



POSITIVE ENTERPRISE

TRANSFORMING WEST CUMBRIA



CUMBRIA
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



**CENTRE for
LEADERSHIP
PERFORMANCE**

Year 3 Fund Report

Positive Enterprise, launched in 2022, is an annual competition designed to help young people in West Cumbria turn their enterprising ideas into reality. Open to those aged 14–25, the programme gives aspiring entrepreneurs the tools, funding and confidence to start their own business.

Developed by Cumbria Community Foundation in partnership with the Centre for Leadership Performance (CforLP), the initiative is funded by property developer Brian Scowcroft and Sellafield Ltd through its Transforming West Cumbria programme, with additional funding this year from the Beverley Trust and Thomas Graham & Sons.

Participants not only receive £1,000 to invest in essentials such as equipment, materials and services, but also benefit from six months of tailored support. This includes workshops, expert advice, mentoring and opportunities to shadow local business leaders – all designed to help bring their ideas to life.

Now in its third year, the programme aims to empower young people, build self-belief and develop leadership skills, breaking down barriers for those who dream of running their own business.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024/25

- Ten young people, aged 15–22, took part in this year's programme.



- The journey began in January 2025 with a welcome event at The Rum Story in Whitehaven, where participants were introduced to the volunteer business mentors. Previous programme alumni, Chloe Pennington of Chloe's Chateau and Aaron Groggins of Lakeland Life, also shared insights into their experiences and spoke about launching their businesses, including Aaron's events venture, Lakeland Life. *"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."*
- Between March and June, CforLP delivered four interactive workshops covering:
 - Time management and wellbeing
 - Team-building and relationship skills
 - Personal branding and business planning
 - Marketing, insurance and legal considerations

A key feature was the creation of peer-to-peer Action Learning Sets, encouraging collaboration and problem-solving within the group.

Monthly sessions, including regular mentor meetings, gave participants space to share challenges, exchange ideas and strengthen supportive networks.

The programme concluded with a celebration event at Rosehill Theatre in July, recognising the achievements of these inspiring young entrepreneurs. At the event, an additional £1,000 was awarded to a young entrepreneur who impressed the judges, and this year, an additional £500 was presented for a Highly Commended entry, adding to the excitement and recognition of their efforts.

FINN BLAKELY, 17

When Finn applied to Positive Enterprise, his idea was an email service to help older people reduce spam. During the programme, his concept evolved into **Go Local Keswick**, an app designed to support businesses in his hometown by promoting special offers and deals, particularly during quieter months.

Finn, from Keswick, described the experience as invaluable for learning how to build and monetise an app.

“I taught myself to create an app using an app builder and lots of YouTube tutorials. Ashleigh, my mentor, guided me through the legal side,” he explained.



With structured support, Finn broke his vision into achievable steps, carried out market research and generated interest from local businesses. His ambition now is to expand the app to other towns, including Penrith and Maryport.

Finn’s mentor, Ashleigh Veitch, founder of Carlisle-based Able Admin, said: *“Often, young people are expected to get a job, and self-employment isn’t really presented as an option. For people like Finn, who have lots of ideas, working for someone else might not be the right fit.”*

Finn’s advice for future participants? *“Enjoy the setbacks and know you’re building resilience.”*

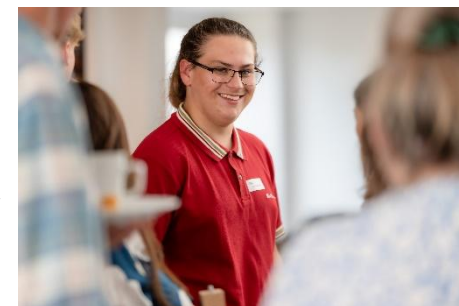
ISAAC MUSGRAVE, 16

Isaac, from Whitehaven, turned his passion for woodworking into a thriving business, inspired by time spent crafting with his dad. Through his venture, **Walkmill Design**, he creates handmade wooden pieces and gives unwanted furniture a new lease of life by refurbishing and repurposing it.

To get started, Isaac invested in professional tools and transformed his garden shed into a workshop. Sustainability is at the heart of his business – every item is made using reclaimed wood, reducing waste and promoting reuse.

During Positive Enterprise, Isaac built a brand that reflects his craftsmanship and values. He developed a business plan, pitched for additional funding and made his first sales. The programme boosted his confidence and wellbeing, showing how personal passions and a commitment to sustainability can grow into a successful enterprise.

