



Onward Lives

We help people move **onward**, for good



Built together. Moving onward.

Onward Lives Charity
Impact Report 2025/26

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Explore the programmes, people and partnerships behind our impact in 2025/26.

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Foreword from Jonathan Taylor, Board Chair

This year's impact report marks an important moment in our story.

It is both a reflection on everything achieved under the Recycling Lives name and an introduction to the next chapter of our journey as Onward Lives. While our name has changed, the values, relationships and belief in people that have shaped our work remain firmly at our heart.

For many years, Recycling Lives demonstrated what is possible when individuals are given meaningful opportunities, practical support and the chance to move forward. **Together, we have helped people rebuild their lives, progress towards employment and independence, overcome significant barriers and reconnect with their families and communities.**

The impact contained within this report belongs to everyone who has been part of that journey. It belongs to our participants, whose resilience, determination and achievements continue to inspire us. It belongs to our staff, who bring compassion, professionalism and persistence to their work every day. It belongs to our trustees, whose leadership and commitment have helped guide the organisation through periods of opportunity, challenge and change. It also belongs to our partners, commissioners, employers, supporters and wider external stakeholders, whose trust and collaboration have enabled us to reach more people and create lasting social value.

To every person who has walked alongside Recycling Lives, I want to offer my sincere thanks. The environment in which we are working is increasingly difficult.

Prisons and public services are under immense pressure, funding is constrained, and the needs facing the people we support are becoming more complex. Recent justice statistics show the scale of the challenge. Between January and March 2026, 12,977 people were released from custodial sentences in England and Wales, while 13,193 people were recalled to prison. These figures demonstrate that release alone is not rehabilitation.

People need safe accommodation, meaningful employment, positive relationships, specialist support and the opportunity to build a sense of purpose. These are not optional additions to an effective justice system. They are essential to successful resettlement, safer communities and a reduction in reoffending.

That is why our work remains so important. During the period covered by this report, Release Potential supported 144 participants, with 72 moving into employment and 58 remaining employed after 12 months. We created 54 Release on Temporary Licence opportunities and provided training to 65 people. Through the ACE Project, we delivered hundreds of interventions and outcomes across areas including accommodation, mental health, substance misuse, employment, training, volunteering and advocacy.

Our wider community and environmental work also continued to make a significant difference. More than 1,350 tonnes of surplus food were redistributed — the equivalent of approximately 3.2 million meals — supporting almost 21,000 beneficiaries. Together, the programmes assessed in this report generated an estimated £33.7 million of social value.

These numbers matter, but their true significance lies in the lives behind them: someone securing employment after prison, sustaining a tenancy, addressing an addiction, rebuilding confidence or beginning to believe that a different future is possible.



On 5 June 2026, we officially launched Onward Lives at our gala. It was a proud and emotional milestone: an opportunity to celebrate the legacy of Recycling Lives, recognise the people who made that legacy possible and share our ambitions for the future.

Onward Lives represents more than a new name. It reflects the direction of our work and the journeys of the people we support. It speaks to progress, possibility and our belief that nobody should be defined solely by their past.

The next chapter brings new work, new partnerships and new projects. It also brings challenges. Times are tough, and we must be honest about the pressures facing our participants, our sector and our organisation. But this is also an exciting time — one filled with energy, opportunity and renewed purpose.

We move forward with the experience gained through Recycling Lives, the strength of the relationships built along the way and an unwavering belief in the potential of every person we support.

This report is therefore both a thank you and a promise: a thank you to everyone who helped us reach this point, and a promise that, as Onward Lives, we will continue creating opportunities, challenging barriers and helping people move towards safer, more stable and more fulfilling futures.

The Recycling Lives name will always be an important part of our story. Its achievements, relationships and values provide the foundation on which Onward Lives is now building.

Jonathan Taylor
Chair of the Trustees, Onward Lives

Built together. Moving onward.

This report celebrates what we built together as Recycling Lives and introduces how we are moving onward - with the same values, stronger partnerships and renewed ambition.

Across employment, housing, recovery, training, food redistribution and support for young people, our work is built around practical opportunities and long-term relationships.

The figures in this report matter because they represent people gaining stability, confidence, skills and a route forward.



7

care leavers
supported

13

people supported by
the Residential
Programme

3.2m

equivalent meals
redistributed
through FareShare

“

I got a nice warm welcome. It's built my confidence and I've made friendships and good connections with the ACE Team. I know if I ever need them, they'll support me.

