



THE GATEWAY

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

WEST LOTHIAN  
THIRD SECTOR  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2025-2026

*Partnership with purpose*

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# Executive Summary

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This is a joint Annual Report produced by the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (The Gateway), and West Lothian Council (The Council). It gives an overview of the current Third Sector, and its performance and challenges over the financial year 2025/26, with a specific focus this year on Social Enterprises. The report also gives an overview of the partnership working between The Council and the local Third Sector.

This is the sixth joint Annual Report and it highlights the following:

- The size and range of West Lothian's Third Sector;
- A review of the last year's achievements and challenges;
- Examples of partnership working;
- The scope of Council investment in the Sector;
- An overview of Social Enterprise activities and the added value that they deliver; and
- Seven case studies, which give examples of the range, varied size and trading levels of this Sector.





West Lothian has around 500 Third Sector organisations across the spectrum highlighted above. There are, however, no requirements for all of them to register or declare their finances anywhere, which makes mapping the Sector difficult. There are national statistics, published by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), but these are not available at a Local Authority level.

In West Lothian the Third Sector is supported, and represented by, the Voluntary Sector Gateway, which is, itself, a charity. The Gateway is a (free) membership organisation, with 163 members currently.

In addition to representing and supporting the Third Sector strategically, The Gateway delivers a wide range of practical support to charities, community groups, volunteers and social enterprises across West Lothian. This includes volunteering development, training, organisational support, partnership working, networking opportunities and information services, helping organisations strengthen their impact and respond to the needs of local communities.



# Review of the Year

Over the last year West Lothian's Third Sector has continued to adapt, innovate, and rise to the challenges of a tough operating environment. It has continued to prioritise our most vulnerable people, and has been a lifeline for many people who have nowhere else to turn to.

Our local Third Sector has never been more needed, nor important to local communities, than it is now. It has maximised impact through creativity, efficiency and partnership working, adding value wherever possible, and providing an essential safety net. West Lothian organisations' achievements continue to be recognised through national awards and accolades. For example, West Lothian organisations winning Charity of the Year in 2022 and 2023, and Simply Play winning Outdoor Learning Environment of the Year in 2025.

2025/26 saw continued budgetary challenges for both West Lothian Council and West Lothian's Third Sector. As detailed in the following section the Council has been able to continue to support the sector financially, indeed increasing the overall spend in 2025/26 in a climate of increasing financial pressures.

The last year has seen compounded challenges for West Lothian's Third Sector, with:

- An unprecedented increase in demand for services and complexities of support, with the Third Sector increasingly the only service available in many areas;
- Marked increases in operating costs: especially Employer's NI;
- Other Public Sector funding and contract values have seen year on year cuts; and
- Increased competition and overload, for charitable funding sources, like the National Lottery, BBC Children in Need, The Robertson Trust, etc, are resulting in reduced success rates and grant awards.

Data from Community Enterprise's Crisis and Resilience Service shows that 12 local social enterprises have sought crisis support over the period, which places West Lothian as the fifth highest Local Authority area in Scotland. This data confirms that the three main drivers adversely affecting the Sector are: failure to secure core funding; failure to achieve trading income targets; and rising operating costs. Over the last five years West Lothian has seen a decline in the number of charities by 20. Investment in the Third Sector has, therefore, never been more important, or essential, to enable local organisations to meet needs and fill increasing gaps in provision.



# Funding Overview 2025-2026

Below is a breakdown of all Council and key partners (Health and Gateway) expenditure over the 2025-26 financial year. The funding is a mix of small micro grants to large contracts and are awarded through a variety of processes, applications, Service Level Agreements and tendering.

The amount awarded to Third Sector organisations was £45M, this includes the Gateway's Mental Health funding and NHS Lothian awards. This investment in local services delivers best value for the Public Sector. It is important to view this as an investment in essential services for local people and communities, as it gives Third Sector providers a foundation to build upon, enables them to add value through their own fundraising and delivers best value for Council through this increased return on investment across its county.



**£45 Million**

across all sectors covered in this report

## The Gateway

**£559,000**



**£559,000**

Community Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund - 44 projects

## Social Policy

**£39.0 million**

### Adults & Older People Services

**£25.4 million**

paid to providers of direct care & support.

**£3.3 million**

indirect support- advocacy & other services.



### Children & Justice Services

**£5.3 million**

for provision of external placements & supported accomodation

**£1.9 million**

on direct care for children with disabilities

**£3 million**

paid for other support including families and mental health



## Community Wealth Building

**£2.3 million**

### Voluntary Organisation Budget

**£954,000** (26 groups)



### Regeneration Capital Grant Fund

**£789,000** (1 project)

### Gala & Similar Annual Events Fund

**£40,000** (28 groups)



### West Lothian Development Trust

**£411,861** (28 grants)



### Pensioners Xmas Fund

**£29,000** (77 groups)



### Developer Contributions Winchburgh

**£80,578** 2 grants in Winchburgh



## Public Health

**£200,000**

**£100,000**

Family Advice in Community Team (FACTs) - Partnership involving CAB and Kidzeco

**£100,000**

Memory Information Support Team (MIST) Carers of West Lothian

Please note figures in this report have been rounded.

## Operational Services / NETS

**£106,196**

### Community Transport

**£106,196** paid to HcL towards public transport services in addition to £182,119 from the Voluntary Organisations Budget



### West Lothian Litter Pickers

Almost 5,000 members. 256 tonnes of litter removed. 36,600 bags used



## Education

**£2.3 Million**

### Nursery & Early Years Provision

Support to 7 local Playgroups

**£10,500**



### Primary & Secondary Schools

Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) (7 groups)

**£193,016**

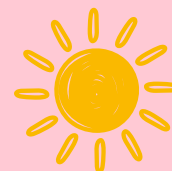
Other school funding

**£186,950**



### Summer Programme

**£216,258**



### Youth Work

**£33,919**

### West Lothian Leisure

**£1,402,632 Revenue plus £180,000 capital)**

### Active Schools & Community Sports

**£40,090**

awarded to 18 accredited clubs through the Sporting Grants scheme

**11,238** registered members supported across accredited clubs

**1,938** coaches and volunteers supporting local sport

**£3,450**

allocated to Livingston South Community Sport & Wellbeing Hub



## Housing and Homelessness

**£38,399**

**£38,399** Rock Trust – Upstream prevention of homelessness in schools, this includes £11,732 from the Whole Family Support



## Economic Development

**£671,695**

### No One Left Behind Funding

**£488,740**

(organisations including VSGWL, Partnership for Parents, Impact Arts, Routes to Work, Positive Qualities, Spark & Firefly Arts)

### Shared Prosperity Fund

**£30,000**

grant to 1 group

### Digital Development Grant

**£13,750**

grants to 2 groups

### Rural Funding

**£139,204.63** (grants to 13 groups)

# Working Together

## Partnership & Strategic Working

Investment, partnership working and sharing of expertise is vital to both shaping strategy and delivering for communities. The Third Sector Working Group continues to be an important link between the Council and the Third Sector and has been pivotal in shaping policy and funding developments in 2025/26.