He said: *“The best part of Positive Enterprise for me was the sense of community and the in-person sessions. I now think about my business more simply and logically. My mentor helped me refine ideas and put practical steps in place to achieve my goals.”*



His advice for anyone considering applying? *“Just sign up – don’t overthink it. Everything you need is in the programme. After Positive Enterprise, I’m going all out to grow my business.”*

ISABELLE WALKER, 15

Isabelle, from Whitehaven, joined Positive Enterprise with her established vintage fashion brand, **Emerald Bella Rose**, which offers pre-Raphaelite-inspired, "timelessly beautiful attire".

Through the programme, Isabelle strengthened her marketing strategy, learned cost-saving techniques, and launched her own website – reducing reliance on third-party platforms and creating a stronger online presence.

Home-schooled in Whitehaven, Isabelle has already secured retail opportunities beyond Cumbria, including a stand in a Yorkshire shop, and showcased custom-made designs at a Renaissance festival. Her entrepreneurial maturity stood out, and she leaves the programme equipped to scale her business sustainably, with a clear focus on growth and efficiency.

Reflecting on her experience, Isabelle said: *"The best thing about Positive Enterprise has been the mentoring and support from the CforLP. I've learned that I need to manage my time better to drive growth. My mentor has been a massive help in developing this and tackling challenging projects."*

Her advice for future participants? *"It's 100% worth it – the financial and mentoring support is incredibly helpful."*

Isabelle hopes to turn Emerald Bella Rose into her full-time career, launching her own clothing label and expanding into more stores and online platforms.



ISLA HADDEN, 16

Isla, of Maryport, was highly commended by the judges for her business **Iris Vintage**, which she describes as a "slow fashion brand".

Isla upcycles and sells vintage clothing online, with the aim of making shoppers become more conscious of the environmental and ethical consequences of their buying habits.



"Many people prefer convenience over sustainability," she said. "I want to use my business to promote my values. I'm climate conscious in all of my decisions."

With her online shop thriving, Isla is exploring markets and using her business to support her further education aspirations. Coaching helped her build a strong brand and clear direction. She used her £1,000 Positive Enterprise grant to expand stock and also upcycle materials to sell on.

"I recirculate pre-loved clothing," she explained. "Sometimes I upcycle items; sometimes I just wash them and put them back out in circulation. I really want to lean more into the upcycling aspect of the business to provide unique items for customers."

Isla's presentation to judges on the harmful consequences of fast fashion earned her £500 in additional funding. A talented photographer, Isla uses her talent to showcase her products on her website. She hopes to study fashion journalism and has applied to the London School of Fashion.

JORJA ATKINS, 17

Jorja, of Whitehaven, joined Positive Enterprise with the dream of launching a crocheting business but struggled with confidence and at one point came close to leaving the programme.

With extra support from her mentor and the programme lead, she dug deep, developed her brand, **Made by JJA**, and launched a social media presence.

Jorja creates a wide range of crocheted products, from toys and bags to full outfits. *"I aim to make all of my products affordable. I've always wanted to make everyday items. As well as my own creations, I now make items to order."*

Jorja has had success selling locally, taking £160 at her first market, and would love to sell online to reach people across Cumbria and further afield. The transformation is complete, from hesitant participant to confident entrepreneur, showing how the programme can unlock both business and personal growth.



"The best thing about Positive Enterprise is being able to meet like-minded people and having access to a mentor," said Jorja. *"This programme has allowed me to see that business is achievable and not as complex as I thought."*

"I would advise future participants to take it at their own pace as everyone has their own journey on the programme. I want to expand my business and sell worldwide eventually."

LAILA BROWN, 17

Laila, from Maryport, turned her love of crochet into **Crochet Cove**, a business offering crochet kits complete with video tutorials. Her aim was simple – to share her passion and support others, creating kits that promote mental wellbeing.

With guidance from her mentor, Laila produced engaging tutorials and quickly built strong connections across West Cumbria.

"The best part of Positive Enterprise has been working with others in the group, seeing their ideas, and gaining valuable advice from them and my mentor," she said.



"It's helped me develop my ideas and understand the process of creating a business. My mentor has given me practical insights, contacts and helped me organise my ideas to achieve success."

Laila exceeded her original goal by launching 12 unique crochet boxes, each thoughtfully designed. She also added a social impact element to her business, offering free kits and lessons to older people in the community to help combat loneliness.

Her advice for future participants? *"It's a great experience and really helps grow your business idea. My plans now are to keep building Crochet Cove, grow my network and sell online and at markets."*

OLIVER WOODEND, 15

Oliver, the programme's youngest participant, balanced studies at St Benedict's with building **Woodend**, a sustainable gymwear brand created to address a clear gap in the local market.

