



IMPACT REPORT

2025-2026





Our vision

A society in which doing business is synonymous with doing good

Our mission

To make social enterprise accessible, achievable and aspirational

Our proposition

The first port of call for social entrepreneurs

Foreword

It is with pride and optimism that I introduce Firstport's 2025/2026 annual impact report. This report reflects the tangible progress we have made together over the past year, shaped by our six strategic ambitions and brought to life through the dedication of social entrepreneurs, partners, funders and the Firstport team.

Over the year, we have seen a meaningful and measurable impact. Key highlights include the launch of a new strategy for the Catalyst Fund, the expansion of our reach through the Boost Invest programme in the North East of England, and the publication of an independent evaluation of the Social Entrepreneurs Fund and LaunchMe. The evaluation demonstrated the strong return on investment and the economic and social value created through our programmes. Taken together, these and other achievements detailed in this report reinforce Firstport's long-standing role within Scotland's social enterprise ecosystem and reflect our growing contributions in the UK. They speak to the strength of collaboration, innovation, and shared ambition that underpin our work.

Our support pathways continue to evolve in response to the diverse and changing needs of social entrepreneurs. This commitment to learning, innovation, and flexibility remains central to our mission: making social enterprise accessible, achievable and aspirational. As Firstport approaches its 20th anniversary, we are proud to be an established and trusted gateway into the wider entrepreneurial landscape. The enterprises we support start, grow and thrive as resilient, impactful organisations, deeply connected to their communities and to the broader ecosystem that supports them.

None of this success and impact would be possible without the social entrepreneurs who invite us to accompany them on their journey. We are sincerely grateful for the trust you place in us and for the inspiration, creativity, and determination you bring to your endeavours every day.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the Firstport team for their continued commitment to delivering high-quality, inclusive support, grounded in shared values. I also extend our thanks to our partners, funders, and commissioners. Through our collective efforts, we deliver programmes that create meaningful, positive change for the people and communities we serve.



Mark Biggs, Chair

Introduction

For nearly two decades, we have supported people from the early stages of their social enterprise journey to refine ideas, test concepts, and build sustainable enterprises rooted in communities of both place and interest.

As this report shows, our work delivers real impact. Through our programmes and services, we help social entrepreneurs build confidence, strengthen business skills, and access the right funding at the right time, enabling them to start and grow enterprises that drive positive change.

This impact moves us closer to our vision: **a society in which doing business is synonymous with doing good**. We believe social enterprises are businesses whose time has come. They respond to an increasing desire to shape the economy in a way that meets the needs of people, place and planet. With the right support, they can sit at the heart of how social and economic value is created and retained in communities in Scotland and beyond.

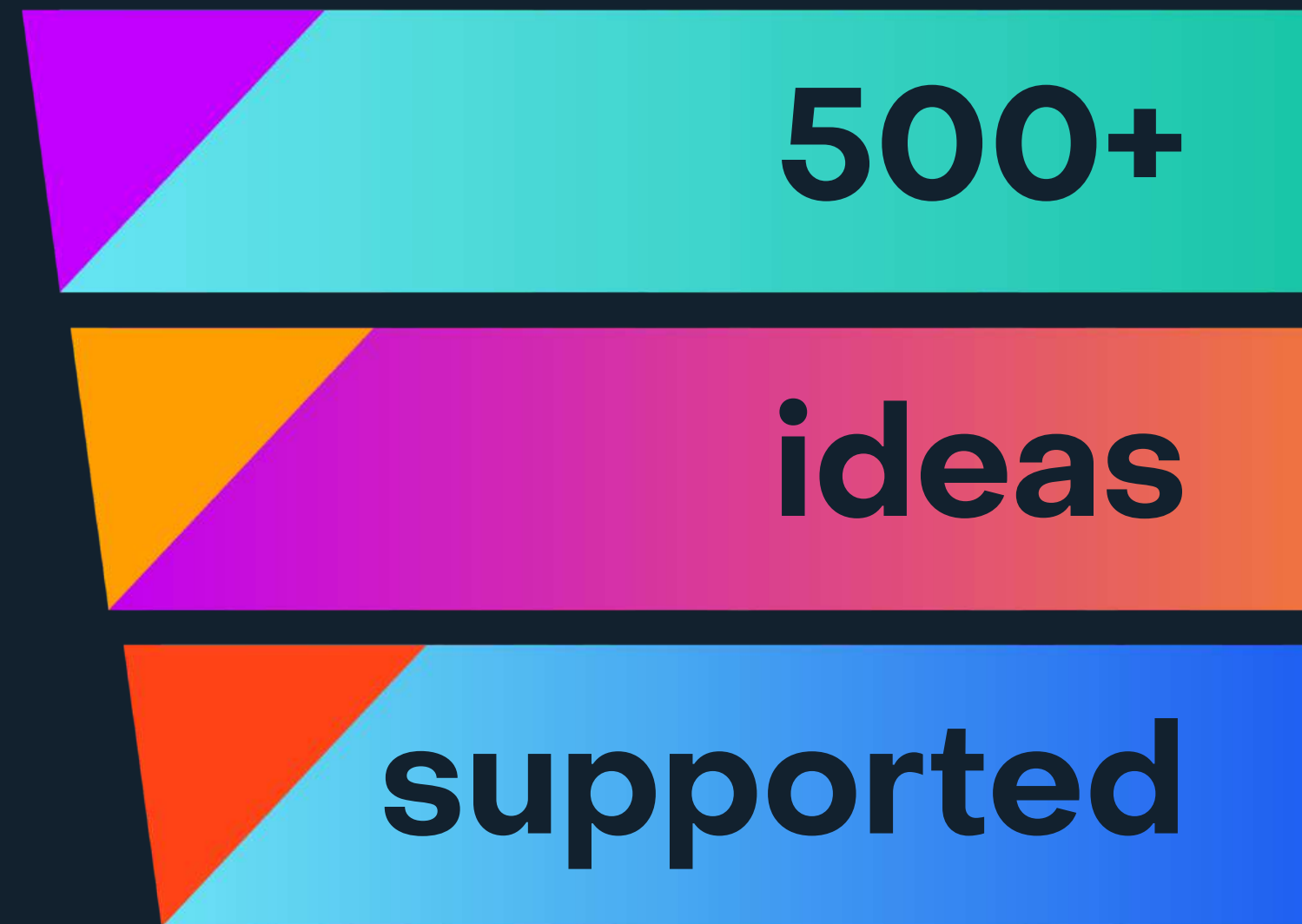


Kwetu Coffee CIC

In the last financial year, the interest in social enterprise as a business model continued to grow. Both our early-stage grants and business advice service saw an increase in demand compared to the previous year. Despite tighter budgets and growing competition, we stepped up, expanding both funding and support to meet this need.

