

ALLEN & OVERY

ReStart Programme Impact Report

2023

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IN





“Testament to the power of connection and community in discovering my core strengths, values and the path I want to take, expertly led by such a sensitively curated group of coaches.”

ReStart Participant, 2023

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Executive summary

Ahead of the curve on tackling the barriers facing a vital yet often-overlooked group, Allen & Overy piloted ReStart back in 2017. **The main aim was simple: equip workers aged 50+ with the knowledge, tools and confidence to build their resourcefulness to access employment.** Now in its seventh year, ReStart has supported nearly 200 people aged 50-64 in the UK, including 2023's cohort of 27 individuals, with targeted and holistic interventions to aid their journeys back into the workforce.

Through workshops and coaching by a range of organisations, and mentoring by generous employees of A&O, ReStart provides tailored support to realign participants on their career path. The multi-pronged approach seeks to re-energise them through recognising and utilising their skills and creating strategies for overcoming barriers that they may face on their return to work. This is a significant support offer, because only 10% of unemployed 50–64-year-olds get help to find work each year in the UK (**Learning and Work Institute, 2022**).

With 3.5 million people aged 50-64 out of work in the UK (House of Commons Library, 2023), there's a lot of work to do in supporting older workers should they want to return to work. New data from high-income countries indicates that almost one in five unemployed people aged 55 and older would like to be in work (**McKinsey Health Institute, 2023**). The research shows that the top three cited barriers were: difficulty getting work; a lack of attractive opportunities; and having a lack of relevant skills. These same barriers were reflected in the 2023 ReStart cohort's surveys, along with age discrimination (Figure 12).

Over ReStart's history, with the backdrop of a global pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis in the UK, A&O has gained considerable insight regarding the challenges, needs and motivations of over 50s. It's projected that by 2031 in the UK, 23% of workers will be aged 55 and older (**Bain and Company, 2023**). This is up from 16% of workers in 2011, so companies need to factor in supporting this age group in their long-term talent strategies.

In this report A&O shares reflections on external factors impacting workers, as well as the outcomes from the programme. It's not only the individual participants that A&O intends to see benefit, but in demonstrating its commitment to supporting over 50s, the broader aim is to contribute to a knock-on positive effect for their families, their social mobility and a wider community of organisations and workers.

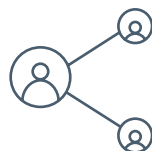
Impact Headlines

The 2023 ReStart programme enabled 27 participants to better understand their strengths and transferable skills, alongside developing their confidence, motivation and self-belief. Participants shared that the peer support they received from other participants was invaluable for fostering a safe space to share their challenges and celebrate their experiences. It's with great delight that we announce that all 27 completed the ReStart programme.



100%

said they would recommend ReStart to someone else in a similar situation.



96%

felt confident about their job search after completing the programme versus 17% beforehand.



92%

felt it would be 'Unlikely' or 'Very Unlikely' they would find work if they hadn't taken part in the programme.

“I'm amazed at the people who delivered the course. It was way beyond anything I ever imagined. It's hard to explain the quality of the course. If you've ever been on any other course – they're pretty bog-standard. This was a completely different world, it really was.”

Dean, ReStart Participant, 2023

“I definitely see a difference in myself and my confidence has returned. The ReStart programme works, it definitely works.”

Dakhsa, ReStart Participant, 2023

“ReStart helped right from the first day – being in a room full of people of the same age group, all without jobs and all at different stages really helps. You feel that you’re not alone.”

Juliette, ReStart Participant, 2023

“I think this is an amazing programme. I have worked at A&O for almost six years and I only discovered it this year. I wish I had known about it sooner... my mentee has spoken so highly of the programme.”

Danielle, ReStart Mentor, 2023

Sheila's Journey



Sheila joined ReStart visualising her career in one industry – and finished the programme with a job in another! By reconsidering her work non-negotiables, she found new avenues opened up. From understanding her strengths and personal brand, and honing her application skills, to the supportive community of participants, ReStart exceeded her expectations. She's thriving in her new role and embracing the opportunity to learn and develop professionally.

One of the things that the programme made me realise is that it's important to consider all options. **I'm now working for a very kind company. I'm delighted.** It's a career change, but I thought – it gets me back into the job market, it's a really reputable company and nearby, so it ticks lots of boxes. I'm still learning, it's making me much better at dealing with situations and I've acquired way more knowledge.

I saw the ReStart advert, and I thought, do you know what, I could do with some help. I had been out of employment for a year and I was having more difficulty than I thought finding work.

The programme itself exceeded my expectations in terms of the depth it went into. I realised how much you do have to tailor your CVs, I think this helped me get my new job, and how to give as much information to the employer as possible so they can employ you. **I wouldn't have typically done that previously, so I am delighted with that advice.**

I found the strengths identifier useful; it gave me a way to describe in interviews what I'm strong at, my strengths and my skills. Thinking about that was quite insightful, and not something I'd thought of before.

Listening to everyone else on the programme I realised there were common themes in our experiences, so that was hugely beneficial. I think for a lot of people, especially those of us who were lacking confidence, it came at the right time.

I thought the support network was lovely, it's a very positive group and we all try and help each other still. **Some people are sending jobs over to each other and we've created a really lovely community since completing the programme.**

My coach and mentor were really good, I was delighted with both of them. I liked bouncing ideas off them and they went with what I wanted as opposed to dictating the content or the structure. I loved the focused approach; they gave me honest and personalised feedback which was really quite helpful!

I'm thinking now about what my career will look like over the next few years – it's really exciting!

Dean's Story

Following ReStart, Dean has developed a critical approach to the job hunt and embraced how the market has changed in the last few decades. He's now armed with the tools to leverage those changes to his advantage, and thinking deeply about how his passions and professional experience can intersect to ensure he has a fulfilling career.

