Market Pulse

Analysis of the key trends in the SME sector,
prepared by Fitzgerald Power on a quarterly basis.

Q3 2026



Fitzgerald Power
ADDING VALUE. ALWAYS.

Summary Q3 2026

Irish Economy

Modified Domestic Demand (MDD) grew by 1.7% year-on-year in Q2 2026, down from 4.5% in Q1, as strong multinational investment in AI and data centres was offset by a 6.9% decline in domestic construction. Consumer spending rose 2.9%, supported by stronger tax receipts and continued growth in domestic sectors. The Central Bank's Business Cycle Indicator suggests economic activity recovered from earlier weakness, returning to around its long-term average growth rate.

Global Economy

According to Euromonitor, global economic growth is forecast at 3.0% in 2026, with inflation at 4.9%, as energy disruptions and US tariffs continue to weigh on trade, investment and economic confidence. Advanced economies face persistent cost pressures, while emerging markets show greater resilience, supported by domestic demand and technology investment despite ongoing geopolitical uncertainty.

Start-ups

According to CRIFVision-Net, in the third quarter of 2026 alone, total set-ups reached 12,457 (comprising 7,207 company set-ups and 5,250 business set-ups), which is a 3.45% increase over Q3 2025. July was the busiest single month in the quarter with 4,672 total set-ups.

Housing Market

MyHome reports that Ireland's annual asking price inflation eased to a three-year low of 3.9% in Q3 2026, with housing supply increasing 12.5% year-on-year, offering some relief to buyers despite continued affordability pressures and a subdued mover market.

Irish GDP

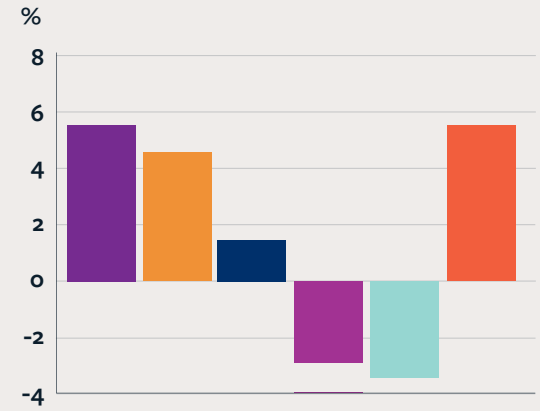
Preliminary CSO estimates indicate that Irish GDP increased by 5.5% in Q3 2026, primarily driven by growth in the multinational-dominated Industry and Information & Communication sectors.

Revenue Pulse

The value of Retail Sales was 0.1% lower in September 2026 than in August 2026 and was up by 4.8% when compared with September 2025.

Sales Growth

Annual change to September 2026



Sector

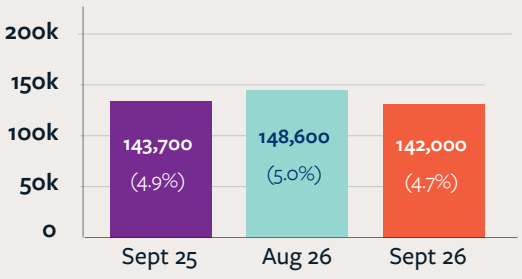
- Motor Trades **5.8%**
- Department Stores **4.5%**
- Food, Beverage & Tobacco **1,5%**
- Clothing, Footwear & Textiles **-2.8%**
- Hardware, Paints & Glass **-3.1%**
- Bars **5.4%**

SOURCE: CSO

Employment Pulse

The number of people unemployed decreased by 1,700 in September 2026 when compared to the same period in 2025.