Most striking is an increase of over 270% in applications to our social investment products compared to the previous year. While numbers remain modest compared to grant funding, this growth is significant. In a sector traditionally cautious about repayable finance, it signals a growing acceptance of loans as part of a more diverse and sustainable funding mix, and reflects our shift towards integrating social investment at earlier stages in response to needs.

Beyond the numbers, the real impact lies in what these enterprises achieve. Those we support outperform mainstream business survival rates – 67% remain active after five years, compared to the UK average of 38%. They are working with some of society’s most vulnerable groups, contributing to key economic sectors, and continuing to grow, progressing through the entrepreneurial ecosystem while tackling complex social and environmental challenges.



See note 1

Our strategy through to 2030

Since 2024, we have been delivering our mission through six strategic ambitions. This report is structured around each ambition, what we are doing to progress them, and the change that is emerging as a result.

A static strategy that pretends to know what the future holds does not serve a post-Covid world. This is why our strategic ambitions are deliberately flexible. They allow us to respond to a changing external environment while remaining focused on what we want to achieve.

We are delivering our six-year strategy through a year-on-year approach, underpinned by an OKR (Objectives and Key Results) methodology. We make progress through incremental, test-and-learn steps, adapting quickly when something does not work and building on what does. Reflection and learning inform each next step, building intentionally towards achieving our strategic ambitions.

