Going the extra mile to help young people flourish

Thursday 10 April, 2025

A groundbreaking new report has been launched, shedding light on the state of extra-curricular and enrichment activities for young people in Furness.

Commissioned by Cumbria Community Foundation, BAE Systems, and Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, the independent report – *Strategic Approaches to the Delivery of Extra-Curricular & Enrichment Activities in Furness* – provides a comprehensive analysis of current provision, identifies key barriers to participation, and outlines strategic recommendations for future improvements.

The findings were unveiled at a special event, bringing together youth organisations, educators, employers, and business leaders to explore how collaborative efforts can enhance opportunities for young people and support their development.

Researchers spoke to young people, parents, carers, schools, colleges, funders, businesses and other organisations involved in delivering extra-curricular and enrichment activity to build up a picture of existing provision and future needs and opportunities.

They also looked at best practice in other regions and made recommendations as to how extra-curricular and enrichment activities could be improved and better co-ordinated with further investment to provide greater impact to young people in Furness.

David Beeby, Chair of Cumbria Community Foundation and of Furness Education & Skills Research Steering Group, said: “Extra-curricular and enrichment activity supports work readiness, builds confidence, and the capacity of young people to embrace opportunities. This can shape their life chances and help them to progress into rewarding careers and a prosperous future.

“This review recognises the good work undertaken by schools, providers and employers to nurture future talent and realise potential. However, extra-curricular and enrichment provision in Furness is not as effective and impactful as it could be. Developing a new strategic approach to the delivery of extra-curricular and enrichment activity can drive a step change in provision, maximise participation and impact, and equip all children and young people with the skills and attributes they need to raise their aspirations, build their confidence, and develop their essential skills.”

The report highlights the multiple benefits of extra-curricular and enrichment activity, including improvements to emotional and physical wellbeing; social benefits such as building friendships and connections with peers; and improvements to academic performance, longer-term attainment and career prospects.

Researchers found that barriers to participation include affordability and ability to pay, lack of transport, confidence levels, and fear of discrimination amongst marginalised groups.

A lack of longer-term funding is a barrier to provision, with long waiting lists for some types of activity.

The report was launched at an event at The Bridge, Portland Walk, Barrow, on Thursday 10 April with presentations from Lauren Newby of GC Insights, who authored the report, and Professor Julie Mennell, Vice Chancellor of the University of Cumbria.

Professor Mennell said: “We know that the young people of Barrow have an abundance of talents. However, we also know that not all have access to the opportunities and environment needed to realise their full potential.

“We need positive outcomes, both for our young people and for our future workforce.

“As part of the transformative potential of major investments in the Barrow area, we have a significant opportunity to do this by improving and shaping extra-curricular and enrichment activity. The report will help us greatly and offers a strong foundation of evidence to guide policy decisions, direct funding, and support future initiatives.”

To find out more about supporting the development of extra-curricular and enrichment activity, contact Annalee Holliday, Head of Grants Practice & Programmes at Cumbria Community Foundation, on 01900 820827 or annalee@cumbriafoundation.org.

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