



cumbria
family
support

Impact Report

2025





On behalf of the Board of Trustees I am delighted to share our annual review for 2024/25.

We've seen considerable positive change this past year as we welcomed new members of staff, new volunteers, new places of work, new funding relationships, and even new branding and a new website.

I'm also delighted to welcome three new trustees to the board; **Jane Bryant** joins us after a career as a Headteacher in SEND schools, **Ashleigh Hall** joins us as a small business owner and former CEO of a small charity in the North East, and **Mike Smith** joins the board representing our volunteers. Their experience, skills and passion are already helping to shape our work and future potential.

We have had two much loved members of the team move onto retirement. Together **Clare Francis** and **Val McQuillin** have made a huge contribution during their years with Cumbria Family Support, helping families, recruiting volunteers, and mentoring some of our team.



The year has been one of steady progress and exciting development. In this report you'll get a flavour of this work, from the increased support of new funding organisations and partners, the rolling out of new 0-3 playgroups in West Cumbria, the profound importance of attachment demonstrated by our Family Time Centres, and the deepened understanding of the needs facing families and how we remain committed to early preventative support and our values.

To close, on behalf of all the Trustees, the biggest **thank you** belongs to our wonderful staff and dedicated army of volunteers. They are the engine room of this organisation and are responsible for the real highlight of the last year – our work.

Our team make a **daily difference to the families** we support in a myriad of ways. Whether it's keeping children and their families safe, happy, or able to cope each day – their compassion and integrity is something we can all be very proud of.

Christine Renouf, Chair

This is **who we are...**

Our **why:**

To support families with young children in Cumbria **who feel isolated or overwhelmed** and need **help to cope** with the challenges of family life

Our **values:**

- ♥ Empathy ♥ Respect ♥ Integrity
- ♥ Courage to challenge

Our **beliefs:**

- ♥ **A child's wellbeing** is at the centre of all we do
- ♥ **Everyone** needs help sometimes
- ♥ Tackling issues **as early as possible** is the best way to support a family

What we **do:**

We specialise in early preventative support by:

- ♥ Volunteer befriending
- ♥ Modelling skills for positive parenting
- ♥ Listening and helping families and children have a voice
- ♥ Practical support

The changes in **skills, mindset** and **lifestyle** that our families can expect to see:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| ♥ Self-aware and informed | ♥ Willing and realistic | ♥ Safe, happy home |
| ♥ Using positive parenting skills | ♥ Trusting and hopeful | ♥ Healthy habits |
| ♥ Managing independently | ♥ Caring and expressing love | ♥ Mentally and physically healthy children |
| ♥ Setting routines and boundaries | ♥ Taking pride and personal responsibility | ♥ Spending time together and enjoying it |

So **that:** Children will grow to be **functioning, resilient, secure adults** who have **healthy relationships** and will play a **positive role** in their communities.



Our **impact highlights** from 01/04/2024 to date.

Number of children/young people supported:

535

Parents/carers supported:

373

Number of families supported:

263

% of children and young people whose mental health and wellbeing has significantly improved:

82

% of parents who feel more confident about raising their children:

76

Number of hours directly supporting families:

4,285

Number of volunteers supporting families:

42

Number of volunteers with over 3 years of service:

19

Number of training hours our team has completed:

4,694

Number of new trustees on board:

3

Number of organisations we work with:

108

Number of Early Helps coordinated by our team:

57

Number of funders supporting our work:

35



Other Achievements

As well as the **4,285 hours of direct work** with children and their families, here are some of the other things we've been up to (in no particular order)...

- ♥ A **Theory of Change** document developed with **Dr Elaine Bidmead** from University of Cumbria.
- ♥ Launch of our volunteer-led **phone befriending service**.
- ♥ **Two 0-3 playgroups** established in Northside Primary School, Workington and Flimby Primary School.
- ♥ **Recruited** a new Family Time Coordinator for Kendal Family Time Centre.
- ♥ A **new Family Time Centre** opened in Kendal.
- ♥ **Recruited** a new Volunteer Coordinator.
- ♥ **Recruited** an additional Family Support Worker for Eden.
- ♥ Two-day Solution Focused **training** rolled out for all staff.
- ♥ **New office** location for Carlisle team at Petteril Bank Family Hub.
- ♥ Two **staff development** days.
- ♥ Two **volunteer development** days.
- ♥ **New branding** thanks to Prospus Marketing.
- ♥ A **new website**.
- ♥ A **new impact measurement** based on Signs of Safety.
- ♥ **Reduced average waiting time** from over 12 months to 10 weeks.
- ♥ **Collaboration** with Brampton and Longtown ICC looking at social isolation.
- ♥ Supported **Cumberland Family Hub** launches and open days.
- ♥ **Supported families** through our Christmas campaign.
- ♥ Joined the **National Family Support Network UK** as a founding member.
- ♥ Member of the **Family Forum Advisory** group.
- ♥ **Working with Maternity Voices Partnership** to identify vulnerable parents at the earliest opportunity.
- ♥ Working in partnership with North Lakes Counselling **introducing counselling** to our offer through L4 placements.
- ♥ Member of Westmorland and Furness' **Family Help Partnership** board.
- ♥ **Distributor of funds** for families from the Westmorland and Furness Household Support fund.