I had been in the same organisation for over 20 years and hadn't applied for a job since 1996 so **this course really opened my eyes to how much the world has changed.** It's completely different. I suddenly realised why I wasn't getting anywhere.

The coaching gave me a lot of confidence, it really shook me up. The coach said "Think about your strengths. What would you really like to do? What motivates you?" They really gave me a whole new confidence to believe I could do something more meaningful, something I would enjoy.

That's the new skillset I've got now: how to introduce myself, how to sell myself on a CV and use online tools like LinkedIn, how to promote myself. Every time I do an application or a cover letter, I feel I'm improving, getting the angle I need, building more confidence.

Now because I know what I want to achieve, I have a totally different motivation and so the setbacks don't hit me as hard because I still feel that I've moved a step forward. **I'd almost say I'm kind of enjoying the applications now, whereas before it was just a process.**

I now want to move from what I was doing into green technology and environmental projects. I've been looking at lots of organisations, joining networks, attending online seminars, just to build my knowledge in that area and get myself known. That's a thing I wasn't doing before – it hadn't even occurred to me to do that! **Even though I haven't got a job yet, I feel a lot more confident. I've got a change in attitude and self-motivation.**

One of my big fears was how to explain why I had been out of the paid workforce for quite a few years (though I had been active as a local environmental volunteer). My ReStart mentor helped me formulate how I explain that as a positive, how to own it and not shy away from it. And that was really useful, I didn't have that before I went in.

I'm amazed at the people who delivered the course. It was way beyond anything I ever imagined. It's hard to explain the quality of the course. If you've ever been on any other course – they're pretty bog-standard. This was a completely different world, it really was.



Over 50 and Out of Work

Key Terms

Unemployed: without a job but have been actively seeking work in the past four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks.

Employment Rate: the number of people in paid work as a proportion of the population.

Economic Inactivity: not working, actively seeking work within the last four weeks, or being unable to start work in the next two weeks.

Economic Inactivity Rate: the proportion of people aged between 16 and 64 years who are not in the labour force and are not actively seeking work.

Long-Term Unemployed: out of paid work for more than twelve months.

The Big Picture

The UK and most high-income countries have ageing populations, and therefore ageing workforces. As the number of 50-64-year-olds increases, the numbers of those who are both economically inactive and those who are seeking work also grow (**Learning and Work Institute, 2023**).

Whilst millions more 50-64-year-olds are out of work due to illnesses today, many are facing financial pressures to return to work. Excluding the disruption caused by Covid-19, more 50-64-year-olds continue to seek employment, both full- and part-time. This is a trend that countries with ageing populations are seeing across the world, and it's projected to continue (Figure 1).

Supporting the over 50s back into work (should they desire and if they are able) should be a priority for governments and organisations. It complements the wider narrative of inclusivity in workplaces, and having multiple generations interacting in the workplace brings a wide range of organisational benefits.

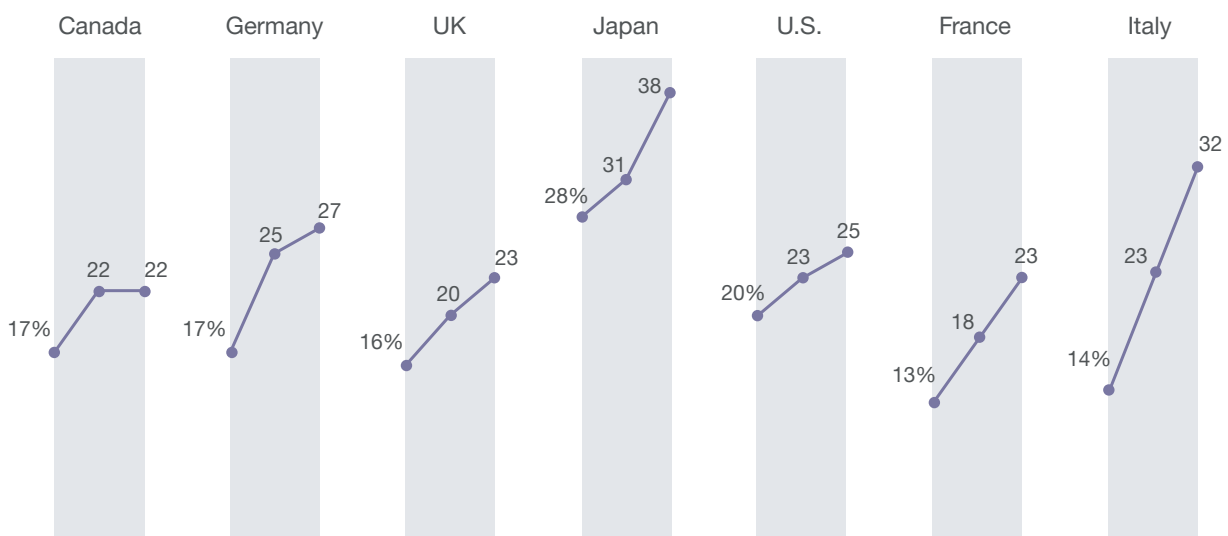


Figure 1: Share of Workers Aged 55 and Older (2011, 2021, and 2031): (**Bain and Company, 2023**).

Economic (In) Activity

In the past 40 years there has been an overall steady trajectory of decreasing economic inactivity in the 50-64-year-old age bracket (Figure 2). During the years most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic inactivity rate of those aged 50-64 increased*. 2023 saw a very slight reduction in economic inactivity rates to the year previous, down to 26.6%, but this is still higher than pre-pandemic rates and equates to 3.5 million individuals who are not seeking work (Gov.UK, 2023).

