



Third Sector Employability Impact Report

May 2025 – March 2026

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CELEBRATING IMPACT

THE THIRD SECTOR'S ROLE IN EMPLOYABILITY

This report highlights the positive impact of the Third Sector in delivering employability services across the Scottish Borders, supported by the No One Left Behind (NOLB) funding from May 2025 to March 2026.

The collective work of Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) forms a cornerstone of both the local and national employability landscape. Far from being small-scale efforts, these organisations drive economic

contribution and provide essential support for those navigating their pathway toward employment.

By bringing together the diverse TSOs that delivered NOLB-funded projects, this report showcases the high quality of delivery over the past year. It also serves to celebrate the sector's significance and role in creating a prosperous, inclusive region.

- ✓ **9 partner organisations supported 193 individuals across the Scottish Borders**
- ✓ **106 moved on to positive destinations**
- ✓ **Resulting in a success rate of 54.9%**



IMPACTFUL DELIVERY OUTCOMES

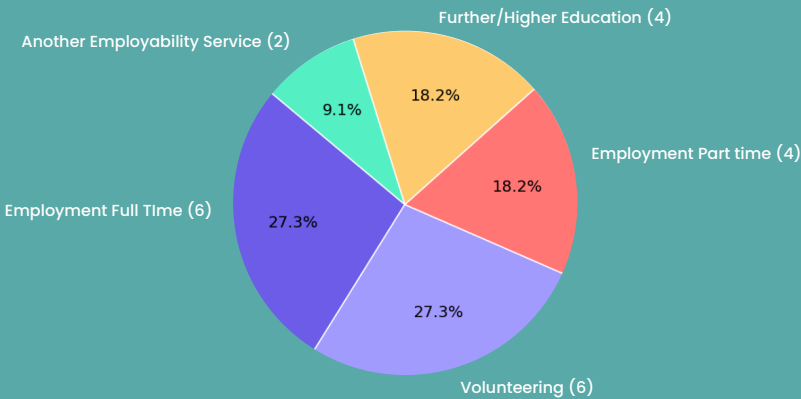
The Third Sector’s employability programmes funded through NOLB have achieved an exceptional success rate, consistently meeting and often exceeding the performance of other initiatives with comparable funding.

► **Partner organisations supported 193 individuals across the Scottish Borders.**
With delivery scaled to meet local needs, ranging from intensive support for six clients in specialised projects to broader reach for forty-one individuals in others.

► **106 participants successfully transitioned into a positive destination.**
This represents a 54.9% success rate, notably higher than the national average of approximately 46% for Scotland’s devolved employment services.

► **Individual organisational success rates reached as high as 93.3%.**
This achievement reflects the third sector’s ability to tailor support to clients’ specific needs.

Among the most frequently reported outcomes were full time **employment** and **volunteering**, highlighting the sector’s dual role in driving economic contribution and community integration.



DELIVERY OVERVIEW

Across the Scottish Borders, from Eyemouth to Newcastleton, nine partner organisations delivered an array of projects this year.

Their initiatives offered a variety of specialisms tailored to local needs, including creative media, metalworking, CV development, and confidence building, alongside essential life skills.

The nine organisations included:

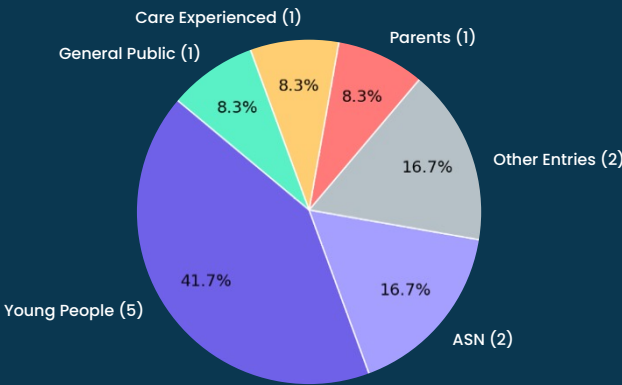
- Newcastleton District and Community Trust
- Borders Additional Needs Group
- Works +
- Interest Link
- TDI Youth Hub
- Element Scotland
- Brothers of Charity
- Bloom Media
- Live Learn Earn CIC

To ensure maximum accessibility, delivery was highly flexible, with projects operating out of various community settings ranging from local schools to community hubs. This versatile approach ensured that high-quality support reached individuals across the region.