Below are a number of key examples of partnership and strategic working between the Third Sector, West Lothian Council and Community Planning Partners.



The Third Sector and Council have continued to work together to support the Third Sector to represent the sector at all of the Council's Policy Development Scrutiny Panels. The Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (The Gateway), has a seat at all Panels to support local policy scrutiny. Representatives have mechanisms to communicate with organisations within the sector who are interested in the agenda items being discussed and enable contributions from the Third Sector.

During the year the Third Sector Working Group has continued to support the identification of representatives and reviewed working arrangements to ensure they are supported to participate.

## Themed Forums

The Gateway coordinates a number of themed forums for the sector comprising of Third Sector groups with an interest in the theme of the Forum. It also provides the opportunity for partners to engage with all organisations with an interest and expertise in the theme of the Forum.

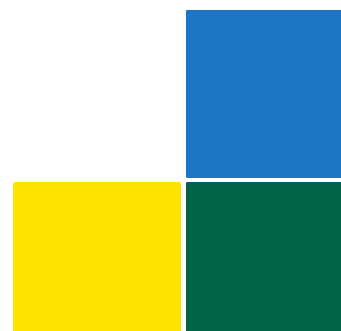
The Forums are:

- Children and Families;
- Third Sector Cost of Living;
- Third Sector Strategy Group;
- Positive Ageing Services;
- Third Sector Employability Forum;
- West Lothian Volunteer Network;
- Social Enterprise Forum; and
- Mental Health Forum.



**Working Together**

The Forums aim to improve the effectiveness and maximise the contribution of West Lothian's Third Sector to the planning and delivery of services and activities around the themes. They also provide an opportunity for Community Planning Partners to engage with the sector around thematic areas.

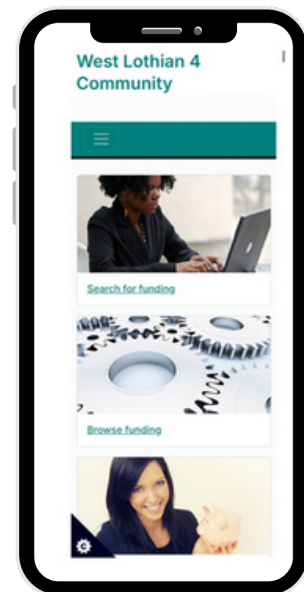


# Open 4 Communities

In January 2024 West Lothian Council invested in West Lothian 4 Communities, a funding website that supports the Voluntary and Third Sector to search for funding.

The website provides organisations, and Officers supporting organisations, with access to information on a range of grant funding sources throughout the UK. The site enables users to search by, for example, type of funder, nature of funding required and the type of organisation applying. Once a search is complete, the site provides a summary of the grant funders that support what they require and information on how to apply. Users are also able to set up alerts for funding. This significantly reduces the amount of time spent looking for funding, increases the range of funders organisations are applying to and provides information on how to apply directly and what is required for an application.

In 2025/26 there were 364 registered users, including 237 that had used the site in 2025/26 (118 were new users). There were 1691 searches during the period.



# Supporting Service Delivery

## Community Wealth Building

In 2025/26 the Community Wealth Building Team administered a range of Council and external grants provided to the Council. This totalled £2,304,439 of funding to 163 projects. This is broken down below:

- Voluntary Organisations budget - £954,000 to support the Third Sector in West Lothian, awarded to 26 groups, through various methods including; Service Level Agreements, commissioning, Third Sector Community Support funding and Twinning associations;
- Gala grants - £40,000 to 28 organisations;
- Pensioners Christmas Grants - £29,000 to 77 organisations’
- Developer Contributions Towards Town and Villages Centre Improvements - Winchburgh - £80,578 to two projects’
- The West Lothian Development Trust windfarm funding allocated - £411,861 to 25 different organisations through 28 grants’ and
- In 2025/26 the Scottish Government provided £789,000 additional Regeneration Capital Grant Funding to support the Scottish Cooperative Discovery Centre project in West Calder.

## Economic Development

Access2employment, through their **No One Left Behind** funding paid out £488,740.00 to the following organisations:

The Gateway, Partnership for Parents, Impact Arts, Routes to work, Positive Qualities, Spark, and Firefly Arts.

One organisation received £30,000 from the **Shared Prosperity Fund**.

The Scottish Governments **Rural funding** also saw £139,204.63 allocated to 13 local community organisations.

**Business Gateway** continue to deliver business advice and support to existing and new start social enterprises in 2025/26. Support is tailored around the needs of individual organisations including business planning, legal structures, finance/income raising, grant and loan applications, property, community benefit leases, asset transfers, governance and sustainability. In 2025/26, support was provided to 58 social enterprises with 10 supported with a Business Development Review as part of organisational restructuring.

Business Gateway also awarded two Digital Development Grants totalling £13,750 to third sector organisations during 2025/26, supporting investment in digital infrastructure, organisational efficiency and service development.

## Community Asset Transfer

In 2025/26 much of the focus in the year was to support the conversation with the Community Centre Management Committees as part of the Council review with training and advice offered by a range of Council Services, including Business Gateway, Community Regeneration, Property and Facilities Management as well as external sources such as Development Trust Association Scotland and the Gateway.

Bathgate Band's asset transfer application for the old Nursery Building was approved.

## Operational Services inc. NETs, Land and Countryside Services

The Transportation Team provided HcL with £106,196 to support their local public transport services. A further £182,119 was provided via the Community Wealth Building Team, reported above under the Voluntary Organisation Fund, to provide community transport.

Over 2025-26 West Lothian Council via the Cleaner Communities Team has continued to work with and support Community Clean-up Groups including the lead group West Lothian Litter Pickers. The group is now almost 5,000-member strong including all the subgroups, lifted over 256 tonnes of litter and used 36,600 bags in year to September 2025.

