The young entrepreneurs taking business to the next level

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Ten young entrepreneurs with brilliant business ideas from software development to gutter cleaning have been accepted onto an exciting programme to help them bring their plans to life.

The young people, aged between 14 and 21 from across West Cumbria, have been chosen to take part in the Positive Enterprise programme, run by Cumbria Community Foundation and the Centre for Leadership Performance (CforLP).

They 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 is the fourth year of the programme, which will also run in the Furness area for the first time this year. The West Cumbria launch took place at LEVELS in Whitehaven, where participants and their families, mentors and organisers had chance to get to know each other and hear about previous success stories.

Business ideas this year include furniture reupholstering, buying and selling vintage sports memorabilia, software development, and gutter maintenance.

Aiden Gill, 15, of Dearham, has been selected to take part with his idea of creating a new fragrance. He said: “I’m most looking forward to trying new things. I’ve done some research into making a fragrance and this programme seems like a really good opportunity to give it a go.”

Chloe Pennington took part in Positive Enterprise in 2024 to develop her business, Chloes Chateau. 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 gave her advice to this year’s participants: “Take every opportunity; you don’t know where it will lead. If it’s not working for you – pivot. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. The experience itself is worth much more than the money.”

The programme is funded by Sellafield Ltd, through the Transforming West Cumbria programme, Thomas Graham & Sons Ltd, the Printers Inc Social Mobility Fund, and a private donor.

Stuart McCourt, Social Impact Manager at Sellafield Ltd, said: “We always look forward to the launch of the new Positive Enterprise cohorts each year. Meeting the new participants and seeing the passion behind their ideas was fantastic. The success of previous beneficiaries proves the programme’s impact – helping young entrepreneurs get started and giving them the tools to build sustainable, growing businesses.”

The programme is delivered by CforLP. Project Lead Rhianna Smith said: “At the very start of this year’s Positive Enterprise programme, we’re already seeing a diverse group of young people bringing forward a broad and creative range of business ideas that reflect their different experiences, interests and ambitions. Positive Enterprise doesn't just focus on the business outcomes, the real impact is long-term – supporting participants to build confidence, resilience and essential skills that shape their futures.

“Now in its fourth year, the programme continues to support alumni beyond delivery, helping them apply what they’ve learned as they move into education, employment or self-employment. It’s a privilege to be part of another year supporting young people as they take their first steps on that journey.”

Annalee Holliday, Head of Grants Practice & Programmes at Cumbria Community Foundation, said: “Positive Enterprise has a fantastic track record of delivering practical support and advice to young people starting out in business. There are so many success stories from the first three years of the programme – not only in terms of the number of businesses still going from strength to strength, but the confidence and life skills it has given those taking part.

“Positive Enterprise really does have a transformational effect on the lives of the young people taking part, and we are very grateful to the funders and mentors giving up their time to share their skills and

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

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