routes to work

BUILDING RESILIENCE, CREATING OPPORTUNITY.

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26



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building resilience.
creating opportunity.

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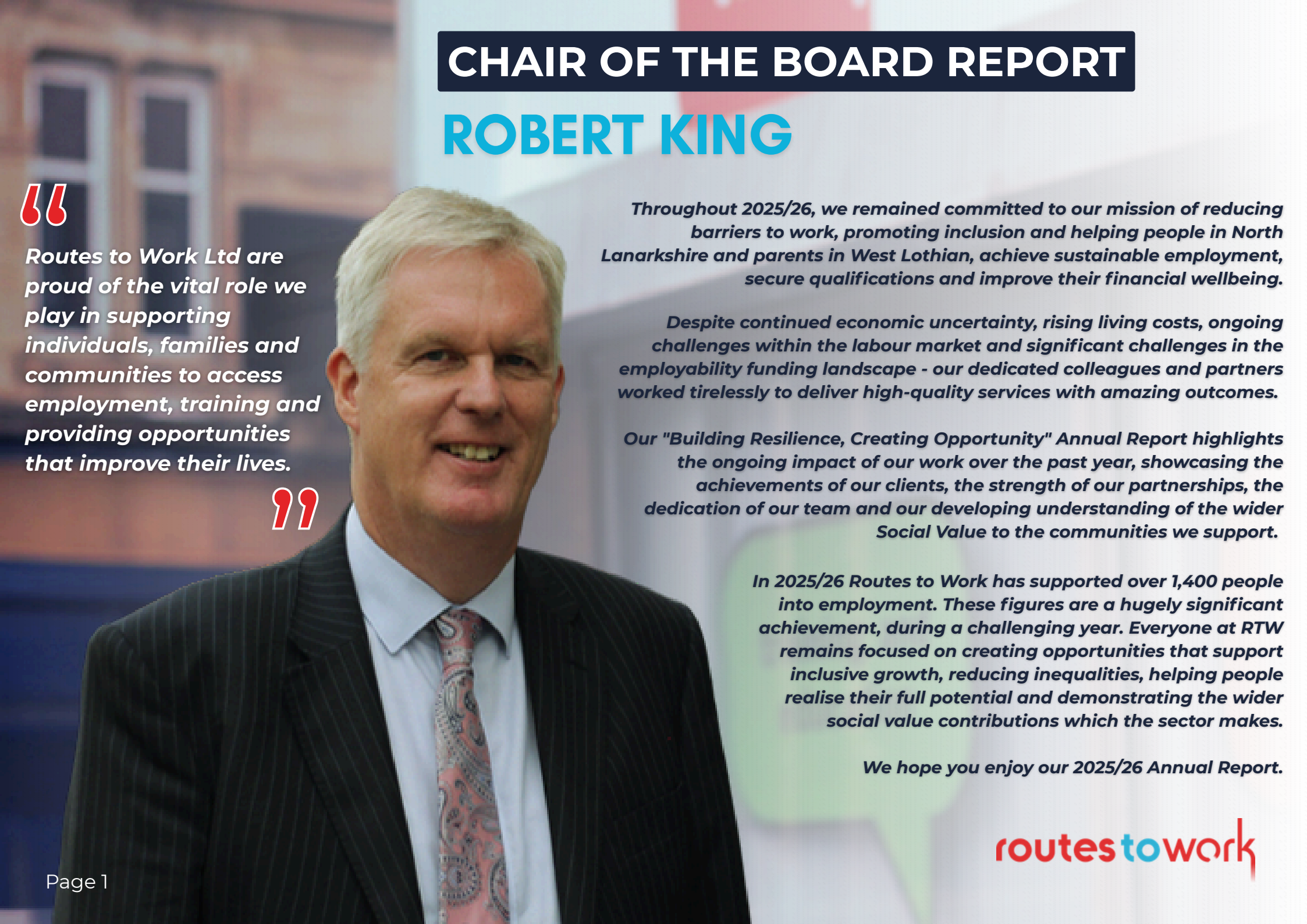
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CHAIR OF THE BOARD REPORT

ROBERT KING



"Routes to Work Ltd are proud of the vital role we play in supporting individuals, families and communities to access employment, training and providing opportunities that improve their lives."

Throughout 2025/26, we remained committed to our mission of reducing barriers to work, promoting inclusion and helping people in North Lanarkshire and parents in West Lothian, achieve sustainable employment, secure qualifications and improve their financial wellbeing.

Despite continued economic uncertainty, rising living costs, ongoing challenges within the labour market and significant challenges in the employability funding landscape - our dedicated colleagues and partners worked tirelessly to deliver high-quality services with amazing outcomes.

Our "Building Resilience, Creating Opportunity" Annual Report highlights the ongoing impact of our work over the past year, showcasing the achievements of our clients, the strength of our partnerships, the dedication of our team and our developing understanding of the wider Social Value to the communities we support.

