

Westmorland & Furness Best Start Family Hubs



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Westmorland & Furness Best Start Family Hubs Service Area:

- Best Start Family Hubs
- Holiday Activity & Food Programme
- Young Carers

Our Local Context

Westmorland & Furness' has a unique geography with a high proportion of rural communities and long travel distances which lends itself to diverse local networks. This influences how we design and deliver our services. Our vision commits to ensuring that where a family lives never limits the support they can access. Through the Best Start Family Hubs this means building an outreach offer, taking services to communities. Our Young Carers provision requires service availability across the footprint of Westmorland & Furness and the Holiday Activity & Food Programme uses a network of local and national providers to ensure diverse range of opportunities is available throughout the area.

This vision underpins our Family Help transformation and is fully aligned with national Best Start in Life and SEND reforms, creating a single, joined up system of support from conception to adulthood.

Our Family Help model has been built with rurality in mind, ensuring that community venues, outreach, digital options, and mobile provision help us reach families who might otherwise be isolated.

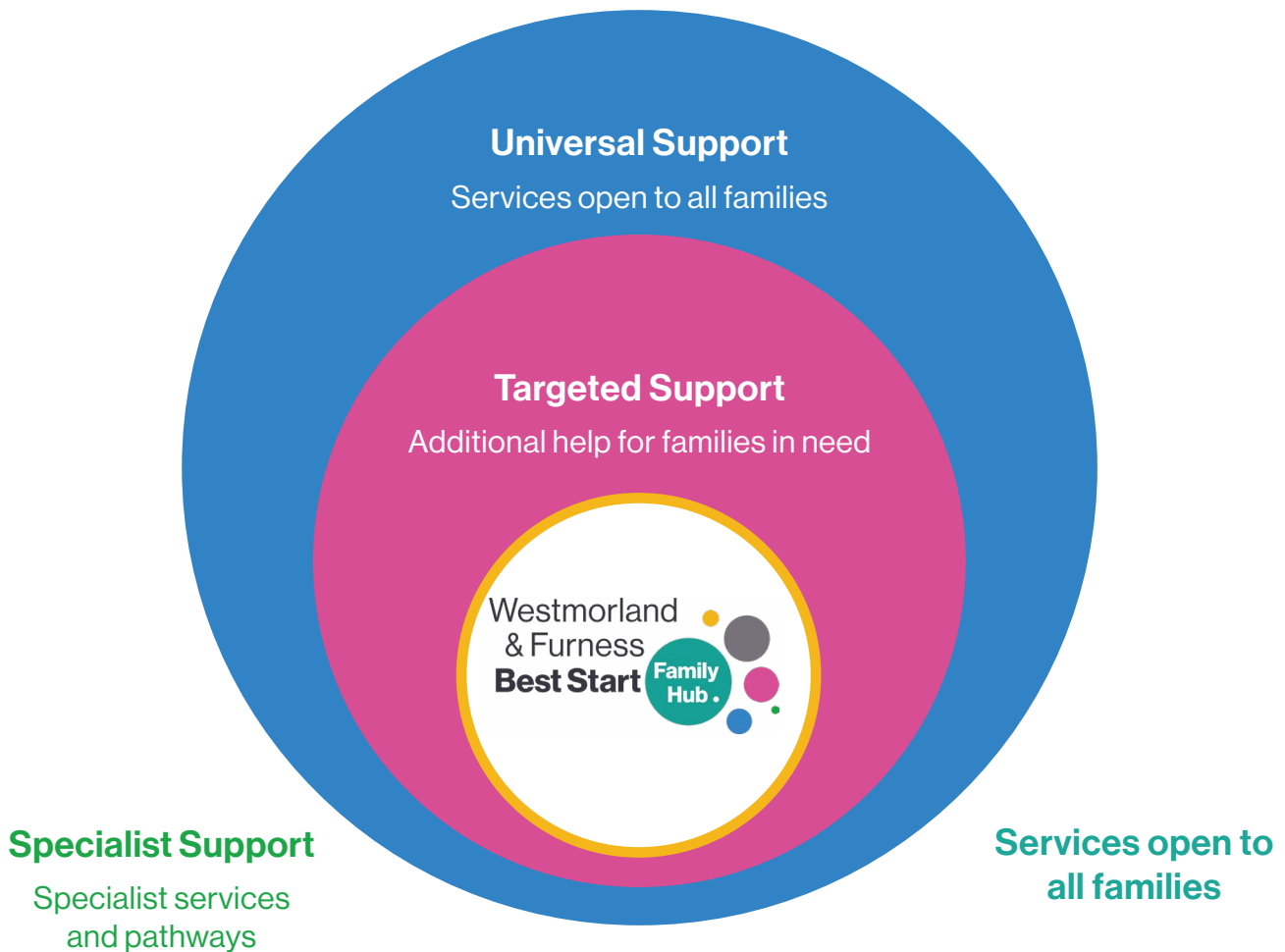
Our Best Start Family Hub delivery model is designed around three tiers of support:

1. Universal services, open to all families
2. Targeted help, for families needing additional support
3. Specialist pathways, delivered with partners for the most complex needs.

Each tier interacts through a No Wrong Door approach — any professional or community setting can connect families to the right support.



Best Start Family Hub Model



Best Start Family Hubs - Who we are:

We have the following roles in our team:

Service Manager x 1 FTE

Line managed by Senior Manager- Family Help

Overall strategic responsibility for ensuring the Family hub service delivers as per contractual requirement and in response to service need.

Responsibility for Holiday Activity & Food Programme

Best Start Family Hub Managers x 3 (aligned to district footprints)

Maintain running of several buildings in a district footprint. Manage the team of ISAOs, Practitioners, and volunteer co-ordinators. Build outreach offer, develop strong links with partners and ensure data is accurately collected and recorded.

Information, Support & Advice Officer x 6 FTE

Customer service support, administrative duties for the Family Hubs and being the first point of contact. Offer support and advice to families and young people to help them access local services.

Offer additional administrative capacity to the HAF project.

Volunteer Co-ordinator x 1 FTE

To work with the community, families, stakeholders and partners to recruit and support a diverse, skilled and experienced volunteer workforce.

Work within the wider Family Help and Family Hub teams and partners to develop, promote and support volunteer opportunities to fit the needs of the Family Hubs.

Practitioners x 12.5 FTE with Lead Practitioner Role being developed

Develop and deliver high quality universal and targeted activities and deliver group and 1-1 interventions including Portage, parenting with children and their families from pre-birth to 19(25 SEND) in settings and the family home. Main delivery focus is evidence based programmes from the Hub sites.

Outreach Workers x 2 FTE lead roles and 6 FTE Outreach Workers

Deliver outreach support & activities, working with partner organisations, stakeholders, families, young people and communities to ensure the Family Hub service is built on the needs of the community.

Gaining the voice of families & communities in service delivery.

Early Years Practitioners x 5 FTE

Develop and deliver high quality universal and targeted activities & deliver group interventions to improve Early Years Foundation Stage Good Level of Development. Focus on toileting, weaning, speech, language & communication. Focus on improving parenting skills and knowledge and the home learning environment. Working from a wide range of settings and venues.

SEND Practitioners will be confirmed once more detail is known from DfE.

In addition, we have the following roles funded from other sources:

Reducing Family Conflict Worker -0.6FTE funded by DWP

Deliver training on RFC to the family hub and wider workforce to improve their skills and knowledge of RFC.

Develop tools that are used by frontline staff to help address challenging topic of family conflict.

Undertake evaluations of work completed and use this to inform next steps.

Attendance Officers – 2 x FTE funded through Team Barrow

Locality specific project to work with families where Y5 & 6 pupils with low attendance receive holistic support to improve school attendance rates and family situation.

Cooking & Nutrition Workers - 2 x FTE funded through Crisis Resilience Fund

Initial project ran from September 2025 to March 2026. Project aims to improve cooking schools, nutritional awareness and making cooking accessible to a range of groups/ communities.