Mick

Read more about Mick's Story on page 13

72

people moved into
employment

65

course attendance
and certificates
issued

144

people supported
through Release
Potential

Release Potential

Creating routes from custody into training, work and long-term stability.

Release Potential supports people before and after release, connecting preparation in custody with practical opportunities in the community

Employment is central, but the programme also recognises that sustained progress often depends on confidence, wellbeing, housing, recovery and trusted support.

144

participants
supported

72

moved into
employment

54

ROTL opportunities

65

training places

58

sustained
employment after
12 months

30

volunteers



SPECIALIST SUPPORT

Specialist Support sits within Release Potential and is also available more widely across our services and, where appropriate, to employees within partner organisations.

The support focuses mainly on mental health and drug and alcohol recovery, while helping people address practical barriers such as accommodation and employment.

11

people supported
to secure
accommodation

4

employment
outcomes

30

improved mental-
health outcomes

5

reached 6 months'
abstinence

1

reached 9 months'
abstinence

3

reached 12 months'
abstinence



MOVING ONWARD: MOMENTUM

A future development, not a 2025/26 outcome

During 2025/26, Recycling Lives, now Onward Lives, worked with Multipave, Catway Training and HMP Kirkham to co-design Momentum, a construction training and employment pathway for serving prisoners.

The first six-person pilot is due to begin in August 2026, combining accredited training, employability support and routes into ROTL and sustained employment. Its impact will be reported in next year's Social Impact Report.



Residential Programme

A safe place to rebuild, recover and move towards independence.

During the year, the Residential Programme supported 13 people. Four completed the programme and moved into full-time employment and independent living, while nine remained actively engaged and continued progressing at the end of the reporting period.

13

participants supported

4

completed the programme

4

moved into full-time work and independent living

8

engaged in training

111

training hours

185

wellbeing-support hours

“

A place to call home: Mark's journey to independence

When Mark was preparing to leave HMP Wealstun, he knew that returning to Leeds would place him close to the people and circumstances connected to his previous drug use and offending. Through support in custody, he learned about the Residential Programme and moved in during October 2024.

At the programme, Mark received joined-up support with recovery, mental wellbeing, personal development, employment and independent living. He also rebuilt family relationships and regained his driving licence.

Mark now works full-time for FareShare Lancashire & Cumbria as a driver and warehouse operative. He has his own home and renewed relationships with his family, including the hope that his grandchildren will be able to stay overnight.

Mark is no longer hoping for a fresh start; he is living it.

8

reached 9 months' abstinence

7

reached 12 months' abstinence

9

reached 3 months' abstinence

9

reached 6 months' abstinence

ACE Project

Lived experience, practical support and crime prevention across Lancashire.

The ACE Project combines one-to-one support, advocacy and group activity with crime-prevention workshops rooted in lived experience.

During the year, its reach included The King's Trust, colleges and Police Cadets, alongside continued work through the MAP Group and HMP Preston Release Hub.

12

people attend MAP Group in a typical week

45

accommodation outcomes across ACE and Specialist Support

114

training, education or volunteering outcomes across ACE and Specialist Support

27

employment outcomes across ACE and Specialist Support

38

improved mental-health outcomes across ACE and Specialist Support



Integrated Offender Management referrals increased during the year. The MAP Group remained active, with around 12 people attending each week, and delivery continued through HMP Preston Release Hub.

The combined ACE and Specialist Support figures above should be used only where a combined programme total is helpful. The Specialist Support subsection uses Matt's individual totals separately.



CASE STUDY: MICK'S STORY

“My message every time is: it is possible.”

Mick first started working with Onward Lives and the ACE Team in October 2022, following his release from HMP Ranby in Nottingham. He was released on an IPP licence and moved into supported accommodation with Community Interventions in Preston.

Being new to the area and away from drugs and offending wasn't easy. Mick knew that building positive connections and finding a sense of purpose would be important if he was going to make lasting changes.

“WHEN I WAS RELEASED, I CAME TO SUPPORTED HOUSING IN PRESTON. I'M NOT FROM ROUND HERE SO I NEEDED TO BUILD UP CONNECTIONS”

After hearing about the MAP Group, Mick came along one Tuesday morning and quickly became part of the group.

“I GOT A NICE WARM WELCOME. IT'S BUILT MY CONFIDENCE AND I'VE MADE FRIENDSHIPS AND GOOD CONNECTIONS WITH THE ACE TEAM. I KNOW IF I EVER NEED THEM, THEY'LL SUPPORT ME.”