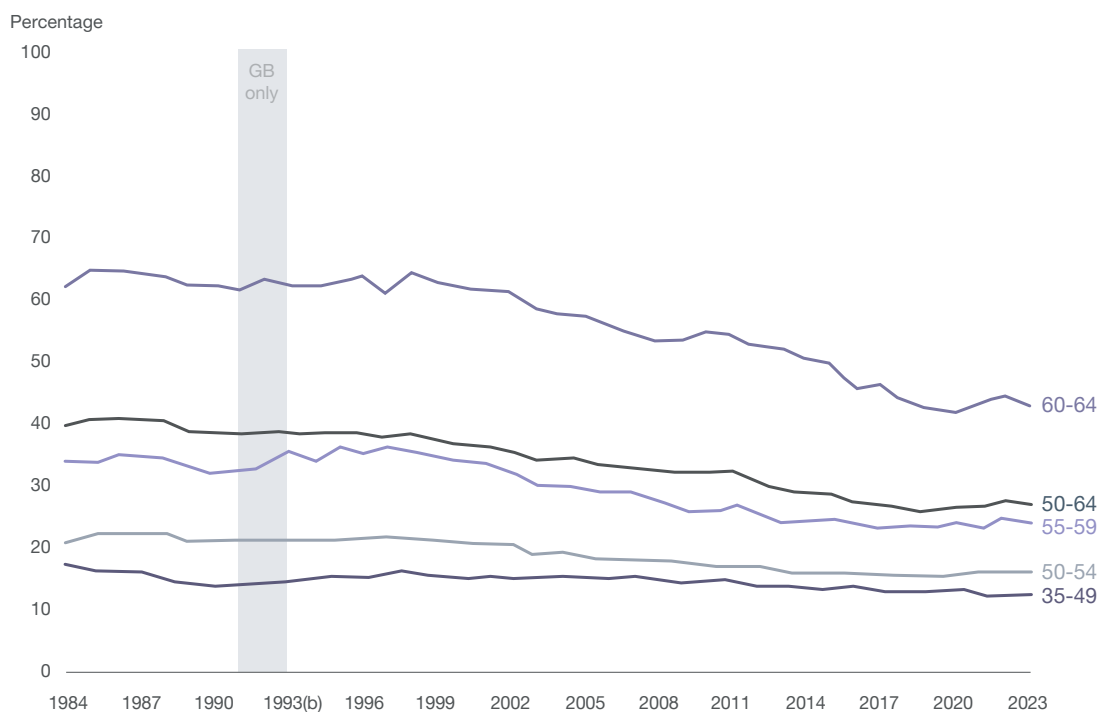


Figure 2: Economic Labour Market Status of Individuals Aged 50 and Over Statistics: (ONS, 2023).

Within this age group there are discrepancies in the root driver of economic inactivity. Those aged 60+ are more likely to report that they retired early, whilst those in their 50s are more likely to want to return to work (Learning and Work Institute, 2023). 50-59-year-olds are more likely to cite mental health and disability as reasons for being out of work and are most likely to be looking for work because they have concerns that their finances won't cover their retirement (ONS, 2022).

Data obtained from this year's ReStart cohort showed that more than 9 in 10 respondents (92%) said that they were returning to employment for 'Financial Stability' – a shift from last year when the largest response had been 'Sense of

Purpose' (Figure 3). Despite the shift, almost 80% of respondents still said returning to employment would give them a 'Sense of Purpose' and two thirds (67%) mentioned they wanted a 'Feeling of Belonging'.

Additionally, the 'Other' responses mentioned being a "role model for their children" and "enjoying work". This demonstrates broader and most likely interrelated reasons for seeking employment, although financial motivations were the largest sole driver. As it's thought that only around 50% of people aged over 50 believe their income after retirement is personally acceptable to live off (Centre for Ageing Better, 2022), it's not surprising that so many are seeking financial stability.

*From 2019 to 2022 the economic inactivity rate for 50-64-year-olds rose from 25.5% to 27.2%, higher than the average of 21% across all 16-64-year-olds as of July 2023. Over the same time period, there was an 16% increase in those aged 50-64 who were economically inactive because of long-term sickness.



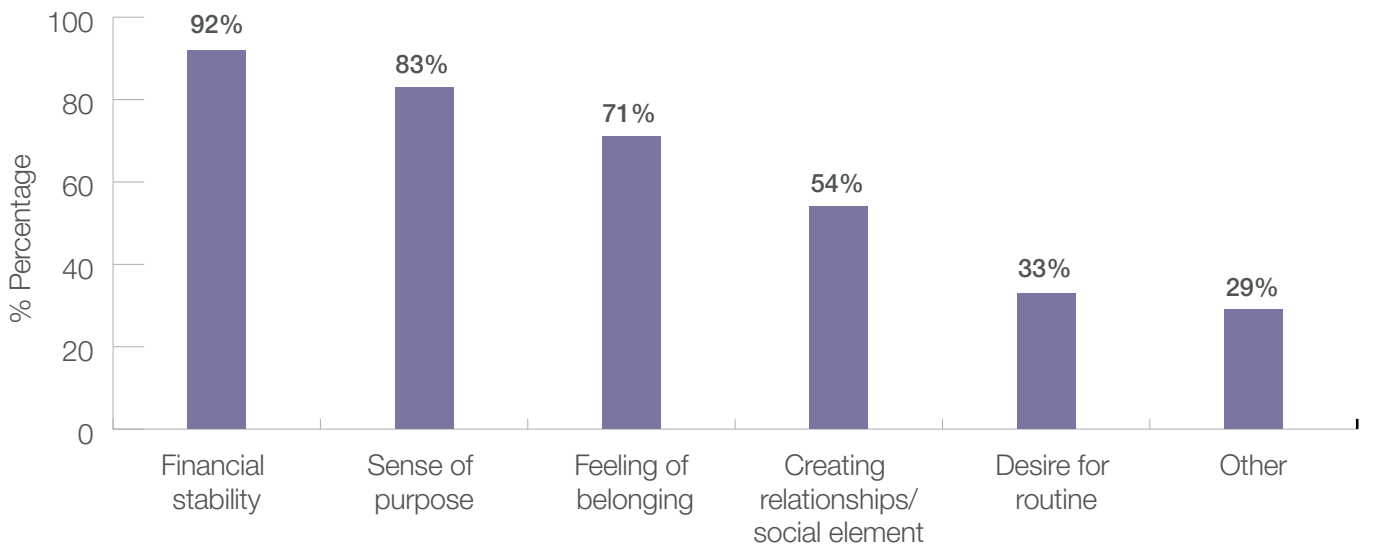


Figure 3: The 2023 ReStart cohort's reasons for returning to employment. Respondents could select more than one option.



The long-term projection of economic activity in older workers shows that over the last 40 years, more and more have been opting to work later in life, as demonstrated by Figure 4. The cost-of-living crisis in the UK, along with rising pension ages is likely at the root of this. The state pension age in the UK has been rising over the last decade. It currently stands at age 66, but in the next decade it's likely to reach 68 (ONS, 2023).

Four in five ReStart 2023 respondents (79%) said that they would hope to retire at or beyond 66, the state pension age in the UK. This is a significant jump from the 66% of ReStart's 2022 cohort who hoped to retire aged 66+; it is interesting to consider whether this is related to their profession or to the shift in motivation for financial stability.

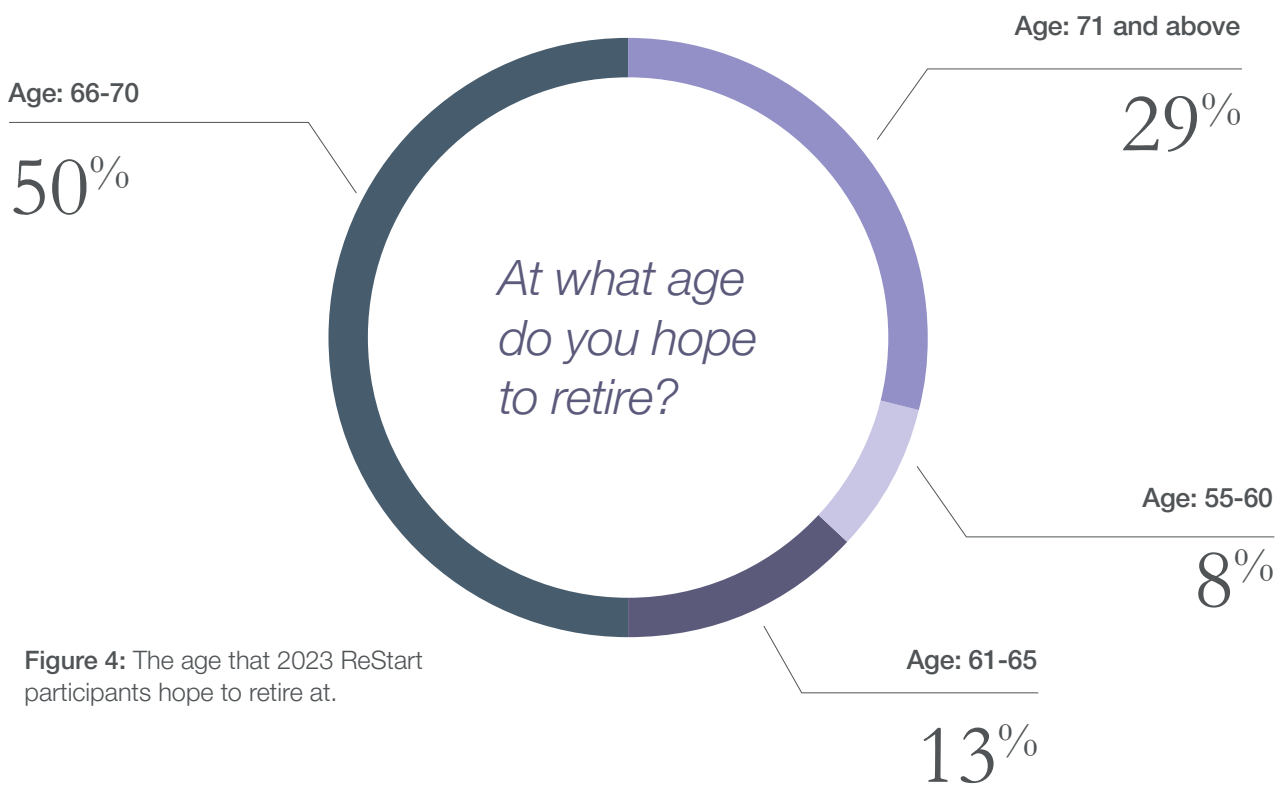


Figure 4: The age that 2023 ReStart participants hope to retire at.

“Organisations should support older workers because they have so much experience, skills and general wisdom to share! We know truly inclusive workplaces where diverse perspectives are encouraged are ultimately better for their customers and employees.”

ReStart Coach, 2023

Rising Employment

Covid-19 acted as a catalyst for reflecting on personal and professional priorities. Of those who were aged 50-64 and considering returning to work, the most important factors were flexibility (32%), decent wages (23%) and having the option to work remotely (12%) (ONS, 2022).

