

West Lothian Third Sector Employability Mapping & Gapping Report 2025

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian



FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce the West Lothian Third Sector Employability Mapping and Gapping Report 2025. Third sector organisations play a vital role in supporting individuals across West Lothian who face barriers to employment. Through trusted relationships, flexible delivery models and person-centred approaches, voluntary organisations often provide the first step towards confidence, skills development and sustained participation in the labour market.

This report provides an overview of the scale, diversity and impact of third sector employability provision across West Lothian. It highlights the significant contribution made by local organisations in engaging residents furthest from the labour market while identifying opportunities to strengthen progression into employment and in-work support. The findings demonstrate the strength of partnership working locally and reinforce the importance of collaboration across the public, private and third sectors in delivering Scotland's No One Left Behind approach.

I would like to thank all organisations who contributed their time and insight to this exercise. Their continued commitment supports individuals, families and communities across West Lothian every day.

Alan McCloskey Chief
Executive Officer
VSGWL

Introduction

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian undertook this mapping and gapping exercise to develop a clearer understanding of third sector employability provision operating across West Lothian.

The work aligns with the Scottish Government's **No One Left Behind (NOLB)** approach, which promotes locally designed, person-centred employability support focused on sustainable outcomes.

Third sector organisations are key partners within the local employability system. Many provide early engagement, confidence-building and skills development opportunities for individuals who may not yet be ready to access mainstream employability programmes.

This report aims to:

- improve visibility of third sector employability provision support
- partnership planning and collaboration
- identify strengths and gaps across the employability pipeline
- inform future service development
- discussions

About the Mapping Exercise

- Structured returns from third sector organisations
- Follow-up conversations and site visits
- Insights from the Third Sector Employability Forum
- Ongoing engagement with local employability partners
- Data reflects 2024–2025 delivery and represents a snapshot of the system (figures show minimum activity levels)

The Role of the Third Sector in Employability

Across West Lothian, third sector organisations provide accessible and community-based employability support for individuals experiencing multiple or complex barriers to work.

Support commonly includes:

Wellbeing and mental health support
Confidence and motivation building
Informal and accredited learning
Volunteering opportunities Vocational
skills development Supported progression
toward employment

These services complement statutory provision by enabling engagement at earlier stages of the employability journey.

Across organisations providing numerical data, third sector employability services support at least 2,600 residents annually.



Organisations Contributing to the Mapping

SMILE Counselling

Area: West Lothian-wide Provides therapeutic counselling for young people experiencing emotional and mental health challenges impacting participation in education, training or employment. Contribution: Supports emotional stability, confidence and readiness for progression.

Stages 1–2

Impact Arts – Impactful Parents

Area: Livingston

Creative engagement programme supporting parents experiencing isolation or low confidence. Contribution: Builds confidence, communication skills and progression toward learning or volunteering.

Stages 1–3

Routes to Work West Lothian

Area: West Lothian-wide

Provides accredited employability training and tailored progression support. Contribution: Supports participants to achieve recognised qualifications and move toward employment.

Stages 3–4

Cyrenians Green Skills Centre

Area: Kirknewton

Outdoor learning and environmental training programmes. Contribution: Accredited green skills supporting progression toward employment.

Stages 2–3

The Larder

Area: Livingston
Hospitality and customer service training provider delivering accredited qualifications.
Contribution: Sector-specific vocational training linked to employment opportunities.

Stages 2–4

Kidz-Eco

Area: Livingston
Community-based environmental learning and volunteering opportunities.
Contribution: Supported volunteering developing routine, responsibility and transferable skills.

Stages 2–4

West Calder Community Hub

Area: West Calder

Community hub delivering local employability and paid training opportunities.

Stages 2–4

West Lothian Youth Action Project (WLYAP)

Area: West Lothian-wide

Youth work and early intervention services.
Contribution: Supports young people through skills development and accredited learning pathways.