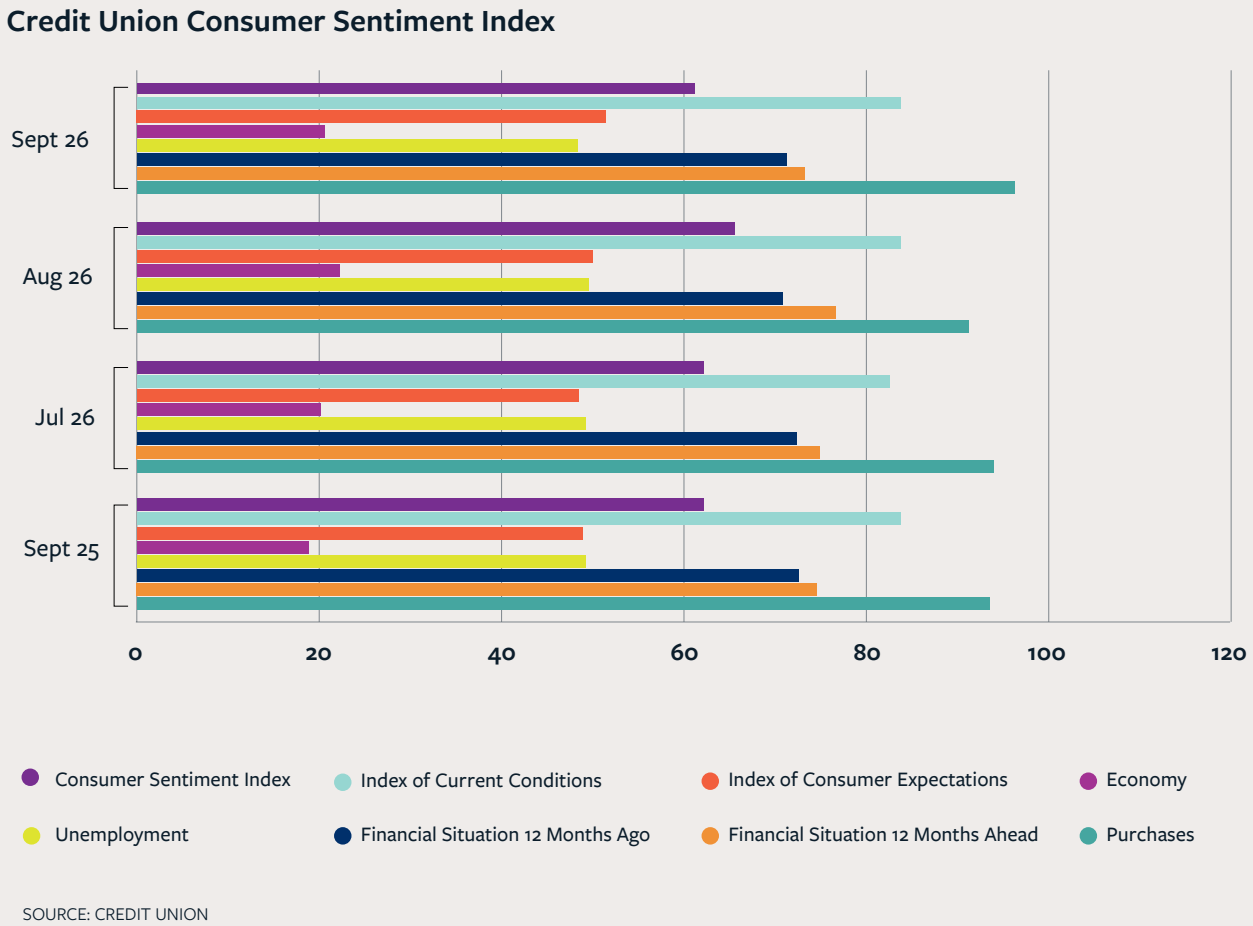
Unemployment Rate



SOURCE: CSO

Consumer Pulse

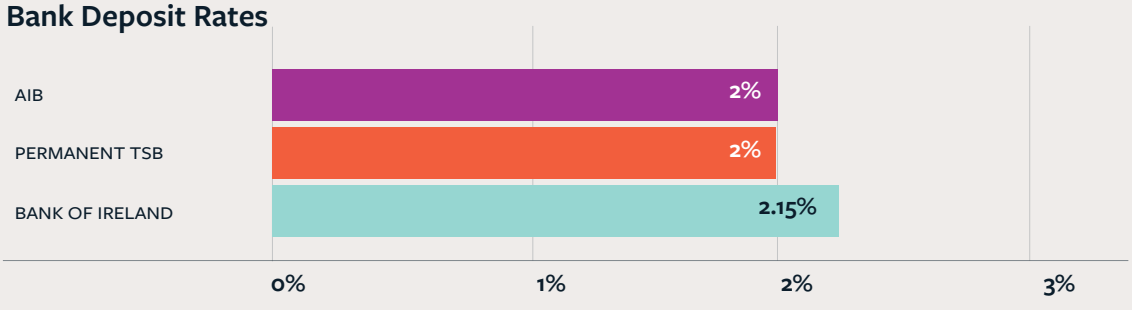
Irish consumer confidence fell to a four-month low in September 2026, with the Credit Union Consumer Sentiment Index declining to 61.1 amid rising energy costs, a cooling jobs market and persistent pressure on household finances.