Costings for the year for the nine funded projects looked at in this report, worked out at approximately £396,000.

TARGETED SUPPORT FOR PRIORITY GROUPS

The projects engaged with a wide range of beneficiary groups, ensuring tailored support for diverse needs across the region. A significant focus was placed on young people (41%), with many initiatives specifically designed to support their first transition into the workforce. This targeted approach highlights the sector’s commitment to tackling youth unemployment and providing early interventions and building long-term resilience.



Beyond young people, projects supported individuals across a wide spectrum of circumstances, including:

- People with disabilities and additional needs
- Those with complex barriers to employment
- Long-term unemployed individuals
- Individuals in rural and isolated communities
- People with mental health challenges

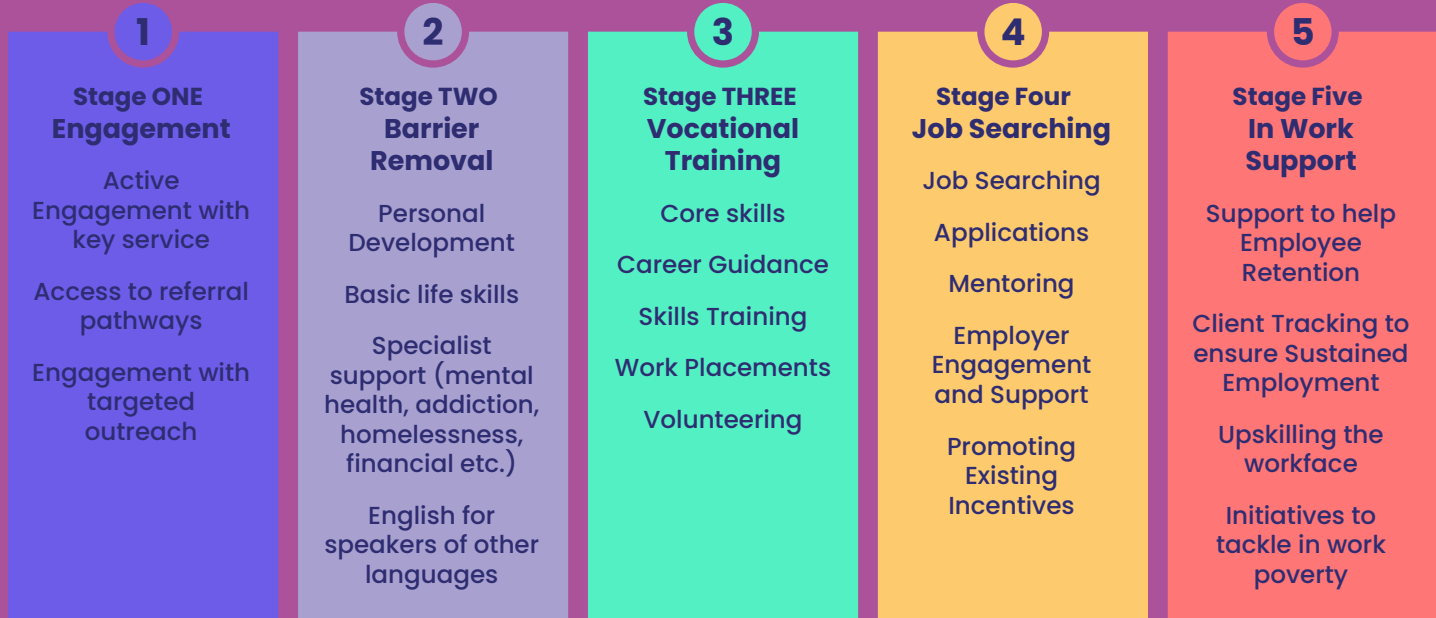
EMPLOYABILITY PIPELINE

The nine TSO partners provided coverage across all five stages of the Employability Pipeline.

