



Press Release

Young Northumberland was started by Northumberland Uplands LEADER Local Action Group in May 2012 to work with young people to help break down the barriers to employment and build enterprise skills. Young Northumbrian Frances Johnson, has been involved with the **Young Northumberland** project since October last year when she was recruited by Changemakers to be the young champion for other rural young people to get their voices heard about issues important to them.

She is currently in Sweden taking part in an exchange visit programme run by **Young Northumberland** to help the next generation of entrepreneurs and artists from rural areas to expand their horizons, boost their confidence and make international contacts. Seeing and experiencing how people in different places live, learn and work opens up new vistas, ideas and possibilities.

Before Fran headed off to Sweden she said:

“In June I am lucky enough to be taking part in Young Northumberland’s exchange trip to Sweden. Myself and a group of other young people aged between 18 and 25 from the Northumberland Uplands will be travelling to Sweden for two weeks. Before the trip in June everyone will take part in an employability and enterprise training course in Northumberland in order to develop and improve team building, project management and transferable skills. One of the weeks in Sweden will consist of study visits, team building activities and attending a mid summer festival and the second week will be a work placement. Each participant has expressed which areas they would be most interested in to do their work experience.

As this is an exchange trip young people from Sweden will be coming to spend two weeks in Northumberland in July, they will also take part in employability and enterprise training, study visits and work experience with local businesses. Even though we live 1000 miles apart, young people in rural Sweden and rural Northumberland live in similar circumstances and experience the same pressures and issues. The trip will be a great opportunity for us to share experiences as well as ideas for the future for young people in rural areas.

For a young person living in rural Northumberland it is extremely rare to be given the opportunity to take part in a fully funded trip to another country, especially for those in the 18 to 25 age group. I think it will be an exciting new opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills and to experience how a different culture lives and works which will hopefully open up new ideas and possibilities for all who are going. With youth unemployment being so low in the UK especially in the North East and with young people from rural areas often getting forgotten about, it is important to grasp new opportunities in order to improve personal development, and to make job applications and CVs stand out from the rest.

I have been thinking that this trip will be a good chance to start to learn a new language, so I have bought a little Swedish dictionary to learn some words and phrases. However if that fails I have been told with confidence that Swedes speak impeccable English, but you have to try don't you."

If you want to find out more about Fran and the rest of the groups time over in Sweden then you can read their blog <http://swedenexchange2013blog.tumblr.com/>.