

Making a difference to families in West Cumbria

Monday 12 August, 2024

Projects to improve the health and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families in West Cumbria have been set out for the next two years.

Family Wellbeing is one strand of the Transforming West Cumbria (TWC) programme, aimed at improving the lives of West Cumbrians, and has already made a positive difference to thousands of people since it was launched three years ago.

Funded through the Sellafield Ltd Social impact multiplied (SiX) programme and delivered by Cumbria Community Foundation, Transforming West Cumbria was created in response to a study commissioned by Sellafield Ltd in 2019. This highlighted persistent social problems including 3,900 children living in poverty, one-in-seven households with an income below £10,000 a year and more children in care than in any other part of the county.

Initial funding of £600,000 was awarded in September 2020 for projects tackling issues ranging from domestic and sexual abuse and addiction to emotional resilience and improved speech and language. A [report](#) published in November last year highlighted some of the achievements of the first three years, with 1,456 families and 2,709 children supported by the projects.

Now a further £200,000 has been awarded across five organisations to continue some of this work.

Cumbria Addictions: Advice and Solutions (CADAS) has been awarded funding to continue its family support service, which aims to reduce the number of children taken into care and improve life chances.

Families affected by parental substance abuse are taught emotional resilience techniques and how to use talking therapy and other strategies to change their behaviour.

One service user explained the difference the project had made: "I now have different ways to manage how I'm feeling and I'm able to be a mother to my child. You've helped me to make sure I keep going in this way and don't take a step backwards. I thought I'd struggle more than I have; but I think that's the difference you all make; I wasn't on my own and you helped more than I could have imagined."

Angie Milfull, West Cumbria Family Support Team Leader, said: "CADAS West Cumbria Family Support Service has brought transformational change both to CADAS and the communities of West Cumbria. This funding has enabled us to respond to what our clients were telling us and to help shape CADAS into a better service.

"Our experiences growing with this pilot have only strengthened our belief in the project and our long-term plans to embed our family support service within the wider organisation, throughout the county."

Howgill Family Centre

has received funding to continue its programme to improve speech and language skills in children up to the age of four.

Parental engagement has been identified as crucial in aiding children's early communication development, so the project will continue to work with families through local nurseries and group sessions.

Faye Eldon, Chief Executive of Howgill Family Centre, said: "The funding has allowed us to work with hundreds of parents who have attended our communication groups. This funding is vital to support parents in the understanding of the importance of early language and how this can impact positively on their child's future learning journey. Parents share stories, songs and have fun with their children, while meeting new people and this would not be possible without the funding we receive. Thank you!"

Safety Net

supports the recovery of those affected by rape, exploitation, sexual and domestic abuse across Cumbria, offering advice, support, counselling and therapy to adults, children and young people affected by abuse and trauma.

Helen Davies, Senior Children and Young Person Therapist, said: "The Family Wellbeing project, funded

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by Sellafield Ltd and Cumbria Community Foundation, ensures we can continue to provide much needed services to children and families in West Cumbria. The funding enables us to employ two part-time Children and Young People's Practitioners/Play Therapists, who work with whole families who have experienced abuse, including sexual violence, child sexual abuse, exploitation, rape, online abuse, and domestic violence.

"Experiencing such abuse at a young age can have a profoundly detrimental effect on the physical and mental wellbeing of a young person. Being part of this project means we can work collaboratively with partners to help children and families to recover, with the aim of improving their lives over the long term."

Together We has been awarded funding to deliver psychological interventions to parents and family units with children aged five to 17 through its Together We Talk programme.

Managing Director Sam Joughin said: "We are pleased to receive this vital funding to continue and extend our family interventions work. Over the past four years Together We Talk has seen a vast demand for psychological support for children, young people and families. The need grows every year and with this funding, we can continue our aims to empower families to better manage their physical and mental wellbeing."

West Cumbria Domestic Violence Support, which operates as **The Freedom Project**, was awarded funding to continue its McKenzie Friend project, giving legal support to victims of domestic violence.

Vicky Pike, Charity Manager of The Freedom Project, said: "We are over the moon to be able to continue with the McKenzie Friend project. We know through the number of families that have benefited from this project already, that there is a huge need for the service, especially considering our McKenzie Friend is the only one in West Cumbria.

"The complexities of the family court can be extremely distressing and overwhelming, so the McKenzie Friend helps navigate this, and allows the family to have a reliable ally that offers essential support, guidance and expertise to those embroiled in legal battles.

"The funding is going to allow us to continue this service for the next two years; but also train another member of staff to help the current McKenzie Friend manage workload and allow us to reach more families that need us. The long-term aim of the project is for us to become a training provider to volunteers and other organisations to ensure a good network of McKenzie Friends to support families across Cumbria."

Tracey West, Senior Social Impact Manager at Sellafield, said: "Working with the delivery organisations has been such an encouraging journey, when you hear the life experiences from those that our funding has impacted it drives us to develop more projects like Family Wellbeing."

Annalee Holliday, Head of Grants Practice & Programmes at Cumbria Community Foundation, said: "Transforming West Cumbria, through the Family Wellbeing programme, is making a significant difference in tackling some key challenges in our area.

"All of these projects have brought improvements to those with the greatest need. This additional funding from Sellafield Ltd will ensure more good work can be done to create thriving communities and a better future for families in West Cumbria."

Earlier this year, Sellafield Ltd also created a Family Support Fund as part of the Social impact multiplied (SiX) programme, offering grants of up to £1,000 towards the cost of essentials for West Cumbrian families in financial hardship.

The fund was administered by Cumbria Community Foundation and delivered by five local organisations – Always Another Way, CADAS, Howgill Family Centre, Together We and West Cumbria Domestic Violence Support.

Grants have been awarded to more than 380 families, including around 800 children. Of the families supported, 60% had a child aged five or under.

Lyn Cavaghan, Executive Officer at **Always Another Way**, said: "Always Another Way were inundated with requests for this funding and very quickly allocated the monies to families in need, demonstrating that this additional financial support was very much needed in our community. Always Another Way were very happy to be able to help so many families."

For more information about Family Wellbeing and the wider Transforming West Cumbria programme,

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