Full-time and part-time employment rates of people aged 50-64, UK

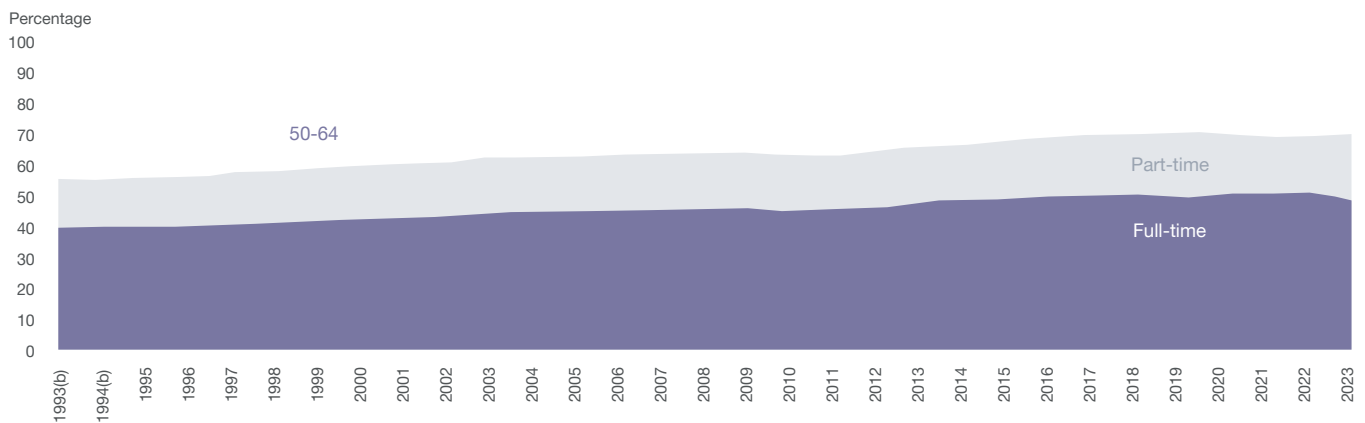


Figure 5: Economic Labour Market Status of individuals aged 50 and over statistics: (ONS, 2023).

The overall employment rate of those aged 50-64 has also been steadily increasing since the 1990s in the UK. It reached highs before Covid-19 struck and is only starting to show signs of increasing again this year, standing at 71.3%. These trends are driven by both full-time and part-time employment records, with 2023 showing a further increase in part-time 50-64-year-old workers (Figure 5).

“I would strongly recommend the programme to anyone in their 50s who could do with some help to find work again”

ReStart Participant, 2023

Tackling Age Biases

Despite an increase in attention to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives in recent years, more than one third of those seeking employment and aged 50+ felt their age was a disadvantage (**Centre for Ageing Better, 2023**). During the pandemic, over one third of the workers made redundant were 50 or older (**Centre for Ageing Better, 2022**). In the 2023 ReStart cohort, age discrimination was the most frequently selected barrier to employment, felt by over 80% of respondents before the programme and more than 70% after the programme (Figure 12).

With so many out-of-work 50-64-year-olds, organisations are losing out on employing talented workers. This is often compounded by other identity characteristics such as gender and race, so it's

important to consider the intersectional nature of bias and discrimination. Feeling alone in the search for employment later in life is difficult to navigate, which is why it's critical to invest in initiatives for older workers.

In 2023, more than one third of unemployed people (37.5%) aged 50-64 had been out of employment for more than a year (**Gov.UK, 2023**); making them more than twice as likely as younger generations to be facing this long-term unemployment (**Independent Age, 2023**). Data gathered by Connectr regarding applicants to the ReStart scheme in 2023 showed that 77% of the 294 total applicants were classed as long-term unemployed (Figure 6), more than double the national average, showing the critical impact that the programme is making.

“It’s so unusual to find resources for people who are over 50 and looking for work. You know, it really is rare.”

Juliette, ReStart Participant, 2023

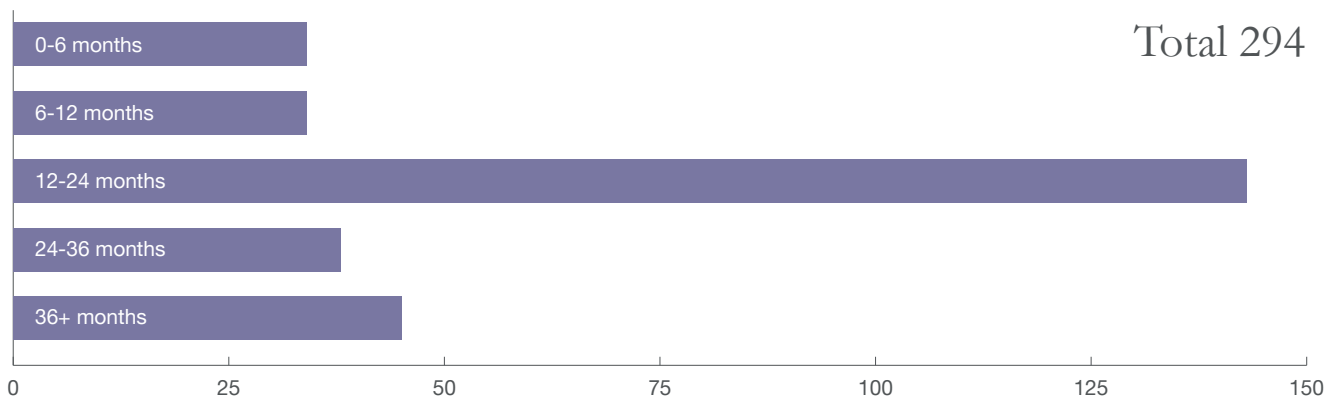


Figure 6: ReStart 2023 applications by months out of employment.

It's not only those who are already out of work who are being passed over; research from the **Executive Coaching Consultancy** shows that many older workers (particularly women) are often **overlooked** for promotional opportunities, in favour of younger talent. In the UK, 50-64-year-olds are least likely to receive additional training at work, which impedes their ability to develop new skills (**Centre for Ageing Better, 2022**).

However, some companies, industries and governments are innovating to tap into the older worker cohort. In Japan, the **oldest society** in the world, a new initiative by the Labour Minister will see older workers encouraged to take up internships in tech companies, to meet a growing demand for tech workers. In supporting older employees to upskill and continue to develop professionally, organisations will contribute to building **psychological safety** within intergenerational teams.

Reframing: From ‘Elders’ to ‘Experienced’

Supporting the over 50s feeds into a wider narrative in the world of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion of creating inclusive workplaces and promoting **inclusive leadership**. There are many benefits to engaging older workers. Older workers have more years of experience, knowledge and skills under their belts to share with other employees. They’ve experienced the world of work through different periods of their lives and have learned from considerable changes and challenges.