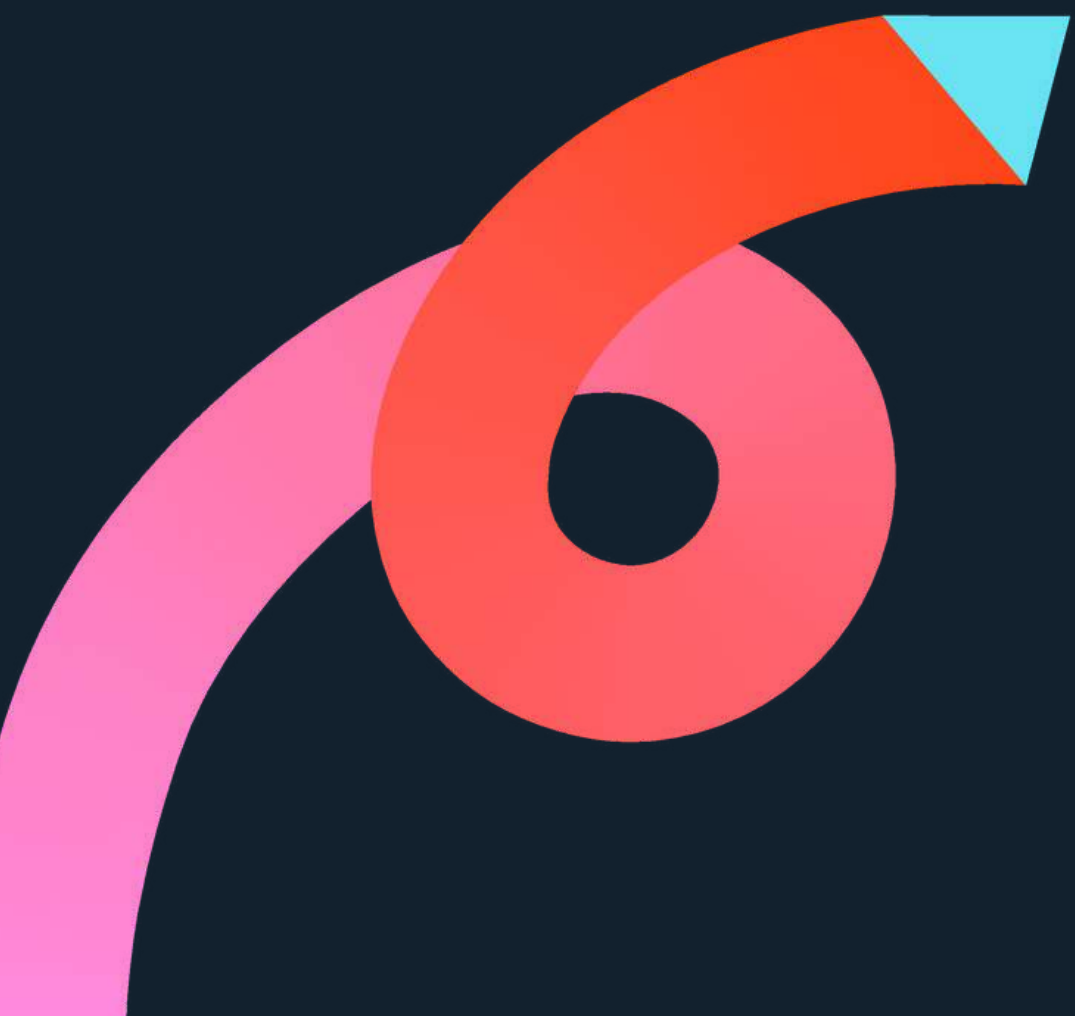


Our approach

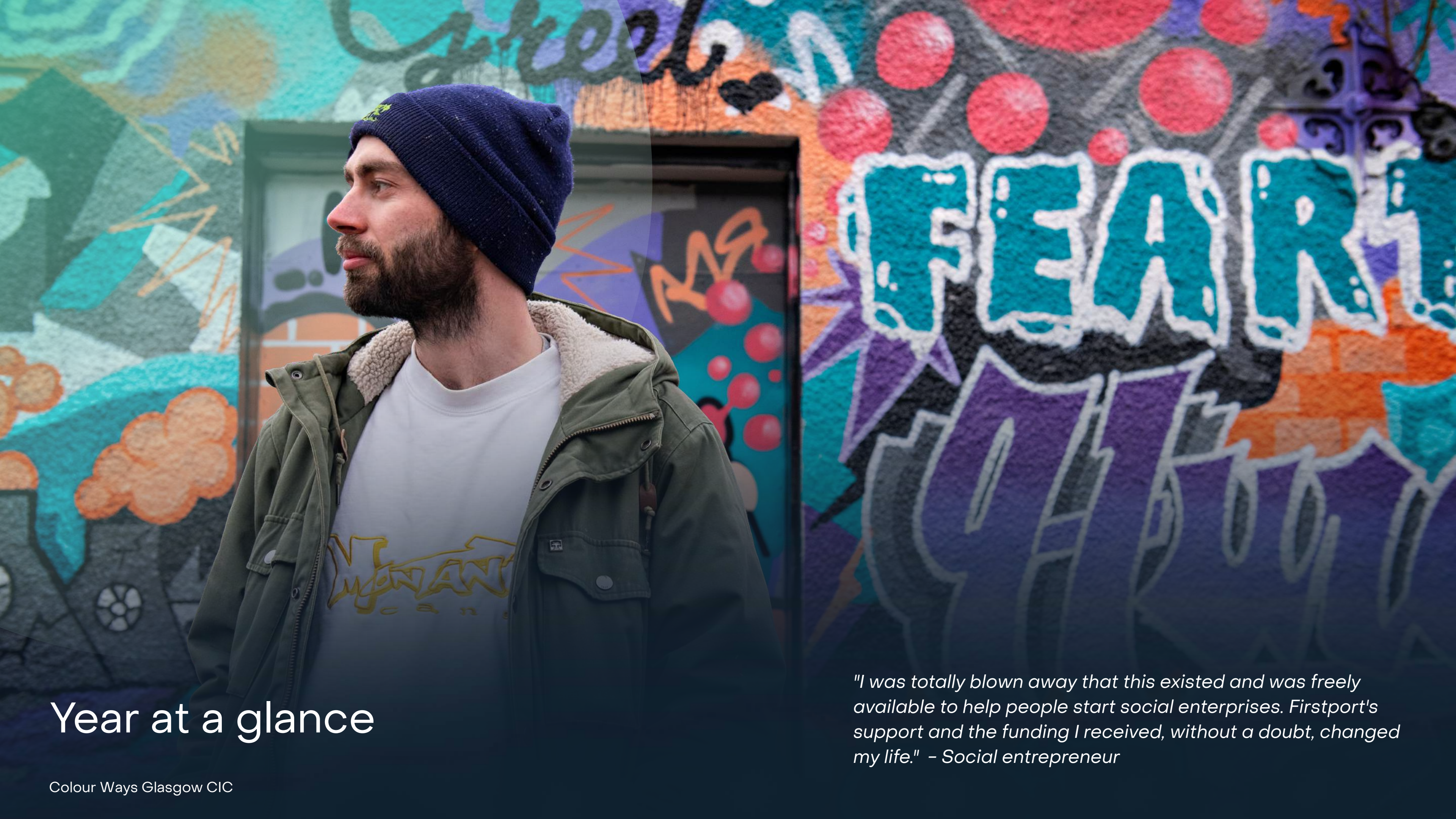
This document sets out both the impact we aim to achieve and how we deliver it, through our support offer, partnerships, people, and organisational culture. We hope it gives a clear sense of both the change we aim to create and the organisation we strive to be.

We believe that every social entrepreneur who comes through our door has the potential to make a lasting economic and social impact in their communities. Our role is to make that journey as effective and accessible as possible by offering the right support at the right time, tailoring it to individual needs, and recognising the value of lived experience, diverse backgrounds, and different ways of learning.

Our theory of change



What we do	Direct outcomes	Indirect outcomes	Impact
One-to-one and group support for social entrepreneurs	Social entrepreneurs become part of a support network. Social entrepreneurs access and benefit from bespoke support.	Social entrepreneurs become more knowledgeable, confident, and equipped to realise their ambitions.	The social enterprise sector grows in scale, impact and resilience, consolidating its place within the economic system.
Grant and investment programmes	Impactful early-stage ideas leverage funding for start-up costs. Successful ideas leverage funding for employment or development costs. Ambitious ideas access investment to grow in scale or impact.	More social enterprises start, grow, scale and deliver impact.	Social enterprises are recognised as partners, service providers and impact enablers by the public and private sectors.
Research, stakeholder engagement and campaigning	Better understanding of barriers to accessing support and funding. New and targeted approaches to removing those barriers.	A more diverse range of individuals access support and funding.	Social enterprises become mainstream, attracting employees, consumers and investors.
Championing the social enterprise sector	More people are aware of social enterprises and their value.	Social enterprises are better understood and appreciated in society.	More social and environmental impact is delivered, improving people's lives and economic prospects.



Year at a glance

"I was totally blown away that this existed and was freely available to help people start social enterprises. Firstport's support and the funding I received, without a doubt, changed my life." – Social entrepreneur

285

new start-up support clients

2700

hours of start-up business support

725

applications to grant programmes (up 24%)

202

grants awarded (up 29%)

79

investment-readiness participants

471

hours of investment readiness support

41

applications to investment programmes (up 273%)

19

investments made (up 171%)

See note 2



total amount awarded (up 27%)
£1,691,443

total amount invested (up 26%)
£1,278,000



67%

female clients
(Scotland)

10%

belong to the
LGBTQ+ community
(Scotland)

18%

identify as disabled
(Scotland)

1.8%

identify as trans
(Scotland)

14%

from ethnic minority
backgrounds
(Scotland)

23%

identify as disabled
(North East England)

See note 3

13%

from ethnic minority
backgrounds
(North East
England)

60%

female clients
(North East England)

Social enterprise is an **inclusive** model that values lived experience, diverse backgrounds and different ways of learning.