In 2025/26 Routes to Work has supported over 1,400 people into employment. These figures are a hugely significant achievement, during a challenging year. Everyone at RTW remains focused on creating opportunities that support inclusive growth, reducing inequalities, helping people realise their full potential and demonstrating the wider social value contributions which the sector makes.

We hope you enjoy our 2025/26 Annual Report.

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OUR STORIES

CHARLIE'S STORY

'PAINTING HER OWN PATH'

Charlie always dreamed of a hands-on career as a painter and decorator. However, after starting high school, comments from others made her feel that it was a "man's job," leading her to deviate from her ambition and unsure of what to do. Traditional classroom learning and office-based work didn't suit her and she needed practical experience to thrive.

Her turning point came through the 'Pathways Programme,' led by North Lanarkshire Council, where she began to explore her options and reignited her passion.

Charlie was then referred to Routes to Work, where her Caseworker Laura provided tailored and person centred support around her. Laura helped Charlie put together her CV, prepare job applications and even put in her college application.

At local careers events organised by Routes To Work, Charlie took the initiative and was networking directly with employers. Seeing successful women thriving in construction also gave her the extra push and confidence she needed.

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OUR STORIES

CHARLIE'S STORY

When the opportunity arose to apply for an apprenticeship with Mears, Laura supported Charlie through every stage from writing her application to preparing for numeracy tests, practical assessments, and interviews.

Mears got in touch after the final interview to tell Charlie that she was successful and that she had landed a painting and decorating role, beating 2000+ applicants in the process.

Charlie starts at Mears in August and we are so proud and excited for her future!

> *If I had not engaged with Routes to Work, I don't think I'd be where I am now... It's life changing really.*





OUR STORIES

DEBORAH'S STORY

'ONE STEP AT A TIME'

For years, living with severe chronic pain and mobility difficulties took a heavy toll on Deborah's mental health. Following a deeply traumatic period after losing her mother, Deborah withdrew completely from the world. She frequently hid away at home and avoided contact, even simple phone calls or walking into a room of strangers felt insurmountable.

When Deborah connected with Routes To Work, her Caseworker Sharon recognised that immediate challenges weren't about immediate job searching, but about Deborah's health, wellbeing and overcoming isolation. Together, they built a holistic, person-centred path forward for her.

MANAGING PHYSICAL WELLBEING
Sharon referred Deborah to a specialist for physio treatments, providing her with tools to manage her chronic pain.

STRESS & ANXIETY MANAGEMENT
Deborah joined a dedicated anxiety course led by our training team, whose warm approach made learning comfortable.

REBUILDING CONFIDENCE
Through regular 1-1s with Sharon and engaging in group sessions, Deborah gradually regained her self belief.

OUR STORIES

DEBORAH'S STORY

The turning point came when Deborah felt confident enough to attend a local jobs fair. This was a milestone she previously thought was out of reach.

Today, Deborah is out in her community again, connecting with people and keen to go back to work.



"People think Routes To Work will have you in a job in a week, but there's no pressure, it's all at your own pace... The old me is coming back. I'm social again, and I am absolutely itching to get back to work!"