While **Stage 3** (Vocational Training) emerged as the most common delivery area, the partners also demonstrated a strong commitment to those at the beginning of their journey.

Six organisations delivered **Stage 1 and 2** support, ensuring that individuals furthest from the job market have a clear, supported starting point.

While **Stage 5** (In-work Support) was less frequently represented, it remains a specialised area of expertise within the region. Notably, **Works+** provided their 18-month aftercare service, ensuring that participants receive the long-term guidance necessary to sustain their positive destinations.



VOICES FROM THE SECTOR

NEWCASTLETON & DISTRICT COMMUNITY TRUST SAID:

With this funding, we have been able to strengthen and expand the support we provide to our service users. The consistency of our programmes has allowed participants to build meaningful connections with one another, with many enjoying regular groups

such as singing, art, and walking. These activities not only offer creative and social outlets but also foster a sense of community, with members celebrating birthdays, achievements, and simply the opportunity to connect and spend time together.

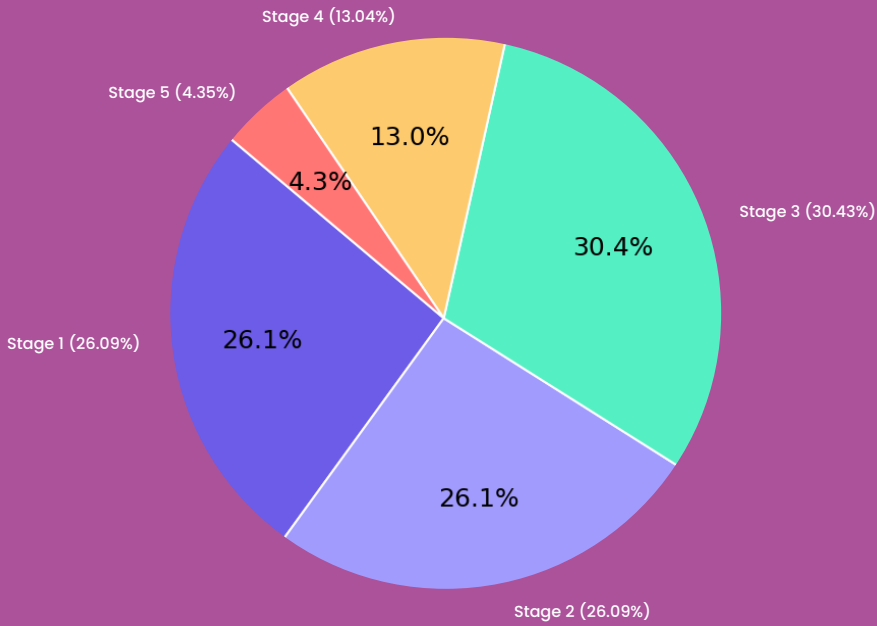
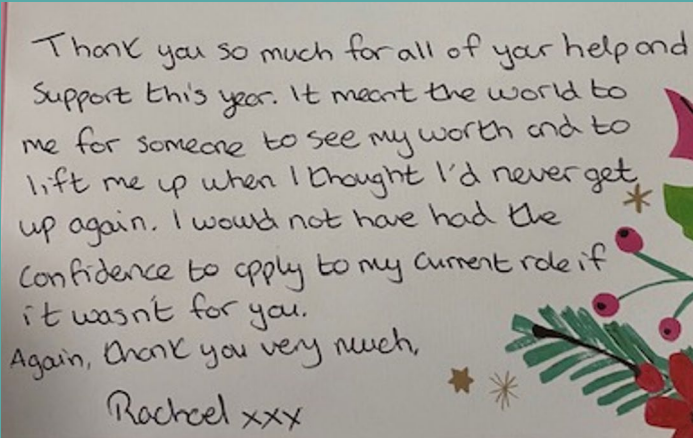
BLOOM MEDIA PARTICIPANTS SAID:

"I am usually quiet and reserved, but I have pushed myself a lot and I am glad that I did."