SOURCE: CREDIT UNION

Deposit Rate Pulse

The 12-month fixed bank deposit interest rates for Q3 have remained at the same level as in Q2.

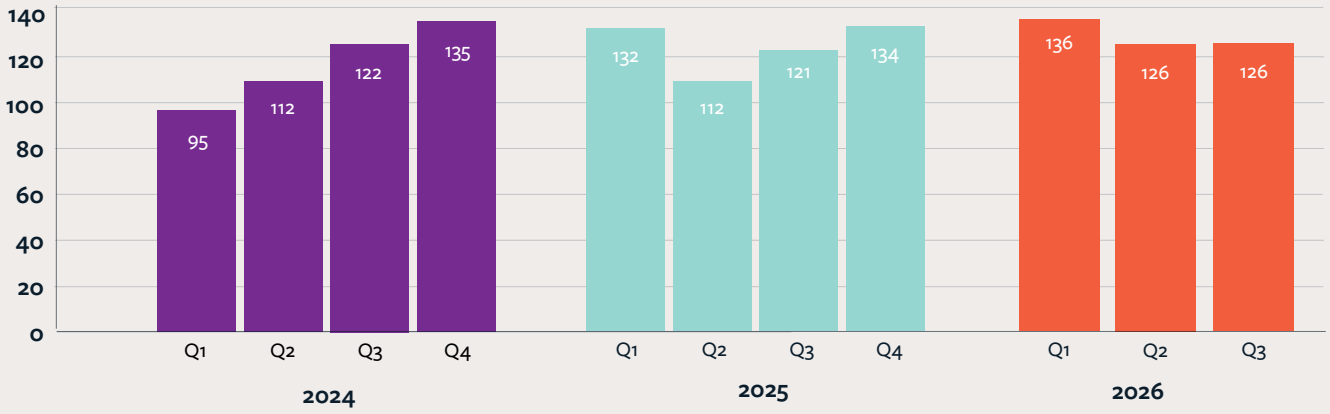


SOURCE: FITZGERALD POWER

Mergers & Acquisitions Pulse

According to the Renatus M&A Report, Ireland's M&A market remained resilient in the first nine months of 2026, with 388 deals recorded, up 6% year-on-year, driven by strong domestic acquisitions and buy-and-build activity, despite a moderation in direct private equity deals and declining European transaction volumes.

Mergers & Acquisitions by Quarter



SOURCE: RENATUS



388 deals recorded in Q1-Q3 '26, up 6% from 365 in Q1-Q3 '25



144 in-market transactions completed in YTD '26, up from 121 in YTD '25 (+19%)



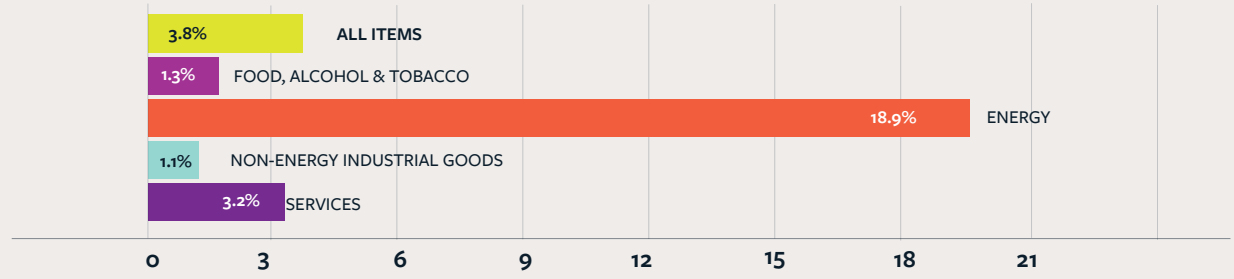
International acquirers completed 158 inbound acquisitions in Q1-Q3 '26, down from 164 in Q1-Q3 '25 (-4%)

SOURCE: RENATUS

Inflation Pulse

The euro area annual inflation rate was 3.8% in September 2026, up from 3.2% in August. A year earlier, the rate was 2.2%.

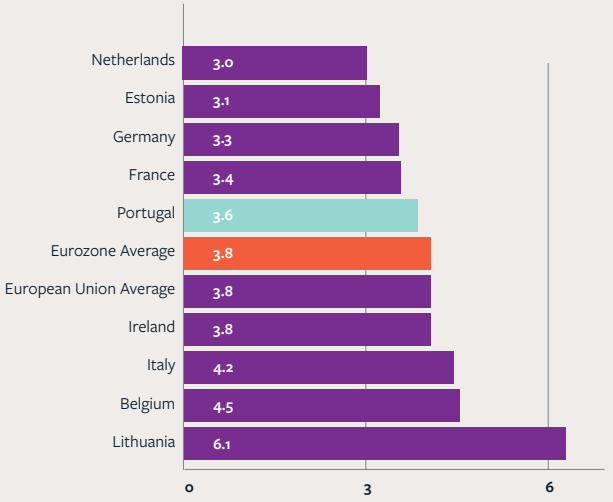
Euro Area Annual Inflation



SOURCE: EUROSTAT

Ireland's level of inflation at 3.8% is the same as Eurozone average.

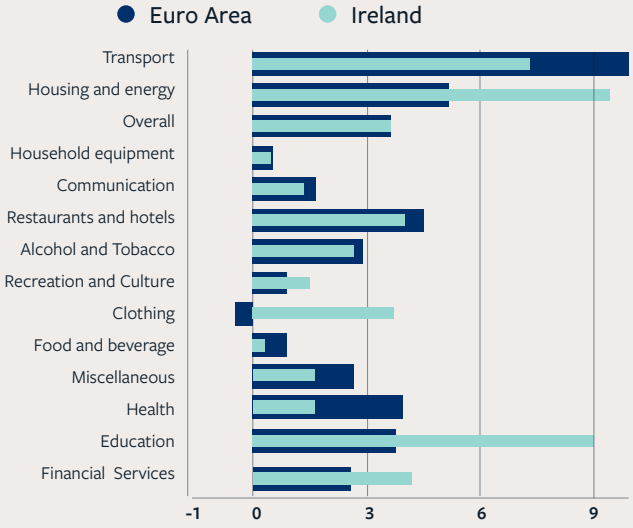
Average Inflation Across European Countries



SOURCE: EUROSTAT

Ireland's inflation rate matched the Euro area average of 3.8% in September 2026, but was considerably higher in Housing/Energy, Education and Financial Services. Inflation was notably lower in Health, Transport and Restaurants/Hotels.