In their words... What our families have told us

I feel positive and happy for the first time in my life, I've finally learnt to look after myself.

I felt stuck before. I wanted things to change but wasn't sure where to start. I now feel more motivated and have boundaries.

E's confidence has grown massively and also her understanding of her emotions.

The boys have so much fun when Jenny visits. I love to see them happy, and her support makes that possible.

You have helped me with so much - money, schools, but the main thing is that I find it hard to put things into words and you have helped me do that with other organisations, and you're helping me find my own voice now.

My son is much more confident. There's a big difference in the mornings, he gets up, follows the routine and generally leaves for school without a problem. The atmosphere at home is much more relaxed.

I don't know how I'd have got through last October to now without the support, even the odd texts. You don't judge me for what I say, and I don't feel like I can't say what I really think.

I love mummy and love it when she's smiling and happy when Emily comes.

I like school now, I didn't like it before and didn't fit in, I have more fun now.

Things are so much better now S understands why he's feeling a certain way, we talk more and don't argue as much.

Having someone believe in me made me feel like I could turn things around, all I needed was someone in my corner.

Alongside our home based Family Support work, our NACCC accredited **Family Time Centres** give **co-parenting opportunities** so that children can meet and develop a relationship with the parents they don't live with.

Our centres in Carlisle and Kendal are supported by a dedicated team of volunteers who support the child and their parents, improving stability and confidence across the whole family. This year we have helped **58** families with over **600** hours of supported contact.

Lenny's family...

Penny and John had been living separately for three months, after police were involved due to harassment from John. John had bail conditions in place and could not have any contact with Penny.

Lenny (aged 9) and John had not seen each other for 3 months; the last time they saw one another John had been angry about the separation and admitted he had said some inappropriate things.

Lenny was nervous about going to the centre to see his dad, so Penny decided she would wait in reception during the first session, so he knew she was in the building.

He was shown where the staff based themselves in the building and how he could get from the family room to the staff room. He was shown the door release buttons and it was agreed that every 20 minutes staff would come to the family room and ask if he wanted a game out of the office. This was the safety code word.

Ten minutes before the end of the session Lenny was told how much time he had left with his dad, and he asked if he could stay a little bit longer. The first 3 sessions were based in the centre where both parents spoke to staff about their feelings, frustrations and hopes. John asked if he could take Lenny out of the centre next time as it was Lenny's birthday.

Penny agreed that they could have 2.5 hours in the community but still use the centre as a drop off and collection point.

As time progressed, Penny was reassured that Lenny was enjoying his time with his dad, and she was encouraged that Lenny was benefitting from seeing his dad more often.

John was able to talk easily to volunteers, he seemed to respond well to praise about his progress with Lenny. John and Lenny had 4 more sessions in the community whilst using the centre as a drop off and collection point. The time was often spent in town getting Lenny a haircut, buying clothes or shoes that Penny had suggested, having lunch and choosing a toy model to paint.

These tasks helped Penny financially and she liked that John was involved in some parenting tasks. We discussed next steps and suggested using a third party to carry out the handovers.

Lenny's confidence and attachment improved, he trusted that his dad would not speak negatively about his mum, and was always eager to see his dad, greeting him with hugs and kisses.

The family no longer requires our support to maintain safe contact and are able to use mutual friends and family members to ensure that Lenny and John can continue to develop their relationship whilst Penny feels safe.

Most importantly Lenny now has a loving relationship with both parents and no longer feels he has to take sides or witness any conflict.

“

You truly made a very difficult time in my life that little bit easier. Lenny is a lot happier and more comfortable. I'll always be so grateful, you do an amazing job!

Penny

”



**A word from Anna Cooke,
our Volunteer Coordinator.**



It cannot escape your attention when you join Cumbria Family Support that our volunteers are the life blood of our organisation.

Volunteers represent the best qualities of our local communities and the values of CFS; empathy, respect, integrity, and a courage to challenge.

They epitomise **selflessness, commitment**, and a willingness to help and make a difference.

As an organisation we want to continue to attract volunteers with different life experiences, who represent a mix of different backgrounds. We understand how important representation is and the impact that can have on a families' willingness to engage with our support.

Our volunteer opportunities encompass a number of different roles, and we are always keen to hear from people who feel they have the right skills, outlook and experience to make a difference.

So, what are some of qualities we're looking for?

- ♥ A good listener
- ♥ Non-judgemental
- ♥ Able to engage with young children
- ♥ Patience and stickability

Currently we are specifically looking for people for the following roles:

Family Support Volunteers

- ♥ Working mostly in the families' own home (but also at times in the local community) providing help and support with establishing routines, modelling play and positive interactions.
- ♥ Offering practical support in areas such as nutrition and decluttering.