"Usually I would mask around strangers, but after the first day I was like, I do not need to mask. I can be a bit more of a weirdo and not get judged."

"I just wanted to take the chance, and I am really glad that I did."

"Everyone is included. No one is excluded."



INNOVATION

In addition to the No One Left Behind funded work, BCA initiated and self-funded a Supported Volunteering for Employability Skills trial, a 12-week pilot designed to evaluate a light-touch volunteering support model. The pilot achieved a 100% success rate, with all participants successfully transitioning into

independent volunteering following targeted initial support.

A separate detailed report is provided separately with recommendations for further development.

LONGER TERM OUTCOMES

Future iterations of this report will prioritise a more detailed analysis of long-term outcomes. By gathering data on the sustainment of positive destinations and providing a breakdown of specific client achievements, we can better illustrate the lasting value of these programmes.

those furthest from the job market. Protecting and investing in these employability pathways is essential to ensuring every individual has a supported, viable pathway toward sustainable employment. We look forward to monitoring the growth and retention of these participation rates throughout 2026/27.

These initiatives are all recognised for their accessibility, serving as an entry point for

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The legal landscape for Scottish benefit claimants has changed with the introduction of the “Right to Try” regulations on April 30, 2026. This landmark legislation ensures that people receiving PIP, Universal Credit, or ESA can volunteer without the fear of triggering an automatic benefit reassessment. By removing this fear factor, the law provides a formal safety net for individuals to build skills and confidence at their own pace.

For our Third Sector, this is a transformative opportunity. We are hopeful that these protections will lead to an increase in participation, allowing charities to tap into a more diverse talent pool and actively build community capacity. We will be monitoring the impact of these changes throughout 2026/27 to ensure they strengthen our social fabric and support inclusive participation across the region.

THE CALL FOR STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

The evidence is clear that the most effective support is delivered locally, through trusted relationships, and in ways that people can access without stigma. However, this model cannot be sustained through short-term, fragmented grant giving alone; it requires **longer-term, joined-up investment** that

protects continuity, retains skilled staff, and allows organisations to plan, adapt and respond to emerging need.

The Scottish Government’s No One Left Behind framework already reinforces this approach through person-centred, locally led support

and relational key working, while Fairer Futures extends the same principle to integrated place-based action at community level.

For this reason, future investment should move beyond conventional grant cycles and embrace collaborative funding models between public and third sector agencies.

The Scottish Government’s Third Sector policy direction explicitly recognises partnership working, collaborative spend in localities,

and preventative spend as part of public service reform, while recent commitments to fairer funding, multi-year agreements, and a Third Sector Partnership signal a move toward more strategic co-investment. This matters because it enables services to be designed around people’s lives rather than organisational boundaries, creating support that is more trusted, less stigmatising, and more effective in preventing escalation of need.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that investment in the third sector is not simply about funding services; it is about sustaining the trusted, local and relational infrastructure that makes stigma-free support possible. Scottish Government policy through No One Left Behind and Fairer Futures reinforces the value of place-based, person-centred responses, but these ambitions will only be fully realised if investment moves beyond short-term grant giving toward collaborative, long-term funding models shared between public and third sector partners. Such an approach protects continuity, strengthens community capacity, and ensures that support is delivered where it is needed most, in ways that are accessible, dignified and effective.



With thanks to our funders:



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