



Workforce Plan

2026/27 to 2030/31

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Executive Summary

1. Our current Business Plan has four strategic goals one of which is to be an excellent employer that attracts and retains high quality staff.
2. To deliver the strategic goals the Board recognise that we need a dedicated and skilled workforce. A Workforce Plan that aligns with our business strategy is crucial.
3. This plan will be supported by the Training Plan and Well Being Strategy.

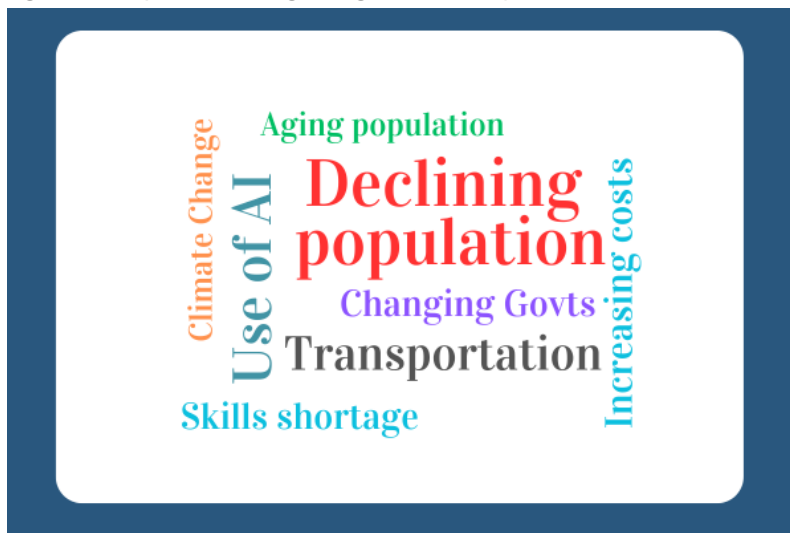
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Being an excellent employer that attracts and retains high quality staff

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Baseline

4. We have 55 posts on the establishment, including 3 Modern Apprentices and 1 Graduate Apprentice. One post is currently on hold leaving 54 active posts. To deliver our Strategic Goals, we need to remain agile and open to doing things differently in an environment that is changing fast and challenging.



Gap Analysis

5. We analysed our data at 31 March 2026 along with NOMIS data 2025 and have concluded that:
 - a. Skills gaps exist;
 - b. We have an ageing workforce, with 40.8% of our current workforce due to reach normal pension age in the next 10 years (8 in 5 years and 12 in the next 5 years);
 - c. Our stock will increase by 6% in the next 10 years to 2,630 homes;
 - d. Over the past 5 years the demands on staff have changed, with more time needed to support tenants because of less family support and recruitment challenges in health services leaving support services stretched;
 - e. The new housing system has freed up some administrative resource which is being redeployed to other areas;

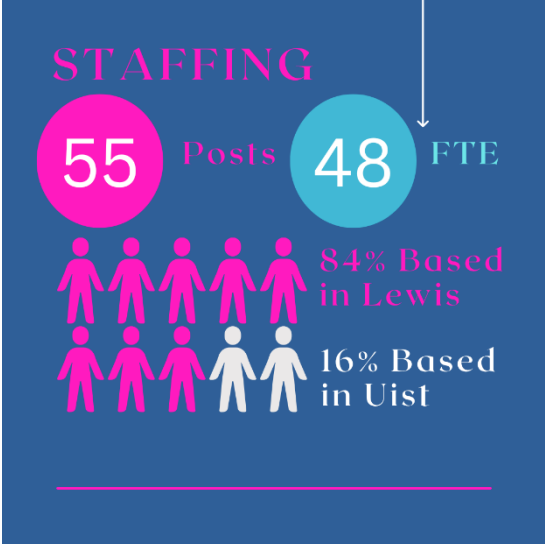
- f. AI is being used to release time from admin tasks which are repetitive, advances are expected to continue.
 - g. There is an increasing demand for our handyperson services and on our IT services.
 - h. Our apprenticeship programme is working well, with our first Graduate Apprentice started in August 2025 and our first Finance Apprentice started in June 2026.
 - i. New people coming into the organisation can bring a fresh approach to how we work and provide some revitalisation;
 - j. Our pay & benefits need to remain competitive;
 - k. Compliance work on our properties has increased but work previously carried out by the Property Team on Investments is now done by Contractors;
 - l. Transport links between the islands are still causing problems; and
 - m. We need to look at all our posts to see how they can be changed to be able to offer different working patterns for staff particularly as their lives change e.g. new parents, caring responsibilities and retirement.
 - n. Retirements present opportunities to reshape jobs, so they are ready for the future.
6. An organisational review has been underway for the past 9 months with proposals coming to the Board in November 2026 which will seek to address the above issues along with our Action Plan at Appendix A.