As part of the recently updated Litter Prevention Action Plan there is a renewed commitment to work with all groups who play a key role in Community Clean-ups.

## Social Policy

In 2025/26, Social Policy paid a total of £39.0 million to third sector bodies for grants and commissioned services, which is an increase from £38.7 million paid in 2024/25.

In Adults and Older People Services, the total amount was £28.7 million. Of this, £25.4 million was paid to providers of direct care and support, to adults with disabilities and older people. There was a further £3.3 million paid for other indirect support such as advocacy and other services.

In Children and Justice Services, the total amount was £10.2 million. Of this, £5.3 million was for provision of external placements and supported accommodation, and £1.9 million for direct care for children with disabilities. The remaining £3 million was other support for families, mental health services, and other low level provision.



## Housing

The Council currently commissions upstream work delivered by Rock Trust as part the Homeless Strategy. This sees £26,667 allocated to upstream annually and Whole Family Wellbeing Fund contribute a further £11,732. It's now in its fourth year and focuses on early intervention in schools, identifying young people at risk of homelessness and providing support to mitigate this risk at an early stage. This is the only commissioned Third Sector service funded directly through the Homeless Strategy.



The Homeless Strategy Governance Board includes Third Sector input through Registered Social Landlords and other organisations

## Education

The Active Schools & Community Sport service supports a wide range of community sports clubs to deliver impactful positive outcomes for local communities. In total 51 clubs currently hold Active Assured Accreditation. In March 2025 information from 47 Accredited Clubs detailed 11,238 registered members supported by 1938 coaches and volunteers (the majority of which are unpaid) in various sports across West Lothian. These clubs access a range of benefits such as bespoke club development support as well as opportunities to attend club network and professional learning events coordinated by Community Sport staff themed around the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda and CLPL opportunities with specialist deliverers to enhance the skillset of their volunteer workforce.

Funding support was provided during 2025/26 to 18 accredited clubs via the Sporting Grants scheme with £40,090 awarded for projects related to the development of volunteers and young leaders and targeting inequalities with a particular focus on women, girls and people with a disability and developing young leaders.



£3,450 was allocated to Livingston South Community Sport and Wellbeing Hub. The hub is a partnership between Livingston Cricket Club, Murieston Tennis and Sports Club, West Lothian Netters, Sonshine Holistics, Andy's Man Club, Breast Friends and Family and Elevate Acro Gymnastics Club supported by a Community Sport Coordinator. The fund has allowed the hub to create opportunities through an 'Access Programme' to offer a multi-year programme of activity, free at the point of use for children whose families may be facing financial barriers affecting their participation in sport and a Yoga4Health programme in collaboration with local GPs at Murieston Health Centre.

The service works in partnership with Clubsport West Lothian, the voluntary voice of sports clubs, organisations and individuals within West Lothian. Clubsport is a consultative partner, they receive funds to disburse to their member network. The organisation now supports 37 clubs.

The service supported 10 community sports clubs to access The Council's Summer Programme Fund in 2025 as well as supporting several clubs with applications to likes of The Robertson's Trust, DCMS - SFA Grassroots Funds, sportscotland's Facilities Fund etc.

### ***Nursery and Early Years Provision***

In 2025/26, £10,500 was awarded to seven playgroups, with each receiving £1,500.

### ***Primary and Secondary Schools***

Within schools some of the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), provided directly to each school, was awarded to the Third Sector to deliver specific interventions. This totalled £193,016 in 2025/26.

Through other school funding £186,950 supported work provided by organisations such as SMILE and the Larder.

### ***Summer Programme***

West Lothian Summer Programme 2025 was co-designed by children, young people and families. West Lothian Council services, third sector and community partner providers offered a successful varied and diverse range of opportunities for children and young people throughout the six-week school summer holiday period. Participants enjoyed fun, engaging and educational activities including Primary and Secondary Schools sports, arts, team games, outdoor learning, cooking skills, environmental projects and trips away. In total 7,834 children and young people benefited from the summer programme, a significant part of this was through services provided by a number of Third Sector partners who were supported through grants totalling £216,258.



### ***West Lothian Leisure***

West Lothian Council provided funding to West Lothian Leisure of £1,402,632 in revenue plus £180,000 in capital towards providing vital sporting and leisure services for local residents.

### ***Anti-Poverty Service***

Officers within the Anti-Poverty Service oversee the delivery of the Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023–2028 through the Tackling Poverty Taskforce. The Taskforce comprises council officers, elected members, Community Planning Partners, and third sector i.e VSG, Foodbank and KidzEco.

- The Advice Shop provides community-based advice services in partnership with third sector organisations, including Carers of West Lothian and West Lothian Foodbank.
- Officers work collaboratively with the third sector through the West Lothian Volunteer Network to promote volunteering and support the delivery of volunteer recognition events.
- The online Referral & Tracking (FORT) Platform is used by all registered third sector, Community Planning Partners and council services. This enables organisations to make and receive secure referrals and monitor referral outcomes.



## NHS Lothian Partnership and Place Team

NHS Funding saw two commissioned projects continue:

·£100,000 to **Family Advice in Community Team (FACTs)** – providing advice and support to families from prebirth to 15 years; this income maximisation project offers advice and support for families from Citizens Advice Bureau West Lothian and The Advice Service (WLC) alongside wider holistic advice and support for families pre-birth to school aged children (5) from Kidzeco. To date this work has supported 1,370 families with client financial gain of £1,188,418. Additionally, KidzEco supported 300 families with meals and 699 children participated in a range of classes.

· £100,000 **Memory Information Support Team (MIST)** - The programme responds to the growing waiting lists for diagnosis and pre diagnosis support for people with dementia and their Carers in West Lothian (WL) through dedicated resource to access crucial earlier support to help people stay well for longer, increase awareness, and adjust to improve their quality of life.

## Environmental and West Lothian Climate Actions Network (WLCAN)

The Net-Zero sub group which is made up of a range of Community Planning partners and WLCAN to help support them both at a strategic and operational level.



## Conclusion

As evidenced by this report, the partnership work between West Lothian Council, Community Planning Partners and the Third Sector is well established. It will be vital to continue to consolidate and build on this partnership going forward in 2026/27.

The importance of Community Planning Partners, including West Lothian Council and the Third Sector, working as strategically as possible to deliver for West Lothian communities remains key. This will help make best use of constrained resources in future.

# Social Enterprise

What is a Social Enterprise?