Awards and investment distribution in Scotland

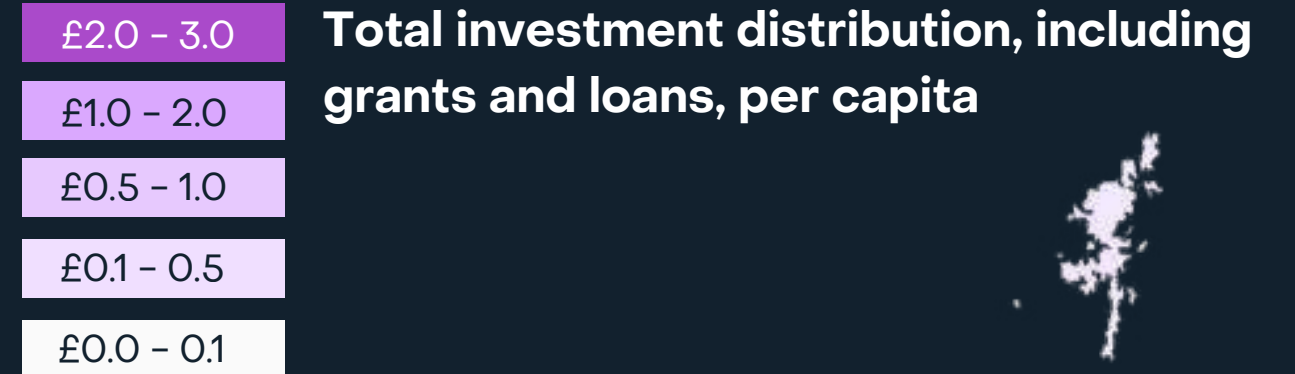
Our grants and loans support people across Scotland, reaching some of the communities most in need, as identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). SIMD deciles rank small areas in Scotland from most deprived (Decile 1) to least deprived (Decile 10) based on several factors.

32 We distributed awards across all of Scotland's local authorities

Awards and loans distribution per capita based on SIMD decile:

1-3	£0.41
4-6	£0.92
7-10	£0.29

See note 4



See note 5

Awards distribution in the North East of England

In the North East of England, we delivered the second and final year of the Social Enterprise Boost Fund.

Our grants were distributed evenly across South Tyneside and Sunderland, reaching some of the communities most in need, as identified by the English Indices of Deprivation (EID). *See note 6*



Herd Groyne Lighthouse

Total amount awarded		% of total awards distributed by EID decile:	
Sunderland	£84,409.25	1-3	57%
South Tyneside	£84,409.25	4-6	22%
Total	£168,818.50	7-10	21%



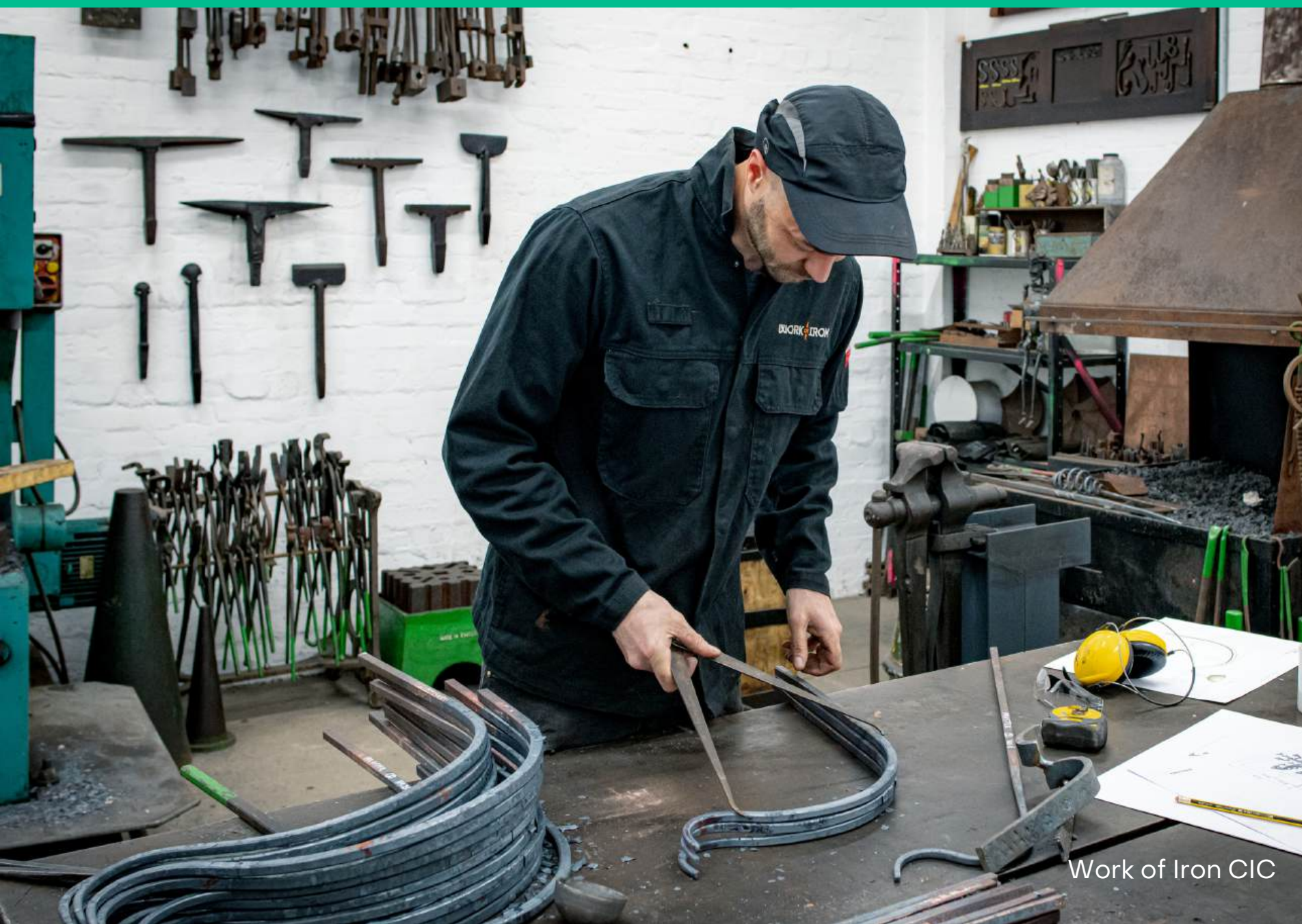
Our strategic ambitions

“Firstport is the best organisation we’ve worked with in the flexible, enabling, efficient way it manages its funds and its readiness to support the social enterprise in all other ways.” – Social entrepreneur

Ambitious

We will deliver high-quality, client-centred support

We design our support around people, recognising that confidence, capability, and resilience grow when entrepreneurs feel seen, understood, and supported. This means shaping our offer around their lives, lived experience, learning preferences, and existing knowledge and skills.



