

Volunteers required for Cost of Living research in the town of Kirkwall: £80 voucher for taking part

Loughborough University has been commissioned by 4 local authorities including Orkney Islands Council to update the Minimum Income Standard for Remote and Rural Scotland that was first carried out in 2012.

In Orkney we are asking people from different types of households in the town of Kirkwall to volunteer to take part in discussion groups to talk about what people need for an acceptable standard of living in 2026. Groups are also being held in locations in Argyll and Bute, Outer Hebrides and Shetland. We know that households in these areas may have different and/or additional needs compared to households elsewhere in the UK. This work will help identify these differences and highlight specific issues that would need to be addressed to help affordability for households in these areas.

The research findings will be used by Orkney Islands Council and other organisations to help make sure that people have enough to enable them to have an acceptable standard of living and to play a full part in today's society.

With support from Voluntary Action Orkney (VAO) we have begun recruiting in the town of Kirkwall for participants for three in-person focus groups from a variety of backgrounds and age groups. Other areas in Orkney will be covered by a separate process.

Participants should be of working age and over but not a full time student. They will not be asked to share or discuss any personal details, and the conversations will be formed around case studies. This means participants do not need to be an 'expert' to be involved.

Involvement in this project is voluntary and places in the focus groups are limited.

Once participants have taken part in the session, they will receive an £80 voucher (for use in the Co-op, Tesco or Amazon) as a contribution for giving their time (3 hours). Discussions during the focus groups are strictly confidential.

The research will involve a small number of people taking part in an informal discussion led by a professional researcher. The three focus groups for the town of Kirkwall will take place at the St Magnus Centre on Monday 21 September 2026. The times are:

- 10.00am - 1.00pm: Retired people and pensioners
- 6.30pm - 21.30pm: Working age with no dependents in the household:
- 6.30pm - 9.30pm Parents with children in the household: 18.30-21.30

The research is being conducted by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) team at the University of Loughborough who are working alongside a Highland based researcher. The researchers operate under strict ethical and legal codes, including those of the Data Protection Acts and the Social Research Association.

If you would like to take part in this study, then please complete the online form. Loughborough University will then let you know if you have been selected to be part of a focus group.

The form can be found here:

