

NDF Update on behalf of Peter Morrish, Chair of NDF - Exciting Start to 2025 for the Children and Young People Action Group

Dear Board member

Yesterday's first meeting of 2025 for the Children and Young People Action Group, an initiative of Northern Devon Futures in collaboration with One Northern Devon, was a fantastic success! Held at Caddsdawn in Bideford, it brought together many attendees, including local academy trust CEOs, business representatives, the NHS, Exeter University, Kailo, local government, Devon and Cornwall Police.

We were especially fortunate and delighted to be joined by Sir Michael Barber, a local resident and one of the country's foremost experts in public sector reform, delivery and education. With a career spanning leadership roles in government and advisory positions worldwide, Michael's insights were both thought-provoking and inspiring. His contribution helped set the tone for meaningful discussions and plans for the year ahead.

A key highlight of the meeting was a report from Professor Tim Hobbs of Kailo (Dartington Service Design Lab), who shared valuable insights gained from working with young people in Northern Devon to co-design opportunities for employment, work experience, and career development. He highlighted the significant mental health benefits these efforts can bring, emphasizing how critical it is to focus on supporting young people as they transition into the workforce.

The group also benefited from the leadership of Kurt Hinz, Principal and CEO of Petroc, who has stepped up as chair of the action group. Kurt encouraged the group to collaborate on practical solutions such as expanding apprenticeships, improving the quality of work experience, and ensuring education aligns with local career pathways to give young people the best chance to thrive.

As its early days, the group has identified key priorities to build on:

- > Expanding opportunities for young people through apprenticeships and meaningful work experience.
- > Strengthening collaboration between education, businesses, public services, and local government to address Northern Devon's unique rural and coastal challenges.
- > Ensuring every young person in the region has the chance to thrive.

This meeting was a strong start to 2025, and it's exciting to see the commitment from everyone involved to make a real difference for children and young people in Northern Devon.