Every year, we reflect on how best to respond to our clients' evolving needs. This continuous adaptation is key to our strategy because client-centred design:

Builds confidence by removing barriers to engagement

Offering flexible ways to access learning and information enables more entrepreneurs, particularly those facing barriers, to engage meaningfully. Confidence grows when support feels accessible and achievable.

Accelerates progress for those ready to grow

Bespoke, time-bound support available through Boost Invest and LaunchMe allows entrepreneurs to address specific challenges at their own pace. Rather than always moving at the speed of a cohort, participants receive focused support that matches their readiness and ambition.

Helps navigate the ecosystem and access the right support

By delivering timely support and working in partnership, we help entrepreneurs understand what assistance is available and when to access it. This reduces overwhelm, supports better choices, and helps enterprises build strong foundations for sustainability.

How we put our client-centred approach into practice

Expanded our pre-application support. We ran **49 office hour sessions**, which are informal, drop-in sessions that offer clarity on aspects of our application process, provide an opportunity to meet our team, signpost people to other sources of support and help inform application decisions.

Introduced LaunchPad, a new inclusive, on-demand digital learning platform. Built with inclusion by design, and running alongside LaunchMe, LaunchPad recognises that people learn and organisations grow in different ways and at different paces. Since its launch, over 70 users have accessed 9 courses and 62 lessons.

Made the Community Enterprise Fund a permanent part of the Social Entrepreneurs Fund. Not all organisations creating change in communities are led by a single individual. This new strand creates an equitable route for community enterprises to access financial start-up support, test income-generating ideas and build resilience over time.

Pioneered the Boost Invest programme in the North East of England. Building on the LaunchMe model, this place-based programme supports Boost Fund alumni to progress towards social investment, addressing a clear gap in provision.



Roker Lighthouse, Sunderland

The difference our approach makes

We understand the value of relationships. Our support is designed so our clients have access to a person – a ‘critical friend’ – who helps them figure out what’s important, gain confidence in their own abilities, decide the next steps in their journey, and navigate the ecosystem.

In the last financial year:

20 individuals helped to prototype and test their ideas

128 individuals supported to launch their social enterprises

100 of those supported to launch are now incorporated

See note 7



1 in 3 social entrepreneurs who actively engaged with business support within the last three years went on to secure a start-up grant.

1 in 6 of those who secured start-up grants within the last three years have gone on to secure a development grant.

1 in 4 LaunchMe participants within the last 3 years have successfully secured investment, either through our programmes (Step Up and the Catalyst Fund) or via other investment providers.

The difference our approach makes

Fosters resilience

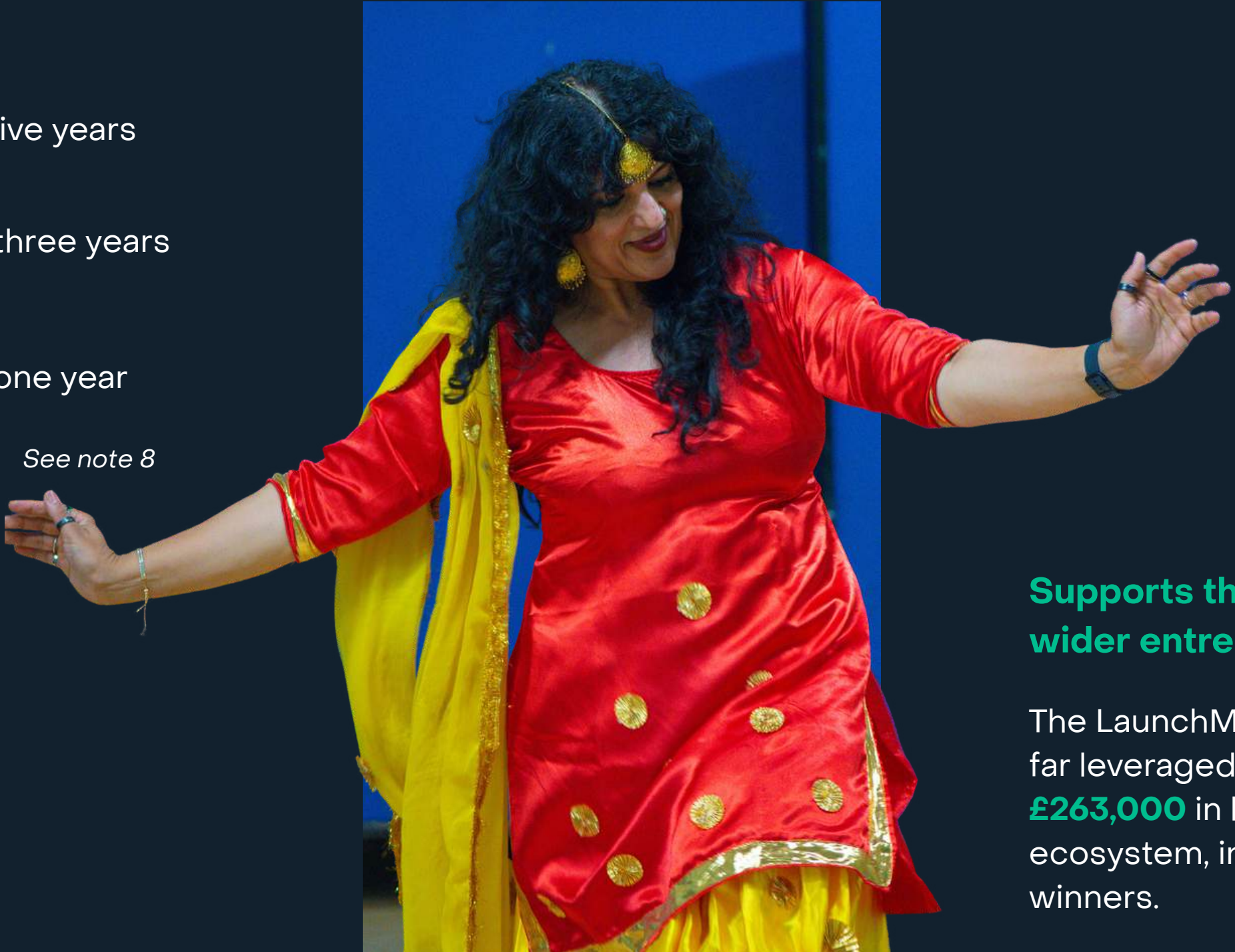
Based on a sample of 257 businesses that incorporated in the last 1-5 years:

67% are still active after five years (38% UK average)

82% are still active after three years (~54% UK average)

98% are still active after one year (~93% UK average)

See note 8



Bowling Green Together CIC

Supports the transition to the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem

The LaunchMe cohort participants from 2025 have so far leveraged **£793,000** in grant funding and **£263,000** in loan investment from partners across the ecosystem, including two Social Enterprise EDGE winners.

11 Boost Invest participants secured a share of **£438,000** in investment from the People's Postcode Lottery.

Impactful

We will demonstrate the difference we are making

Last year marked a step change in how we measure and demonstrate our impact. While we have long shared our expertise through publications and blogs, this annual impact report is the result of a sustained, focused effort to better understand the value of our work and the change it delivers.

That work began two years ago, when we set out a clear data strategy to improve the quality, consistency and usefulness of the data we collect. Since then, we have built the foundations to support it, establishing a dedicated evaluation team and a cross-organisation working group that led the development of this first annual impact report. What we see here is not an endpoint, but a milestone in an ongoing journey.

Our direct impact on social entrepreneurs

Our work has a direct impact on the people and organisations we support. But its true value lies in how those individuals create positive change in their communities by becoming confident leaders and running strong, resilient organisations.

91% of our alumni would recommend us to a colleague or friend.



89% said our support helped them to build confidence in themselves



80% said we helped them to find and access other support



83% said we helped them to increase their business planning skills



76% said we helped them to understand and manage finances



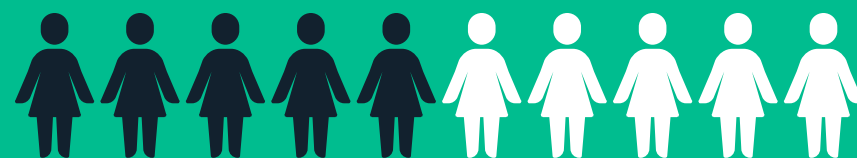
64% agreed we helped them to build strong governance for their businesses



59% said we helped them to understand and report on their impact



84% attributed at least some of their outcomes to our support



52% said they would not have achieved the same result without our help

See note 9

The economic impact of our programmes

Our work delivers clear and measurable economic value. We can demonstrate a positive return on investment (ROI) in our programmes. Our latest calculations suggest that:

For every **£1** invested in the Social Entrepreneurs Fund, there is a return of **£2.06**, so the total ROI delivered per £1 invested is **£3.06**

For every **£1** invested in LaunchMe, there is a return of **£3.63**, so the total ROI delivered per £1 invested is **£4.63**

For every **£1** invested in the Catalyst Fund, there is a return of **£1.93**, so the total ROI delivered per **£1** invested is **£2.93**

See note 10



Our economic impact is also felt in tangible ways. Our programmes directly contribute to the creation of new jobs and support clients to increase their turnover, helping them to grow, adapt and thrive.



87% of early-stage clients increased their turnover

See note 11



61% of early-stage clients increased their trading income

Over the last financial year, our Build It and Step Up programmes directly supported the creation of **34** Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs across **27** organisations.



Glasgow Trades Collective

Our clients' impact on their communities

Top 3 social impact areas	Top 3 beneficiary groups	Top 3 sectors	They address Scotland's national priorities
Better health and wellbeing	Educationally or economically disadvantaged	Health and social care	Improving public services
Reduced inequality	Children and young people	Education, training and employment	Growing the economy
Quality education	Women and girls	Arts and creative industries	Eradicating child poverty
			Tackling the climate emergency <i>See note 12</i>

Firstport-supported social enterprises work in some of the most deprived areas, where they fill service gaps, support individuals with complex needs, and strengthen community cohesion. It is this wider, indirect impact, delivered by social enterprises but enabled by our support, that ultimately matters most.

Influential

We will build trusting relationships and collaborative, high-performing partnerships

Working with partners is central to our approach and ethos. We want to play to our strengths, deliver what we're good at and work with brilliant partners to create something better than the sum of its parts. Some examples of how we put this approach into practice last year include:

Catalyst Fund's new strategy. Partnership working is a core element of the new delivery model for the Catalyst Fund: **three new strands built around partnerships with trusted organisations.** These partnerships are helping us to expand the reach of the fund, better meet the specific needs of different people and communities, and enhance the accessibility and impact of our investments. A prime example is the £500,000 investment into GlenWyvis Distillery. GlenWyvis is the first Community Benefit Society considered by the fund, and was referred by our partner, Democratic Finance Scotland. The Catalyst Fund is managed by our sister company, Firstfund, which provides finance options that are culturally and commercially compatible with social impact.

Boost Invest. Our new investment readiness programme in the North East of England is effective because local partners, including PNE, work closely with entrepreneurs, understanding their needs and offering complementary skills. The result of this place-based partnership has been a resounding success. **47 social entrepreneurs participated across 3 intakes, and 11 of them secured a share of £438,000** in investment from the People's Postcode Lottery.





Building Financial Confidence. Strong financial skills are essential for long-term impact. However, many social entrepreneurs, particularly those facing barriers, struggle with the financial side of running a business. To tackle this, we created a course in collaboration with lived-experience entrepreneurs from Proud Futures and Wild & Kind CIC. **The Building Financial Confidence course supported 10 social entrepreneurs who face barriers** such as neurodivergence, non-traditional educational backgrounds, or caring responsibilities. Participants learned about cashflows, forecasting, and pricing, and developed their skills in communicating financial information, boosting their confidence in planning their growth or investment strategy.