Purpose

- 1 Business plans are essential, but without a dedicated workforce, executing them becomes challenging. Therefore, having a Workforce Plan that aligns with our business strategy is crucial. This plan is not only for succession in case of retirement, but also for filling in gaps due to various reasons like long-term illness, parental leave, maternity leave, or secondments. It aims to prevent staff from being overburdened during absences while also ensuring the achievement of our Strategic Goals.

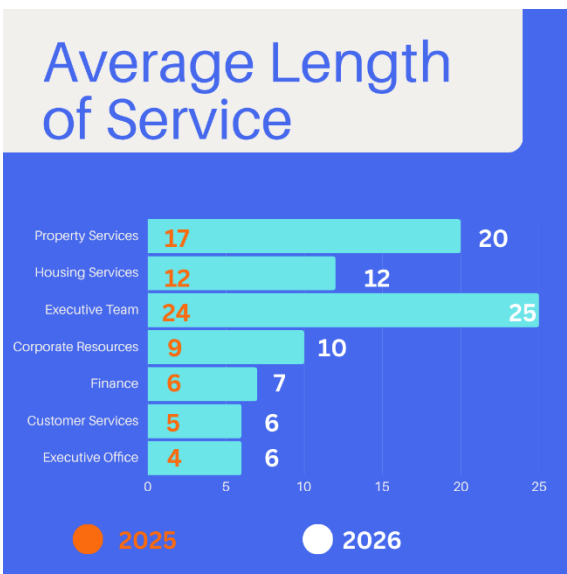
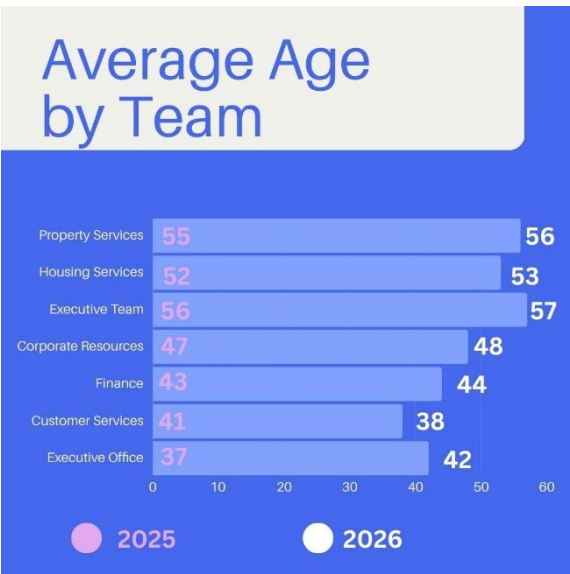
Baseline

- 2 We have a total of 55 posts on our establishment: 3 are Modern Apprentices and 1 is a Graduate Apprentice, leaving 54 active posts and one inactive post.
- 3 We manage a total of 2,481 houses from two offices, one based in Stornoway and the other in Balivanich. The majority of the corporate support staff are based in Stornoway.