DWP Family & Community Work Coach x 1 FTE

Co-located staff from DWP to address barriers to work and improve families' confidence and skills in accessing the work place.

Access to the Westmorland and Furness Best Start Family Hubs

Can be via several routes:

- Self-referral: Walk-in during opening hours or contact your local Hub directly (locations and hours listed online).
- Online booking system to make services accessible to all
- Digital access: Local Family Hubs webpages [Best Start Family Hubs | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

Our Core Offer: Universal and Targeted Services

1. Pregnancy and the First 1,001 Days

- Antenatal information, postnatal support, and infant feeding advice, bonding and attachment guidance; safe sleep; early child development.
- Signposting to maternity, health visiting, vaccinations, oral health, and perinatal mental health support.
- HDFT Healthy Child App
- Health & Development Advice: Access to antenatal guidance, postnatal care, infant feeding support, bonding and parenting guidance.
- Baby Showers
- Baby Massage
- Infant feeding & breast feeding support
- Healthy Child Sessions – with partners from health services
- Portage
- “Stay & Play” Sessions: Facilitated inclusive activities for parents/carers and babies/toddlers to support social interaction and early learning. Promoting home learning, child development and peer support networks.
- Communication, Speech and Language
- Evidence based programmes including PEEP and Wellcomm



2. Child Health and Development

As above plus:

- Stay & Play sessions and early learning activities to promote speech, language, communication, and social development.
- Home learning environment tips and school readiness support
- Early Years Learning Opportunities: Support to strengthen home as a learning environment with a focus on speech and language development and funded childcare information.
- School Readiness Advice: Practical support to help children transition smoothly into primary education.
- Transition sessions
- Together Towards School
- Portage



3. Parenting and Relationships

- Practical parenting advice (routines, boundaries, behaviour).
- Free online learning modules for parents and carers (relationships, mental health, communication).
- Family Matters drop in
- Parenting Courses & Workshops: In-person and online sessions to build confidence, develop communication skills, and manage behaviour.
- Togetherness (Solihull)
- Invest in Play
- Specialist Guidance: Focused support on parental mental health, single parenting, conflict resolution, emotional wellbeing, domestic abuse awareness and divorce/separation.
- Reducing Family Conflict
- Health Visitor support and advice: Support with child health, developmental milestones, oral health and vaccinations.
- Emotional & Mental Support: Referrals to partners who can offer one-on-one guidance for parental and child emotional wellbeing.
- Group support targeted at defined cohorts when required



4. Practical Life Support

- Benefits & money: childcare choices and eligibility
- Advice and signposting for families needing financial support or housing assistance with support from DWP Work Coach
- Family Information Service: [Family Information Service | Westmorland and Furness Council](#) for advice on childcare options, parent-and-toddler groups, activities.

5. Inclusion and SEND

- Front-door guidance on SEND pathways and navigation to specialist support; adjustments to ensure inclusive access to Hub activities. [SEND Local Offer | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)
- SEND Local Drop-Ins take place each month from a different Family Hub location

6. Community Connection

- Local events, volunteering, youth, and peer networks hosted at Hubs
- Outreach support taking the hub to communities
- Family fun days open to all

7. Digital Offer

- Local: Westmorland & Furness Family Help website [Family Help | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)
- Find a Hub with opening times, booking activities, information, resources and newsletters. [Find a Best Start Family Hub | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)
- National: Best Start in Life parent hub (health advice, early learning tips, eligibility checker for funded childcare, and local service search). [Best Start in Life - Best Start in Life](#)
- Family Information Service [Family Information Service | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)
- HDFT app [Anya - 24/7 Tailored Healthcare Support. Growing Healthy 0-19 Westmorland & Furness | HDFT Childrens Health Service](#)
- Health Padlets [Health and Wellbeing in Schools](#)

Targeted group support for families through Best Start Family Hub services

1. Targeted Interventions available

- Parenting programmes (evidence-informed) for specific age ranges/needs.
- Emotional wellbeing support for parents/carers (including conflict reduction).
- Enhanced support in the early years (language development, routines, attachment).
- Practical plans on school attendance, routines, and life and school transition points (early years to reception; primary to secondary, secondary to further education and work opportunities).