Ready to RISE. For the second year, we teamed up with Challenges Group to deliver Ready to RISE, helping women across Scotland learn about social enterprise and discover their potential to use entrepreneurship to make a living, work flexibly and positively impact their communities. **18 women completed the programme**, about half were unemployed or out of work due to long-term health conditions when they started the programme. **Many of them experienced barriers to returning to employment, including a disability, caring responsibilities, mental health issues or previous experience of trauma.**

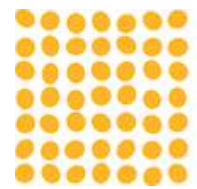
Their lived experience was, in many cases, the driving force to explore an idea. **Five of those women went on to secure funding** from the Social Entrepreneurs Fund and are now leading their own social enterprise.

Funding partners



Funded by UK Government

Programme partners



community enterprise



DECHOMAI



DEMOCRATIC FINANCE SCOTLAND



Development Trusts Association Scotland
A Thriving Community-led Network

just enterprise

MOVEMENT



pne



PROUD FUTURES



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ACADEMY



SiS Social Investment Scotland



Syncplex
Social-Tech Skill Is For All.



Challenges Group



THE MELTING POT



W!LD&K!ND

Progressive

We will challenge traditional ways of doing business

We aim to build a culture where every member of our team feels valued, empowered, respected, and motivated to do work that they feel proud of and serves the needs of our clients.

We work towards creating the conditions and practices that build a culture based on autonomy, responsibility, and trust. In the last year, we:

Facilitated staff-led get-togethers. As a remote-first organisation, coming together, formally and informally, is essential to maintaining connections and protecting our culture. At [Corylus Horticulture](#), we got hands-on in the nursery, planting and gardening. At [ApparelXchange](#), we sorted dozens of bags of pre-loved children's clothes for families in need. And at [Fair Feast](#), we met the small but mighty team transforming wild venison into protein-rich food parcels for people facing poverty. All while spending time building and deepening connections with each other that strengthen our shared purpose.



Firstport visit to ApparelXchange CIC



Improved our policies. We have continued to review and refine our policies and procedures to ensure they're progressive, supporting our culture and enabling our team, rather than creating barriers or slowing progress.

Joined the Pathways Pledge Movement. The Pledge is an initiative that aims to support women and underrepresented founders in Scotland. Joining the fifth cohort, we committed to interrogating our grants and investment data with a gender lens and evaluating the Ready to RISE programme, which supports women returners to set up social enterprises.

Embedded diversity into governance. Following the launch of our refreshed Diversity & Inclusion framework in 2024, we took the bold step of embedding diversity requirements into our Articles of Association. We then ran our first recruitment round under the new approach – targeted, intentional, and outcome-focused – bringing in two new board members last summer. Since November 2024, we have appointed seven members in total, resulting in a board with a stronger balance of skills, experiences, and perspectives. This process has reinforced that change doesn't happen by accident. It happens when you decide to do things differently.

Celebrated being recognised as an investor in diversity. After a rigorous process, the National Centre for Diversity (NCD) reaccredited us as an Investor in Diversity for Small Charities. The results of the NCD's accreditation demonstrate that we continue to work hard towards putting diversity at the heart of what we do.

Innovative

We will inspire innovation in our own work and the pioneering work of others

Thinking about the future

In June 2025, we published The Economic Impact of the Social Entrepreneurs Fund and LaunchMe report, which evidenced that our programmes have delivered value for money, as well as economic contributions through job creation, investment and growth. And while we are proud of these results, the next question for us was: What does the next generation of support look like? How do our programmes iterate and innovate to fulfil future needs?

Our context is changing – the needs of social entrepreneurs do not stand still. What worked five years ago will not work in five years. The sector is becoming more diverse and the challenges more complex. And we cannot ignore the macroeconomic picture of a world that is increasingly divided and unstable.

Adopting a **Futures Thinking approach** – strategically exploring multiple possible futures rather than predicting one single outcome – we worked with the innovation agency AndThen to broaden our view of what's possible and explore how we can future-proof our support.

To spark discussion on these big questions and inform our thinking, we curated a roundtable event, bringing together partners, funders and clients from across the ecosystem to consider how the sector adapts to emerging needs, different structures, and best connects money and support to the people who need it most.



Roundtable event with Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes at The Granton Project CIC

Future-proofing support for social enterprises is not a task we can undertake alone. However, the conversations at the roundtable, together with our experience, have given us signals of where change and innovation may be possible. For example:

- supporting a broader range of structures to include Inclusive and Democratic Business Models (IDBMs).
- designing our more-than-money approach, making funding and bespoke support inextricably linked to drive sustainability and growth at a faster pace.
- developing deeper collaborations with partners to build an aligned ecosystem that supports all social enterprises to thrive.

Sustainable

We will be socially, environmentally and financially sustainable



Practicing what we preach

Just as we advise our clients, we strive to operate as a sustainable and resilient business, with diverse products, services and income streams.

A key milestone towards achieving financial sustainability was to relaunch our trading subsidiary, **Firstimpact**.

Firstimpact takes everything we have learned in the social enterprise space and helps local authorities, community trusts, and private companies put purpose at the heart of business success.

In the last year, we have developed our offering and started building relationships with potential clients across the public and private sectors.



Embedding sustainability into our programmes



Seabuckthorn Scotland CIC

Last year, we made meaningful progress against key areas of our Environmental Sustainability Strategy. A major focus was building our own climate confidence, with all staff participating in dedicated training delivered by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations ([SCVO](#)). The session introduced core environmental sustainability concepts, terminology and practical principles, equipping staff with the knowledge and confidence to engage with climate-related issues in their roles.

Alongside this, we started work to embed sustainability explicitly within our programmes, exploring how climate considerations can be integrated into our awards processes and support for social enterprises. And we began preparations towards achieving [Carbon Literate Organisation \(CLO\) accreditation](#), laying the groundwork for formal commitments in the coming year.

Collectively, these initiatives will enable us to take more ambitious and measurable action on environmental sustainability in the coming year.



