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Halifax reveals Britain's top spots for bringing up the kids

- Northern Scotland home to best children's quality of life
- Craven, North Yorkshire ranks top in England
- South East dominates the top 50 with Hart leading the way

The Orkney Islands, Shetland and the Western Isles in northern Scotland retain the top spots as Great Britain's best places to bring up children, according to new research from Halifax.

The latest **Halifax children's Quality of Life Survey** revealed that the Orkney Islands held on to its crown based on low primary school class size, high school spending per pupil, low population density and traffic levels. Children in the Orkneys are also likely to be surrounded by adults in employment and with high personal well-being.

North Yorkshire's Craven scooped third place and top in England, thanks to its high employment rate, primary and secondary class sizes, low traffic levels, population density and personal well-being.

The top 50 ranking best places for children to live were split between the South (South East, South West and East of England) and the North (Scotland, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands, East Midlands and Wales).

Russell Galley, Managing Director, Halifax, said: "In a twist from last year's survey, the Scottish domination of the top three has been interrupted by a new challenger – North Yorkshire's Craven. Its new spot at the top of the Personal Well-Being Survey indicates that happy parents can often mean happy children.

"Measuring the best quality of life for children covers a range of factors including class size, spending per pupil and academic results. Kids in the top ranked places will often be surrounded by a greater proportion of adults in full-time employment who also consider themselves to be happy. However, one potential drawback for kids in the top spots is that broadband speed is among the slowest in Britain."

Top 50 best places to bring up children split between the North and South

- The region with the most spots in the top 50 best places to raise kids is the South East (12); including Hart, Waverly, Woking, Mole Valley and Test Valley.

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- 10 are in Scotland – along with the top two; the Western Isles, the Highlands, Perth & Kinross, Argyle & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway and the Scottish Borders.
- Seven are in the East Midlands including the local authorities of Rutland, Erewash and Harborough.
- Seven are also in the East of England including the local authorities of Suffolk Coastal, South Norfolk and Chelmsford.
- The West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber have four local authorities in the top 50, followed by the North West with three local authorities in the top 50.
- In the South West Suffolk Coastal, South Norfolk and Chelmsford along with Powys in Wales make up the rest of the list.

Many of these areas score highly in categories relating to the environment in which children are brought up. These include high levels of employment, bigger houses where children are more likely to have their own bedroom, faster broadband, relatively low traffic volumes, population densities and where adults rate personal well-being highly.

What makes the northern tip of Scotland Islands such a good place to bring up children?

- The average primary school class size (17.3) and pupil to teacher ratio (PTR) in secondary schools (13.4) in the Western Isles are the lowest in Britain (national averages of 27.0 and 20.9 respectively). The Orkneys follow with primary class sizes of 18.4 and a PTR of 14.2.
- An average school spend in the Orkneys of £9,662 per pupil is the highest in the survey – just over twice the national average of £4,643. The spending ratio in the Western Isles and Shetlands follow at £9,128 and £8,701 per pupil respectively.
- These factors appear to help secondary school children achieve excellent exam results, with over 90% of pupils in the Islands getting five awards at SCQF 4 or better (61% GB average¹).
- The Western Isles have the lowest population densities in Britain with only nine people per square kilometre – compared to the national average of 279. The Shetlands and Orkneys also have equally low population densities with 16 and 22 people/square km respectively.
- Children can walk about in relative freedom with an average of 81 vehicles per square kilometre in the Western Isles, 147 in the Orkneys and 150 in the Shetlands, compared to 9,729 in Britain overall.
- The ONS survey of personal well-being indicates the Orkney and Western Island adult populations are 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 between only 86% and 71% of households have access to fast broadband; significantly below the national average of 94%.

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Table 1: 2017 Halifax children's quality of life rankings – top 50 areas

Local Authority	Region	Ranking 2017
Orkney Islands	Scotland	1
Shetland Islands	Scotland	2
Craven	Yorkshire and The Humber	3
Western Isles	Scotland	4
Hart	South East	5
South Lakeland	North West	6
North Warwickshire	West Midlands	7
Highland	Scotland	8
Waverley	South East	9
Richmondshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	10
Rutland	East Midlands	11
Stroud	South West	12
Perth & Kinross	Scotland	13
Erewash	East Midlands	14
Eden	North West	15
Woking	South East	16
Wychavon	West Midlands	17
Suffolk Coastal	East of England	18
Harrogate	Yorkshire and The Humber	19
Mole Valley	South East	20
Bromsgrove	West Midlands	21
Cotswold	South West	22
Argyll & Bute	Scotland	23
Harborough	East Midlands	24
Dumfries & Galloway	Scotland	25
South Norfolk	East of England	26
Test Valley	South East	27
Chelmsford	East of England	28
St Edmundsbury	East of England	29
Ribble Valley	North West	30
West Oxfordshire	South East	31
Selby	Yorkshire and The Humber	32
Chiltern	South East	33
Scottish Borders	Scotland	34
Chichester	South East	35
Blaby	East Midlands	36
Wycombe	South East	37
Basingstoke and Deane	South East	38

