

Family Hubs Winter Newsletter

Welcome to the Family Hubs Newsletter

Winter is a time when connection and support matter more than ever, and our Family Hubs have been busy supporting families across the local community. From festive activities and holiday programmes to ongoing universal and targeted support, this newsletter highlights some of the wonderful work taking place this season and the partnerships that make it possible.

Baby Shower Event – Supporting Parents-To-Be

We were delighted to host a Baby Shower event through Family Hubs, bringing together expectant parents for a relaxed and welcoming morning of advice, reassurance and support.

Families had the opportunity to meet a range of our fantastic partner organisations, all offering valuable information and guidance for pregnancy and early parenthood. We would like to thank the following partners for joining us and sharing their expertise:

- Furness Area Babywearing Support
- Westmorland & Furness Growing Healthy 0-19
- Women's Community Matters
- Blaze Trails – Duddon and Furness Baby & Toddler Walking Group
- Furness Area Reusable Nappy Library
- PANDAS Peer Support Group Cumbria South
- University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust
- Furness College

A special thank you to Furness College students, who provided relaxing hand massages for the mums-to-be and kindly donated a wonderful hamper for the event.

We also ran a raffle on the day, and winners of the hampers will be contacted shortly. Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the morning such a positive and supportive experience. Winners have been contacted, and Both raffles have been collected.



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Care Leavers Open Day – Family Hubs Greengate Street

We were proud to be part of a special Care Leavers Open Day at the Family Hubs on Greengate Street, held as part of National Care Leavers Month. This event gave care-experienced young people the chance to explore local support, connect with services, and get practical advice to help with education, employment and future plans.

Young people attending were able to drop in and speak with local partners about career options and support services, with sessions running from 1 pm – 3 pm. It was a great opportunity to meet professionals, ask questions, and find out what support is available as part of life after care.

The open day built on the recent launch of the Care Leavers Hub at Greengate Street on 24 November — a dedicated space within the Family Hubs where young adults aged 16 + can access advice, activities and peer support, with regular drop-in sessions

Baby Time Special – Celebrating Baby Week

To celebrate Baby week, Lorraine from Barrow Library visited our Baby Time group to deliver a special session on the importance of sharing books with babies. The session highlighted how enjoying books together right from the very start supports babies early language development, strengthens bonding and helps build positive routines around reading. It was wonderful to see families enjoying books together and creating special moments during the session.



Christmas Family Fun Day With Rag-Tags

Our Christmas Family Fun Day, delivered in partnership with RagTags, took place at the library and created a truly magical experience for families in the run-up to Christmas. The library was transformed into a festive, welcoming space filled with seasonal activities, crafts, and opportunities for children and parents to spend quality time together.



A very special highlight of the day was the visit from Santa and Mrs Claus, who brought lots of excitement and festive cheer. On arrival, each child received a special ticket, adding to the anticipation and magic of the day, which they could then use to visit the Christmas Grotto. This helped create a structured yet exciting experience, ensuring every child had their own special moment.

We would like to thank Rag-tags and the library team for helping make this event such a success and for supporting us to deliver a joyful and memorable experience for local families.

Barrow Market – Christmas Crafts

Families joined us at Barrow Market for festive Christmas craft sessions, where children got creative making seasonal decorations and gifts. These sessions were a great way to bring families together in the heart of the community while supporting creativity, confidence, and festive fun for all ages.

Parents and carers welcomed the opportunity for free, accessible festive activities while out in the community, and many took the chance to speak with staff about Family Hubs services and upcoming events. The crafts created lots of smiles and festive cheer and helped make Barrow Market a lively, family-friendly space during the Christmas period.

We would like to thank Barrow Market and all those who supported the sessions, helping us to spread Christmas joy while connecting families to wider support.



Winter HAF And Festive Special

This Christmas, Family Hubs Barrow were delighted to deliver a range of Winter HAF & Festive Specials, supporting local families to enjoy memorable experiences together during the school holidays.

As part of our festive programme, children and families were treated to a special pantomime trip, bringing plenty of laughter, excitement and Christmas cheer. The trip was followed by a hot meal at the Holiday Inn Express, Barrow-in-Furness, giving families the opportunity to sit together, relax, and enjoy a nutritious meal in a warm and welcoming setting before the performance.

Alongside our face-to-face activities, we were also pleased to offer a virtual cook-along experience, helping families to take part in festive fun from home. Families collected all the ingredients after the pantomime, along with simple recipe cards, and then joined us online via Microsoft Teams to cook together in real time. This activity supported families to build confidence in the kitchen, try something new, and enjoy quality time together over a shared meal.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme provides free holiday activities, enriching experiences and nutritious food for eligible children and young people during school holidays. Our Winter HAF programme aimed to reduce holiday pressures on families while creating positive, fun and inclusive opportunities for children to connect, learn and make lasting memories.

