

West Cumbria: Opportunities and Challenges 2025

Thursday 17 July, 2025

A new report shining a light on the opportunities and challenges facing West Cumbrian communities will be launched at an online event **on Tuesday 29 July at 4pm**.

The launch will also introduce a brand-new interactive dashboard to bring the data to life like never before.

The [West Cumbria: Opportunities and Challenges 2025](#) community needs report was commissioned by Sellafield Ltd and produced by Cumbria Community Foundation. It updates the findings of an earlier report published in 2019.

The original report laid the foundation for the £6.5 million [Transforming West Cumbria](#) social investment programme, a groundbreaking initiative funded by Sellafield Ltd and delivered by the Foundation to tackle the area's most pressing social challenges.

Since then, Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis have significantly reshaped the region's social and economic landscape. Against that backdrop, the new report provides an update on six key themes: Growing Up, Employment & Skills, Living, Health & Wellbeing, Ageing Well, and Strong Communities.

The 2025 report highlights a number of areas where significant progress has been made, but also clearly demonstrates the increased challenges communities face.

It shows the area has a strong sense of community, with more than 15,000 volunteers, good schools and a vibrant visitor economy. It is globally recognised as a Centre of Nuclear Excellence, with thousands of jobs and specialist expertise in the sector.

But there has been a significant increase in the number of mental health referrals, with the suicide rate the second highest in England. The area has a super-ageing population, high levels of childhood obesity, and worrying levels of personal debt.

The interactive dashboard that will accompany the report is a dynamic, user-friendly platform that will be regularly updated with the latest data. It's designed to enable people to explore the findings in real time, identify trends, and support evidence-based action across the region.

Tracey West, Senior Social Impact Manager at Sellafield Ltd, said: "So much good work has been done since the first *West Cumbria: Opportunities and Challenges* report was published. We know how effective the Transforming West Cumbria programme has been in changing lives for the better. A recent independent evaluation confirmed it had generated £19.9 million in social value so far – delivering an incredible £5.34 for every £1 invested.

"But we are also acutely aware of how great the need still is in our communities and how an unprecedented pandemic alongside a major financial crisis have exacerbated existing issues and presented new difficulties to resolve.

"Importantly the interactive dashboard will enable people to explore the findings in real time, identify trends, and support evidence-based action across West Cumbria."

Dr Jenny Benson, Director of Programmes and Partnerships at Cumbria Community Foundation, said: "Updating this report has enabled us to take a deep dive into some of the key data and look at where life has improved for West Cumbrians, and where there is still work to be done.

"One thing the report makes clear is that despite the many opportunities West Cumbria has to offer, too many people live in poverty or face challenges and too few achieve their potential.

"This area has an incredibly powerful network of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, and we know that the solutions to many of these problems lie within our communities. By working together with businesses, charities, community groups and individuals, we can achieve significant and lasting change."

West Cumbria: Opportunities and Challenges 2025 will be officially launched at an online event on **Tuesday 29 July at 4pm**. All are welcome to attend.

Media:



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The report features stories of change from across West Cumbria, highlighting efforts to tackle some of the most pressing issues in recent years.

Known locally as the **Freedom Project**, West Cumbria Domestic Violence Support has been supporting families suffering from the trauma of domestic and sexual abuse since 1997. It receives funding from the Family Wellbeing strand of Transforming West Cumbria.

Demand for the charity's services has steadily increased in the past few years, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic. Last year referrals increased by 30%.

Manager Vicky Pike said: "Demand for our services continues to rise. Last year, we supported 607 people. We have increased our staffing levels to help meet demand and allow people to receive immediate support once they reach out."

One woman supported by the charity after leaving an abusive relationship said: "Being able to speak through what happened helped me process the trauma in a safe and secure environment. Before the support, I couldn't see myself reaching 23; now I am planning far ahead into my future, and I can't believe the difference in myself."

Company Contact:

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Cumbria Community Foundation

T. 01900825760

E. annalee@cumbriafoundation.org

W. <https://www.cumbriafoundation.org>

[View Online](#)

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