Through these connections, Mick began volunteering with FareShare twice a week and helping prepare surplus food for redistribution to food banks and community organisations. Having somewhere to go and something meaningful to do gave him routine and purpose at an important point in his recovery.

As his confidence grew, Mick began using his lived experience to help others. He now supports people preparing to leave prison and take their first steps back into the community, providing clothing and toiletries, helping them access food parcels and signposting them to local services.

Mick also completed a 12-step programme with Community Interventions and remained drug-free for two years, eventually resulting in his IPP licence being terminated.

Today, he has rebuilt relationships with his family, including his daughter, and has been able to enjoy experiences that once felt out of reach.

“I SPENT FIVE YEARS IN THERE MYSELF. MY MESSAGE EVERY TIME IS: IT IS POSSIBLE.”

Training

Recognised skills for safer work, stronger confidence and progression.

During the year, 65 accredited operational training attendances were completed across prison and community settings, with 65 certificates issued.

Courses included forklift truck, banksman, first aid, fire marshal, manual handling and health and safety training.

Course	Attendances
Forklift truck	19
Banksman	14
First Aid / EFAW	14
Fire Marshal	12
Health & Safety	4
Manual Handling	2



“

Behind every outcome is an individual journey. Christian's story shows how consistent support, new opportunities and the determination to make a change can help someone move forward, rebuild their independence and look towards a different future.

Read more about Christian's Story on page 22

48

attendances in the
community



Community Café

A social enterprise creating hospitality opportunities and a welcoming community space.

Based at head office in Preston, the Community Café operates Monday to Friday from 8am to 3pm. It creates opportunities for people interested in catering and hospitality while serving colleagues, visitors and the wider community.

The café also supports delivery across other programmes: Residential Programme participants volunteer there, the ACE Friday morning coffee group meets in the space, and surplus food from FareShare is used wherever appropriate.

6,500+

customer
visits

£28,000+

income
generated

25+

volunteers
supported



A YEAR OF STEADY PROGRESS

Fresh Start Café has had another busy year. Alongside serving customers and bringing income into the charity, we have continued to give people a place to learn, rebuild their confidence and gain real experience of working in catering.

From August 2025 to March 2026, the café recorded more than 6,500 customer visits and generated over £28,000. Those figures matter, but they are only one part of the story. During the same period, more than 25 volunteers spent time with us, we delivered over 13 classroom-based food-safety courses, and several people moved forward into interviews, further volunteering or paid work.

This report brings those different parts of the café together. It looks at what we achieved, the people who helped make it happen and the difference the café has made beyond the food we serve.

VOLUNTEERING AND MOVING FORWARD

More than 25 volunteers worked with us during the year. People joined the café for different reasons and with different levels of experience. Some wanted to learn practical catering skills, while others were looking to rebuild confidence, develop a routine or prepare themselves for employment.

Volunteers were able to gain experience in areas such as:

- Food preparation and basic kitchen work
- Front-of-house service and speaking with customers
- Cleaning, hygiene and safe working practices
- Working as part of a team
- Following instructions and taking responsibility
- Food safety and workplace expectations

During the year, some volunteers moved into other volunteering roles and several gained interviews with different organisations. These are positive outcomes. For somebody who has been away from work, or who has faced difficult personal circumstances, attending regularly and feeling ready to apply for a job can be a major step forward.

THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

Headline	What happened
Customer visits	More than 6,500 visits were recorded during the year.
Income	Over £28,000 was generated for the charity through café sales.
Volunteers	More than 25 people volunteered with the café.
Training	Over 13 Level 1 and Level 2 Food Safety classroom courses were delivered.
Progression	Volunteers moved into interviews, other placements and paid employment.
Community work	Air-fryer and family cooking sessions were delivered with Fylde Borough Council.

FOOD-SAFETY TRAINING

Training remained an important part of the café's work. During the year, we delivered more than 5 traditional classroom courses covering Level 1 and Level 2 Food Safety. We trained a total of 13 volunteers and an additional 23 vulnerable adults in the supported sector.

The courses gave learners the chance to gain useful knowledge and recognised training in a supportive setting. For some people, sitting in a classroom or completing an assessment can be daunting, especially if they have been away from education for a long time. We therefore try to make the sessions practical, welcoming and easy to understand while still maintaining the required standards.

The training supports people already volunteering with us, but it can also help learners take their next step into catering, hospitality, another volunteering role or further study.

