



Ben Heslop

In Carlisle Library there is a team ready to give free bespoke advice and support to new businesses in the county

Ben Heslop is the programme manager of Cumbria Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC), which offers free help and support to businesses in pre and post start-up phases through the British Libraries



Here at BIPC Cumbria we specialise in taking you from where you are at right now and helping you ask and answer the questions that will move you forward

The last time I was writing an article about business I had my own business in Carlisle. Fast forward to now and I am in the very privileged position to be heading up a service that supports businesses just like the one I had.

Being a serial ‘business starter’ I suffered massively from imposter syndrome. No one in my family had ever worked for themselves, there were no tradespeople or company directors waiting to show me the route to forging my own path. So naturally when I started out, I did what most people do – I made it up!

My first business in Cumbria was Border City CrossFit back in 2012, I am very happy to say this is still going strong. Back in the early days, set up in an industrial unit in Denton Holme it didn’t occur to me that there would be support for someone starting a business. As far as I was concerned, I had decided to take the plunge and it was on me to make it happen, which is a great attitude that I applaud in those setting out on the road to self-employment, however it is definitely not true.

Now let’s clear up one thing, I did not think I knew it all and 100% knew I needed help. It was where to look and what to ask for that I was unsure of. My next business in Carlisle city centre had a shopfront and I very quickly got to meet all sorts of interesting and helpful people and groups who could support my venture in all kinds of ways simply because I had a front door and was visible.

And that is the message I bring here today: business support in Cumbria is alive and kicking and thankfully, comes in many different forms. I am the programme manager for the Business and Intellectual

Property Centre (BIPC) which is part of a national network of 22 centres around the country run by the British Library. Being situated within the wider library service, traditionally the home of books and now a real hub for so many community-based projects as well as strong links with the Department for Work and Pensions, it is my aim to not let anyone thinking of starting a business or having just started one to take that plunge without having access to the plethora of support available. We work with and refer into Cumbria Chamber of Commerce as well as the LEP who both provide other excellent initiatives.

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Sophie Baker, our advisor based in Carlisle library has already in the first year helped so many businesses access what they need to get started or take the next steps in their business journey.

Sophie says: “I like to take a bespoke approach to each interaction with people seeking our support at the BIPC. It is great to be able to help people navigate the tricky and often daunting set up phase at the start of their business journey.”

So, if you are someone or know of someone who is running their own business or has the germ of an idea then make sure they know about us. When it’s going right is the best time to ask questions and look at how to hone your hard earned success into a longer term sustainable business.

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