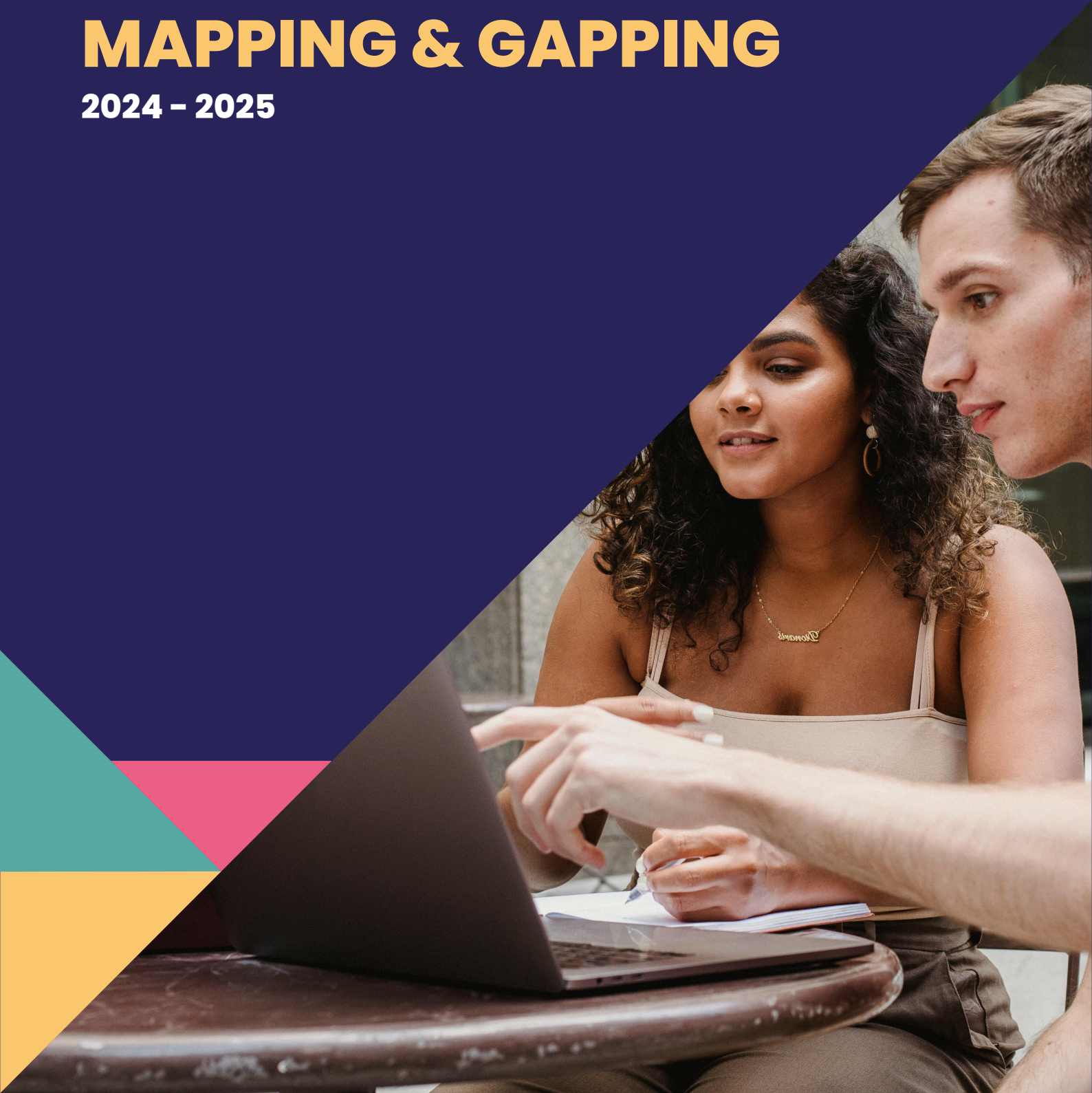


**THIRD SECTOR**

# **EMPLOYABILITY MAPPING & GAPPING**

**2024 – 2025**



# FOREWORD



The Third Sector in Scotland is incredibly diverse with **46,000 organisations** employing **136,000 paid staff**<sup>1</sup>. They earn a living in areas including social care, human services, environment, heritage, sports, arts, culture, campaigning, health, community work, village halls, housing, animal welfare, education and many others..

In the Scottish Borders, it is estimated that there are over **1,200 organisations providing employment** and supporting people towards positive destinations, either through volunteering, mentoring or direct skills development opportunities.

**Borders Community Action (BCA)**, is the third sector interface in the Scottish Borders acting as the third sector representative at the **Local Employability Partnership (LEP)**. Working alongside partners, our shared ambition is to develop an employability ecosystem that supports people across rural communities under the “No-one Left Behind” strategy<sup>2</sup>.

The mapping and gapping exercise is our first attempt to understand the employability support across the Scottish Borders. Despite fragmentations across the region, it is clear that many projects operating at the very hyper-local level are the first open door available for many vulnerable groups and individuals living in rural communities.

The third sector play a key role in delivering employment outcomes in the Scottish Borders, complementing services and fulfilling gaps where they exist. It is fundamental that services, either through

private, public or third sector are aligned and operating in harmony, helping people to gain skills and confidence.

The mapping and gapping exercise has exposed opportunities as well as challenges. Short-term funding combined with increased operational costs makes these provisions difficult to measure due to constant changes. We hope that we can build on this initial learning, and work with partners to develop a structure of investment that helps key services have the confidence, and security they need to support people into employment, training, education and/or volunteering, consequently, creating long-lasting positive outcomes and improving people’s life chances.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juliana Amaral'.

**Juliana Amaral**

*Chief Executive Officer*

# EMPLOYABILITY IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

Employability is the combination of factors and processes that enable people to progress towards employment, remain within employment, and progress their career in a work environment and has been a key focus of the Scottish Government since devolution in 2016. Employability services play a key role in delivering Scottish Government priorities, such as building a thriving economy, reducing unemployment rates, and tackling child poverty. Employability services are essential for improving marketability, career performance, and long-term career growth, with those with improved employability skills being more adaptable to unexpected workplace changes.

[No One Left Behind](#) is the current operating model for employability in Scotland, which holds a “no wrong door” approach believing that many services tie directly into employability, meaning people can receive the support they need through a variety of organisations. No One Left Behind aims to deliver a person-centred and responsive approach to people of all ages, particularly those with disabilities, health conditions, or other disadvantaged individuals in the labour market. To make employability services accessible to the population at large No One Left Behind uses the Employability Pipeline, which breaks down a service user's personal employment journey into five stages, these stages can also be split into Pre-Employability, Employability and In Work Support.

Employability Pipeline				
Stage 1 Engagement	Stage 2 Barrier Removal	Stage 3 Vocational Training	Stage 4 Job Searching	Stage 5 In Work Support
Active engagement with key service	Personal development	Core skills	Job searching	Support to help employee retention
Access to referral pathways	Basic life skills	Career guidance	Applications	Client tracking to ensure sustained employment
Engagement with targeted outreach	Specialist support <i>(mental health, addiction, financial etc)</i>	Skills training	Mentoring	Upskilling the workforce
	English for speakers of other languages	Work placements	Employer engagement and support	
		Volunteering	Promoting existing incentives	Incentives to tackle in work poverty

The Scottish Borders, a large, hilly, and mostly rural region, has a dispersed population of over **116,000 people**<sup>3</sup>. Mapping and gapping of employability services across the Scottish Borders is crucial to understand who is operating on the employability pipeline, what services they are delivering and how best to support them moving forward. Mapping was especially important as prior to this exercise there was a lack of available information on employability services in the region, especially those provided by Third Sector Organisations (TSO's).

This exercise is our first attempt to identify organisations operating on the employability pipeline within the region. And, any gaps in service provision. The results will be used to create an accessible directory of employability services across the Scottish Borders, while highlighting potential actions for the LEP based on gaps in provision.



# WHAT WE DID

The mapping and gapping process for employability providers in the Borders involved an online survey, 1:1 conversations with various organisations working on the employability pipeline and further information was gathered at third sector networking events.

The initial step involved gathering information on possible providers within the BCA team, using the TSI's knowledge on TSO's operating across the region. The list was then distributed to partners in the Local Employability Partnership (LEP), including Scottish Borders Council, Borders College, Skills Development Scotland, NHS Borders, South of Scotland Enterprise, Scottish Borders Chamber of Commerce, Berwickshire Housing Association, and Developing the Young Workforce. Other sectors were included in the mapping and gapping exercise due to these organisations relationships with the third sector and people's referral route systems. This was used to ensure a more robust overview of the employability pathways across the Borders region.

