating on for the first time in years."

Governance and Staffing 2021-22

THAW Orkney Staffing

Gill Couper-Swanney, Facilities and Administration Officer

Michael Butler, Homelessness Support Officer (*October 2021 – March 2022*),
Development and Support Officer (*from April 2022*)

Craig Nisbet, Community Support Officer/Development and Support Officer
(*until April 2022*)

Jonathan Ford, Development and Support Officer

Caroline Atkinson, Development and Support Officer (*until September 2022*)

Robert Leslie, Manager (*until June 2022*)

Trustees

Rhoda Walker (*Chair*)

Adele Lidderdale (*Vice Chair*)

Caroline Butterfield (*Treasurer*)

Janice Annal

Gerry O'Brien

Mark Hull

Pat Law

Imogen Sawyer

John Ross Scott

Thank You:

Our grateful thanks to all those who have contributed to THAW Orkney this year without whom we would not have achieved so much:

- British Gas Energy Trust / Charis Charitable Trust
- Orkney Islands Council
- Energy Action Scotland
- Foundation Scotland
- NHS Orkney
- The Robertson Trust
- Orkney Housing Association Ltd
- Orkney Renewable Energy Forum
- Orkney Renewable Energy Ltd
- Orkney Citizens Advice Bureau
- Warm Homes Fund / Orkney Islands Council
- Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
- Scottish and Southern Electric
- Warmworks
- **Laura Watts** who kindly donated the royalties from her book '**Energy at the End of The World: An Orkney Islands Saga**'
- And **Individuals** who have generously made **personal donations** to further THAW's work of tackling fuel poverty and social and financial inclusion

Organisations we have partnered during 2021-22



Further information:

Further copies of this report can be obtained from THAW's website:
<http://www.thaworkney.co.uk/>

THAW can be contacted via
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