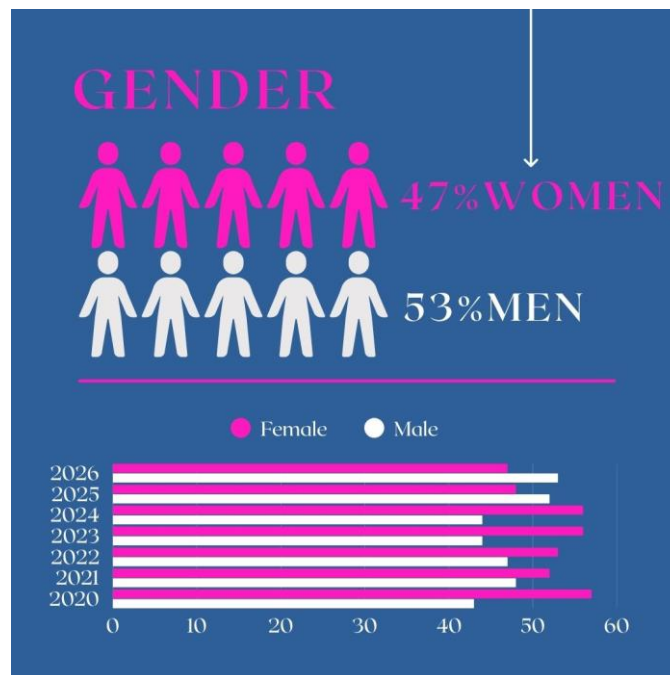
Age Profile

- 4 The average age of the team is 49.5 years and the average length of service is 12.5 years.



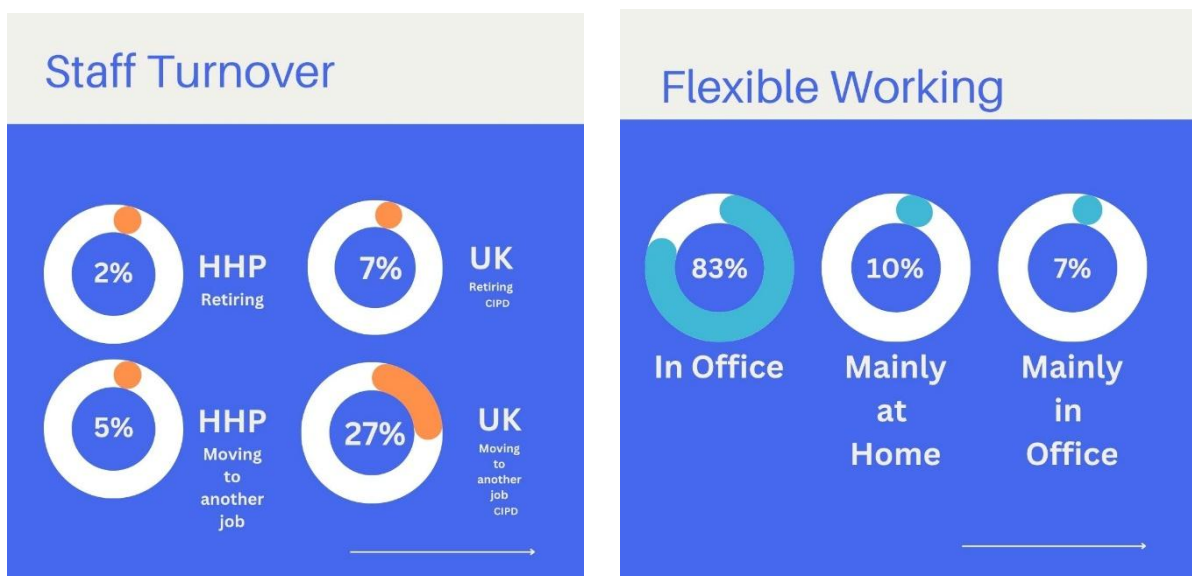
Gender Split

- 5 The gender split has moved this year, with more men and fewer women: 47% women and 53% men.



Staff Turnover

- 6 Our turnover decreased this year from 9.4% to 4.95%; the UK average for all employers is 32%.
- 7 We offer Flexible Working with 10% of staff mainly working from home.
- 8 Our lower turnover rate could be indicative of a few things:
- We are a good employer and people want to stay with us; and/or
 - People are comfortable doing jobs they have done for years and do not want a change.



