

Community Development Centres

COMMUNITY development centres (CDCs) across Cumbria have a major role in the expansion of childcare facilities which are vital to the county's future prosperity, a conference staged at Rheged, Penrith was told.

Childcare experts highlighted problems facing many families in Cumbria where there is a shortage of childminders, pre school playgroups offering extended hours, breakfast and after-school clubs.

Lack of early years' options is holding back not only parents who want to take up training courses for better jobs or return to work, but also the prosperity and progress of the region, they say.

The Cumbria CREDITS regeneration programme hosted the child care conference on 3rd October for managers of CDCs in rural and urban communities throughout Cumbria.

CDCs are ideally placed to set up training in childcare qualifications and, as a result of the conference, staff will be discussing childcare options with their local communities.

Thirty CDC officers from across the region, who attended, heard of the extensive range of childcare options now available.

Speaker **Carol Gorman**, development manager for **Cumbria Out of School Network**, emphasised that more Cumbrian people were needed to train in child care because of the Government-led expansion in early years' provision. She said: "Community development centres are well placed to set up tailor-made training wherever it is needed, as there are huge opportunities on every level for child care. The child care sector offers members of local communities in Cumbria many opportunities by providing employment and training as well as a safe environment for children to play and learn."

Rachel Lane, senior pre-school development worker for the charity, **Cumbria Pre-school Learning Alliance**, told CDC representatives: "Training in child care leads to new child care provision, that also leads to new jobs and greater prosperity. The present early years facilities in Cumbria are of a high quality and the training being offered will keep that high standard. More child care places enable parents to access work and training. They can't start looking for these unless child care services are in place."

Kirkby-in-Furness CDC manager Ann Carruthers, based at **Burlington Primary School**, said after the conference: "In order to increase child care provision, we need to provide training, and CDCs can combine resources to offer the courses."

Janet Tarn, representing **Cumbria CREDITS**, said: "As a result of the conference, CDC managers can now go back to their communities to discuss child care training opportunities with local people. The conference was well supported and is another step forward in the much-needed expansion and development of child care which is a foundation for the future prosperity of Cumbria."

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