The role is very much tailored to needs of the family but also to the skills and experience of the volunteer.

Volunteers to support Allerdale Playgroups

This is a developing project linking in with local primary schools. The role supports the smooth running and viability of the playgroups. Volunteers will help with modelling positive parenting skills and engage in play with young children and their parents.



“
My name is Mike, and I have been a Family Support Volunteer at CFS for just over a year.
”

After training, I was matched with a family made up of a single mum with 5 children aged 2–16 at home. One has severe autism and learning difficulties, and mum has been diagnosed with ADHD, Depression, EUPD, and OCD.

At our first meeting the whole family was together, and they were not just a credit to their mum, but a joy to spend time with. It was clear mum loves them all to bits and tries her best for them.

We are very different personalities but share something important – a sense of humour! This has allowed our relationship to develop deeply.

Early on it became clear that the mum's ADHD had a severe impact on household management, routines and organisation. Her inability to manage correspondence had caused her to get into significant debt and miss important medical appointments.

Working with Christians Against Poverty, we managed to secure a Debt Relief Order meaning past debts were cleared.

Together as a family, we have introduced better budgeting, better bedtime and morning routines, improved management of appointments, diary keeping, and even better meal planning and shopping for a menu.

At times it has been hard, but we have become friends and trust one another.

The children have seen a change in their mum as she has grown in confidence and tell me things are much calmer at home.

This is all down to us building a really good relationship where we can talk about anything and challenge one another. Mum's naturally impetuous nature has been replaced by greater reflection before action and seeking advice.

“
I am truly grateful to have met the family and felt the impact they have had on my life.
”

Mike

It was my absolute privilege to take over as CEO in early 2024.

Coming in I knew CFS was well-loved by the families who received support, I knew that it was a service which could achieve things which others couldn't, and I witnessed an indefatigable energy when it came to securing positive outcomes for children and their families.

That energy is infectious, it's shared by staff and volunteers alike and it's inspiring a new business plan which you can expect to see launched in Spring 2026.

The plan will be rooted in our values of Empathy Respect Integrity and the Courage to Challenge, we don't want to give too much away just yet but expect to see...

- ♥ A return to **early years family support** that makes a lasting difference.
- ♥ A strong focus on **attachment, attunement, play**, speech development and socialisation.
- ♥ A public conversation about the **importance of play and bonding**.
- ♥ Helping as many children as possible have the best start to **fulfil their potential in school**, the community and with relationships.
- ♥ A **broader offer** at our Family Time Centres.
- ♥ **Peer support** groups.
- ♥ **Targeted support** in specific communities in West Cumbria.
- ♥ Therapeutic support including **counselling and creative therapy** work.

If you want to know more then get in touch, because together we want to deepen our impact and see happy, healthy children from confident and resilient families.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'LB'.

Lynsey Buckle, CEO



Enormous thanks to our 2024/25 funders.

Your support makes our work possible.

Together we stand alongside families when they feel overwhelmed and isolated and together we can ensure that children will grow into resilient adults who have healthy relationships and play a positive role in their communities.

Special thanks to:

- ♥ Awards for All – National Lottery
- ♥ Buckland Charitable Trust
- ♥ Cumberland Council
- ♥ Cumbria Community Foundation - Cumbria Fund
- ♥ Cumbria Community Foundation - Out of Eden Fund
- ♥ Dobies Charitable Trust
- ♥ EC Graham Fund
- ♥ Focus Foundation
- ♥ Forte Charitable Foundation (formerly Trusthouse)
- ♥ Francis C Scott Trust
- ♥ Hadfield Trust
- ♥ IGY Foundation
- ♥ Kelly Family Charitable Trust
- ♥ Keswick Methodist Church
- ♥ Lake District Giveaways
- ♥ Ministry of Justice (NACCC)
- ♥ NISA Local
- ♥ Nuclear Transport Solutions
- ♥ Paul and Rosie Tuckwell
- ♥ Penrith Lions
- ♥ QEGS Penrith
- ♥ Rainbow Wishes Foundation
- ♥ Sellafield Social Impact Fund
- ♥ SI Cockermouth
- ♥ Stainton Village Hall
- ♥ Tesco - Stronger Starts
- ♥ The Cumberland Building Society
- ♥ The Finn Family Fund
- ♥ The Frieda Scott Trust
- ♥ The Henry Smith Foundation
- ♥ The Masonic Charitable Foundation
- ♥ The National Lottery Community Fund
- ♥ The Proven Family Trust
- ♥ Westfield Health
- ♥ Westmorland and Furness Council
- ♥ Women's Institute Donation

...as well as the many generous donations from the public.



Since 1993, we've been proud to support children and families across the county — placing children at the heart of everything we do, and championing their voices so they are heard, respected, and valued.

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