- Deborah

OUR STORIES

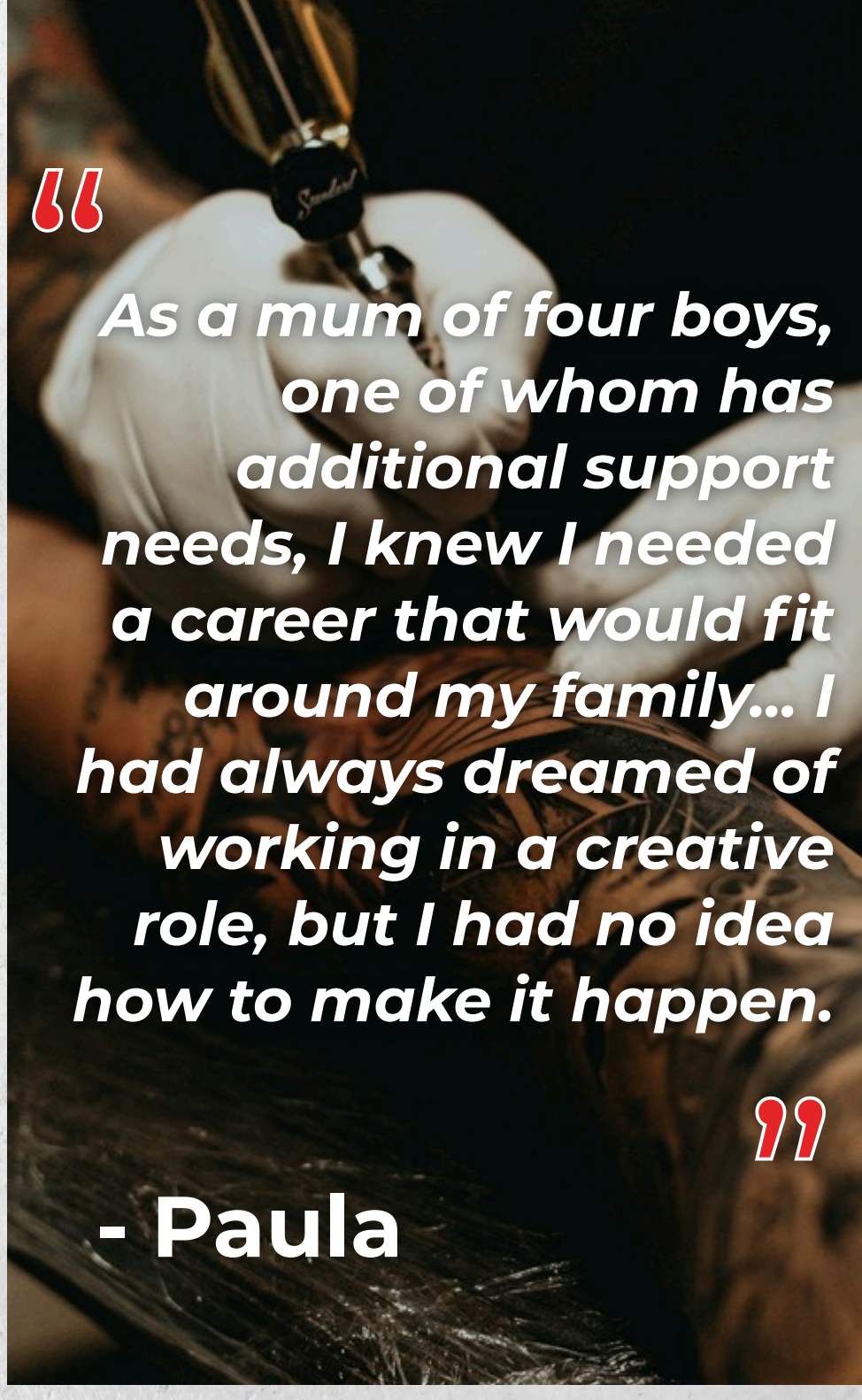
PAULA'S STORY

'INKING' OUTSIDE OF THE BOX!

Paula knew she needed a career that provided genuine flexibility for her family.

Although she had always dreamed of a creative role, surviving domestic abuse and being out of work had severely knocked Paula's self-esteem. She wanted to build a secure future, but lacked confidence and had no idea where to start.

Her turning point came when she contacted Routes to Work. From the very first appointment, her caseworker recognised Paula's talent and backed her ambition to pursue self-employment as a tattoo artist.



OUR STORIES

PAULA'S STORY

> *"This opportunity gives me the work-life balance I need for my family, and now I feel excited and confident about my future."*

Together, we supported Paula through every step of her journey:

- Sourced specialist training, secured funding and arranged travel costs to ensure Paula had all the right tools to complete her qualifications
- Guided Paula with registering her UTR number, meeting licensing requirements and taking all steps to legally trade
- Currently supporting Paula in finding a suitable permanent premises to launch her very own studio



Today, Paula is a fully licensed tattoo artist and is eager to get started on her self employment journey. This will give her the vital work-life balance she needs to support her sons while building a thriving career in an industry she loves.

DIFFERENT & BETTER AWARDS

RTW, and our clients success, is undoubtedly due to the quality, skills, experience and commitment of our colleagues.

Every year, through our Reward and Recognition scheme, colleagues nominate those they feel have gone "Above and Beyond."

These were our colleagues selected in 2025/26 for our "Level 2; Different and Better," awards with a synopsis of their amazing contributions.



EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION & TEAMWORK

Liz Cavinue & Kevin Kennedy

Liz helped clients with long-term experience of homelessness to source essential household items, turning bare houses into real homes. Her work brought dignity and comfort, and one client moved into work as a result.

Kevin arranged all the paperwork for 10 clients to secure vital training. His teamwork and client-focused approach meant the training ran smoothly, reflecting the very best of Routes to Work values.

OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE

Andy Thom

Andy provided excellent customer service and effectively advocated for a client. Andy strengthened relationships with Tesco and helped the individual secure and sustain employment. His commitment delivered life-changing results for the client and their family, reflecting outstanding customer service.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION

Liz MacDonald & Alan Govan

Alan and Liz undertook significant work in the visioning and designing of new client spend paperwork templates. Their efforts streamlined processes, reduced errors, improved security and saved time for both frontline and corporate staff—an excellent example of innovation making a real difference to the performance and effectiveness of our operations.



TAKING ACTIONS ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Eilidh Mitchell, Sharon Pollock and Lauren Henderson

Eilidh & Sharon recognised the fundamental needs for a client were not being met. As a result they contacted a foodbank with an emergency referral to ensure a client ate and sourced essential household items to ensure the clients basic needs were met. They both demonstrated exceptional care and initiative, offering comfort and dignity during a critical time.