A Social Enterprise is a business that trades for a specific social or environmental purpose and reinvests its earnings into that mission, rather than distributing profits to owners (called an “asset lock”). They combine business efficiency with social goals, operating in sectors like, for example, housing, leisure, hospitality and education. They generate their own income through selling services or products, which can include contracts and selling directly to the public.

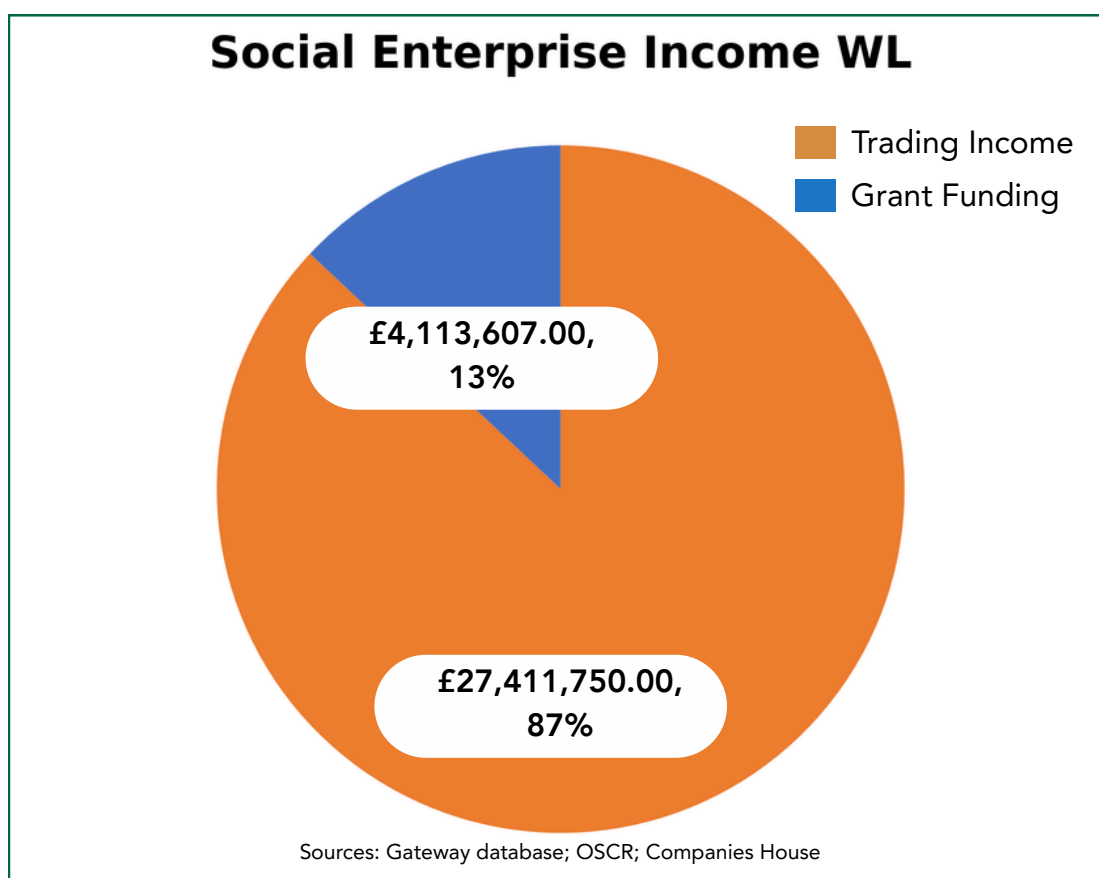


Social Enterprises can be charities, but this is not necessary. Most Social Enterprises operating in West Lothian are both traditional charities, with grants and contracts, who also trade to generate additional income, for defined social causes. This combination of income streams and delivery methods, spreads risk and strengthens sustainability. Whilst this works well for many local organisations, it is not an option for all, as there needs to be a sellable service or product to offer.

The Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (The Gateway) has responsibility for Social Enterprise development and support in West Lothian. It has a dedicated resource for this, leads a Social Enterprise Forum, provides training, facilitates partnership and networking opportunities, encourages new start-ups, and works closely with Business Gateway and Community Enterprise, who are other support agencies for the Sector.

West Lothian has a wide range social enterprise activity from large housing associations, to a single volunteer-led neurodiversity service funded by a café. There are currently 63 Social Enterprises registered with The Gateway, but, again, there is no requirement for individual enterprises to be members.

Analysis of available data by The Gateway illustrates the value of West Lothian's social enterprises, generating over £27M, 87% of income to support their social aims.



The figures above demonstrate a vibrant and innovative social enterprise sector across West Lothian. There are a wide range of outcomes delivered by all of these organisations. The thing that they all have in common is that they are able to generate their own income through trading – selling activities and services to the public, alongside addressing their social missions. To illustrate the various sizes, activities and outcomes of our local Sector, there follows seven case studies, from across the spectrum, which show how diverse social enterprises are across West Lothian.

# Social Enterprise Case Studies

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1. Almond Valley
2. Chorus
3. Kidzeco
4. River Kids
5. S.M.I.L.E. Counselling
6. Simply Play
7. Xcite West Lothian Leisure



## Charity

**Annual Turnover:** £1,8m

**Customers:** We welcome 150,000 annual visitors, mainly families, schools and community groups, with nearly half from Livingston and the rest within an hour's travel.

**% of turnover from trading:** 98% (% of turnover from visitor admissions)

## Social mission/aims:

As a heritage charity and major visitor attraction, we contribute significantly to the social, cultural, economic and reputational transformation of our region, harnessing the power of our heritage to support health & wellbeing, nurture social cohesion, build civic pride, enrich our regions cultural reputation and build community wealth.

## Outcomes contributed to:

Changes to our procurement strategy, the introduction of a curriculum aligned education programme, more community centered engagement activities and a growing portfolio of high-quality events has resulted in AVHT contributing significantly in the following areas:

Improved:

- Health & Wellbeing
- Social Cohesion
- Civic Pride
- Cultural reputation
- Youth Development
- Economic transformation
- Community wealth building



## Service/project outputs/activities:

Over the past 20 months, we have delivered a series of creative initiatives to support our ambition of harnessing the power of heritage to transform people and place.

Working in partnership with local schools, we co-created a heritage-based, curriculum-aligned education programme rooted in a STEM approach. This initiative connects learning with creativity and place, nurturing the next generation of history makers.

