

LESSONS LEARNED – UK RETURNERS GRANT FUND

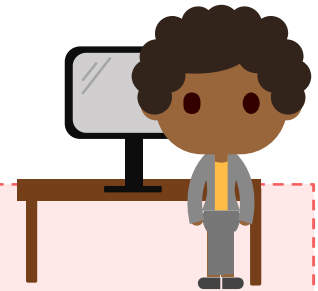


What is the UK Returners Grant Fund?

Following the UK's 2017 Spring Budget, the UK Government set up programmes across the public and private sector to support people to return to work after a break for caring responsibilities.

These programs centre on **three (3) key sectors**:

- **Return to ICT** – targeting public sector ICT workforce
- **Return to Social Work** – recruiting previously registered social workers
- **Return to Planning** – focusing on the public sector planning workforce



Return to ICT

- 1,362 expressions of interest and 517 full applications received
- 85 applicants accepted a place in program and began the training. Of these applicants:
 - 44% were women
 - 22% reported former caring responsibilities
 - 51% reported having ongoing caring responsibilities
 - 75% were out of labour market for over a year

Key Learnings and Recommendations:

High levels of interest in the program were generated using a range of channels	→	Use a range of channels when promoting programme, and use data analytics to track interest
Recruitment websites and job boards were effective way to direct people to the application	→	Advertise the programmes on national recruitment websites and job boards
Programme was able to expand eligibility criteria and adapt to COVID-19 challenges	→	Consider how programmes can be more inclusive by responding quickly and flexibly to changing job markets
Onboarding was challenging during periods of competing priorities, such as the festive period in December	→	Avoid scheduling onboarding periods over festive periods
Some participants had greater expectations than what the programme could help them with	→	Scope candidates with what they want from the program (e.g. with surveys) and see if this can be implemented
A high proportion of participants who reported trying to return to work had experienced barriers when attempting to do so	→	Gather data on these barriers so that the programme can proactively offer support
The programme was able to provide an introductory pathway for those looking to upskill in a new profession	→	Run a pathway that offers introductory training to support those who may not have the required skills or experience
Participants were able to access additional support that was flexible	→	Offer participants support, such as flexible or staggered start dates for training, to balance the programme with other responsibilities
Coaching was popular and highly rated	→	Include coaching elements

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Return to Planning

- 1,615 expressions of interest and 366 full applications received
- 13 applicants accepted a place in program and began the training. Of these applicants:
 - 53% were women
 - 15% reported former caring responsibilities
 - 30% reported having ongoing caring responsibilities
 - 53% were out of labour market for over a year

Key Learnings and Recommendations:

High levels of interest in the program were generated using a range of channels	→	Use a range of channels when promoting programme, and use data analytics to track interest
Recruitment websites and job boards were effective way to direct people to the application	→	Advertise the programmes on national recruitment websites and job boards
Programme was able to expand eligibility criteria and adapt to COVID-19 challenges	→	Consider how programmes can be more inclusive by responding quickly and flexibly to changing job markets
Despite high levels of interest and applications submitted, the programme was only able to identify a small portion of candidates	→	Ensure programme eligibility criteria are clear when advertising a return to work programme to reduce to volume of ineligible applications
Some participants had a range of expectations than what the programme could help them with	→	Scope candidates with what they want from the program (e.g. with surveys) and see if this can be implemented
The programme was able to provide an introductory pathway for those looking to upskill in a new profession	→	Run a pathway that offers introductory training to support those who may not have the required skills or experience
Some candidates withdrew due to a change in circumstances	→	Monitor the reasons for potential withdrawals and support participants with their concerns
Participants were able to access additional support that was flexible to their needs	→	Offer participants support, such as flexible or staggered start dates for training, to balance the programme with other responsibilities
Coaching was popular and highly rated	→	Include coaching elements



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Return to Social Work

- 1,668 expressions of interest and 773 full applications received
- 199 applicants accepted a place in program and began the training. Of these applicants:
 - 75% were women
 - 49% reported having ongoing caring responsibilities
 - 38% reported former caring responsibilities

Key Learnings and Recommendations:

Paid advertising was an effective way of directing potential applicants to the website	→	Consider multiple marketing channels, including paid advertising, to raise awareness of the programme
Video content from those with experience of returning was a popular way of engaging audiences	→	Consider effective ways to capture relevant case studies, and use these when promoting the programme
Programme was successful in reaching and recruiting returning social workers with ongoing caring responsibilities and those with former	→	Use targeted messaging when promoting the programme to reach eligible participants
Some applicants declined or withdrew from the programme due to a change in circumstances	→	Consider how the length of time between applying for and starting a programme may affect attrition
Coaching was popular and highly rated by participants	→	Develop a programme that includes coaching, and consider whether alumni can attend training sessions
Some participants needed sufficient notice to attend some training sessions to balance training and personal commitments	→	Consider how participants' personal commitments may affect training attendance, and explore flexible options such as repeated or recorded sessions
Larger group training sizes presented challenges for some participants to interact and engage in sessions	→	Review the size of training groups to ensure that all participants can fully engage and share insights
Some participants faced technological difficulties with virtual training that may have been avoided or resolved in a face-to-face training setting	→	Be clear on the IT skills required for the programme from the outset and ensure all participants have the opportunity to receive support to develop digital skills
Access to additional sources of support, such as through peer support networks were considered valuable	→	Develop a programme that offers participants additional forms of support, such as the provision of out-of-hours support