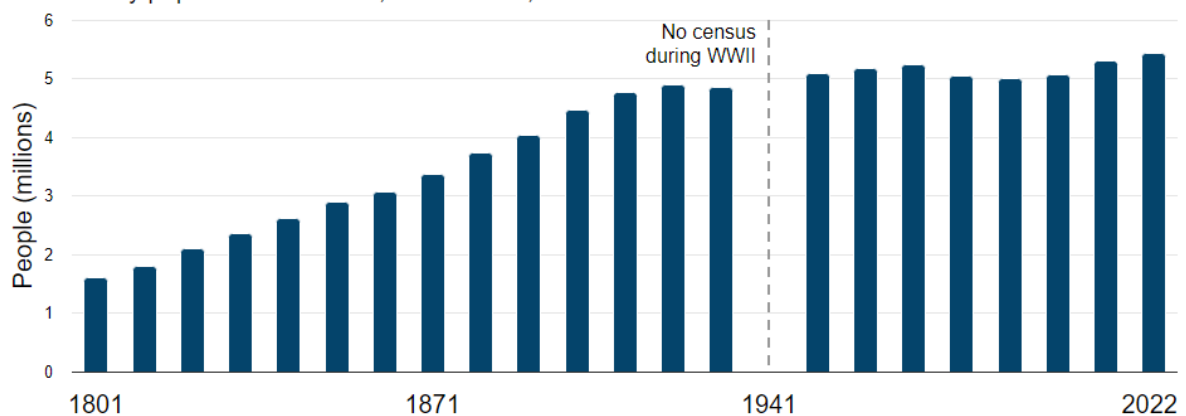
Population

- 9 Since the 2011 Census, Scotland's population has grown, but the Outer Hebrides population has gone down. Out of the three island authorities, the Outer Hebrides has seen the largest % decline at 5.5%. Shetland was next at 1.2% but Orkney bucked the trend increasing its population by 3%.



Figure 1: Scotland's population continued to increase

Census Day population estimates, 1801 - 2022, Scotland

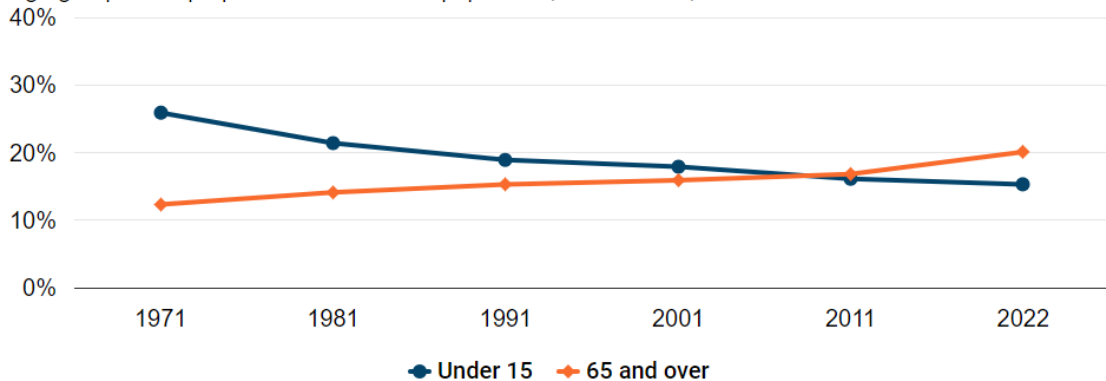


- 10 The population in Scotland grew by less than other areas in the UK at 2.7% as opposed to 6.3% for England and Wales and 5.1% for Northern Ireland. Migration is what is keeping the population high as deaths outstripped births.

- 11 The extract below from the Census website confirms that Scotland has an ageing population.

Figure 2: Scotland's population is ageing

Age groups as a proportion of Scotland's population, 1971 - 2022, Scotland



- 12 The reducing “under 15” population directly impacts the working population of the future.
- 13 Either people will have to continue to work longer or we need to attract people from other countries to move to Scotland.
- 14 In the Outer Hebrides the situation is more acute and there are significant gaps in a number of key sectors in the islands. We are facing the same challenges as every other rural area in Scotland which means we are competing to attract people to come and work in our area. So what can we offer to encourage them to come West instead of North?