All families taking part in the HAF programme received a hamper to take home, giving them something extra to enjoy together after the session.

Thank You to Our Partners

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who helped make our Winter HAF & Festive Specials possible. In particular, we are extremely grateful to Holiday Inn Express, Barrow-in-Furness, for hosting families and supporting the meal element of the day. Their generosity and warm hospitality played a key role in making the experience so special for local families. We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to **Tesco Express Roose** and **The Factory Shop Ulverston** for their kind support and contributions, which helped us to provide ingredients and resources for families to enjoy festive activities both in person and at home. Their support made a meaningful difference in helping families take part and create lasting memories together.

How to Book Future HAF Activities

Future Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programmes will run during school holidays throughout the year.

Families can find out more information and book upcoming HAF activities by:

- Visiting the Family Hubs Barrow website or social media pages
- Speaking to a member of staff at any Family Hub or Community Centre

If you need help with booking, accessing activities, or attending sessions, our friendly team are always happy to help.



Tiddlers Is Back

We're excited to welcome Tiddlers back with Family Hubs at The Dock Museum, bringing together learning, creativity and play for our youngest explorers.

This fun-filled session will include creative crafts with Family Hubs, transport-themed stories and interactive play delivered in partnership with Barrow Library and Archives and Westmorland & Furness Libraries, as well as hands-on media activities with Signal Film & Media.

Designed especially for children aged 18 months and over, Tiddlers offers a relaxed and welcoming space for little ones to explore, imagine and learn through play—while parents and carers can connect and enjoy quality time together.

Thursday 8th January 1:00pm – 2:30pm

@ The Dock Museum, Barrow-in-Furness

Free & drop-in

Hop on board for an afternoon of discovery, storytelling and creative fun - we can't wait to see you there!



Family Hubs and Community Spaces – What On

Our Family Hubs continue to partner with local community spaces to bring you activities, support and fun for all ages! Family Hubs offer welcoming drop-in sessions and events right across Barrow-in-Furness and surrounding areas, connecting families with support, learning and play opportunities. wandffamilyhelp.org.uk +1

Here's a snapshot of regular and upcoming activities you and your family can be part of:

Weekly Drop-Ins and Play Sessions

- **Baby Time** – interactive play and sensory activities for babies, helping early development and exploration. wandffamilyhelp.org.uk
- **Little Learners** – themed craft and learning sessions for toddlers and young children. wandffamilyhelp.org.uk
- **Play Space & SEND Play Space** – relaxed parent-led play sessions for children of all abilities. wandffamilyhelp.org.uk
- **Mums Minds Matter** – wellbeing support group for mums, babies and carers. wandffamilyhelp.org.uk
- **Lego & PokéMon Clubs** – creative and social sessions for school-aged children. wandffamilyhelp.org.uk (This is a Barrow Library activity)
- **Weekly wellbeing being walks** in partnership with Barrow Raiders

Special Support and Services

- **Baby Weigh Stations at Barrow and Walney libraries** – free baby scales available during library hours. wandffamilyhelp.org.uk
- **Midwife Clinics** at Family Hub locations by appointment.



Free School Meals - Support For Families

Free School Meals are available to help support families with the cost of food, and many children and young people across our community may be eligible.

If your child attends school and you receive certain benefits, you may be able to apply for Free School Meals. Registering can help reduce household costs and ensures children receive a nutritious meal during the school day. It can also unlock additional funding for schools, helping to provide extra support, resources, and activities for pupils.

Applying is quick, confidential, and does not affect any other benefits you receive. Children receiving Free School Meals are treated the same as all other pupils, with no difference in how meals are provided.

If you're unsure whether you're eligible or need help applying, Family Hubs can support you with advice, guidance, and signposting to the correct application process.

Did You Know?

Children who are registered for Free School Meals may also be eligible for support during school holidays through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

Apply online now: www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals – this official government page will help you check eligibility and direct you to your local authority application. GOV.UK

Even if your child already receives free meals because of their year group, applying ensures your school gets extra funding which can help with educational support and resources.

Coming soon.....

We're excited to share some of the upcoming activities and support that will be launching soon across our Family Hubs. More details, dates, and booking information will be shared shortly.

- **Toddler Talk** – supporting communication, language, and early development through play
- **Baby Buddies** – a friendly space for parents and babies to connect and build confidence
- **Baby Massage** – gentle, guided sessions to support bonding and relaxation
- **February Half Term Activities** – fun, free activities for families during the school holidays
- **Family Decider Group** – helping families make positive choices together
- **First Aid Skills** – practical first aid information to help parents and carers feel more confident

Keep an eye out

Follow our Family Hubs social media pages or speak to a member of the team at your local hub to find out more and book onto upcoming sessions.



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