Lauren provided amazing support to a justice client who had his tag restrictions changed, allowing him to take on a nightshift role; but was struggling with finances and food. Lauren contacted a local foodbank, explaining the situation and was able to arrange a package to see the client through until he was paid. Lauren also arranged for the items to be delivered, given the hours and restrictions on the client. Lauren's actions allowed the client to sustain employment and make a good impression in work.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

NHS LANARKSHIRE

Partnerships are vital in ‘Building Resilience’ and ‘Creating Opportunity’, because they connect our clients with the skills, support, and employment opportunities they need to succeed in a changing labour market. These are examples of the numerous partnerships Routes to Work contribute to or coordinate. They highlight the benefits of coordinated action to improve well-being, social value, and support economic recovery and inclusive growth.

Routes to Work has continued to develop our partnership with NHS Lanarkshire, combining health services and job support. This innovative partnership helps parents, job seekers, and people with health barriers build confidence, manage family duties and move into paid work through special referral pathways and 6-month paid placement programs.



How this Partnership Works:

Health Visitor Referrals
Health visitors connect parents directly to RTW during regular early-years home visits.

Demonstrator Programme
Offers 6 months of paid NHS employment to unemployed or low-income residents in Lanarkshire.

Flexible Hours
Placements feature flexible working routines to help participants manage childcare and personal needs.

Wellbeing Support
Focuses on improving mental and physical health alongside practical job skills and CV writing.



Support Provided:

1-1 Coaching
Tailored action plans built around personal or family barriers.

Practical Help
Assistance with costs like travel and childcare while in training or work placements.

Skill Building
Access to certified training courses and exclusive job matching.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

COMMUNITY JUSTICE SERVICES

RTW continues to develop partnerships with Community Justice services to provide specialised employability support. We offer dedicated casework, training, and barrier-removal for clients with experience of the criminal justice system. This support helps people transition into education, training, and sustainable paid employment.

Core Services and Support:

Specialist Casework

Dedicated justice caseworkers provide confidential, one-to-one guidance tailored to the client.

Employability Programmes

Targeted training courses build core skills and opportunities to secure accredited vocational qualifications.

Collaborations

Collaborations with social work, housing, and health sectors tackle complex personal barriers alongside career goals.

Partnership Integrations:



Integrates with community payback and supervision requirements to offer structured skill-building paths.



Contributing to reduce reoffending by establishing stable routines and long-term financial independence, achieved through securing employment.

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> ***"I felt supported and treated like a person, rather than being judged on my criminal conviction. This built trust in the support RTW provided and led to full-time permanent employment."***
>
> **'Craig' - RTW Justice Client**

72

Secured Training, Employment and/or Further Education

56%

Remain in Work After 6 Months

Significantly over the 31.1% UK average for people leaving custody.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

EMPLOYERS

We understand the challenges businesses face in attracting and retaining talented employees. We have developed strong partnerships with a wide range of employers to support workforce growth and development.

Working in partnership with North Lanarkshire's Working, RTW provides a comprehensive recruitment and employability service designed to meet the specific needs of employers.

We offer a bespoke service tailored to each employer's recruitment requirements, ensuring businesses are connected with skilled, work-ready candidates.

By understanding both employer needs and candidate aspirations, we help create successful and sustainable employment outcomes.

Over the last year, RTW has supported more than 1,400 individuals into employment and has built productive partnerships with a range of employers, including Lidl, Victor Pizza and Albert Bartlett. These partnerships demonstrate the value of collaborative working between employers and employability services to strengthen the local labour market and create opportunities for local people.







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"The work Routes to Work does for our local community is invaluable, and we're proud to support it."

Lisa Massey, Regional Engagement Consultant for Scotland at Lidl GB

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

EMPLOYERS

We have also delivered a range of bespoke training routeways, supporting 37 clients into work:



RETAIL



WAREHOUSE



SECURITY



CALL CENTRE



MAINTENANCE



HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE



FOOD PRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2026, our Employer Services Consultants arranged jobs fairs across North Lanarkshire.

This saw an amazing 680 attendees coming along, with 350 attending in Coatbridge alone to meet employers.

This was the most we have ever had attend a jobs fair!

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Whilst facing pressures from the transition to the Local Growth Fund and continued challenges from the cost of living crisis. Our amazing, and dedicated team have achieved so much this year.

2,900
new clients supported

We registered almost 2900 new clients in 2025/26

1,400
Into Work

We helped 1400 clients move into work

800
Qualifications



We delivered more than 800 accredited qualifications

76%
Client Sustainment

We supported the sustainment of 76% of our clients who entered work

120
West Lothian Council
Qualifications Achieved

Continued our delivery in West Lothian, supporting 120 parents to achieve qualifications

95
Working for Families x NHS Lanarkshire
Parents Engaged

Together with NHS Lanarkshire, we engaged 95 parents through their Health Visitor Programme

72
Job Outcomes

For clients with experience of the justice system

197
Active Employers

Engaging and actively recruiting for 197 employers across North Lanarkshire

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KEY HIGHLIGHTS

£7.34

routes to impact

Social Return on Investment Value

Routes to Work achieved a social return on investment figure of £7.34.

