



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

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Family Help and Support Panel

Supporting All Children and Families to Get the Right Help at The Right Time

Westmorland
& Furness
**Family
Help**



Together making a difference



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What is the Family Help and Support Panel?

Our Purpose

The Family Help and Support Panel in Westmorland and Furness exists to ensure that children and families receive the right help at the right time. Our core aim is to strengthen existing Family Help by identifying what is already working well, addressing challenges early on, and ensuring the most appropriate professionals are involved to offer timely, effective support. We take a systemic approach, meaning we consider the whole family, their relationships, and the wider environment around them, not just the presenting issue. By working in this way, we can better understand the root causes of difficulties and create more sustainable, joined up solutions.

We currently run two local panels that meet monthly: one in Furness, and another in Eden and South Lakes. These panels bring together a wide range of services and professionals who work collaboratively to assess what additional support a family might need, ensuring this is done in a respectful, strengths based and timely way.

By collaborating early and systemically, we aim to prevent small worries from growing into more serious problems. The Panel ensures that children and families are at the centre of all planning, that their voices are heard, and that support is coordinated, consistent, and empowering.



Who's Involved?

Panel members come from a range of services including:

- Health Visitors
- Schools
- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Children's Centres
- Police
- Family Hubs
- Targeted Family Help
- Young Carers Organisations
- SEND

Each panel member may also contribute additional relevant information or professional insights based on their direct or indirect involvement with the child or family. This could include recent observations, service histories, health or educational concerns, and any other contextual details that may not have been included in the referral form. By sharing this broader understanding, panel members help build a more complete picture of the family's needs, strengths, and challenges. This collaborative approach supports more informed decision-making and helps ensure that recommendations and updates to the Early Help Plan are both practical and tailored to the family's unique circumstances.

What Happens at the Family Help and Support Panel?

Once your referral has been received, the Panel will:

- Review the information you've provided
- Discuss the family's situation as a multi agency partnership
- Identify any additional agencies or services that can support the family
- Provide solutions to strengthen the current Family Help Plan

Sometimes, the challenges faced by a family may be more complex or show a higher level of risk than Family Help services alone can address. When this happens, the Panel may recommend that a Social Worker becomes involved to offer more specialist assessment and intervention. This decision is never made lightly. It is based on the collective professional judgment of the Panel, always with the child's safety and wellbeing as the highest priority. This action is about making sure the family receives the right level of support at the right time, whether that's additional Family Help, or more complex safeguarding support from children's social care.

If the Panel makes this recommendation, it is essential to communicate openly and sensitively with the family. They should be informed about why the involvement of a Social Worker is being suggested, what this will mean in practice, and how it can support them in overcoming difficulties. Being transparent helps to maintain trust and ensures that the family understands that the aim is to work with them on plans to improve their lives.

Preparing for the Meeting

Before the meeting:

- Speak to you link **Early Help Officer** to understand the meeting format and your role
- Review the **Practitioners Guide to Cumbria Family Help and Family Support Panels**
- Bring any relevant updates or documents to support the family discussion

Preparing thoroughly helps ensure that the meeting is both productive and sensitive to the family's unique circumstances. When professionals come to the Panel well-prepared, with a clear understanding of the family's story, strengths, and current challenges, it allows for more focused discussions and informed decision-making. It also shows respect for the family by showing that their experiences are being taken seriously and handled with care. Good preparation helps avoid duplication, ensures that everyone involved is aligned on the family's goals, and ultimately leads to more effective and coordinated support. It sets the tone for a meeting that is purposeful, compassionate, and centred on finding the best way forward for the child and their family.



Making a Referral

When making a referral to the Family Help and Support Panel, it is important to provide a clear, balanced, and accurate picture of the family's situation. A quality referral includes details about the family's strengths, such as positive relationships, routines that are working well, or engagement with existing services, as well as any worries or concerns that may be affecting the child's wellbeing or development. Equally important is your professional analysis, which brings together what you know, what you've observed, and what you've heard from the family. This analysis should explore the underlying causes of the difficulties, what impact they are having, and what support might be needed. The more comprehensive the referral, the more effectively the Panel can understand the situation and offer meaningful, coordinated help.

To refer a family to the Early Help and Family Support Panel:

- Ensure you have **the family's consent** to share their details and discuss their situation.
- In rare circumstances, a family may be discussed anonymously without consent, although full involvement and participation of the family should always be sought
- Fill in the **Referral Form** as fully as possible. Incomplete forms may delay discussions.
- Submit the referral **at least 7 days before** the panel meeting.

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Meeting dates for 2025–2026 can be found on our [website](#).

The referral should include:

- A summary of the family's current situation
- What support has already been tried
- What outcomes you hope for from the Panel

Submit a Referral: Visit the Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Childrens Partnership webpage or contact an Early Help Officer for guidance.

Supporting Documents and Contact Info

You can access the following resources online at the Westmorland and Furness safeguarding Children's Partnership webpage:

- Referral Form
- Meeting Dates
- Practitioners Guide
- Terms of Reference
- Contact Information for Early Help Officers



Translation Services

If you require this document in another format (e.g. CD, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone: **0300 373 3300**.

للوصول إلى هذه المعلومات بلغتك، يرجى الاتصال **0300 373 3300**

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 0300 373 3300 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，
请致电 **0300 373 3300**

Jeigu norėtumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba,
skambinkite telefonu **0300 373 3300**

W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę
zatelefonować pod numer **0300 373 3300**

Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua,
telefone para o **0300 373 3300**

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde görmek istiyorsanız lütfen
0300 373 3300 numaralı telefonu arayınız