Working Age Population

- 15 The Working Age population in the Outer Hebrides is around 15,092 people. We have a lower weekly gross pay than Orkney and Shetland which might make it harder to attract people to come to the Outer Hebrides but the gap has closed a bit with Orkney now at £5.70 per week.



Future Needs

- 16 A stable workforce with low turnover may look like a good thing, but are we going to face a real crunch in the not-too-distant future when more staff with a strong knowledge base and experience reach retirement? Despite all the technological advancements, we have yet to find a way to extract detailed

information shaped by experience and intuition from people’s minds, although it could be argued that AI is about to change that considerably.

On the other hand, there is a risk that if older employees stay in the same job for too long, creativity may be stifled, and we lose the opportunity of bringing new employees with new skills on board.

Based on our current turnover rate, staffing structure and expected retirements we expect to fill 23 posts during the life of this plan, which is just under 5 a year.

Retirements

If staff retire at normal pension age, we will have 8 retirements over the next 5 years. It is very likely that a number of staff will retire ahead of normal pension age but that has not been confirmed.

It generally takes about 3 months to fill a vacant post and probably a further 3 months for the person to be fully up to speed with how we work and their new role. If we were filling posts like for like we would expect to be able to fill the posts left vacant from retirement.

A couple of members of staff have expressed a wish to apply for phased retirement, which generally involves going part time for two to three years before retiring completely. This will allow opportunities for acting up by other team members, providing resilience.

As part of our flexible working approach, we will need to look at all our posts to see how they can be adapted to enable flexible working. We will also review how jobs are likely to change over time, and this will be done as part of the organisational review currently underway.

Succession Planning

In terms of succession planning the posts that are likely to become vacant in the next 10 years are:





- 24 The potential retirements are two from the Executive Team, two Admin roles, one manager and three officer roles.
- 25 We will develop a Leadership Talent Pipeline, which will be split into three categories:
- Emerging Leaders – staff demonstrating management potential
 - Operational Leaders – current managers and team leaders
 - Executive Leaders – potential future Directors and CEO
- 26 The current succession risks are:

RISK	Rating	Mitigation
Retirement of senior leaders	Amber	Develop successors now using the talent pipeline
Lack of external candidates	Red	Grow internal talent e.g. apprenticeship programme
Single points of failure	Red	Knowledge transfer plans to be prepared
Loss of specialist knowledge	Red	Develop a documentation programme

- 27 The organisational review will address some of the mitigation actions and the Action Plan at Appendix 1 has been updated to ensure the risk is mitigated.

Changing Demands

- 28 Over the past 10 years, we have seen a trend of increasing workload for RSLs to deal with welfare concerns, compliance and governance matters. There has also been an increase in the resource required to deal with communications. Technology has helped with some of the additional burden, but there are some aspects that cannot be dealt with by technology.

Welfare Cases & Increased Turnover

- 29 The increase in the number of welfare cases being managed by the Housing Services Team -it is the complexity of the cases rather than the volume which has increased. However with the aging population there may also be an increase in demand.
- 30 An increase in turnover due to Housing with Extra Care.

Compliance Work

- 31 There has been a significant increase in the amount of compliance work required in our properties e.g. fire suppression systems, EICR.

Data Analysis

- 32 The value of data integrity cannot be underestimated. When we have full confidence in our systems, it reduces the time required to gather data for planning and frees up storage space on our systems, reducing costs over time.
- 33 With the new housing system, it is vital that it is supported by data analysis with robust systems in place to ensure the data is sound.

Communications: PR

- 34 There has been a significant increase in the amount of time required to deal with press and media enquiries. This is an area where we need to enhance the skills we have and perhaps realign available resources.

Estate Management

- 35 Handyperson Service – possible expansion and being able to offer the service to others via the subsidiary.

Senior Management

- 36 The organisational review will look at proposing options to provide staff with a career path to prepare them to be in the best position to apply for senior management roles.

Flexible Working

- 37 According to HR Review hybrid or flexible work models have had the lowest overall turnover rates since 2019 with fully remote roles predicted to have the highest retention rate in 2023 with 39.3%
- 38 Our Retirement Policy makes provision for staff to apply for flexible retirement, so we will need to look at all posts to see how we can enable that for as many jobs as possible. There will be some jobs where it is not feasible, but these should be few in number.