We have also launched a range of community initiatives in collaboration with local artists, creatives, schools and outdoor educators. These programmes have broadened opportunities for heritage-led engagement across all ages, supporting children and young people while creating inclusive, stimulating spaces for older members of the community. They inspire a lifelong love of learning and provide safe, welcoming environments where people can gather, share and explore diverse perspectives on heritage.

In addition, we delivered a public engagement programme, Project Break Out, which invited our community to reimagine and co-design the museum of the future. This has informed a new interpretation strategy and contributed to a five-year masterplan, positioning Almond Valley as an emerging cultural beacon for the region.

## Collaborations and partnerships:

Throughout 2025, we worked with local creatives and community leaders to deepen engagement with our heritage and enrich visitor experience. Collaborating with artists, makers and grassroots organisations, we developed inclusive ways to connect people, especially children and young people, with our site and stories.

Over 20 months, partnerships with Kids Gone Wild, West Lothian Bricks Club, Firefly Arts, Cedarbank School, Livingston Village Primary School, Think Circus, and others, have delivered creative play, forest school and informal learning programmes. These initiatives reduce barriers to participation and create pathways to employment, with Firefly participants moving into paid roles.

This approach ensures our programmes remain inclusive, creative and community-led.

## Challenges faced/overcome:

In 2025, we experienced a significant decline in visitor numbers and spend per head, driven by the cost of living crisis. This reduction, alongside rising operational costs due to inflation, has had a marked financial impact, reducing surplus and limiting reinvestment in the estate.

The introduction of the Real Living Wage, a moral imperative for our charity, has further compounded these challenges. In response, we remain financially vigilant and agile, applying strong financial controls and carefully prioritising resources to navigate ongoing uncertainty and safeguard our long-term sustainability.

We are also prioritising the diversification of our income, exploring broader partnerships with industry and academia, and working to galvanise support from public bodies, trusts and foundations, who share our belief in the power of heritage to transform people and place

## Future plans & sustainability:

Almond Valley has set out a clear plan to prioritise the natural, built and cultural heritage in our care, bringing it to life in ways that connect the past with a more sustainable future. Over the next five years, we will become a centre of learning and discovery, charting the journey from our oil-fueled industrial past to a green future. We will harness our heritage assets, including the working waterwheel, to ignite imagination and inspire future innovators.

A commitment to dynamic heritage underpins this vision. Plans include generating green energy through the waterwheel, restoring the historic mill to full working order, and bringing the buttery back into use.

We will work across sectors to realise this ambition, harnessing the collective power of our community to deliver meaningful social, cultural and economic impact for the region.





## Children/Mental Health

**CIC, with an asset lock**

**Annual Turnover: £16,000**

**Customers:** Chorus exist to provide much needed services and support for ASN children in the local community as well as their families.

**% of turnover from trading:** 82% (% of turnover from café sales)

### Social mission/aims:

We are on a mission to create an inclusive safe environment for all children and families regardless of any diagnosis or neurodiversity, removing the barriers between children with ASN and society.

### Outcomes contributed to:

We support children with additional support needs and their families to build confidence, social skills and wellbeing. Our inclusive environment reduces isolation, improves access to activities and services, and helps families feel supported, connected and better able to engage with their community.



### Service/project outputs/activities:

ASN children and their families can find themselves fortunate enough to be supported in their attainment and inclusivity in the classroom, however, we have found the services out-with school hours and term-time have become extremely scarce or are too expensive for families to engage with. This creates a barrier for these children to be included in society and leaves parents and care givers struggling and isolated with very little support.

With that in mind, we've created a safe place that offers free & minimal-cost classes, support groups, activities, tuition, coffee mornings, support drop-in sessions, and much more, to encourage relationships between like-minded families, making inclusion in the community possible without any stigma.

They say it takes village but we need a community of people who recognise how important it is to support ASN children and their caregivers.

## Collaborations and partnerships:

We work with local music tutors, including those at Wall to Wall Music in Bathgate, to deliver engaging and inclusive sessions for children. We also utilise community spaces such as the Bathgate Partnership Centre to host our activities, ensuring they are accessible and welcoming for local families. We continue to build relationships with local providers and organisations to strengthen our offer and to reach more families.

## Challenges faced/overcome:

The main challenges have been financial sustainability and limited organisational capacity. As a small, community-led organisation, delivery and administration are largely managed by just one person, with additional support from volunteers, who also have caring responsibilities and limited availability.

Securing consistent funding has been challenging, impacting our ability to expand provision and meet growing demand. Despite this, we have maintained and developed services through careful resource management and strong community commitment.

## Future plans & sustainability:

In response to the above challenges, we have taken proactive steps to strengthen sustainability and reduce reliance on external funding. This includes establishing a not-for-profit café, where all proceeds are reinvested into service delivery, creating a more consistent income stream.

We have also relocated to more cost-effective premises to reduce overheads and ensure long-term viability.

We continue to operate with a strong commitment to our mission, while exploring further funding opportunities and partnerships to support future growth.



## Testimonials:

"We have loved coming to Chorus. My son has thrived here. Chorus is a wonderful place where families can spend time together, no judgement, just acceptance and support"

"Jack loves Chorus. Jack lacks most social skills so he's never acknowledged other children but I love that during the class he can be himself with no judgement. He can't sit for more than a second and there's never any pressure for him to do so here!"

"Chorus is a brilliant little safe haven! It's helped Stewart find a new place he can be himself with no judgement or pressure to engage. He can be himself and feel included in his little community! You have helped me to get a bit of a break, helped me socially, improved my mental health and inspired me to look forward to the future"

**CIC** (we do have a separate SCIO launching soon, called Kidzeco in the Community)

**Customers:** Families with children aged 0–5

**Annual Turnover:** £450,000

**% of turnover from trading:** 55% (% of turnover from shop sales)

## Social mission/aims:

Parents and their children will experience increased happiness, improved health and enhanced resilience; empowering their prospects for a better future.

## Outcomes contributed to:

- Kidzeco strengthens family wellbeing, builds confidence and resilience, reduces financial pressure, and creates inclusive spaces that tackle isolation
- We divert waste from landfill, cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and support a circular economy
- We create jobs and skills pathways for people distant from work, boosting local employability and community resilience

## Service/project outputs/activities:

Kidzeco delivers a powerful range of practical, wellbeing and early-years supports that make a tangible difference to families across West Lothian. Through our “Family Platform” Give Back programme, families referred by professional partners receive KidzStart credit for essential baby items and weaning packs for parents who are struggling financially, as well as Aldi cards for those in financial crisis. We also provide free referable spaces for baby massage and other early-years activities.

