

Hunt for young entrepreneurs launched

Monday 21 October, 2024

The hunt is on for the next generation of young entrepreneurs in West Cumbria – with £1,000 in funding available for each successful applicant.

The Positive Enterprise programme is an initiative from Cumbria Community Foundation and the Centre for Leadership Performance (CforLP) to help people aged 14 to 25 go into business.

Those chosen to take part will receive a grant of £1,000 to spend on equipment, marketing or other business start-up costs, as well as mentoring from an experienced businessperson, and skills and leadership development opportunities.

The programme is open to anyone aged between 14 and 25 living in the former districts of Allerdale and Copeland. Up to 10 places are available for the next intake, which will launch in January 2025.

This will be the third year of the scheme, which is funded by property developer Brian Scowcroft with match funding this year from Sellafeld Ltd, under its Transforming West Cumbria programme, and the Beverley Trust Fund.

To date, 16 participants have been through the programme, which includes workshops, expert advice, mentoring and the opportunity to shadow local entrepreneurs.

Businesses which have been developed under the scheme so far range from animal accessories and football coaching, to American sweets and self-care packages for people undergoing chemotherapy.

Chloe Pennington, 16, from Whitehaven, took part this year with her business, Chloe's Chateau. She creates and sells original art and gifts, transforming her own brightly coloured, hand-drawn artwork showing scenes from West Cumbria and beyond into prints, mugs and other giftware.

She said: "Being on the programme with so many brilliant young participants, that have now become friends, is a privilege that I am so very grateful for and one that any young person would benefit hugely from."

Eirini Etoimou, Head of Corporate Sustainability & Supply Chain Development and Sourcing at Sellafeld Ltd, said: "We are excited with the launching of the Positive Enterprise programme, a significant opportunity for young minds in West Cumbria. This initiative not only supports aspiring entrepreneurs aged between 14 and 25, but also equips them with the mentorship and skills they need to thrive in today's business landscape. Together, we aim to nurture the next generation of innovators and leaders who will shape the future of our communities. We look forward to inspiring young talent and fostering entrepreneurship in Allerdale and Copeland."

Rhianna Smith, Early Careers Project Lead at the Centre for Leadership Performance, said: "For the past two years, we've been blown away by the creativity and self-motivation of all the young entrepreneurs. With invaluable support from their mentors and our practical workshops and programme of support, they develop key employability and entrepreneurial skills such as negotiation, time management, and business knowledge.

"Positive Enterprise is truly a springboard for these young people and their exciting business ideas, and I cannot wait to see what they come up with next."

Key to the success of the programme is the recruitment of local businesspeople to act as mentors to the young entrepreneurs.

Mark Cant, one of the brains behind the Cumbrian Tea brand, was a mentor for the first two years of the programme. He said: "I've thoroughly enjoyed it. It's about giving something back and helping the next generation, and I learn a lot from the young people involved too."

Annalee Holliday, Head of Grants Practice & Programmes at Cumbria Community Foundation, encourages both young people and potential mentors to consider applying.

She said: "The scheme has a fantastic track record of helping young people fulfil their dreams and make their business a reality. It's really gratifying to be able to help these young people, and we couldn't do it

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without the support of our funders and mentors giving up their time to share their skills and experience.”

Two online information sessions will be held for anyone wanting to find out more about Positive Enterprise, on Thursday 14 and Wednesday 20 November, both 5.30pm to 6:30pm.

For more information, and to apply for a place or to be a mentor, go to <https://www.cumbriafoundation.org/transforming-west-cumbria/positive-enterprise/>

Applications close at 5pm on Friday 3 January 2025.

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