Stages 1–3

SPARK

Area: West Lothian-wide

Community learning and wellbeing programmes supporting adults facing barriers to participation.
Contribution: Large-scale engagement supporting confidence and progression into further learning.

Stages 1–3

Simply Play / Play Works

Area: West Lothian

Childcare and play services delivering Modern Apprenticeships. Contribution: Employer-led progression routes into childcare employment. Stages 3–4

Organisations Contributing to the Mapping (continued)

EnvironMental Health CIC

Area: West Lothian
Mental health and wellbeing training provider.

Contribution:

Delivers accredited mental health learning improving employability readiness.

Stages 2–3

Street League

Area: West Lothian

Sport based employability programmes for young people.

Contribution:

Combines physical activity with employability skills and progression support.

Stages 2–4

Firefly Arts

Area: West Lothian

Creative arts engagement programmes.

Contribution: Supports

confidence, participation and transferable skills development.

Stages 1–2

Employability Pipeline Overview



Stages 1–2: Engagement and Barrier Removal A key strength locally, focused on wellbeing, confidence-building and stabilisation through trusted community relationships.



Stage 3: Skills Development

Strong provision exists across hospitality, green skills, creative learning and community qualifications, including SQA and industry certifications.



Stage 4: Progression to Work

Opportunities include supported volunteering, paid placements and apprenticeships. Coordination across pathways varies.



Stage 5: In-Work Support Structured in-work support remains limited across the third sector and represents a key development opportunity.

Qualifications and Participation Supports

Provision includes:



Participation supports commonly include:

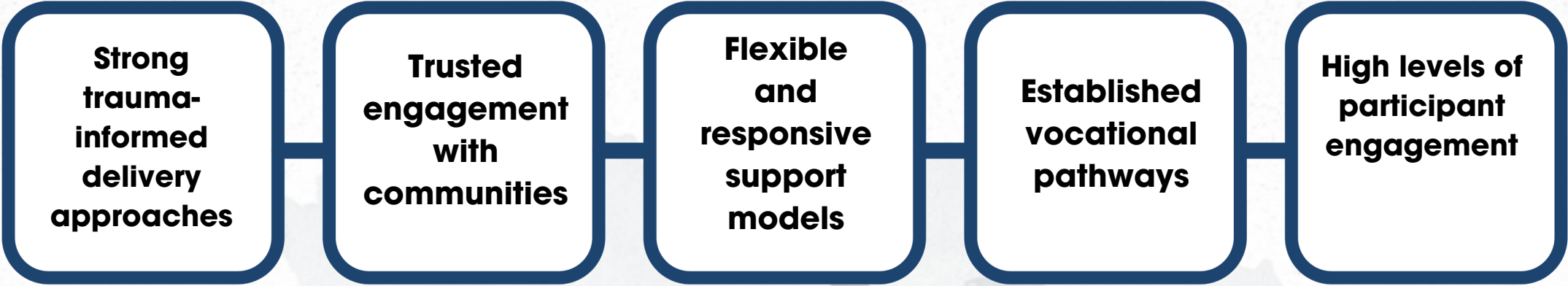
- ➔ Travel expenses**
- ➔ Meal provision**
- ➔ Training allowances**
- ➔ Childcare support**
- ➔ Paid training opportunities**