Case studies

Angus Cycle Hub

*“Firstport's funding gave me the opportunity to give 100% of my time and energy towards my project – this has changed my life and also the life of everyone involved.”
– Social entrepreneur*



Fair Feast: Helen Stewart

The enterprise is based at Helen's family farm just outside Pitlochry in Perthshire. Helen took on management of the farm in 2021 and was shocked by the wastage of venison within the sector. At the same time, food insecurity is increasing and is associated with poor health outcomes, particularly for children.

Since establishing Fair Feast, the enterprise has donated nearly 2.5 tonnes of venison to local foodbanks and community larders, helping to improve nutrition in their local area while protecting a vulnerable environment.

Helen has received support from **Start It, Build It, the Social Innovation Challenge** and **LaunchMe**, as well as a **Step Up loan**. She is currently using the loan to fit out the butcher's shop in Pitlochry.

Talking about securing Firstport's backing for her idea, Helen said:

"It was that huge vote of confidence that, we believe you can do it, and we're going to support you. It was honestly a game changer for us. Fair Feast would not be where it is today without Firstport's support".

Sustainable deer management that protects the environment and supports local foodbanks

Founded in 2024 by Helen Stewart, Fair Feast is a social enterprise that processes deer from areas of extreme overpopulation into venison donations for food banks. Their sustainable donation model has been funded by the sale of venison to local hotels and from summer 2026, Fair Feast will be expanding with the opening of the first ever social enterprise butcher shop in Pitlochry. Fair Feast venison will be available for direct sales to the public with all sales funding food bank donations.

ZIMSCOT: Heather Mudhari

Transforming and advancing communities in Scotland – creating business, cultural and diplomatic links between Zimbabwe and Scotland

Heather Mudhari founded ZIMSCOT in 2021 in Glasgow to create stronger links between Zimbabwe and Scotland while addressing the practical challenges faced by Zimbabweans living in Scotland.

Inspired by her own lived experience of struggling to access essential services needed to live and work legally in Scotland, Heather created ZIMSCOT as a hub for support, connection, and advocacy.

ZIMSCOT successfully advocated for the introduction of the Embassy of Zimbabwe Consular Outreach services in Scotland, helping Zimbabweans access consular services locally. This has helped many people save time, money, and unnecessary travel.

Today, ZIMSCOT provides professional ID and passport photo services, documentation support and guidance, merchandise celebrating Zimbabwean heritage, cultural events, and partnerships that strengthen social, cultural, and business links between Scotland and Zimbabwe.

ZIMSCOT also leads Climate Exchange programmes focused on community growing, climate justice, and environmental sustainability, including a mission to plant 1,000 fruit trees with families, schools, and local communities.

Heather has received support from **Start It**, **Build It** and **LaunchMe** and a **Step Up loan**, which enabled her to launch a ZIMSCOT merchandise shop and photo ID studio.

Talking about the funding and support she received, Heather said: *“The award helped me to build a stronger foundation and meaningfully engage with my community. It has enabled me to demonstrate clear impact, increase revenue, and boost community and client trust. The LaunchMe programme was such a blessing, it gave me confidence and ideas to scale up and prepare for investment.”*



Two years into our six-year strategy, it is encouraging to see our ambitions translating into tangible progress: a more inclusive support offer that widens access and builds strong foundations; deeper, more intentional partnerships across the ecosystem; stronger approaches to measuring impact; and a continued focus on building an organisation we are proud to be part of.

As we look to the year ahead and our 20th anniversary, we will continue to build on what works, addressing gaps in our support, and strengthening our contribution to an inclusive economy that benefits everyone. The opportunity is significant, not least with the introduction of the Community Wealth Building Act, which places social enterprises, alongside other Inclusive and Democratic Business Models, at the heart of local economic transformation.

This is not a journey we want to take alone. We invite you to be part of what comes next:

Social entrepreneurs – Keep sharing your feedback, make the most of our support, and help us to reach others like you.

Partners – The potential for innovation in business support design and delivery is strong. Let's combine our expertise to create programmes that deliver lasting impact.

Government and policymakers – We are committed to building an inclusive economy and look forward to working with you to develop interventions that genuinely meet the needs of social enterprises.





Together, we will continue to turn momentum into lasting change.

Keep in touch



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Notes and references

1. 500+ refers to the number of unique organisations or pre-start ideas supported across all programmes in the 2025/2026 financial year.
2. 'Year at a glance' section reflects all new business support clients (Just Enterprise start-up support, LaunchMe and Boost Invest), as well as all grants and loans approved within the 2025/2026 financial year, excluding awards declined or withdrawn. Awards programmes include the Social Entrepreneurs Fund, Boost Fund and Social Innovation Challenge. Investment programmes include Step Up and Catalyst Fund.
3. Diversity statistics relate to the total distribution of awards, loans and support across our internally-managed programmes.
4. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles rank small areas in Scotland from most to least deprived based on factors such as income, employment, health, education, housing, and crime. Decile 1 represents the most deprived 10% of areas, while Decile 10 represents the least deprived 10%.
5. Total investments (grants and loans) by local authority per capita.
6. The English Indices of Deprivation (EID) rank small areas from most to least deprived, dividing them into ten deciles, where 1 represents the most deprived 10% and 10 the least deprived.
7. 'Helped to prototype' figure based on the number of pre-start awards approved (Pipeline, Pounds for Purpose, Ready to RISE, Boost Try). 'Supported to launch' figure based on start-up awards approved (Community Enterprise, Start It, Boost Kickstart).
8. Survival rate figures based on a review of all awards made since 1 April 2020 and ongoing tracking of those linked to incorporated businesses. UK figures are based on the ONS UK Business Demography data.
9. Statistics reflect the top areas where Firstport support made a difference, according to the alumni who responded to our 2026 survey.
10. ROI figures calculated in-house, building on the Social Value Lab methodology and based on available data sets. We applied adjustments (attribution, deadweight, and displacement) in proportion with our confidence in the data that contributed to these calculations. LaunchMe and Catalyst Fund support long-lasting change. Therefore, we continue to monitor and update these calculations.
11. Turnover and trading income figures based on client self-reported data from Start It awards closed in the financial year 2025/2026.
12. 44% focus on improving public services, 36% on growing the economy, 10% on eradicating child poverty and 9% on addressing the climate emergency.