This means that for every £1 invested, this is what was generated.

4,495

Provided Work of Value

Following client registration, tailored substantive support that includes a minimum of three successful, separate interventions per client—such as accredited training, dedicated confidence coaching, or intensive interview preparation





The majority of Routes to Work clients reported better mental health, confidence and reduced isolation, thanks to our support

Awards Finalists:

Investors In People: 'Excellence in Purpose Driven Impact'
Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards: 'Making a Social Difference'
Innovate UK KTP Awards: 'Changing the World' & 'Best Knowledge Transfer Partnership'

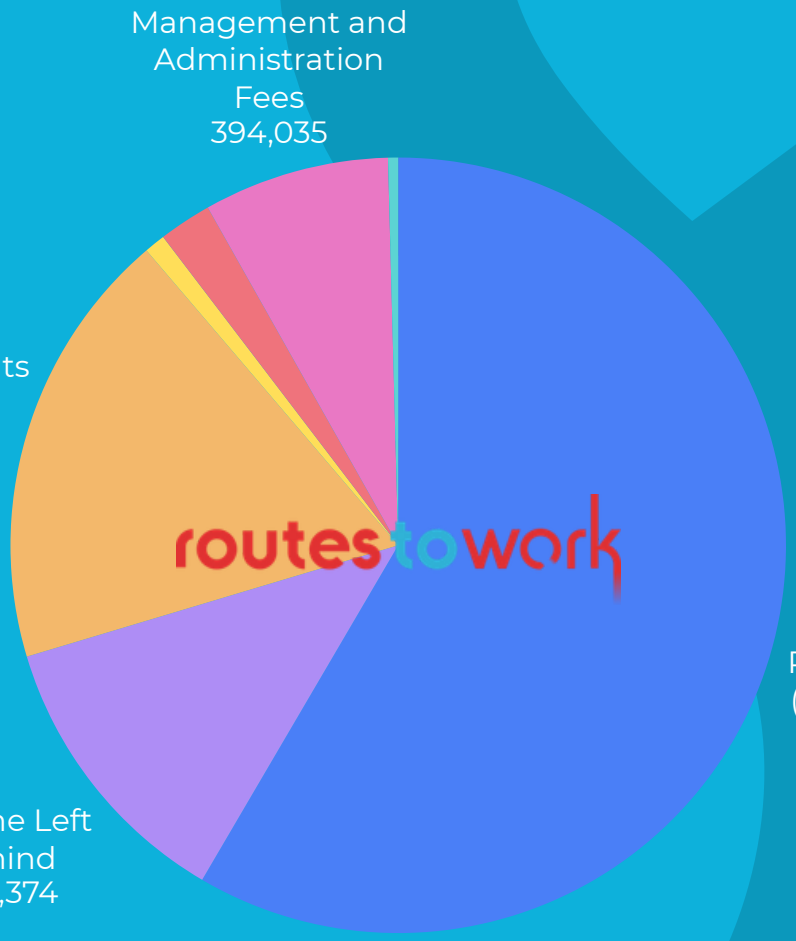
FINANCES

During 2025/26 we continued to deliver exceptional value for North Lanarkshire and West Lothian in the face of uncertainity in employability funding and the move to Local Growth Fund.

As we grow, we continue to deliver outstanding value for money - and, more importantly, fairer, stronger and more resilient communities

- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**
- **No One Left Behind**
- **Prospects for Parents**
- **Programme Information Reporting (NLC)**
- **Other Delivery Projects**
- **Management & Administration Fees**
- **Account Interest**

Where Our Funding Came From



> ***This was the UK's first charity based management KTP, involving nine members of staff from across two Schools at UWS, working in partnership with Routes to Work to deliver both societal and economic impact.***
>
> ***The project is an exemplar of how the KTP model can be applied within the third sector.***

Stuart McKay, Senior KTP Manager at UWS

routes to impact

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST of SCOTLAND UWS

UKRI Innovate UK | Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

OUR KTP PROJECT

Our work continues through our innovative Social Value evaluation Framework **'Routes to Impact.'** This reflects on the strength of our collaborative Knowledge Transfer Project (KTP) considering the meaningful impact this has, and could have, in other communities.