There are also financial benefits for bringing over 50s back to work. Increasing the number of workers aged 50+ in employment by just 1% would add £5.7billion to GDP in the UK (**Centre for Ageing Better, 2022**). There tends to be a lower turnover rate amongst older workers, which is beneficial for team stability, greater productivity and organisational growth.



Companies who want to stay ahead of the curve on high-performing teams need to rethink age biases and tap into the talent of the over 50s. If they don’t, it’s likely their competitors will.

“Companies need to carry on with these courses because there are so many people in similar situations who have a lot to give to the workforce but don’t have these opportunities.”

Dakhsa, ReStart Participant, 2023



Juliette's Story



Juliette was ReStart's furthest-travelling participant, but this didn't hamper her efforts to engage with the programme. She progressed in leaps and bounds, and now has an environmentally impactful new role. Juliette attributes the confidence ReStart helped her to build and the realisation of her strengths and drivers as what tipped the balance at her interview, reflecting on these moments being "pivotal" and "life-changing".

Before ReStart I was feeling completely ready for the scrap heap. I was really desperate to find a job post-Covid, which had ravaged my sector. I became aware of the programme, and with the Allen & Overy name I thought wow, maybe this could help. It's so unusual to find resources for people who are over 50 and looking for work. You know, it really is rare.

ReStart helped right from the first day – being in a room full of people of the same age group, all without jobs and all at different stages really helps. You feel that you're not alone.

When work evaporates and you find yourself without the opportunity to socialise – or 'workalise' – communicating with colleagues and other people, it's a massive shock, especially if you travelled a lot pre-Covid. You lose that almost unconscious confidence you had. During the ReStart programme, I sometimes found it challenging to be in the room, but I do think the in-person aspect is really important for things like motivation and connection. The balance of hybrid sessions was perfect and complementary.

The strengths profile and the values exercise were pivotal moments for me. In the interview process for my current role, it was incredible to realise "actually, this job really corresponds to me". And **I'd never really thought about me in the job hunt process before. I would say it was life-changing.**

I also found the mentor and the coach incredibly helpful, and again, so complementary to the group sessions. I think ReStart is a perfect mix as a whole, with varied methods of delivery, and exercises outside the course.

If I was faced with a job hunt again, instead of thinking "oh my goodness what am I going to do?", I would think "OK, let's get my folder out, maybe contact one of the cohort, or more, and ask for help and just get on with using all the various tools we have been given." **I definitely feel better equipped. I now have resources I can draw upon.**

It's great that after all this time – 25 years or more – I'm now doing something that's beneficial for the world and corresponds to my values. ReStart has helped me find a job – and better still, one which is perfect for me!

Barbara's Journey

One of Barbara's key take-aways from ReStart was learning how to reframe what she had previously thought of as limitations into strengths. With support from her mentor and the coaching sessions she challenged herself to turn barriers into assets that could make her a stand-out job candidate.

The mentoring was by far the most helpful part of the programme for me. **I got a lot of practical tips from my mentor and a lot of support, and that was invaluable really.** We have maintained our relationship and we still catch up regularly; so he's definitely someone I will try to keep in touch with.

I also thought the workshops were extremely helpful. One was about different working styles and how to approach others, one was how to better target the job you should apply for and make the applications more suitable for the role you are applying for.

I enjoyed being there, also helped by the fact that the Allen & Overy office is a beautiful place to be. But it was also nice that everything was so professional. I really enjoyed it. I also enjoyed the concept of a hybrid programme as you do need to meet people in person to establish a real contact; it's different when you meet them virtually.

This programme is very good and very thorough because it caters to everyone – everyone can find something in the programme.

My field is communication, and it's quite difficult to work in communication in a language which is not your mother tongue. So even though I'm very fluent, it's not my native language, and I do feel like I have some limitations there. I'm now trying to broaden the possible jobs I could apply for and to not see it as a barrier, like before, but instead to look for positions where being bilingual is one of the requirements!

I'm a bit more optimistic which is good. **I have a more can-do attitude than before. That's for sure.** I'm sort of thinking – come on, there's always something I can do. So far, I have applied to four jobs, and I've got two interviews, which is quite good!



Impact Framework

Whilst A&O is delighted to hear about many participants getting back to work following the programme, each person's journey to realising their next career steps looks different. A&O seeks to uncover the programme's holistic impacts, by cultivating the three ReStart pillars: 'Mindset and Momentum', 'Skill Sets' and 'Career Readiness and Planning'. These are the programme's short- to mid-term outcomes. It's intended that if progress is seen in these areas, the 'Resourcefulness' of participants will develop (Figure 7) which will enable the individual to take steps which are right for their specific goals.