Through Positive Enterprise, he transformed an early idea into a working prototype, identifying suitable materials and a reliable supplier. The workshops aligned perfectly with his interest in business studies, bringing theory to life through practical, hands-on learning. His end-of-programme evaluation showed a significant uplift in confidence and business knowledge, and he left motivated with a clear set of next steps.

Showing maturity beyond his years, Oliver, from Whitehaven, chose not to spend his £1,000 grant, investing time in research, refining the product and gathering feedback before committing funds.

Importantly, Oliver wants his business to deliver social impact as well as quality products. He plans to donate a portion of profits to local community groups, aligning enterprise with benefit for the wider area. He leaves Positive Enterprise with momentum, a clearer strategy and the confidence to move from concept to launch while growing Woodend sustainably.



SOFIYA NEALY, 17

Sofiya, from Whitehaven, joined Positive Enterprise with a simple but powerful idea – to create bespoke mental health wellness boxes after experiencing her own challenges.

"I had only ever seen generic boxes that didn't offer enough support. I wanted to create affordable, accessible boxes tailored to individual needs," she explained.

Starting with just an idea, Sofiya immersed herself in workshops and mentoring, transforming her concept into a business: **Bright Beginnings**.



By the final celebration event, she had a brand name, active social media accounts and five prototype boxes designed to support people living with anxiety, stress, depression and other conditions. Each box includes thoughtful items such as a candle, eye mask, air-dry clay and a journal to encourage self-reflection and relaxation.

The programme not only helped Sofiya shape her business but also boosted her confidence. She learned how to structure her ideas, market her products and connect with potential customers.

"The support and advice have been incredible. I feel more prepared and motivated than ever," she said.

Looking ahead, Sofiya plans to grow Bright Beginnings, expand her product range and make mental health support more accessible for people across Cumbria.

THOMAS HENDERSON, 18

Thomas, from Cockermouth, launched **Greenblades**, a garden maintenance business, with guidance from his mentor, Michael Pemberton of BEC.

"Initially I wanted to offer five services, including gutter cleaning and pressure washing," Thomas explained. "But my mentor advised me to keep it simple and focus on lawn mowing and hedge cutting." Michael also supported Thomas with pricing and setting up a website.



Balancing the business alongside A-levels in Maths, Physics and Chemistry proved challenging, and Thomas paused during exam season. He's now back on track, and his commitment has led to a placement with a property development firm and an offer for a degree apprenticeship. His journey shows how ambition, mentorship and hard work can turn a simple idea into a pathway for future success.

Reflecting on Positive Enterprise, Thomas said: *"The best thing was taking an idea I cared about and making it real. Being surrounded by ambitious young people and pitching my project gave me confidence. Before this, I saw business as just a way to make money. Now I understand its power to solve problems and help people. Business and social impact can work hand in hand."*

ELWOOD RAZZETTI, 17

Elwood joined Positive Enterprise with a prototype streetwear concept co-created with a friend and a clear ambition to build a brand inspired by Cumbrian landmarks. With guidance from his mentor, James Batchelor of Alertacall, he refined his ideas, strengthened his branding and developed the name Madmarras, described as "bold, Cumbrian streetwear inspired by the local fells."

Based in Wigton and studying A-levels in Physics, Maths and Business Studies, Elwood launched his first product featuring a striking image of Striding Edge. He adopted sustainable materials and a drop-shipping model to minimise environmental impact.



Market research helped him target younger audiences, and his social media strategy quickly gained traction, building a loyal following. Elwood plans to sell his T-shirts and hoodies across Cumbria, reinvesting profits into even more sustainable practices as online sales grow.

At the celebration event in July, Elwood impressed the judges and received an additional £1,000 grant to support his next steps.

He shared how transformative the programme has been for his confidence and future plans: *"This grant has given me incredible exposure to the business world, and I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity. Next year, I'll be studying Business Management at Sheffield University, and this grant, along with the Positive Enterprise programme, strengthened my personal statement and helped me secure reduced offers from three of my five university choices."*

EMPOWERING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION

The third year of Positive Enterprise has been an outstanding success, delivering all its core elements and meeting the programme's primary objectives. Designed to educate, connect and enable young entrepreneurs, the initiative offered a development experience that went far beyond business skills. It created a supportive environment where participants could learn, share ideas and build confidence, while forming meaningful connections with peers and mentors.

