Young entrepreneur programme launches in Furness

Friday 13 February, 2026

Young entrepreneurs taking their first steps in business have been selected for an exciting new programme to help them bring their plans to life.

Six young people, aged between 15 and 24 from across Furness, have been awarded a place on Positive Enterprise, run by Cumbria Community Foundation and the Centre for Leadership Performance (CforLP).

Their innovative business ideas range from selling African food and pizzas, to photography and make-up services.

Each participant will receive a £1,000 grant, plus workshops, expert advice, and the opportunity to shadow local entrepreneurs.

They 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.

The programme has run successfully in West Cumbria for the past three years and is expanding into Furness for the first time for 2026. It was launched at The Bridge in Barrow on 12 February, where participants and their families, mentors and organisers had chance to get to know each other and hear about previous success stories.

The programme is delivered by CforLP. Project Lead Rhianna Smith said: “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. We are really excited to run the programme in Furness for the first time, and very impressed with the broad and creative range of their business ideas that reflect their different experiences, interests and ambitions.”

Positive Enterprise in Furness is funded by the Printers Inc Social Mobility Fund and individual donor Jan Ambler. Mrs Ambler explained what led her to support the programme.

“My husband came from a very poor background and appreciated the advice he got when starting out in business. We have always been interested in helping young people, especially those who do not have the same opportunities as others. Everyone deserves an equal chance.”

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.

“We are delighted to be able to offer the programme in Furness for the first time and are very grateful to the funders and mentors giving up their time to share their skills and experience.”

James Batchelor MBE, founder of Alertacall, has been a mentor on the programme for the past three years. He is encouraging others to sign up as mentors too.

"One of the most powerful ways you can have a positive impact across a community is to lend support to a young person trying to start their own venture,” James said. “You'll improve their skills, confidence and capabilities, and if their venture succeeds, they will go on to have a positive impact on countless other people. Your life experiences shared and your encouragement just a few hours a month is all that many brilliant young people in Cumbria need, and the truth is you'll also have fun and meet brilliant people.

“If you're considering youth mentorship, the Positive Enterprise programme is one of the easiest ways to get involved in Cumbria because all the participants benefit from brilliant leadership training and other wraparound support which truly maximises their chance of success. Go for it!"

To get involved with Positive Enterprise in Furness, either as a participant or mentor, please contact Rhianna Smith at CfLP on 07949 642598 or email rhianna.smith@cforlp.org.uk.

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

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