Inflation in Ireland and Euro area

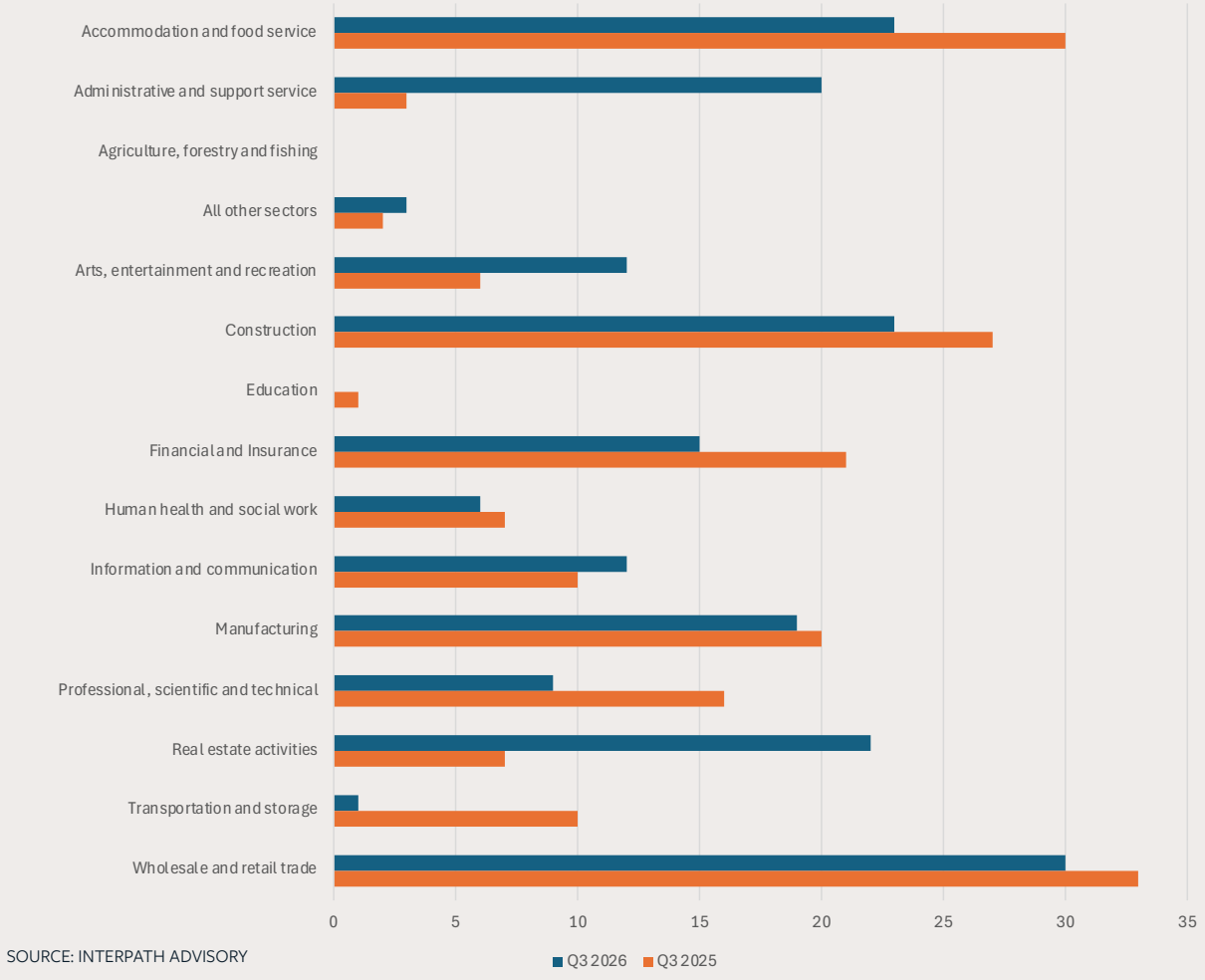


SOURCE: EUROSTAT

Insolvency Pulse

Data provided by Interpath Advisory shows insolvencies remained broadly stable year-on-year, with 195 recorded in Q3 2026 compared to 193 in Q3 2025.

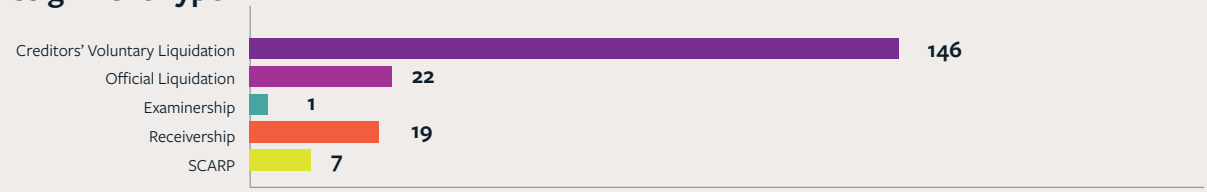
Insolvencies by Sector



SOURCE: INTERPATH ADVISORY

The majority of insolvencies have been voluntary liquidations.

