



Embedding The Decider Life Skills across Westmorland and Furness June 2025

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Fiona says “I’m really pleased to share a few updates on how The Decider Skills are being embedded across Westmorland and Furness. It’s been an exciting period, full of positive momentum, and we’re already observing encouraging outcomes.”

“What a powerful gift to offer the next generation: the ability to understand and care for their own mental wellbeing.”

In one local primary setting, the first six Decider Skills were introduced through a whole-school assembly series at the end of the autumn term. Each pupil created their own digital Fizz Scale, accessible via their school devices, and visual reminders have been placed throughout the school to encourage regular check-ins. While uptake has varied, as expected with any new initiative, staff are increasingly adopting the approach, and it’s becoming part of the school culture.

Two teaching assistants at the school, who completed training in Decider Life Skills, recently facilitated their first small group with children experiencing heightened anxiety around transitions. The group showed notable improvement, and one young person was even able to use the skills at home with support services, demonstrating the value of a shared language across families and professionals. These same staff also support pupils in class, particularly those with neurodivergent needs, to apply the skills in real-time. The school now plans to run these assemblies annually to strengthen long-term embedding of the approach.

We also have a large secondary school that has successfully embedded the skills into its everyday practice. The STOPP and 54321 posters are displayed in every classroom, and the school runs a dedicated wellbeing day each week. During these days, online assemblies featuring Decider Life Skills are delivered during form time, and the school also uses social media to share key messages with parents and carers. A member of the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) is regularly based on-site, using the skills both in targeted work and in whole-school assemblies.

We’re also pleased to share the valuable work being done by the **Barnardo’s MyTime team**, in collaboration with **MyTime to Thrive teams** covering Blackpool, Darwen, North Lancashire including Lancaster, and South Cumbria, and **Moving Mindset – Mental Health Support Team, South Cumbria**.

Barnardo’s MyTime team, in collaboration with MyTime to Thrive teams, run two DLS online, 5-week groups for children and young people. The ages are up to 11 years and 12+ years. They tend to run concurrently on Mondays and Tuesdays. The groups are run by a mental health practitioner from each team. The first session is a run-through of what DLS is and getting to know each other. The other four sessions cover three skills each week. The young people are posted out the Life Skills handbook to use as a resource during the sessions and this is referred to by the facilitators throughout. The icebreakers are effective and improve engagement.



The young people are given exercises to do at home in between sessions. The older age group are given the option of having the camera off (and sometimes the microphone) and using the chat if they wish. We find this improves attendance. The younger group are happy to be seen. The groups are offered instead of 1:1 sessions with a mental health practitioner or therapist. We have now adapted the database we use to enable us to recommend the DLS group (among others, but this is our primary group) for young people at the end of their initial assessment, which means they spend less time on a waiting list.

One-hour online workshops run most months for both professionals and parents (separately), where we go through what we offer to the young people in the groups and how they can support them. The slides also have videos taken from the DLS website and other supporting information and resources which we put in the chat at the end. The workshops have the same information for parents and professionals and there is 10 minutes available at the end for questions. Parents can join these workshops regardless of whether their child has been referred to our service or not, i.e., they are stand-alone. The professionals who attend tend to be from the education sector, but we also have lots of new workers from the council and some in the health sector.

Our numbers for these workshops are growing rapidly and we have around 15 people booked on each workshop. We run the professional one as a lunchtime upskill from 12–1pm and the parent one from 4–5pm after they get their child settled from school. If the workshops are missed, they can book on the next one, as we share the dates well in advance. We have all the workshop dates booked to the end of the year. More recently, we have had a great response from parents of college students after our poster was put on a Lancashire website.

The feedback we capture through MS Forms is excellent.

Moving Mindset – Mental Health Support Team in South Cumbria

In a secondary school, we initially screened a whole Year 8 cohort, which revealed a significant need for support around emotion regulation. In response, we collaborated with three school staff members to deliver Decider Life Skills to the entire year group. The sessions were very well received by both the students and school staff. Based on the positive feedback and observed outcomes, the school has now decided to embed the programme into the curriculum for all new Year 7 pupils from the start of each academic year. This ensures that all students begin secondary school equipped with practical tools to support their mental wellbeing throughout their school journey.

Sessions have also been delivered to parents, which have received excellent feedback and, in many cases, opened the door to further support through the Moving Mindset – Mental Health Support Team in South Cumbria.

More broadly, 34 schools, from early years through to further education, along with a number of local services, have now participated in training delivered by Ruth and Tara, Authorised Trainers for The Decider Skills. We're currently working closely with another school to tailor and embed the skills in a way that feels meaningful to their whole community.



One particularly touching example came from a school where a pupil had learned the “It Will Pass” skill. She later used the tunnel analogy to explain it to her parent at home, who was so moved that she came into school to share the experience. Staff have also reported that even the youngest children are now confidently using tools like the STOPP skill during moments of overwhelm, both in class and during targeted 1:1 work with children who have additional needs.

It’s genuinely inspiring to see children and young people learning and using these tools—not only to manage life’s ups and downs themselves but also to support those around them. What a powerful gift to offer the next generation: the ability to understand and care for their own mental wellbeing.

We’ll continue to promote and expand the use of The Decider Skills across Westmorland and Furness and look forward to supporting another school beginning their journey with the skills from the start of the next academic year. We’d be more than happy to share further outcomes from that work as it develops over 2025–26.

The Decider Life Skills