FareShare Lancashire & Cumbria

Redistributing more food, strengthening communities and creating meaningful volunteering opportunities.

During the year, FareShare Lancashire & Cumbria increased the volume of food distributed through its existing network, helping community organisations support more people while preventing more good food from going to waste.



1,350+

tonnes of surplus
food redistributed

3.2m

equivalent
meals

21,000

people
supported

MORE THAN VOLUNTEERING: JUNAID'S STORY

Junaid began volunteering at FareShare in June 2025 after his support worker introduced him to the opportunity. Since then, volunteering has given him structure, friendship, confidence and a growing sense of purpose.

He plays an active role in the warehouse, picking and packing food for charities and community groups, speaking to people collecting deliveries and helping new volunteers learn their roles. He also uses the opportunity to raise awareness of autism and how it affects people differently.

Junaid's contribution was recognised when he was voted Volunteer of the Year at the Recycling Lives awards evening. Together with Jack, a Residential Programme participant who also volunteered at FareShare, he helped create "Junaid's Day Out", an inclusive initiative designed to reduce isolation and help people enjoy new experiences together.

"Come to FareShare and we will work together."

- Junaid

LOOKING AHEAD

Over the next 12 months, FareShare Lancashire & Cumbria will transition to the Felix name. The change will be introduced gradually, while the focus remains on distributing more food, supporting communities and creating opportunities through volunteering.

182

active community
food members

2,747

tonnes of CO2e
potentially avoided

2.16bn

litres of water
potentially
saved

Care Leavers Programme

Paid placements, trusted support and practical routes into adulthood.

The Care Leavers Programme began in 2024 and works with Lancashire County Council to provide six-month work placements, mentoring, coaching and personal development for care-experienced young people aged 17 and over.

During 2025/26, seven young people were supported. Four moved into full-time employment and one progressed into an apprenticeship. Of the remaining two, one moved to Liverpool to live with her mother, while another stepped away from the programme during pregnancy.

Recycling Lives Services and Global Ardour provided routes into full-time employment, while FareShare Lancashire & Cumbria provided placement opportunities.