Surveys from other Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs), such as Fife Voluntary Actions and Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway, were used as reference points for the design of the survey. The survey was developed with sections focusing on Organisation Details, Employability Project Information, and Project Impact. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in this exercise, with conversations with organisations providing additional context.

A poster was designed to advertise the survey and distributed it through BCA's social media channels, the LEP, and email to all identified organisations. Third Sector Employability Networks were also promoted to gather additional information. The survey was officially closed on October 19<sup>th</sup> 2024, and the raw data was analysed to produce the results.

1

**Identified potential providers across the Borders**

2

**Designed and distributed an online survey**

3

**Engagement with a variety of organisations across the region**

4

**5 Third Sector Employability Networks held across localities**



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# WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE?

57 organisations responded to the mapping and gapping survey working across the 5 localities in the Borders, 45 of which were third sector organisations. The number of organisations operating in each locality correlates closely with the population of each locality. The outlier in this field being Teviot and Liddesdale, which has the smallest population but the second highest number of available services. The population of Teviot and Liddesdale has declined by 6%<sup>4</sup> in recent years and employability services could be a way to tackle this by getting working age people into jobs and preventing them from leaving the Borders. The number of services in the area could also be in large part due to Hawick being one of the largest towns, naturally resulting in the most available services. However, those reliant on public transport in the area may find the town difficult to access.

Berwickshire reported the third highest number of available services. However, talks with organisations indicate that these statistics do not paint the full picture as some organisations expect those in Berwickshire to travel to Eildon to receive support. For many service users, especially those relying on public transport this is **neither time efficient nor financially feasible**. Organisations in Berwickshire have reported a feeling of isolation from the rest of the Borders and say they would welcome a visible presence from statutory and Borders wide services.



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- 1 57 organisations responded to the survey
- 2 45 third sector organisations responded
- 3 The number of available services in each locality correlates to populace, except for Teviot and Liddesdale
- 4 Employability Services in Teviot and Liddesdale could help slow the declining population
- 5 Identified a need for services to have a more visible presence in Berwickshire
- 6 Recognition of public transport as a barrier to people accessing services

*Thank you again for the meeting a week or so back. I found it extremely interesting, and I think the Employability Forum will be a great space to come together going forward.*

# HOW ARE SERVICES DESIGNED AND DELIVERED?

Most projects are delivered by organisations with less than 10 staff. Delivery is split evenly between paid and unpaid staff.

- **24% of organisations reported training their volunteers to deliver peer support and/or mentoring programmes but with;**
- **73% of employability support being delivered by non-paid staff it may imply that many services are being delivered by a workforce that could benefit from additional training.**

There may also be room in the Borders for more mentorship programmes, research has evidenced benefits for both<sup>5</sup> the mentor and the mentee and only 7% of respondents said mentors were delivering their programme.

- **Both group support and 1:1 support is available across the region with almost half of all organisations saying they do some combination of the two.**
- **There is also support available across the pipeline, with most of the support provided being on stages 1-3.**
- **Stage 4 is only provided by 33% of organisations. Stage 5 has the least available support.**

However, there are enough organisations working across the pipeline, in which potential clients in and around the large towns should be able to easily access. This may not be the case for those staying in more rural areas, as public transport has been flagged as barrier to clients accessing services.

The most common services being provided are confidence building, upskilling, communication skills, interpersonal skills and volunteering.

Tailored employability support such as application assistance, CV's, job searching and job brokering were the least common.

- **15% do not help service users access other activities or services,**
- **75% help clients access training opportunities, other services or further/higher education.**
- **The most catered for client group are those between the ages of 16-25.**
- **The least catered for data is those who have a history of substance misuse.**

Most services aim at improving mental health and/or upskilling, followed by employment, long-term volunteering and education.

1	Further training for TSO's could be beneficial
2	Limited mentoring programmes in the region
3	More support available for earlier stages of the employability pipeline
4	Most catered for client group is 16-25-year-olds
5	Least catered for client group is those who have a history of substance misuse
6	Improved mental health is the end goal for most projects

# IMPACT OF EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES

**Over 2000 clients have accessed employability services in the Borders between April 2023 and March 2024** and hundreds of those were supported into a positive destination. It was reported that most clients have accessed services via self-referral, but several services have also received referrals from Scottish Borders Council (SBC). Most respondents said they engage with SBC, and many engage with Borders College, BCA and South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE). When looking at what services referred clients on, most organisations chose not to answer, some said not applicable, or they didn't know and most of the other responses said they referred between 0-10 clients elsewhere. This information indicates that organisations need to improve partnership working and increase cross organisational referrals, especially TSO's.