Technology

- 39 The advancements in technology are providing opportunities to reduce the number of resources dedicated to administrative tasks and allow staff to be redeployed in other areas where demand is increasing. It might also provide more opportunities for flexible working as mentioned above.
- 40 The freeing up of resources due to new systems does not extend to the staff who provide support for all our IT systems. An exercise is required to analyse the level of resources required internally and externally to provide robust IT support, including ensuring that expertise is shared by staff and not held by one or two people.

- 41 AI is changing the way we work and it is important to embrace it, with all the necessary safeguards so we can be as agile and skilled as possible enabling us to deliver consistently excellent services.

Debt Management

- 42 Debt has been increasing over the past three years at a higher rate than in the past, particularly in Former Tenant arrears and Rechargeable Repairs. An analysis of the process and resource we deploy to collect debt will be undertaken to ensure it is being targeted at the right time and in the most effective way. We also need to consider whether employing our own lawyer could bring benefits.

Increasing expectations

- 43 As service standards rise so do the expectations of customers. People expect more for the same price. As a starting point we will identify how expectations have changed over the last three years and the implications on our resources. An assessment will be made whether we need to incorporate a “buffer” in our resources going forward or whether it can be accommodated through the benefits from new technologies.

Supply-what's the market like

- 44 At the end of July, there were 44 vacancies being advertised on HiJobs, compared with 33 in 2024, with the majority of these in the health sector and local government.
- 45 We recently carried out a benchmarking exercise which confirmed that the rates we are paying for the type of jobs we have is right for the current market. We will carry out another benchmarking exercise in 2027.
- 46 Based on our current turnover rate, staffing structure and expected retirements we expect to fill 23 posts during the life of this plan.
- 47 We are exploring options for our Subsidiary Dachaigh Property Solutions which will involve employing an additional member of staff.

Gap Analysis

- 48 To attract the best candidates for any post, we are committed to benchmarking our salaries to ensure they remain competitive, building and developing a good, wholesome culture so people are happy in their work, and providing training opportunities for our current staff so they can gain new skills.

Pay

- 49 Our gross weekly pay is £745, based on an average salary of £38,723. We offer a very good overall package, including an 18% pension contribution. The package will be kept under review to ensure we are attracting great candidates.
- 50 We are a Living Wage and Living Pension employer and committed to Fair Work First principles which should make us an attractive employer. We are also signed up to the Army Covenant (Bronze level) which could make us more attractive to veterans.



Promotion Prospects

- 51 There can be too big a gap between some posts, and it is proposed that, as part of the organisational review, we look at providing more opportunities throughout the structure for advancement. The downside of this will be more tiers rather than a flatter structure, but it is hard to see how there is any other option.

Job Design

- 52 When posts become vacant there will be a more robust process for managers to go through before the post is released to ensure we don't miss opportunities for a job redesign.
- 53 We are using AI in a number of ways which should free up time for staff to do more planning.
- 54 Areas to look at include data analysis, compliance for properties, communications, welfare, estate management and support for new IT systems.
- 55 We need to minimise an increase in the cost of the service unless there is a very clear reason to do so with a demonstrable benefit to the tenant. Tenants will need to be asked for their views around any changes to service delivery.

Culture & Wellbeing

- 56 We spend a minimum of 30% of waking time at our work and this should be as positive an experience as possible by ensuring we have a good vibrant culture where people trust each other and support each other when things are tough.
- 57 We are building on the culture work done in 2024, and a Wellbeing Strategy has been approved and is being implemented. We are also taking part in a pilot to gain a Mental Health Accreditation with the Health Board.
- 58 Our Gender Gap report for 31 March 2026 confirmed there are no equality issues with our pay structure.

Apprentices

- 59 Our apprenticeship scheme has proved beneficial, but the volume of applications has not been overwhelming. There is work to be done in developing the scheme and strengthening our relationship with the Apprenticeship Team at the Comhairle.

Action Plan

- 60 The Action Plan is at Appendix A. It will be monitored by Management Team quarterly, with a six-month report going to the Personnel Working Group and an annual update to the Board.