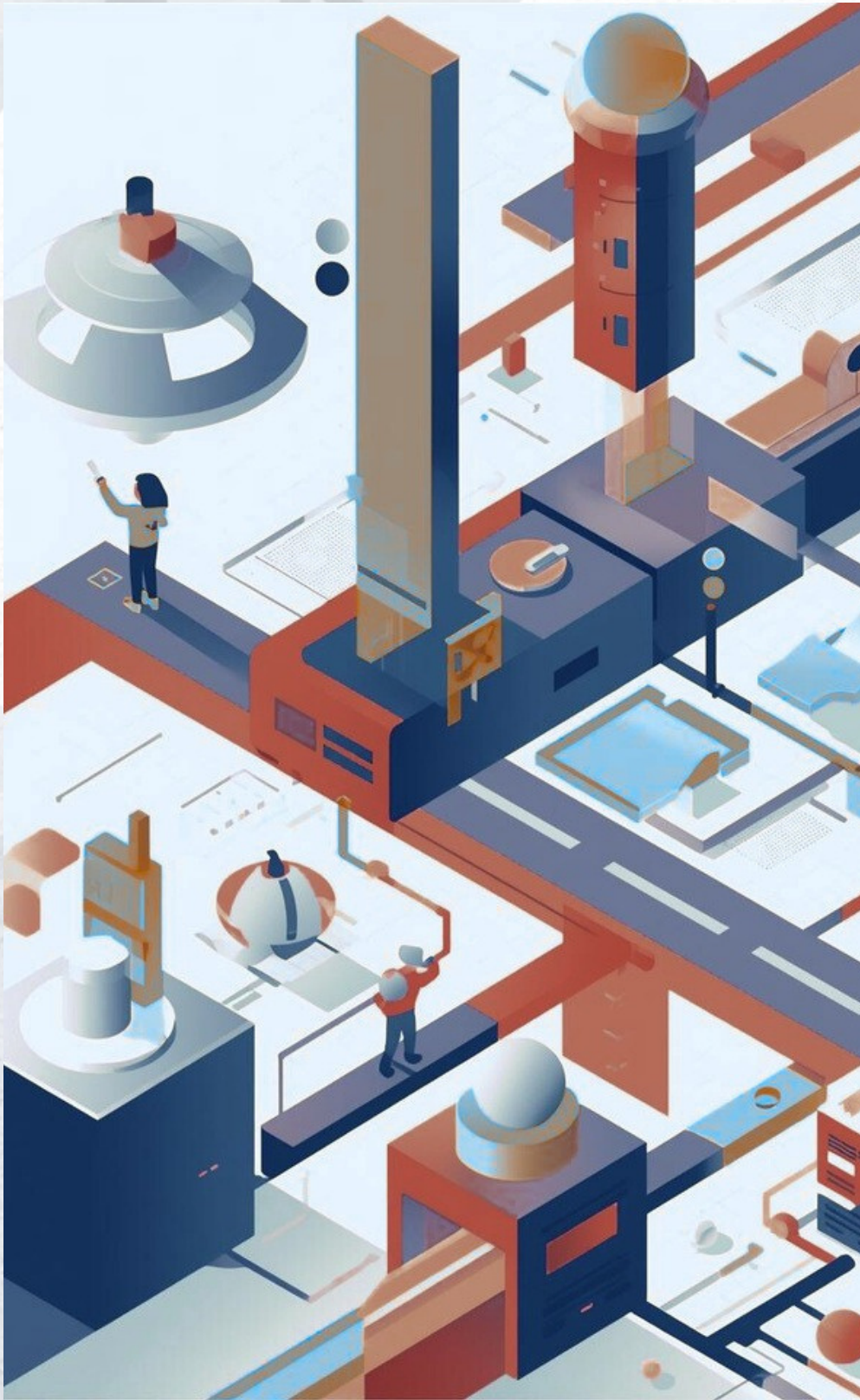
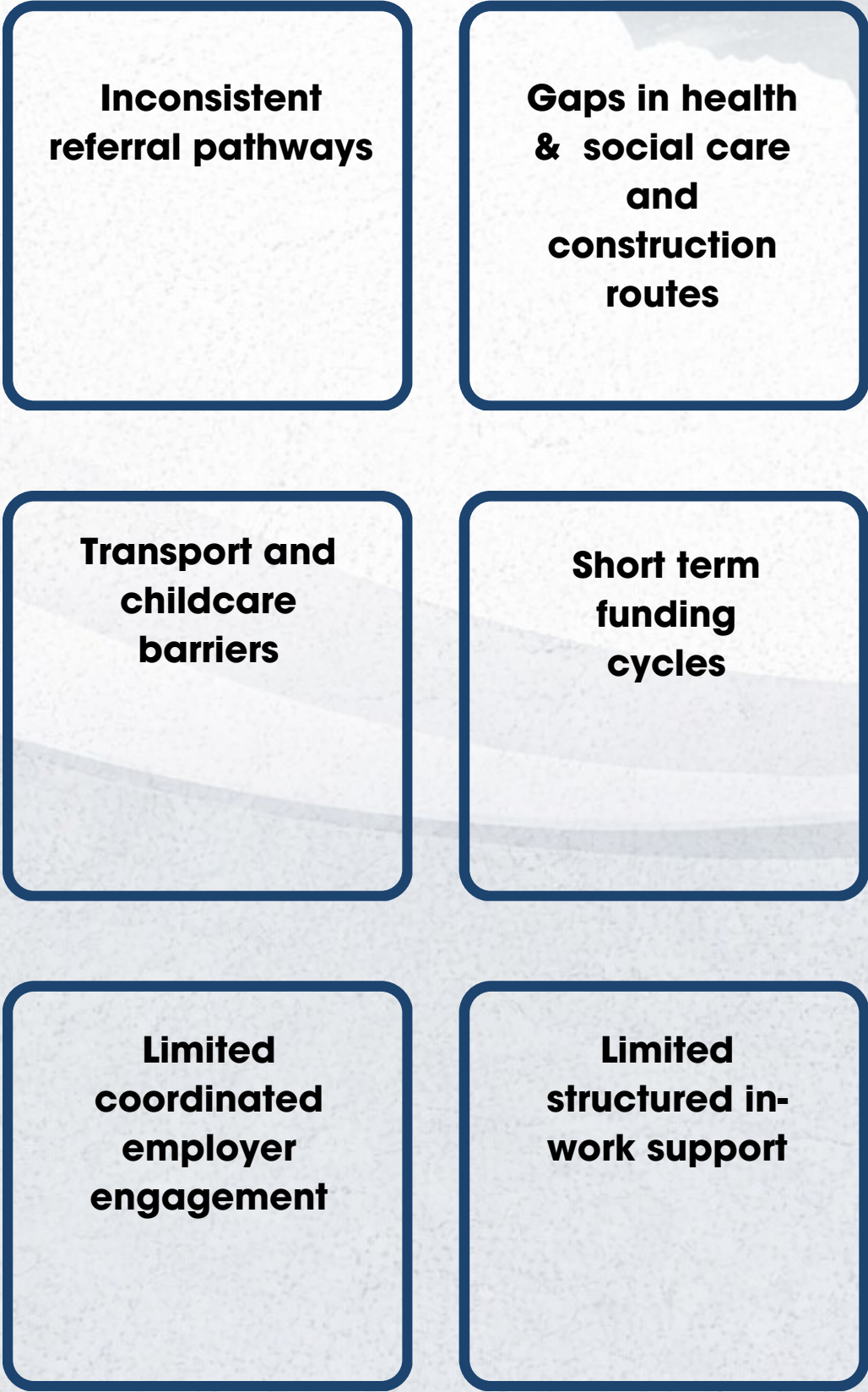
**These supports
play a significant
role in retention
and progression.**

Strengths, Gaps and System Challenges

Strengths Identified



Gaps and System Challenges



Opportunities for System Development

The mapping highlights opportunities to

Strengthen visibility of third sector services

Improve cross-partner referrals Enhance

progression into employment Develop

coordinated employer engagement Explore

shared approaches to in-work support

Conclusion

West Lothian benefits from a strong and diverse third sector employability ecosystem supporting thousands of residents each year.

By strengthening coordination, visibility and progression pathways, partners can build on this foundation to further improve inclusive employment outcomes across West Lothian communities.

**Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian
will continue to support collaboration
and partnership working to ensure the
contribution of the third sector remains
central to local employability planning.**