- **14% of organisations track a client's progress after leaving the service**
- **23% of services measure a client's self-perception of employability skills**

The largest industries in the Borders are retail, manufacturing, hospitality, health and social care and agriculture<sup>6</sup>. It would therefore make sense to develop employability services that tie into these sectors. We also asked about fishing, due to the fishing industry in Berwickshire, and construction due to the growth of this industry across the UK. Over half of respondents do not link into a specific industry or link into another industry not explicitly mentioned in the survey. 6 respondents said they link into the manufacturing industry, 5 said agriculture, health and social care and hospitality, 4 retail, 2 construction and 1 fishing. It may be worth exploring and developing Employability Services around these industries in the future to both get people into employment, but also to keep young workers in the Scottish Borders.

1

Cross referrals between TSO's are low and an increase in partnership working will help the sector

2

Measuring impact could be improved by tracking a client's progress after the service and measuring the client's perception of their own employability

3

It could be beneficial to explore employability services that link directly into the largest industries in the Borders (retail, manufacturing, hospitality, health and social care and agriculture)

4

Over 2000 clients have accessed employability services in the Borders between April 2023 and March 2024



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# WHAT WE DISCOVERED

- **61% of organisations said their projects were dependant on external funding.**
- **60% also said they had not secured a contract for to continue next year. Of those who have secured contracts only 2 of them were for over a year, the rest reported only having a up to one year of funding.**
- **44% of service providers reported without external funding, they would not be able to continue to deliver services.**
- **23% said they could provide services but in a reduced capacity**
- **Only 14% said they could continue to deliver services as they currently are.**
- **Worryingly 58% of respondents said they were not expecting to renew the project for another funding period.**

Reasons given for this included lack of funding and uncertainty regarding future funding arrangements. Funding security and services sustainability was highlighted as an issue. This correlates with discussions across the networks.

*"Funding should allow organisations to pay the living wage and be allocated early enough that they do not have to 'race' to provide services."*

Currently, almost 77% of third sector organisations in the Borders report that they pay the living wage, however this needs to be in line with fair funding to remain sustainable.

Additionally, the survey asked respondents if they were familiar with the Local Employability Partnership (LEP). 40% of respondents said they were familiar with the LEP, 48% said they were not. Many of those unfamiliar with the LEP may be services that do not directly focus on employability but instead focus on another service.

1

TSO's are struggling due to a funding, staffing and volunteering crisis

2

58% of organisations are not expecting to deliver their services next year

3

Fair Funding is needed to ensure employability services run successfully



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# LIMITATIONS IDENTIFIED

While the mapping and gapping highlighted some useful information and provides a strong starting point for building employability services in the Scottish Borders, it is clear that more is needed to refine what has been uncovered on this first attempt to map employability support in the Borders.

## Survey Uptake

The survey was completed by 57 organisations but there are hundreds of organisations working across the Borders, many of whom provide support that is vital for helping people progress in life and find their way into positive destinations. If appropriate organisations failed to complete the survey this leaves valuable information missing from the data gathered.

Reasons for this lack of uptake may include organisations limited understanding of what constitutes as employability support, with many not considering earlier stages in the pipeline as appropriate. The survey's size may have also acted as a barrier, with two organisations stating it was too large and gathered too much information. Another reason for slow uptake is the overwhelming workload faced by organisations, with many in the third sector being underfunded and understaffed.

## Ambiguous Information

Some of the information provided was ambiguous, or in some cases inaccurate. This could either be due to user error i.e. a misunderstanding of the questions being asked in the survey, or a lack of specificity in the responses. An example being the question "What client groups can access the project?", some organisations selected a specific group targeted, such as "little or no work experience", while other organisations who target the same groups ticked multiple demographics. This is due to the organisation technically working with these demographics, although the support is not directly targeted at them. This limitation means

there is a lack of consistency around how organisations completed the survey.

This limitation does not have a large negative impact on the results, however the lack of specificity may prove problematic when searching for an organisation working with specific client groups on our directory. This limitation can be addressed with a continually deepening understanding of the employability landscape.