Through our framework, we found that **for every £1 invested in Routes to Work, a social return on investment of £7.34 is generated.**

We are delighted that our work has gained national recognition including:

- Finalists in the 2026 **'Making a Social Difference,'** category at the Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards and finalists in the **Innovate UK KTP Awards.**
- Finalists at the 2025 **Innovate Knowledge Exchange** 'Best of the Best' Awards in the **'Best Knowledge Transfer Partnership Project KTP Award,"** and the **'Changing the World,'** award.
- Achieving the highest possible '**Outstanding'** grade from Social Value UK for our **KTP.**

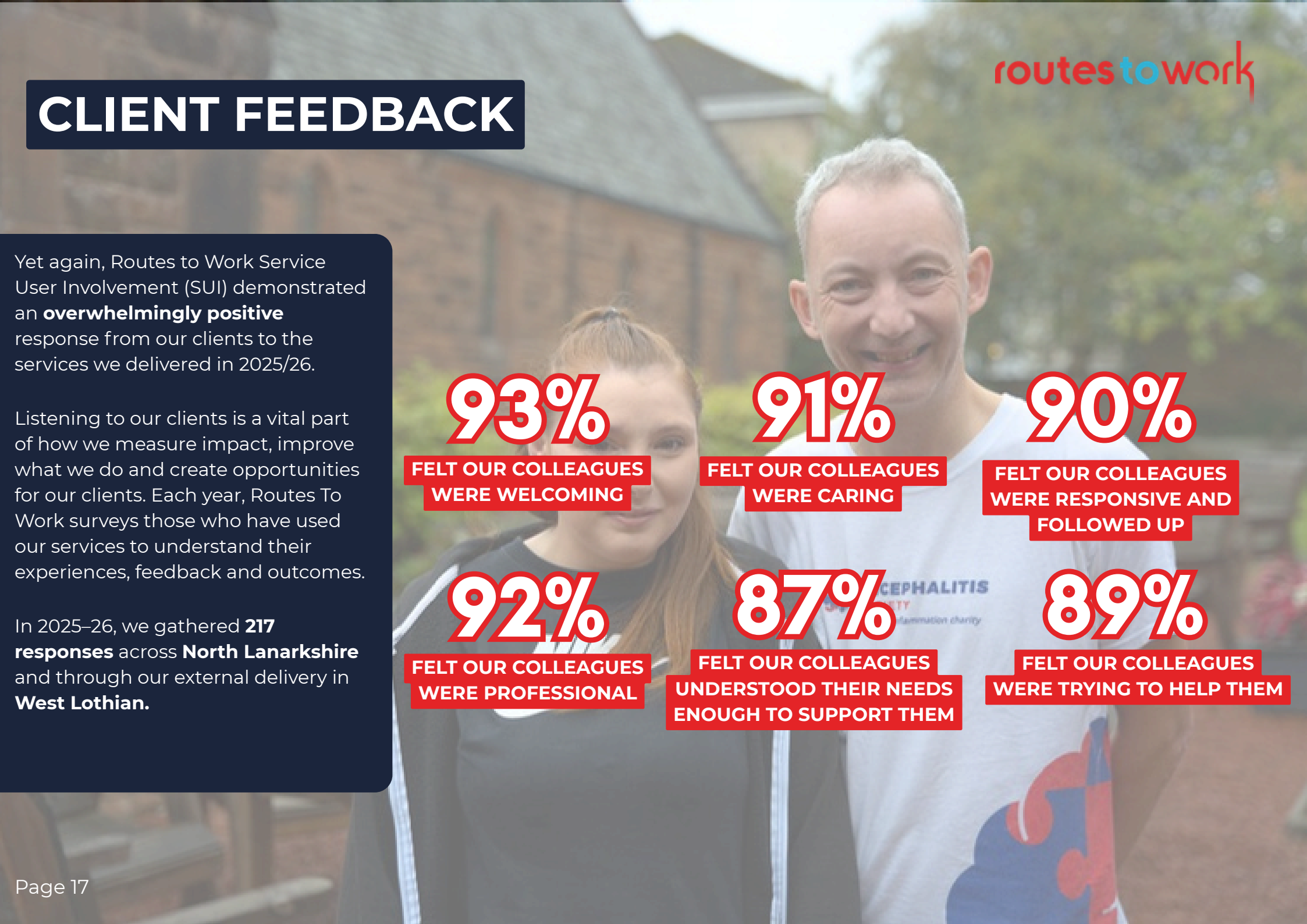
We look forward to formally launching Routes to Impact in **August** at **New College Lanarkshire's Motherwell Campus**. The event will demonstrate to stakeholders from multiple local authority areas how softer interventions and outcomes delivered by employability providers can be quantified, measured, and celebrated.

CLIENT FEEDBACK

Yet again, Routes to Work Service User Involvement (SUI) demonstrated an **overwhelmingly positive** response from our clients to the services we delivered in 2025/26.

Listening to our clients is a vital part of how we measure impact, improve what we do and create opportunities for our clients. Each year, Routes To Work surveys those who have used our services to understand their experiences, feedback and outcomes.