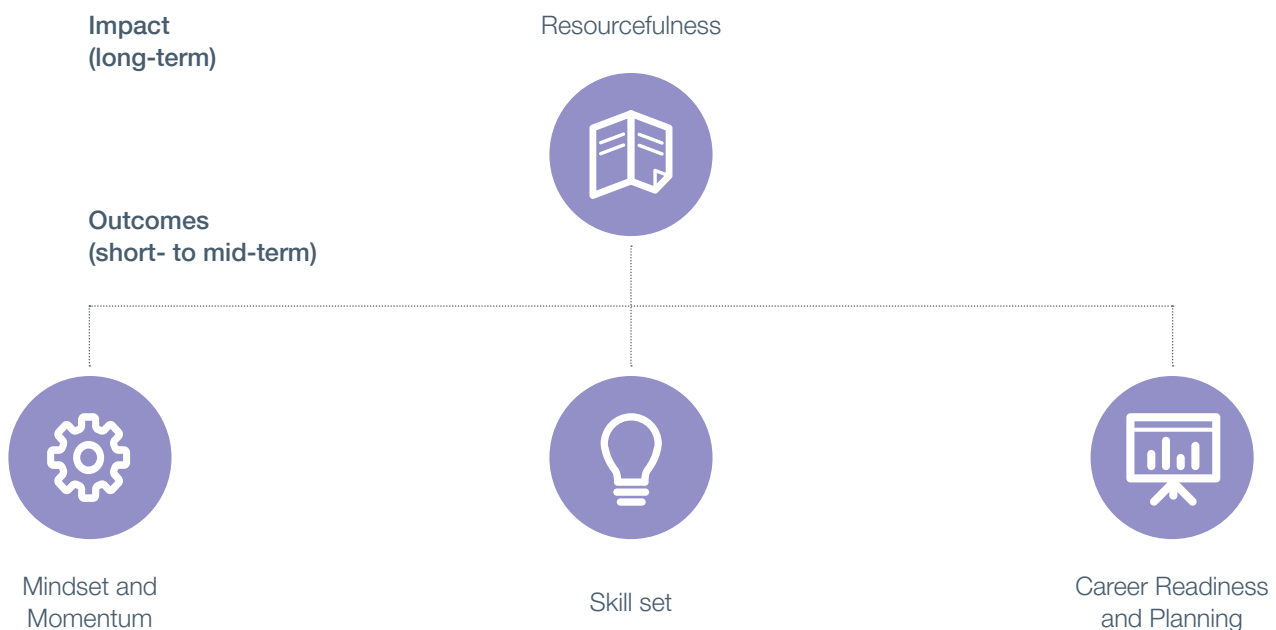


Figure 7: ReStart's Impact Pillars, The Executive Coaching Consultancy.

While employment status after the programme is collected, solely using this as an indicator of success would overlook the steps that individuals have taken in their journey to re-entering employment. Through the pre- and post-programme surveys, it is hoped that personal growth and professional development are captured, rather than solely focusing on whether participants are in work.

The barriers facing participants are also recorded, to provide a clearer picture of what seeking employment at age 50-plus looks like. ReStart enables participants to carefully consider which employment opportunities complement their lifestyles and fit their needs. ReStart puts the participants at the centre of their career journey and encourages them to exercise resourcefulness in a way that is meaningful to them.

Measuring Change

To evaluate the impact of ReStart 2023, A&O partnered with the **Good Business Initiative** (GBI), taking a mixed-method approach. GBI have assessed data collected from the ReStart participants through three surveys to measure the participants' progression across the three outcome areas. The surveys' aim is to capture how the knowledge gained on the programme has translated into changes in the feelings and behaviours of the individual, as well as showing any results from these changes. Across all three surveys we saw fantastic response rates (Figure 8).

Survey Name	When Sent	No of Respondents	Response Rate
Pre (or pre wave)	Launch session: 2/3/23	24	89%
Post (or post wave)	Workshop 10: 25/5/23	24	89%
Post 3 months (or post wave 3)	Catch-up session: 20/8/23	26	96%

Figure 8: ReStart survey details.

In the following 'Programme Impact' section, data is compared from the launch session and the catch-up session three months after the programme ended. This is because the data obtained three months after the programme is more representational of the lasting impacts of the programme. Usually, immediately after a programme, participants have inflated senses of achievement. But three months down the line, the participants have been back to their day-to-day lives and without the structure of the ReStart programme, so this is a more accurate reflection of their individual long-lasting take-aways.

To complement the quantitative research method, interviews were conducted with six participants to produce richer insights into their experiences on the programme. Additionally, 22 A&O mentors were surveyed after the programme, to provide alternate perspectives on ReStart's impact and the participants' journeys.



Programme Reach

The ReStart recruitment campaign undertaken by Connectr meant the programme was incredibly sought after. This year 294 applications were initiated, of which 169 were completed. This was a staggering 202% increase compared to 2022, which is reflective of the growing needs of this demographic group.

▲ 202%

Following a successful campaign, 27 participants enrolled in the ReStart programme. Of these 27, the age breakdowns are as follows:

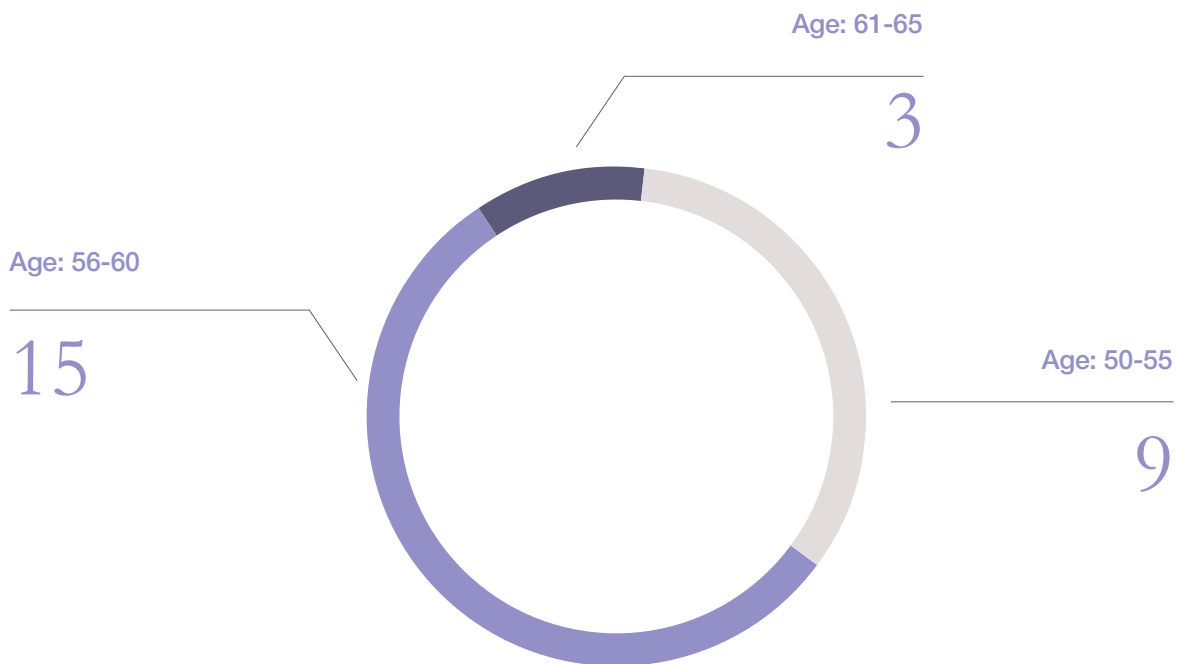


Figure 9: ReStart participant's ages 2023.