1

**Need to increase awareness of what constitutes as employability services**

2

**Need to refine initial findings through further engagement**

3

**Continue to add organisation to our Employability Map**



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# MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** Increase knowledge of what constitutes as employability support highlighting work being done across the entire employability pipeline.
- 2** Develop a shorter more “user friendly” survey to get an update on organisations programmes and increase uptake for directory.
- 3** Promote/support available employability services in Teviot and Liddesdale to try to tackle the declining population of the locality.
- 4** Borders Wide organisations increase visibility and delivery in Berwickshire.
- 5** Recognition that public transport, is one of the largest challenges for clients accessing employability services.
- 6** Additional training for third sector organisations around Employability.
- 7** Consider intergenerational-mentorship programmes.
- 8** Increase awareness of work being done and foster partnerships across organisations.
- 9** BCA Employability Directory Map to be shared with partners across all sectors.
- 10** A time and resource efficient way to measure client success after the service ends needs to be considered.
- 11** Measure a client’s perception of own status when entering and leaving a service.
- 12** Consider main industries in the Borders and highlight employability services linked into them.
- 13** Fair funding to be allocated across the Third Sector where possible, to ensure continued and strengthened service delivery.

# EMPLOYABILITY MAP

**Borders Community Action**

name  
Borders Community Action

Description  
Fostering resilient and empowered communities in the Scottish Borders by providing support to, and representation for, community groups, voluntary organisations, social enterprises and individual volunteers.

Address  
1 Dryrange Cottages, Melrose, TD6 9DJ

Website  
<https://borderstsi.org.uk>

Stages  
3

Localities  
Tweeddale, Eildon, Teviot and Liddesdale, Cheviot, Berwickshire

End Goal  
Employment, improved mental health, Up-skilling, Long term volunteering

Above is the new Scottish Borders Employability Map. Every organisation that responded to the mapping and gapping survey has been pinned on the map with important information about the service they offer. Information includes a brief description of the organisation, the stages of the employability pipeline they work on, the localities they deliver services in, the demographics they work with, the end goal of their project, a link to their website and in some cases any specialist support they offer.

Keeping this map a live document will be an ongoing process but it is believed that this map will increase awareness of available services across the region and improve client experiences by ensuring referrals are more tailored to the clients needs.

[View Map](#)



# CONCLUSION

There are many services across the Scottish Borders that operate on the employability pipeline without the knowledge that what they are doing could come under the umbrella of employability. While the mapping and gapping exercise does have its implications, it is recommended that BCA's new directory map is used to help to increase awareness of available services for people across the Borders, this may help improve the number of cross referrals and partnership working taking place. It is also recommended that employability networks continue to provide organisations with the chance to communicate, ensuring that services complement one another, and duplication is avoided. A more visible presence of employability services has also been identified as a need in Berwickshire.

Recommendations also include further training for volunteers leading programmes, and implementation of an easy way to track a client's progress after they leave a service to ensure services are having the desired impact. It would also be beneficial to measure a client's perception of their own employability to ensure client's are developing based on input offered.

Services designed to tie into Borders main industries (retail, hospitality, health and social care, manufacturing, agriculture and fishing) could be a successful way to get people into employment and to keep the young workforce in the Scottish Borders. Gaps in services tailored for specific demographics are harder to identify due to many services being open to many groups of people, however groups that appear to be the least catered for include those with a history of substance misuse, sensory impairments, refugees, asylum seekers, those with criminal records and those experiencing or at risk of poverty. Services specifically targeting these demographics could fill holes in provision. As could funding organisations working on stages 4 and 5 of the employability pipelines.



In conclusion this mapping and gapping exercise has provided knowledge of multiple services, offering valuable work that ties directly into the employability landscape. While limitations have been identified, this exercise provided an initial starting point to build from with continued interaction with services across sectors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan Martin'.

**Ryan Martin**

*Third Sector Employability Lead*

# REFERENCES


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# GLOSSARY

<b>BCA</b>	Borders Community Action
<b>SOSE</b>	South of Scotland Enterprise
<b>SBC</b>	Scottish Borders Council
<b>LEP</b>	Local Employability Authority
<b>TSOs</b>	Third Sector Organisations
<b>NOLB</b>	No One Left Behind
<b>TSI</b>	Third Sector Interface
<b>Client</b>	Anyone receiving support for skills development and employment.

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