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East Dunbartonshire	Scotland	39
North Hertfordshire	East of England	40
South Kesteven	East Midlands	41
Uttlesford	East of England	42
Newark and Sherwood	East Midlands	43
South Bucks	South East	44
Central Bedfordshire	East of England	45
Midlothian	Scotland	46
Rugby	West Midlands	47
Gwynedd	Wales	48
New Forest	South East	49
South Northamptonshire	East Midlands	50

Source: Halifax

Table 2: Best area for children's quality of life in each region in 2017

Local Authority	Region	Rank
Orkney Islands	Scotland	1
South Lakeland	North West	7
Rutland	East Midlands	23
North Warwickshire	West Midlands	29
Craven	Yorkshire and The Humberside	13
Hart	South East	22
Stroud	South West	44
Suffolk Coastal	East of England	49
Gwynedd	Wales	57
Sutton	London	260
County Durham	North East	229

Source: Halifax

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Table 3: Best children's quality of life in each category in 2017

Group	Variable	Local Authority District	Region
Labour market			
	Highest employment rate: 89.1% (GB average is 75.2%)	Shetland Islands	Scotland
Housing			
	Highest average number of rooms in house: 6.4 (GB average is 5.4 rooms)	Uttlesford Chiltern Rutland South Bucks	East of England South East East Midlands South East
	% of households with more than 5Mbps – and where more than half of household have chance of having superfast broadband: 100%² (GB average is 86.0%)	Liverpool Tamworth Rochford Havering Epsom and Ewell (37 LADs in total – a full list is provided in editors' notes)	North West West Midlands East of England London South East
Urban environment			
	Lowest population density per sq km: 9 (GB- 279 per sq/km)	Western Isles	Scotland
	Lowest traffic flows per square km: 80.1 cars /km (GB- 9,729 per sq/km)	Western Isles	Scotland
Education			
	Lowest average number of pupils in primary school class: 17.3 (GB average is 27.06 pupils per class)	Western Isles	Scotland
	Highest % of 15+ yr olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade or Scottish equivalent: 97.9 (GB average is 60.86 ¹)	East Dunbartonshire	Scotland
	Highest average state school (primary and secondary) spending per pupil: £9,662 (GB average is £4,643)	Orkney Islands	Scotland
	Lowest secondary school pupil teacher ratio: 13.4 (GB average is 20.94)	Western Isles	Scotland
Personal well-being			
	Highest personal well-being (average of life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety): 7.0 (GB average 6.5)	North Warwickshire	East Midlands

Source: Halifax March 2016

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Notes to editors:

¹ GB results refer to GCSEs

² 37 LAD- small sample of each region is selected. Full list is available on request.

The Quality of Life index has been produced at a local authority district level from 377 Local Authority Districts in Great Britain.

The quality of life reading for each local authority has been created by summing scores across 10 variables within five 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 %	Apr 2016-Mar 2017
Housing	Number of rooms in house	England & Wales 2011 ONS Census Data Scotland – Housing Conditions Survey 2009/11
	Households with a good level of broadband access (i.e. a download speed of at least 5Mbps):	Point Topic June 2014
Urban environment	Population density per square km	Mid-2016
	Traffic flows per square km	2016
Education	Number of pupils in primary school class	January 2017 - England & Wales, Scotland 2016
	% of 15yr+ olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade or Scottish equivalent	2015/16 England, Wales & Scotland
	Average state school (primary and secondary) spending per pupil	England & Scotland 2016-17, and Wales 2017/18
	Secondary school pupil teacher ratio	England 2017 (adjusted class size data), Wales 2017 and Scotland 2016
Personal well-being		April 2016-March 2017 ONS

"This report is prepared from information that we believe is collated with care, however, it is only intended to highlight issues and it is not intended to be comprehensive. We reserve the right to vary our methodology and to edit or discontinue/withdraw this, or any other report. Any use of this report for an individual's own or third party commercial purposes is done entirely at the risk of the person making such use and solely the responsibility of the person or persons making such reliance. © Bank of Scotland plc all rights reserved 2017.

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