We run a strong programme of free and affordable classes and groups, that build learning around wellbeing, bonding, confidence and practical skills, including buggy walks, PEEP (Parent and Early Education Partnership), Bookbugs, baby massage, Fivez cooking classes, Tiny Trekkerz, and practical weaning workshops.



Our Bumpz 2 Babies perinatal café offers a free, welcoming day for pregnant people and families with children aged 0–23 months, with an additional outreach day in Whitburn.

Our social enterprise shop supports the circular economy, offering affordable quality pre-loved goods. Our play space and sensory room at Kidz 'n' Kin, welcomes over 1,500 families a year, with low-cost, accessible sessions, including monthly ASN and dads' groups. We also deliver HENRY (Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young) training to local partners, strengthening early-years support across the community.

## Collaboration and partnerships:

Kidzeco works within a strong network of strategic partnership to deliver holistic support for families, collaborating closely with NHS services, public bodies, and Third Sector organisations.

Through the Whole Family Wellbeing Alliance and Whole Systems Working (Whitburn), we support early intervention alongside NHS professionals. Our NHS Health Improvement project, delivered with Citizens Advice Bureau West Lothian and The Advice Shop, provides wraparound health, financial, emotional and practical support. Bumpz 2 Babiez brings together multi-sector partners to offer perinatal support through our weekly café. Partnership for Parents, funded by NOLB and delivered with The Larder and CABWL, supports targeted parents into positive destinations.

## Challenges faced/overcome:

Kidzeco has navigated a period of significant change, most notably the closure of our Bathgate shop at the start of 2025. Losing this income stream created real financial pressure, but it also became a turning point that strengthened our focus, sharpened our purpose and deepened our commitment to early intervention. Rather than stepping back, we expanded our reach by launching a dedicated delivery day in Whitburn, ensuring families—particularly those in areas of highest need—continued to receive consistent, trusted support.

Sustainability is an ongoing challenge for any social enterprise, yet we have responded with determination, creativity and a strong community foundation. By listening closely to families and meeting them where they are, we have shaped our services to ensure support begins early, often during pregnancy, and continues through the critical early-years period. This early-intervention approach has strengthened relationships, improved outcomes and built trust across the community.

Our partnerships with NHS teams, advice services, community organisations and local businesses, have enabled us to secure diverse funding that now drives our work forward. Despite setbacks, we have grown our impact, expanded our presence and demonstrated that Kidz-Eco is a resilient, values-driven organisation that the families of West Lothian can consistently rely on.

## Future plans & sustainability:

Kidzeco's future plans focus on deepening our early-intervention approach, expanding our circular-economy work, and strengthening long-term sustainability. We are developing new community-based environmental projects that build on the success of our shop, beginning with EcoBumz reusable nappy scheme funded by West Lothian Climate Action Network, and developing into wider green-parenting initiatives, supporting families to make sustainable, affordable choices and reinforcing our commitment to early support that improves long-term wellbeing.



Building on our strong foundations we plan to introduce various training opportunities for parents such as Henry and LLTF (Living Life to the Full), and expand our outreach model into a wider range of West Lothian communities. Our goal is to ensure families can access support early: during pregnancy and throughout the early years, when it has the greatest impact on confidence, resilience and future outcomes. This expansion will help us reach more families with the right support at the right time.

Sustainability remains central to our plans. We will continue diversifying income, strengthening partnerships and developing circular-economy projects that support both families and the environment. We also plan to expand our employability support, creating more opportunities for young people, parents and those distant from the labour market, to gain skills, confidence and routes into work.

## Testimonials:

"Has helped massively with many anxieties I have had with my son; I feel more confident letting him explore new experiences I may have been previously worried about"

"It's so good to for socialising, ideas for activities to take home and a safe space for getting out the house"

"I can't thank you enough for the support and giving me the confidence to be a mum. My child is flourishing into a happy child and that's with support from yourselves!"

### Charity

**Customers:** We provide support through our referral network, with children identified by Social Work, Health Visitors, schools and other charities supporting those facing poverty and barriers to development.

**Annual Turnover:** £225,000

**% of turnover from trading:** 21% (% of turnover from toy sales)

### Social mission/aims:



At River Kids, we believe that no child should go without. That's why we enable positive change for disadvantaged children and their families by providing them with essential goods, clothing and toys, access to financial support through small grants, and help with finding employment through volunteering and work placements.

### Outcomes contributed to:

- Provision of 500 packs of clothing
- Over 100 beds and cots provided
- 3,394 bags of gifts & 200 birthday bags provided
- £40,000 provided to fund school projects
- £10,000 small grant funding for extra-curricular activities



### Service/project outputs/activities:

River Kids provide essential support for material items (clothes, beds, child development and safety equipment). We receive over 800 referrals per annum, with support in kind valued at over £50,000. We also manage the West Lothian Toy Appeal on behalf of the community, to ensure gifts are available at celebratory times of year. Funding is also provided for individuals to access extra-curricular activities, as well as project based support for schools to provide access to opportunities for children experiencing poverty.

## Collaborations and partnerships:

We work in partnership with West Lothian Council, Health and Social Care Partnership, and NHS Lothian, to deliver this support via a referral network. There are 20 other charities in West Lothian that we work with to deliver the service.

## Challenges faced/overcome:

Over the last 12-months demand for services has grown by 13%. Beyond funding we are also seeing a decline in the quality of the goods donated over the last 2 years, which we attributed to Vinted selling making River Kids the alternative, rather than the first thought to donate items. Thankfully we have been successful in securing a number of grants for the purchase of clothing, beds and stair gates, to ensure we have no reduction in the quality and speed of the service.

## Future plans & sustainability:

With the current uncertainty in the sector, and the wider economy, we are focused on ensuring that existing services are robust and able to meet expected continued growth. We are keen to engage more with schools directly, to build on the excellent support we have provided to them over the last 2 years. Sustainability will come from the diversity of revenue streams, with a particular emphasis on engagement with businesses of all sizes to back our newly launched campaigns for clothing, beds and funding for extra-curricular activities.

## Testimonials:

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you for the double buggy we collected today.

This will make the family's life so much easier now. They report that they have not been able to leave the home in last 7 weeks, so you have given them a social lifeline."



Building brighter futures.

## Young people/Mental Health

### Charity

**Customers:** S.M.I.L.E. Counselling supports young people aged 11–26 across West Lothian who need mental health and emotional wellbeing support.