From the outset, the cohort demonstrated resilience and adaptability. Over six months, participants maintained almost 100% attendance at workshops and engaged consistently on the Discord platform, which was introduced this year as a new way to check in online and stay connected between sessions.

Balancing schoolwork, jobs and personal commitments alongside the programme was challenging, yet these pressures strengthened organisational and time management skills – qualities that will serve them well in life and business.

The welcome event set the tone for collaboration and inspiration. Held at a local cultural venue, it brought together over 50 attendees, including mentors, funders, families and alumni. Involving past participants created a sense of continuity and community, ensuring newcomers felt supported and motivated by real success stories. This event also reinforced the programme's commitment to celebrating West Cumbria's resources and cultural spaces.

Throughout the programme, teamwork and peer support were encouraged. Despite diverse business ideas – from sustainable fashion to wellbeing products – participants showed a willingness to help each other, share advice and offer encouragement. This

collaborative spirit fostered belonging and accountability, reflected in positive feedback at the end of the programme.

The final celebration event at Rosehill Theatre was a fitting conclusion. Participants presented their business ideas on stage, showcasing entrepreneurial progress and personal growth.

For many, this was their first experience of public speaking, and the transformation in confidence was striking. Some made sales and secured new contacts, while others gained valuable exposure and feedback.

Alumni attendance reinforced the growing network, inspiring this year's cohort to continue their entrepreneurial journeys.

Positive Enterprise continues to demonstrate the power of partnership, mentorship and community in shaping the next generation of business leaders.

Year three has not only equipped young people with practical skills but also instilled resilience, creativity and ambition – qualities that will drive success far beyond the programme.



POSITIVE OUTCOMES:

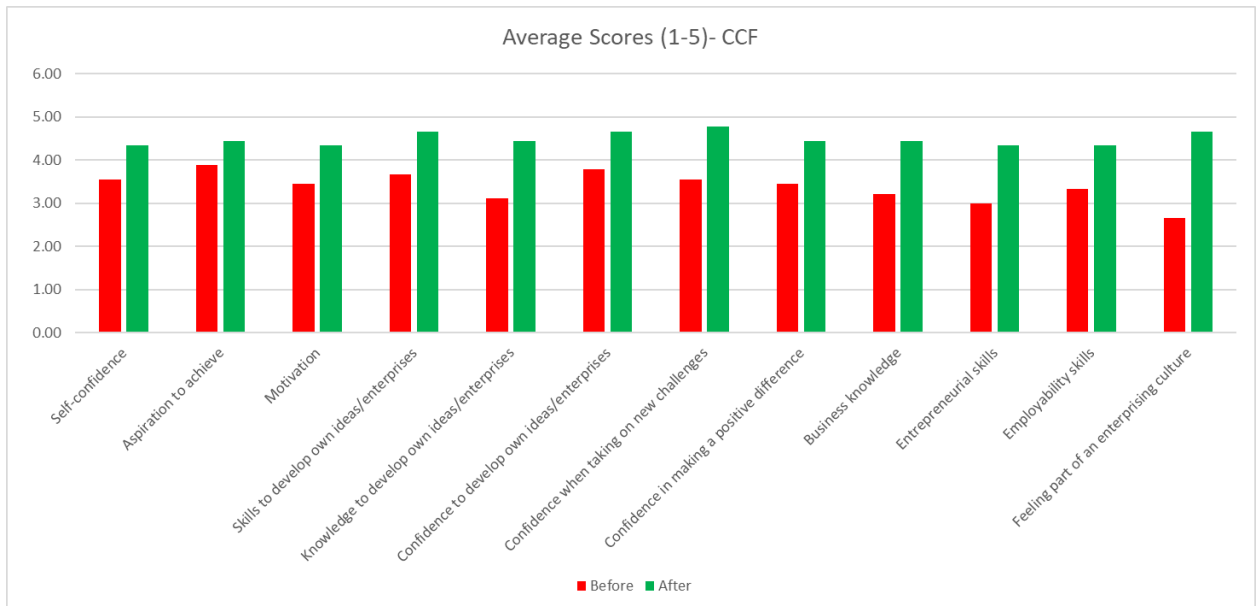
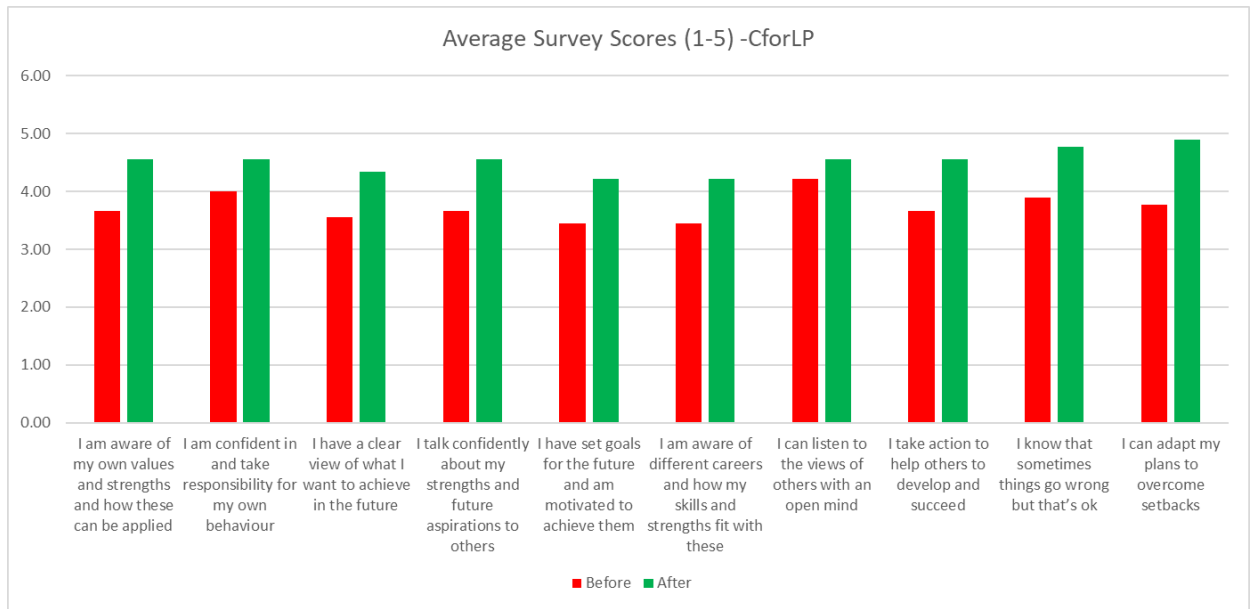
Participants completed a baseline survey before starting Positive Enterprise and the same survey again in July 2024.