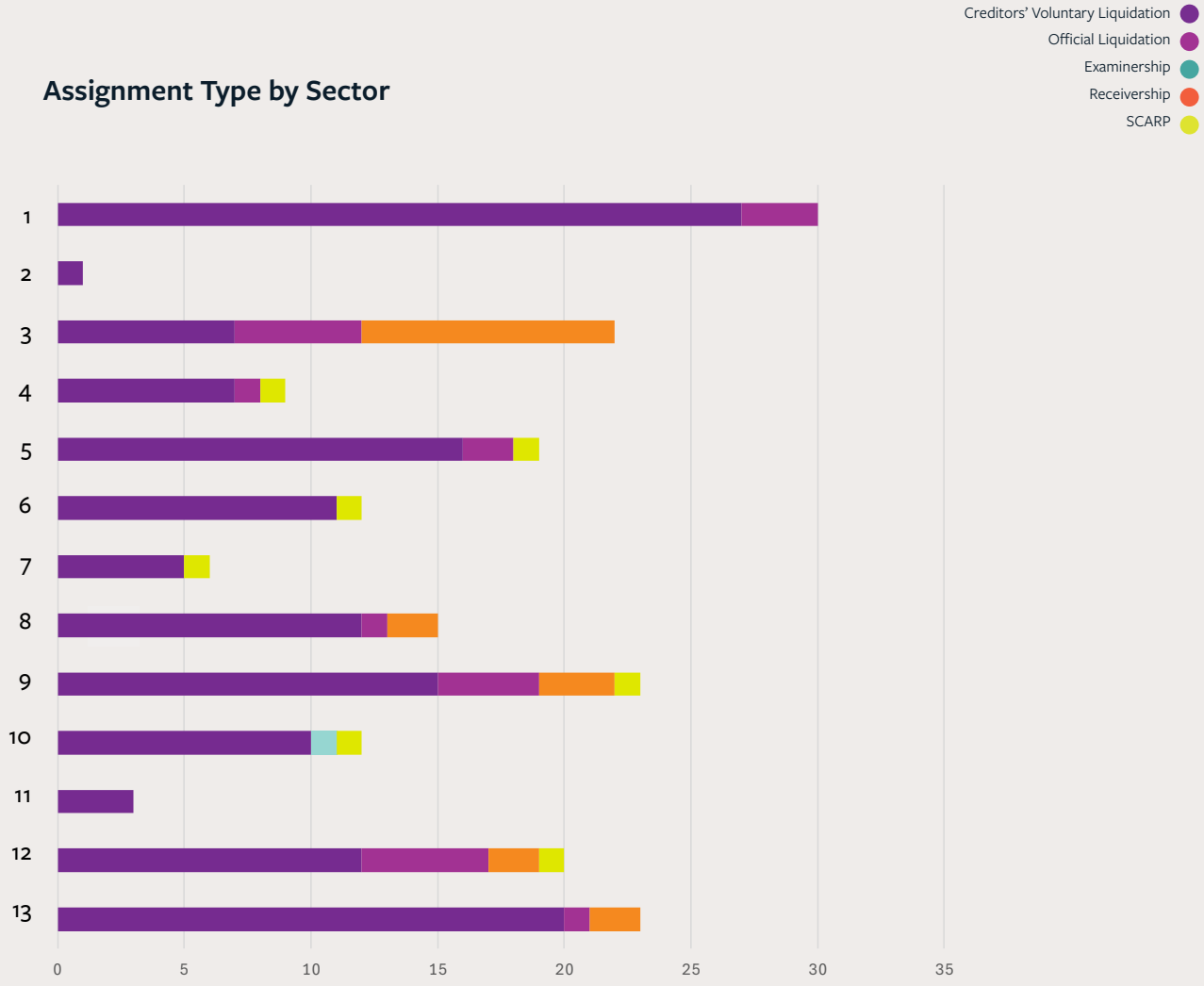
Assignment Type



SOURCE: INTERPATH ADVISORY

Although there is considerable variation in type of insolvency by sector.

Assignment Type by Sector



1. Accommodation and food service
2. Administrative and support service
3. All other sectors
4. Arts, entertainment and recreation
5. Construction
6. Financial and Insurance
7. Human health and Social Work
8. Information and Communication
9. Manufacturing
10. Professional, scientific and technical
11. Real estate activities
12. Transportation and Storage
13. Wholesale and retail trade

SOURCE: INTERPATH ADVISORY

Fitzgerald Power is a leading financial advisor to the Irish SME sector. We provide accountancy, corporate finance and taxation advice to businesses across the country.

We'd love to hear from you so please get in touch if you think we can help.

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