In 2025–26, we gathered **217 responses** across **North Lanarkshire** and through our external delivery in **West Lothian.**



93% FELT OUR COLLEAGUES WERE WELCOMING

91% FELT OUR COLLEAGUES WERE CARING

90% FELT OUR COLLEAGUES WERE RESPONSIVE AND FOLLOWED UP

92% FELT OUR COLLEAGUES WERE PROFESSIONAL

87% FELT OUR COLLEAGUES UNDERSTOOD THEIR NEEDS ENOUGH TO SUPPORT THEM

89% FELT OUR COLLEAGUES WERE TRYING TO HELP THEM



CLIENT FEEDBACK

> ***I hit rock bottom when I was made redundant from my job of 15 years at a time in life when I felt my age and health impacted my physical, emotional and mental ability to return to work at the level I had achieved. My Caseworker gave me huge boost with her understanding suggestions and signposting. I don't think I could have done it without her huge support. So my indebted gratitude to my Caseworker, her support and to the RTW service.***

> ***Staff are so helpful and wonderful. They've really helped me look into the UK job life (USA citizen, spousal visa) and have supported me throughout this big change in my life.***

> ***Your colleagues are very supportive. When I moved to emergency accommodation we had little clothes for us, which you helped us with.***

While the results are overwhelmingly positive, we are responding to feedback aiming for continuous improvement, such as having **quieter meeting spaces** and **providing more job opportunities that are relevant to client career goals.**

COLLEAGUE FEEDBACK

Our annual staff survey was completed by 75% of our colleagues with 72 sharing their views on work, wellbeing, and workplace culture.

The 'Your Voice' pulse survey asked questions, aligned to the five dimensions of the Scottish Government's Fair Work Framework: Effective Voice, Opportunity, Security, Fulfilment, and Respect. These five dimensions of Fair Work are fully aligned with Routes to Work Purpose, Mission, Vision, and Values

Here are some headlines from our survey:

85%
Would recommend RtW as an employer

96%
Are proud of RTW and commited to its success



Team Meetings were rated the most effective channel for colleagues to express their employee voice (92%)



Relationships, networks and good quality line managers were the top enablers to development in roles



We are delighted that the majority of Routes to Work colleagues reported that they are proud of our organisation and would recommend us as an employer.

COLLEAGUE FEEDBACK

Fulfilment is about the right level of control, time, equipment and influence. The balance can differ from person to person. Here is what some of our colleagues had to say about what fulfilment at work looks like to our colleagues:

> ***"Knowing that I am making a difference to people's lives."***

> ***"Fulfillment means opportunities to stretch myself."***

> ***"Being able to help people who are far removed into a positive destination."***

We are proud that our culture allows space for honest conversations and this year's feedback led directly to colleague consultations and proposed improvements. This included: **considering how we continue to help improve the mental health of our colleagues**; **reflecting on career pathways and providing opportunities for learning and development**; **improving internal communication; and reviewing and addressing workload pressures.**

routes to work

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

routestowork

KATE CLARK: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As I reflect on the achievements highlighted throughout this report, I do so with immense pride in what Routes to Work, our clients, colleagues, partners, and stakeholders have accomplished together. Despite continued economic uncertainty, increasing pressures on public services and a significantly changing employability funding landscape, we have remained focused on our key purpose: helping people overcome barriers, realise their potential and access opportunities that transform lives.

Throughout 2025/26, that commitment has enabled us to support almost 2,900 new clients, help more than 1,400 people into employment, deliver over 800 qualifications, and sustain 76% of people in work after six months. These sector leading achievements are a testament to the resilience of the communities we serve, the employers and businesses that we work with - and the dedication of everyone involved in our life changing organisation.

Looking ahead, we recognise that the challenges facing many individuals and families are complex and unlikely to disappear quickly. Rising living costs, ongoing health inequalities, labour market disruption and increasing complexity of client need, mean that employability services must continue to evolve. Routes to Work will respond by strengthening our person-centred approach, ensuring that every individual receives tailored support that recognises their unique circumstances, aspirations, and strengths. We know that sustainable employment is about much more than securing a job; it is about building confidence, improving wellbeing, creating stability, enabling people to thrive and creating opportunities through partnership working...



> ***"We recognise that the challenges facing many individuals are complex... Routes to Work will respond by strengthening our person centred approach, ensuring that every individual receives tailored support that recognises their unique circumstances, aspirations and strengths."***