Using weighted averages, the graphs illustrate the distance travelled across key outcomes, showing clear progress for the cohort.

The data evidences meaningful improvements across every measure. The strongest gains were in clarity of future goals, self-confidence, and employability skills - all core foundations for sustained enterprise and work readiness.

These shifts translate into tangible benefits: participants reported feeling more able to set and pursue realistic milestones, speak about their ideas with confidence, and apply practical skills such as planning, pitching, and presenting.

Improvements were also noted in time management, peer collaboration, and digital engagement (supported by the new Discord check-in), indicating that the programme not only develops business capability but also strengthens the behaviours that underpin success in education, employment and entrepreneurship.



BUILDING FUTURES: MENTORSHIP, NETWORKS AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Mentorship is at the heart of Positive Enterprise, and this year proved how transformative these relationships can be. Each participant was paired with a dedicated business mentor, receiving monthly coaching sessions and, in some cases, more frequent support.

Mentors provided practical advice, encouragement and perspective, helping young people overcome challenges and seize opportunities. For many, these connections have continued beyond the programme, creating lasting support networks.

The willingness of mentors to volunteer their time and expertise was invaluable. Feedback highlighted mentorship as the most impactful element of the programme. Some mentors suggested clearer expectations and induction for future cohorts, but overall contributions were exceptional. Sole traders often gave significant time, sacrificing earning opportunities to support participants – a testament to their commitment to local talent.

The impact extended beyond business. Mentorship opened doors to funding, placements and professional advice, from branding to accounting.



These outcomes show the value of building an ecosystem of support, where young people access expertise, resources and encouragement from day one.

THIS YEAR'S MENTORS

A huge thank you to the mentors who gave their time and expertise to make this possible:

Mentor	Business	Participant
Ashleigh Veitch	Able Admin	Finn
Claire McLean	Realise HR	Isla
Gina Goulding	Bakes by Gina	Jorja
Glenn Anderson	Proud & Diverse CIC	Laila
Harry Stevens	Gen2	Isaac
James Batchelor	Alertacall	Ellwood
Jenny Brumby	TEG	Sofiya
Laurie Crayton	Ascendency Apparel	Oliver
Michael Pemberton	BEC	Thomas
Rachel Gaw	Go Your Own Way and TEG	Isabelle

ALUMNI AND PEER SUPPORT

The programme also facilitated the formation of strong peer networks. Despite having diverse business ideas, participants supported each other, shared resources and built friendships that will endure.

