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THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ARE THE BEST PLACES TO BRING UP CHILDREN

When it comes to the best place to raise children, the Highland and Islands come out top not just in Scotland but across Great Britain too. The 2015 Bank of Scotland Children's Quality of Life Survey found that children in Orkney enjoy the best quality of life of any local area district (LAD), followed by the Shetland Islands and the Western Isles.

The Bank of Scotland Children's Quality of Life Survey has placed Orkney in top spot based on low primary school class size, high school spending per pupil and the fact they live in an area of low population density and little traffic. Children there are also likely to be surrounded by adults who are in employment and who rate their own personal well-being as very high.

What makes Orkney such a good place to bring up children?

- Both the average primary school class size (18.0) and pupil to teacher ratio in secondary schools (8.8) are amongst the lowest in Britain (26.4 and 15.5 respectively)
- An average school spend of £9,000 per pupil is one of the highest in the survey – almost twice the national average of £4,560
- These factors appear to help high school children achieve excellent exam results, with 87.1% of pupils getting 5 awards at SCQF 4 or better (82.6% national average)
- Orkney has one of the lowest population densities in Britain with just 22 people per square kilometre – compared to the national average of 274
- Children can walk about in relative freedom with just 139 vehicles per square kilometre, compared to 9,459 in Britain as a whole
- Importantly, the ONS survey on personal well-being indicates the Orkney adult population is among the happiest, most satisfied, least anxious and content in Britain. This bodes well for those growing up on the isles.
- On the flip side, there is bad news for kids who like online games, as just 56% of households have access to fast broadband; significantly below the national average of 86%.

Shetlands and Western Isles make up the top 3 best places for children to live in both Scotland and Great Britain

The Shetland Islands is the second best place to bring up children, with the Western Isles in third. Both of these areas score high on the education factors, human geography and how adults rate their personal well-being. Shetland performs strongly on the lowest pupil to teacher ratio of 8.6; the highest average school spend per pupil of £10,821 and over nine out ten secondary school pupils achieve 5 awards at SCQF 4 or better. The Western Isles has the lowest average primary school class size of 17.4 in Britain, as well as low population density of 9 people per sq.Km and traffic volumes of just 69 vehicles per sq.Km.

With Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles taking up most top spots in each quality of life category, which other areas in Scotland fared well?

Children living in East Dunbartonshire achieve the second best exam results in Scotland with 94% of pupils getting 5 awards at SCQF 4 or better – well above the Scotland average of 83.3% and the GB average of 82.6%.

Pupils in East Renfrewshire were very close behind at 93.5%. Midlothian has more houses with an internet connection of more than 2Mbps (89%), followed by Stirling (88%) and Clackmannanshire (87%).

Aberdeen has the second highest employment rate at 81.2%, while the adult populations in Falkirk, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Aberdeen City and Argyll & Bute are among the second happiest, most satisfied, least anxious and content in Scotland (6.5), which bodes well for kids growing up in those areas.

Nitesh Patel, economist at Bank of Scotland said, “The north of Scotland has always done well when we’ve looked at Quality of Life indexes so it’s no surprise that Orkney, the Shetland Islands and Western Isles are the top three in the 2015 Bank of Scotland Children’s Quality of Life Index across both Scotland and Great Britain. Children in these areas benefit from low primary school class sizes, low pupil to teacher ratio in secondary schools, excellent exam results and some of the highest school spend per pupil.”

Table 1: Top 20 areas in Scotland based on annual data from 2015

Scottish Ranking 2015	Local Authority	GB Ranking 2015
1	Orkney Islands	1
2	Shetland Islands	2
3	Western Isles	3
4	Aberdeenshire	20
5	Highland	29
6	Perth & Kinross	39
7	Scottish Borders	54
8	Argyll & Bute	60
9	Dumfries & Galloway	71
10	Stirling	73
11	East Renfrewshire	81
12	Moray	119
13	Aberdeen City	124
14	West Lothian	129
15	East Dunbartonshire	134
16	Midlothian	146
17	Angus	153
18	South Lanarkshire	181
19	East Lothian	186
20	Fife	187

Table 2: Best Children's Quality of Life in each category in 2015

Group	Variable	Local Authority District
Labour market		
	Highest employment rate: 89.3% (Scotland average 73.9%, GB average 74.0%)	Orkney
Housing		
	Highest average number of rooms in house: 4.92 (Scotland average 4.6 rooms, GB average 5.4 rooms)	WEstern Isles
	% of households with more than 2Mbps – and where more than half of household have chance of having superfast broadband: 89% (Scotland average 69.5%, GB average is 86.0%)	Midlothian
Urban environment		
	Lowest population density per sqr km: 9 (Scotland average 481 per sq/km, GB average 274 per sq/km)	Western Isles Highlands
	Lowest traffic flows per square km: 69 cars /km (Scotland average 3,236 per sq/km, GB average 9,459 per sq/km)	Western Isles
Education		
	Lowest average number of pupils in primary school class: 17.4 (Scotland average 22.7 pupils per class, GB average 26.4 pupils per class)	Western Isles
	Highest % of 15+ yr olds with 5 awards at SCQF 4 or better: 94.3 (Scotland average 83.3, GB average 82.6)	Shetlands
	Highest average state school (primary and secondary) spending per pupil: £10,821 (Scotland average £5,834, GB average £4,560)	Shetlands
	Lowest secondary school pupil teacher ratio :8.6 (Scotland average 11.7, GB average 15.5)	Shetlands
Personal Well Being		
	Highest personal wellbeing (average of life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety): 6.6 (Scotland average 6.4, GB average 6.4)	Orkney Western Isles Highlands

Ends

Notes to editors:

The Quality of Life index has been produced at a local authority district level from 377 Local Authority Districts in Great Britain, out of which we have conducted a separate analysis based on 32 Scottish LADs.

The quality of life reading for each local authority has been created by summing scores across 10 variables within 5 broad groups.

Each local authority district is given a score out of 10 for each variable contained in the index. Scores within each of the broad groups are averaged and then the seven group scores are summed to create an overall quality of life score.

Group	Variable	Period covered
Labour	Employment rate %	April 2014 – March 2015
Housing	Number of rooms in house	Housing Conditions Survey 2009/11
	Households with a good level of broadband access (i.e. a download speed of at least 2Mbps):	Point Topic June 2014
Urban environment	Population density per square km	2014 – ONS
	Traffic flows per square km	2014
Education	Number of pupils in primary school class	January 2014
	% of 15yr+ olds with 5 or more Standard Grades	2013
	Average state school (primary and secondary) spending per pupil	2013
	Secondary school pupil teacher ratio	2014
Personal Well-Being		April 2013-March 2014 ONS

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