

The West Cumbrian teenagers who mean business

Thursday 13 February, 2025

Ten teenagers from across West Cumbria are launching their own businesses, thanks to a programme run by Cumbria Community Foundation and the Centre for Leadership Performance (CforLP).

The young entrepreneurs have been chosen to take part in the Positive Enterprise programme and will each receive a £1,000 grant, plus workshops, expert advice, mentoring and the opportunity to shadow local entrepreneurs.

Each participant will also be paired with an experienced businessperson to act as a mentor and guide them through highs and lows of running their own business.

This year's programme was launched at The Rum Story in Whitehaven, where participants and their families, mentors and organisers had chance to get to know each other and hear about previous success stories.

Chloe Pennington took part in Positive Enterprise in 2024 and her business, Chloe's Chateau, is booming. She 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.

Chloe told this year's participants: "It has been amazing. Through this scheme, I've met so many people who have helped me.

"My advice would be, network as much as you can and take every opportunity that you get from this process. You'll get out of it what you put in."

Another Positive Enterprise success is Aaron Groggins, who launched his events business Lakeland Life on the programme last year. In November he organised the first Eat Street Cumbria event in Whitehaven, a street food market which attracted 5,000 visitors and brought £74,000 into the local economy.

"If I hadn't signed up to Positive Enterprise, it wouldn't have happened," Aaron said. "A great amount of people have helped me along the way. Positive Enterprise is the perfect place to try out your ideas."

This year's participants have a wide range of business ideas, from selling crochet starter kits, gym wear and wellness boxes, to offering services such as property maintenance and tech services for older people.

Isabelle Walker, 15, of Whitehaven, makes hand-sewn fashion accessories and has already had some success selling online. She hopes Positive Enterprise will help her take her business to the next level. She said: "I need help learning to budget and organise my business, gain visibility on the internet, develop my brand and how to sell locally. I also really need a new sewing machine so the £1,000 grant will pay for that."

Glenn Anderson, of Proud and Diverse Cumbria, is a Positive Enterprise mentor for the first time this year. "It's a real privilege to be asked to be a mentor, to pass on a bit of my experience and to help mould the minds of our future leaders and workforce. If you have somebody who has already been there, it has to help, when setting up your own business."

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

Stuart McCourt, Social Impact Manager at Sellafield Ltd, said: "We are delighted to support Positive Enterprise again this year and it was great to meet the participants and see the enthusiasm they have for their business ideas. Hearing the success stories from the previous beneficiaries shows how valuable the programme is, not only supporting young entrepreneurs to get started, but to also give them the tools that they need for their business to become sustainable and grow."

The programme is delivered by the Centre for Leadership Performance. Jemma Groves, Project Lead for (CforLP), said: "Positive Enterprise is an absolutely fantastic opportunity for our young people to make their mark in the business world and coaching them through this is an honour.

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“This year we have a group of super intelligent, charismatic and creative individuals and I am so excited to support them over the next six months. Some, if not all, of the young people that go through this programme are our future leaders in business and Positive Enterprise gives us the opportunity to nourish their growth.”

Annalee Holliday, Head of Grants Practice & Programmes at Cumbria Community Foundation, said:
“Positive Enterprise has had a truly transformational effect on the lives of the young entrepreneurs supported in the first two years of the programme, and I can’t wait to see how this year’s cohort develop and grow in the coming months.

“Thank you for the support of our funders and mentors giving up their time to share their skills and experience.”

For more information visit www.cumbriafoundation.org/transforming-west-cumbria/positive-enterprise/

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