This sense of community was reinforced by the involvement of alumni – participants returning from the first two years – to share experiences and offer guidance.

An emerging alumni network promises to strengthen this support system further, with suggestions such as a “buddy system” to provide ongoing assistance to future cohorts.

EMPOWERING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION

One of the defining features of this year's Positive Enterprise programme was its emphasis on practical learning and personalised support. With an average age lower than previous cohorts, flexibility in delivery was essential. Monthly coaching sessions, in-person workshops and shadowing opportunities provided participants with hands-on experience and tailored guidance, ensuring that every young person could progress at their own pace.

The introduction of Discord as a communication platform was a game-changer. It created a dynamic space for real-time support, enabling participants to access help when needed and engage in peer-to-peer learning. Weekly check-ins and monthly "open room" sessions encouraged collaboration and accountability, fostering a sense of community that extended beyond formal workshops. Feedback from participants highlighted the value of these sessions, with many noting that they felt more connected and supported throughout the programme.

Workshops were a standout element, covering a wide range of topics essential for entrepreneurial success. From understanding the basics of becoming a sole trader to developing effective marketing strategies, these sessions equipped participants with practical skills they could apply immediately.

The Apprentice-style challenge, complete with competitive sales pitches, was particularly popular.

It not only tested participants' creativity and business acumen but also boosted their confidence in presenting ideas under pressure.



Based on feedback, there is a clear appetite for even more workshop opportunities in future programmes.

The impact of these experiences was evident at the final celebration event. Standing on stage at Rosehill Theatre, participants delivered polished presentations that showcased their progress.

For many, this was a significant milestone, an opportunity to demonstrate how far they had come since the start of the programme. The confidence displayed was remarkable, and the event provided a platform for participants to make sales, secure contacts and gain valuable exposure.

Beyond business skills, the programme prioritised soft skills development – time management, negotiation and teamwork – critical for both enterprise and life. As one participant noted, *"You don't get real-life practice at school."* By providing opportunities to apply these skills in a practical context, Positive Enterprise has helped young people prepare for the challenges of adulthood and the world of work.



Year three demonstrates that Positive Enterprise is more than a business programme – it is a catalyst for confidence, resilience and ambition, equipping young people with the tools to succeed in enterprise and beyond.

THANK YOU

The Positive Enterprise programme would not be possible without the generous support of our funders, including property developer Brian Scowcroft, Sellafield Ltd as part of its Transforming West Cumbria programme, the Beverley Trust and Thomas Graham & Sons.

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. Positive Enterprise is a programme with a proven track record, with many previous participants going on to run successful businesses or find employment using the skills they have learned.”*

Over the three years, match funding has also been received from Nuclear Waste Services, Well Whitehaven, Morgan Sindall and Kaefer.

HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED

Due to the success of the first three years, a further Positive Enterprise programme will run again in 2025/26.

If you would like to find out more and how you can become involved, whether through mentoring, volunteering or sponsorship, please get in touch with:

Annalee Holliday, Head of Grants Practice & Programmes
annalee@cumbriafoundation.org
 01900 825760

Georgina Goulding,

owner of Bakes by Gina also gave the keynote speech at the celebration event, with some words of advice: *“Keep reinvesting in your business. Don’t see risks as a risk but as an opportunity. Don’t*

be scared to say you don’t know and ask for help. As a mentor, it has been absolutely amazing taking part in this scheme and I really hope to be involved again in the future.”



Glenn Anderson,

of Proud and Diverse Cumbria, was 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.”



CUMBRIA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

We are one of 47 community foundations across the UK, and over 1,700 similar foundations around the world.

We work with fundholders to provide a permanent, flexible and growing source of local charitable funding that will directly address the needs of Cumbria's most vulnerable.

Cumbria Community Foundation,
Dovenby Hall, Dovenby, Cockermouth,
Cumbria CA13 0PN

Tel: 01900 825760

Email: enquiries@cumbriafoundation.org

Web: www.cumbriafoundation.org

Cumbria Community Foundation is a charitable company limited by guarantee.

Company No 3713328.

Registered in England and Wales.

Registered Charity No 1075120.

Cumbria Community Foundation is quality accredited by UK Community Foundations.

Published: Autumn 2025



CUMBRIA
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



CENTRE for
LEADERSHIP
PERFORMANCE