2. Specialist Pathways and Liaison - Delivered with partners; access is by referral and assessed need.

- SEND: Navigation to assessments, Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) guidance, and links to inclusive early years settings; targeted inclusion advice.
- Perinatal & Parental Mental Health: Liaison with health visitors, GPs, and specialist services; facilitated access to group/peer support.
- Domestic Abuse & Safety: Awareness and liaison training for schools; safe signposting and multi-agency planning.
- Financial Hardship & Housing: Meet our own Family & Community Work Coach in one of our Hub buildings or an outreach venue. Warm handover to council teams and voluntary and charity sector partners for income maximisation, debt, and housing advice.

Safeguarding, Information Sharing & Consent

We follow Westmorland & Furness safeguarding policies and the MACH protocol for threshold decisions.

Information is shared with consent unless there is a safeguarding risk; families receive clear privacy notices at the point of engagement.



Holiday Activity & Food Programme

The Holiday Activity & Food Programme (HAF) has been run by Westmorland and Furness council since April 2025. Prior to this it was a hosted service run by Cumberland Council. Since the programme has been disaggregated it has seen an increase in providers and delivery sites. Significant work has gone into improving the application and data collection process for providers with the launch an annual application process, the introduction of a booking system and a skilled HAF team offering 1:1 support to providers and families.

Following disaggregation, the HAF team engaged in a self-assessment with Coram and this was completed within 7 months. This process helped the team to focus on areas of development and build on existing strengths.

HAF Roles:

The programme is overseen by the Service Manager- Family Hubs with administrative support from the Family Hub ISAOs.

HAF Project Officer

Responsible for day to day administration, long term and short term planning, data collation from providers and returns to DfE. From April 2026 this role will also be working closely to develop the Primary School Age Sufficiency response.

Develops and refines application process tools, RAG rating document and coordinates QA visits.





Young Carers

Westmorland and Furness Council commission services for young carers to N-Compass as part of an All Age Carers contract. As a new council our inaugural All Age Carers Strategy is due to be published in mid- 2026.

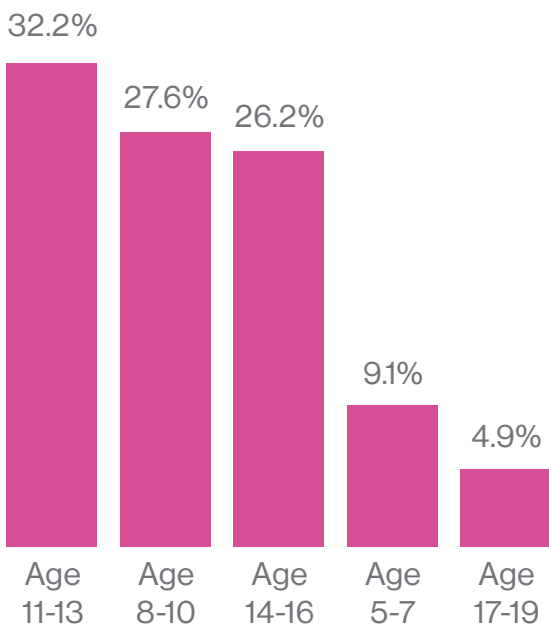
The contract holder is required to undertake assessments for any young person age 5-18 years old who may recognise themselves as a young carer, or where someone else identifies this.

The definition of a young carer we are currently using is:

A Carer is anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their physical or mental health, disability, or an addiction, and would find it difficult to manage without their support. The care they give is unpaid.

Westmorland and Furness young carers data for 2026-26:

Age Branding



Average of **654** young carers on care management system

Average of **139** young carers with an open early help assessment each month

Average of **49** young carers on open to social care each month