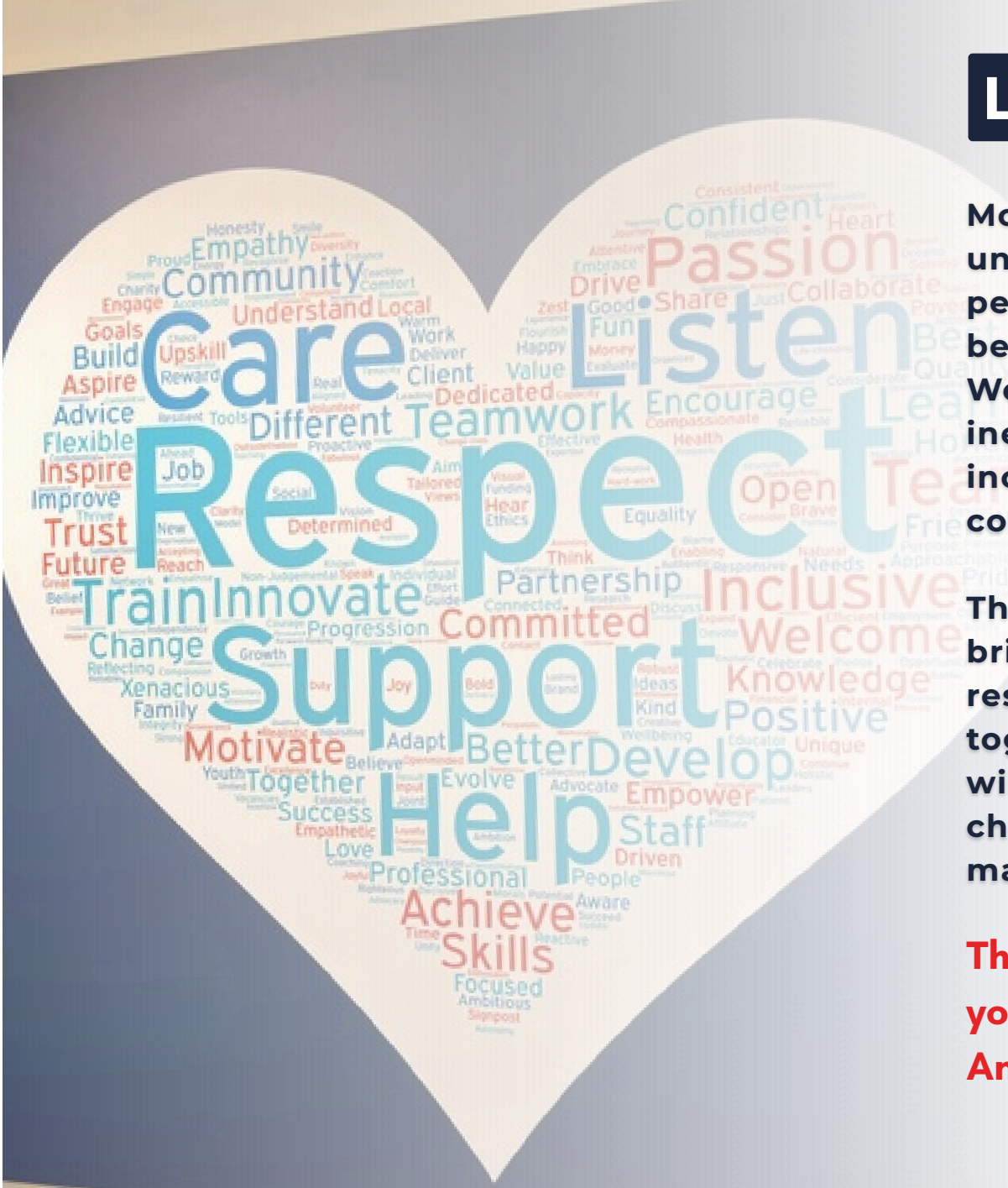


LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Partnership working is central to our future success. Over the past year we have continued to deepen our collaboration with employers, local authorities, NHS Lanarkshire, community justice services, and education providers. These partnerships create pathways that no single organisation could deliver alone. In the years ahead, we will continue to invest in these relationships while seeking new opportunities both thematic and geographic, to collaborate across sectors, ensuring that employers can access skilled local talent and that North Lanarkshire, and the other communities we support, benefit from high-quality employment opportunities.

A key priority for Routes to Work will be expanding our understanding and demonstration of Social Value. Through our pioneering Knowledge Transfer Partnership we have developed robust evidence that every £1 invested in our services generates £7.34 of social value. This work has strengthened our understanding of the wider impact we deliver through improvements in wellbeing, confidence, health, financial resilience, and community participation. Moving forward, we intend not only to continue measuring this impact, but to become recognised "Thought Leaders," within the employability sector, sharing our learning with partners and helping to shape future practice and policy.

We will also continue investing in our greatest asset: our colleagues. The passion, professionalism and compassion demonstrated by our colleagues every day are the foundation of our success. The "Different and Better" awards are a small illustration of the life changing work our colleagues deliver every day. Supporting staff wellbeing, development and progression will remain a core priority as we build an organisation that reflects our Purpose, Misson, Vision, and Values, the essence of "The Routes to Work Way." Our impact only becomes possible by the relationship and support of our key partner, North Lanarkshire Council, who invests in our mission and believe in us to deliver on their key priorities.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Most importantly, our ambition remains unchanged and unwavering. We want every person who engages with Routes to Work to believe that opportunity and change is possible. We will continue to champion inclusion, reduce inequalities, build resilence and support inclusive economic growth across the communities we serve.

The future may bring new challenges, but it also brings new opportunities. By building resilience, embracing innovation and working together, we are confident that Routes to Work will continue creating opportunities that changes lives and delivers sustained impact for many years to come.

Thanks for your continued support. We hope you enjoyed this 2025/26 Routes to Work Ltd Annual Report.

For further info please contact Kate Clark.
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