7

young people supported

4

moved into full-time employment

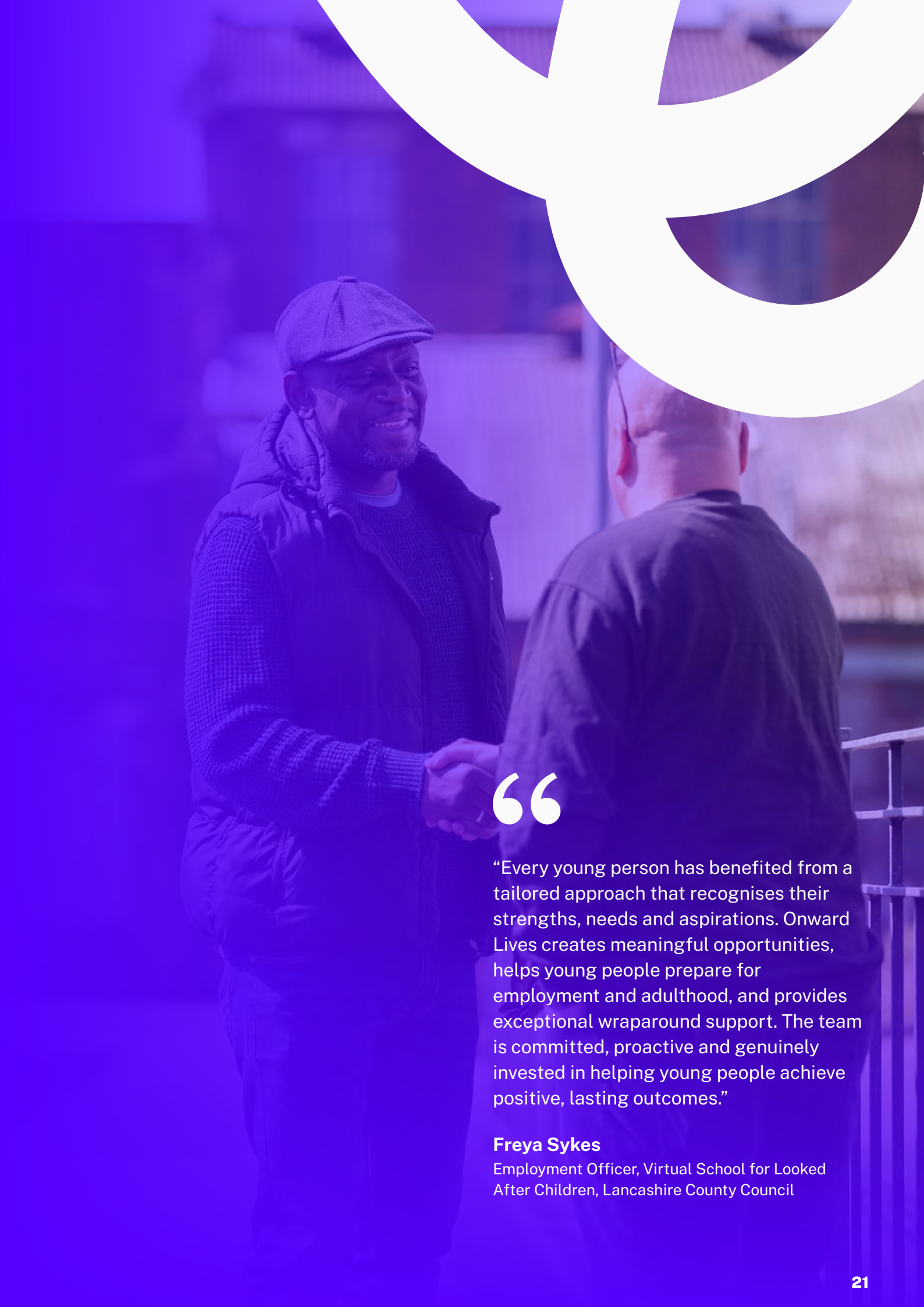
1

moved into an apprenticeship

3

new starters in the following reporting year





“

“Every young person has benefited from a tailored approach that recognises their strengths, needs and aspirations. Onward Lives creates meaningful opportunities, helps young people prepare for employment and adulthood, and provides exceptional wraparound support. The team is committed, proactive and genuinely invested in helping young people achieve positive, lasting outcomes.”

Freya Sykes

Employment Officer, Virtual School for Looked After Children, Lancashire County Council



CASE STUDY: CHRISTIAN'S STORY

A different life was possible and Christian was ready to build it.

Christian's journey with Onward Lives has included progress, setbacks and, ultimately, a determination to build a different future.

He first encountered Onward Lives, then known as Recycling Lives, after his release from HMP Kirkham in 2021. He moved into supported accommodation and stayed for around 15 months before securing housing through the local council.

Christian later returned to drug use and was recalled to prison following failed drug tests. Further offences led to another period in custody, and he admits that while on licence he struggled to move forward. By May 2025, Christian was at G Wing at HMP Preston, a recovery-focused unit supporting people experiencing substance misuse. It was there that something changed.

"I'D JUST HAD ENOUGH. I WAS READY FOR CHANGE."

Recognising that he was stuck in a cycle of drug use and prison, Christian completed a rehabilitation programme and reconnected with members of the Onward Lives team.

After his release in October 2025, he continued receiving support around employment, accommodation and rebuilding his independence. In December, the Employment Team arranged an interview with Recycling Lives Services for a Warehouse Operative role. Christian was successful and started work on 5 January 2026.

Regular employment has given him structure, responsibility and valuable experience, including forklift driving. Onward Lives also worked with IOM to help him secure a shared property in Preston, with funding towards his deposit.

Today, Christian says life is going well. His next goals include moving into his own flat and completing his motorcycle licence. He is enjoying the stability and independence he has worked hard to rebuild.

Looking ahead, Christian hopes to return to HMP Preston one day — not as a prisoner, but to share his story with others. He wants people caught in the same cycle he once experienced to see that a different future is possible, and that change can start even when it feels out of reach.



What comes next

The transition to Onward Lives creates an opportunity to build on established programmes while developing new responses to changing needs.

- Grow the Care Leavers Programme and create more supported routes into employment and apprenticeships.
- Test and evaluate the Momentum construction pathway, reporting outcomes in the 2026/27 Social Impact Report.
- Develop planned support for veterans.
- Continue strengthening corporate partnerships that create jobs, training, volunteering and sustainable funding.
- Complete the gradual transition from FareShare Lancashire & Cumbria to the Felix name while maintaining the focus on food redistribution and community support.



Impact Report 2025/26

Get in touch to learn how you can **work with, support, or benefit** from our programmes:

Visit: onwardlives.org
Email: info@onwardlives.org

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Charity & Social Enterprise

Charity no: 1116562