**Annual Turnover:** £705,000

**% of turnover from trading:** 78% (% of turnover from therapeutic services)

### Social mission/aims:

To improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of West Lothian residents by providing inclusive, accessible leisure, sport and community services, reinvesting all income to help people live healthier, happier and longer lives.

### Outcomes contributed to:

- Improved mental health and emotional wellbeing for young people
- Increased resilience and coping skills
- Reduced anxiety and distress
- Better engagement in education
- Earlier intervention to prevent issues escalating.

SMILE Counselling helps young people feel heard, supported and empowered to make positive choices and build healthier futures. 95.8% of young people say 'Counselling helped them cope better'



### Service/project outputs/activities:

S.M.I.L.E. Counselling delivers early intervention mental health support for young people aged 11–26 across West Lothian through accessible, community-based counselling services. The organisation provides one-to-one counselling sessions delivered by qualified staff and trained placement counsellors, primarily within secondary schools and community settings, ensuring support is available where young people already feel comfortable and safe.

Young people are referred through schools, parents, carers, or other professionals, and are offered a structured programme of counselling sessions tailored to their individual needs. Support focuses on common issues affecting young people such as anxiety, low mood, trauma, family challenges, low self-esteem and social pressures.

Alongside direct counselling support, S.M.I.L.E. works closely with schools and partner organisations to identify young people who would benefit from early intervention. The service also provides opportunities for trainee counsellors to gain supervised placements, helping to expand the availability of counselling support, while contributing to the development of the future counselling workforce.

Through this model, S.M.I.L.E. is able to deliver a significant number of counselling sessions each week, ensuring timely access to support and reducing waiting times for young people who may otherwise struggle to access mental health services.

## Collaborations and partnerships:

S.M.I.L.E. Counselling is embedded within the West Lothian community and prides itself on strong local collaborations and partnerships. We work closely with our secondary school partners to deliver counselling services directly within school settings, ensuring accessible early intervention for young people.



We also collaborate with Xcite/West Lothian Leisure, which offers S.M.I.L.E. clients a free three-month leisure membership to support physical wellbeing, alongside mental health recovery. In addition, we partner with local businesses and charities through corporate sponsorship, fundraising and community initiatives. S.M.I.L.E. is able to create clear support pathways for young people. Working alongside schools, health professionals, charities and community organisations enables us to make appropriate onward referrals and ensure young people can access the wider support they may need beyond counselling.

## Challenges faced/overcome:

In recent years S.M.I.L.E. Counselling has experienced a significant increase in demand for its services, particularly through referrals from GPs, CAMHS and other professionals. This reflects the growing mental health needs of young people but has also placed increased pressure on the organisation's capacity and resources.

As a small charity committed to providing early intervention support, S.M.I.L.E. aims to keep services accessible for all families regardless of financial circumstances. However, the rising number of referrals and the increasing need for counselling support has required the organisation to carefully review how services are delivered and sustained.

To help manage demand, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the service, S.M.I.L.E. introduced a minimum donation model for families who are able to contribute towards the cost of counselling. This approach allows the charity to continue offering support to those who may not otherwise be able to access private counselling, while helping to cover some of the costs associated with delivering the service.

Despite these challenges, S.M.I.L.E. has continued to expand partnerships, utilise supervised placement counsellors and strengthen community fundraising and corporate support, in order to increase the number of counselling sessions available and reduce waiting times for young people in need.

## Future plans & sustainability:

S.M.I.L.E. Counselling aims to continue expanding its services to meet the growing mental health needs of young people across West Lothian, while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organisation. A key priority is to secure Local Authority and Government funding to strengthen the stability of the service and allow S.M.I.L.E. to increase the number of counselling sessions delivered each week.

The organisation is working towards delivering over 200 counselling sessions per week through a combination of qualified staff and supervised placement counsellors. S.M.I.L.E. also plans to further develop its partnerships with schools to increase the reach of school-based counselling and ensure more young people can access early intervention support within familiar environments.

Future plans include introducing online counselling options to improve accessibility for young people who may find it difficult to attend in person. S.M.I.L.E. also hopes to extend our opening hours to offer more flexible appointment times and reduce waiting lists.

In addition, the organisation is exploring opportunities to expand the age range of those it supports and strengthen partnerships with local businesses, community organisations and funders to create a more diversified and sustainable funding model that allows the service to continue growing and supporting young people in the long term.

## Testimonials:

S.M.I.L.E. has supported over 3,500 young people across West Lothian and delivered more than 18,000 counselling sessions. 95.8% of young people report that counselling has had a positive impact on their lives, and 48% of those supported live in areas of high deprivation.

"Thank you so much for counselling my son through this difficult patch, I see a huge difference, a relief for me" (Parent)

"You have helped me so much, I can do so many things that I couldn't before" (Service user)

"Thank you for listening to me and helping me to make sense of things. It really has helped me a lot" (Service user)



Charity

Annual Turnover: £991,939

Customers: Families with children in Nursery-P7 across West Lothian

% of turnover from trading: 97% (% of turnover from childcare bookings)

Social mission/aims: 

Our mission is to provide quality, play-based childcare which supports children’s individual development and gives families confidence in their care. We invest everything into changing lives through the power of play.

Outcomes contributed to:

- Children have access to high quality play opportunities
- Children are cared for and supported in their individual development
- Children thrive in fun, playful, and child-centred settings
- Children are safe, secure, and protected from harm

Service/project outputs/activities:

At Simply Play, we envision a Scotland where families trust their children are nurtured, supported, and thriving, in quality childcare settings – places where children can be themselves and simply play. We provide school age childcare in venues across West Lothian- Broxburn, Craigsfarm, East Calder, Murieston, and Wester Inch, and will open our first venue in Edinburgh in August 2026 in the former Balerno Police Station, now called The Welcome Station.

All Simply Play venues are regulated through the Care Inspectorate and are rated “Good” and “Very Good” in their most recent inspections. Our 50+ staff include Modern Apprentices, Playworkers, Senior Playworkers, Childcare Managers, and Senior Childcare Managers, all of whom are SSSC registered, and undertake extensive on-the-job, and external, training to ensure we provide a consistently high quality of care.



Simply Play also operates Wonder Woods Woodland Nursery near Harburn. They were delighted to win the 'Outdoor Learning Environment of the Year' award at the Scottish Nursery Awards in 2025.

Wonder Woods was West Lothian's first fully outdoor nursery and is a Partnership Nursery offering 1140 hours childcare for children from age 2 ½. The team at Wonder Woods care for up to 25 children a day, providing a wide range of creative outdoor play and learning activities, as part of our holistic approach to the Curriculum for Excellence Early Level.



## Collaboration and partnerships:

As mentioned, Wonder Woods is a Partnership Provider Nursery and parents can use all, or some of their funded 1140 hours of childcare at the Woods. Simply Play itself works in partnership with West Lothian Council to provide Simply Place spaces through its Holiday Activities Programme.

Simply Play's parent charity, Play Works, partners with several organisations in communities served by Simply Play, including Craigsfarm Community Development Project, and Balerno Village Trust.

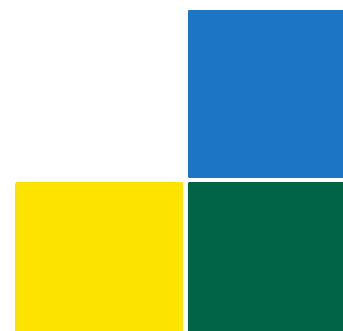
As organisations rooted in the communities we serve, both Simply Play, and Play Works, welcome approaches for collaboration from other charities and social enterprises.

## Challenges faced/overcome:

The 2020 Covid pandemic reshaped the way many people work, and their requirement for childcare. Simply Play faced a rapid reduction in customer demand, which has slowly been recovering, but with families looking for more flexibility and more for their money. We are also faced with competition from unregulated groups and clubs which, by their very nature can offer cheaper, but unregulated services.



To meet these challenges, we focus on continually improving the quality of our childcare and ensuring strong communication with parents and families, working to the HMIE Quality Improvement Framework for the early learning and childcare sectors, and sharing children's development through their personal plans. We benchmark our prices and stress that Simply Play is a social enterprise, and that all income is reinvested both in the organisation itself, and in supporting Play Works, to use the power of play to improve the lives of children and families facing adversity or poverty.



## Future plans & sustainability:

Considering the challenges outlined above, we carefully consider any expansion based on identified local need. Simply Play opened its fifth venue in Craigsfarm in August 2025, following the closure of the previous school age childcare provider at the location, which would have left a gap in service provision for the area. Our Balerno venue is opening after a consultation by Balerno Village Trust identified the need for more school age childcare in the village.

We are now exploring the potential of a second woodland/nature nursery, and must look at the sustainability of our venues, particularly in East Calder, and consider how we generate income from them in the times they are not in use for school age childcare.

## Testimonials:

"My children love going to Simply Play and this is because of the environment that the staff create."

"My children are safe and are encouraged to have fun in an environment where they can be children and enjoy playing and using their imaginations away from screens."

"Staff know my child very well and always make time to take to me about my child each day."

### Charity

Annual Turnover: £13.7 million

**Customers:** Over 2.6 million annual visits (2025/2026) from West Lothian residents, including families, young people, older adults, schools, clubs and community groups.

**% of turnover from trading:** 89.2% (% of turnover from gym memberships)

### Social mission/aims:

To improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of West Lothian residents by providing inclusive, accessible leisure, sport and community services, reinvesting all income to help people live healthier, happier and longer lives.

### Outcomes contributed to:

- Improved physical and mental health
- Reduced social isolation
- Increased activity levels
- Stronger communities

In 2025/26, we generated £20.2 million in social value, including measurable health benefits such as reduced GP visits (£169k) and reduced impact of conditions, including type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, and depression.



### Service/project outputs/activities:

Xcite delivers services across six leisure venues, two golf courses, and a network of community schools, providing access to facilities including gyms, swimming pools, fitness studios, sports pitches, and community spaces.

We deliver a wide-ranging programme of activities, including fitness classes, racquet sports, athletics, golf, and children's coaching programmes that support skill development, confidence, and lifelong participation in physical activity.

Targeted health programmes include GP and NHS referral schemes, which support over 2,500 participants annually, alongside specialist interventions such as Falls Prevention and sessions for people living with long-term conditions, including Parkinson's.

We also deliver inclusive, community-focused initiatives such as:

- Fitness Factory gym access for young people (12–15 years)
- Older adult wellbeing and cognitive movement sessions
- Volunteer-led activities, including walking groups and Singing for Health
- Community events such as the 'Canalympics' and Family Colour Runs

Our facilities act as vital community hubs, supporting around 22,000 members and delivering nearly 100,000 concessionary visits each year—helping ensure physical activity remains affordable and accessible for those who need it most.

## Collaboration and partnerships:

We work closely with key partners including West Lothian Council, NHS Lothian, local schools, and a wide range of community and Third Sector organisations to deliver integrated health, wellbeing and sport programmes.

These partnerships enable preventative health interventions, school-based activity delivery, and targeted support for vulnerable groups, ensuring greater community impact.

## Challenges faced/overcome:

Despite ongoing financial pressures and a challenging operating environment, we have remained focused on our core purpose of helping people live healthier, happier, longer lives. Rising costs, reduced funding, and the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis have increased demand for accessible, affordable services while placing pressure on our operations.

In response, we have demonstrated resilience and ambition, achieving another year of strong performance and impact. Over 2.6 million visits were recorded across our facilities last year, with concessionary use increasing by over 20%, demonstrating the essential role we play in ensuring access for those who need it most.

Key achievements include:

- Growth in earned income by 5.5% and monthly direct debit revenue by 17%, strengthening financial sustainability.
- Continued progress towards sustainability, with subsidy per visit falling by 31%, from £1.18 to 81p.
- Continued investment in our workforce, including enhanced employee benefits and recognition initiatives.

- Greater impact through health and wellbeing programmes, with GP referral visits increasing by 26% and a record 71,000 visits to the wider health & wellbeing programme.
- Continued reinvestment into our facilities and services, from expanded gyms to our award-winning Nourish coffee bar and a brand-new indoor Padel court..

## Future plans & sustainability:

We have set out clear priorities to guide our development over the coming years - helping us grow stronger, work smarter, and deliver greater impact across our communities.

Our focus is on delivering high-quality services, reaching more people, supporting our workforce, and building long-term sustainability.

We will strengthen our core business by working to increase participation across our venues, enhancing customer experience, and continually improving how we operate.

We are keeping our offer fresh and relevant by developing new products and services, while exploring innovative and sustainable ways to grow income and reduce reliance on external funding.

People and partnerships remain central to our approach. We are committed to investing in our staff and volunteers, ensuring they feel supported, valued, and empowered to deliver excellent services. At the same time, we will continue to build strong partnerships that enable us to extend our reach and better support local communities.