Programme Impact

100% of ReStart 2023 participants saw improvements across all three Impact areas as a direct result of the programme. It's valuable to know that their Skill Sets, Mindset and Momentum, and Career Readiness and Planning have 'Significantly Increased'; by 83%, 92% and 83% respectively (Figure 10). No participants thought that these areas had been unaffected by the programme.

Mindset and Momentum was the area with the most change, with ReStart providing the cohort with the focus and structure to feel ready to succeed. Participants mention throughout how ReStart has impacted their lives, with confidence levels increasing and the value of the support network they have gained through the programme.

It's also positive to note the large improvements in their Skill Sets, with participants feeling more adept and confident in the technical areas such as improving their CVs, LinkedIn, the importance of networks and interview skills. Participants are also better prepared to continue their employment journey. They have developed their Career Readiness and Planning, with a greater understanding of their strengths and experience and how they can use this to help them in their employment journey.

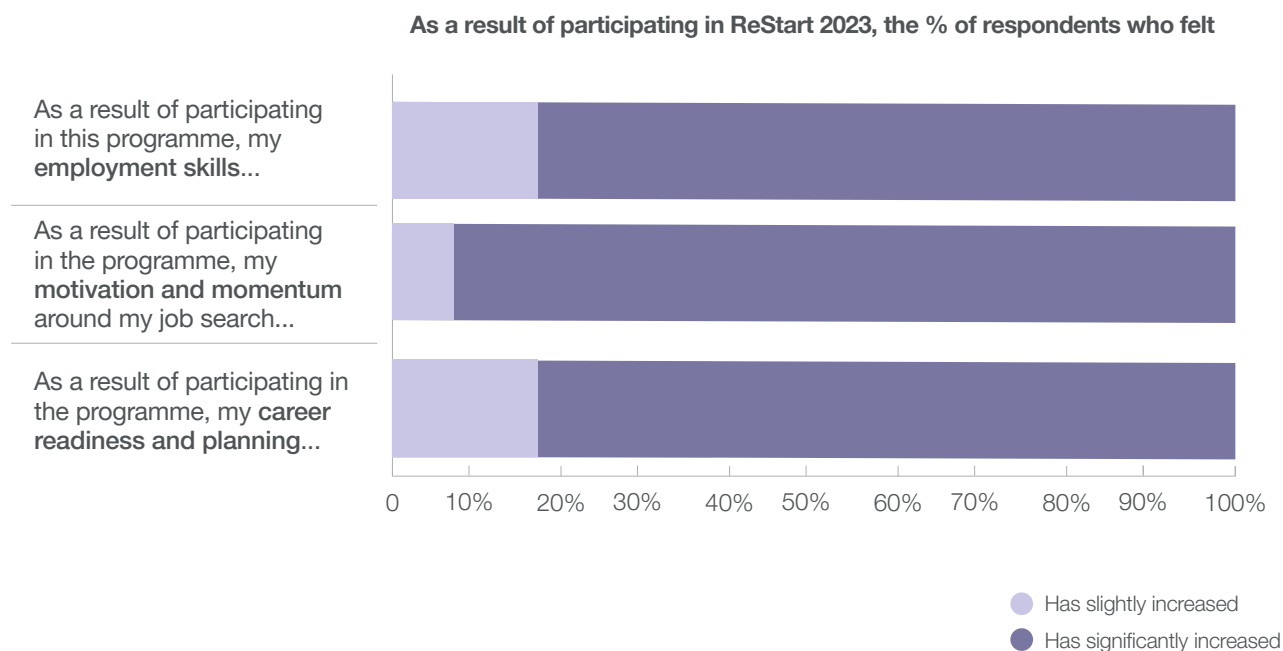


Figure 10: The percentage of respondents who saw change across the three Impact areas due to the programme.

All elements of the programme received positive feedback, with the mentoring sessions and sessions by coaches and facilitators receiving lots of praise. For many respondents their peers were also an important and valuable part of their journey, more so perhaps than in other years. This cohort referenced time and time again the value of their peers' support and the feeling of "not doing it alone".

When asked about what participants think ReStart helped with the most, the responses spoke about the journey they had been on throughout the course, guided by the tasks and supported by their coaches and mentors as well as the other participants – demonstrating how the breadth of areas covered within the programme was beneficial.

“I think ReStart is a perfect mix as a whole, with varied methods of delivery, and preparation exercises outside the course.”

Juliette, ReStart Participant, 2023

The majority of respondents shared how ReStart had helped them to rebuild their confidence: “I think ReStart was an extremely well-designed programme which helped in many areas, but I think the main one was helping improve confidence in my abilities”. Another said they are grateful for “Believing in myself again, identifying my strengths, and giving me the tools to embrace the next leg of my career and life journey, in the company of a wonderful and supportive network of new friends. Thank you.”



Employment and Opportunities Post-ReStart

An overwhelming 84% of participants did not feel confident about their job search before the ReStart programme. However, after the programme, 96% felt confident, with 21% very confident, again supporting the feedback of the big improvements in

feelings of confidence. When asked if they had secured employment after the programme, 58% had yet to do this. However, it is still positive to see that 42% make up the 'Yes' (15%) and 'Other' (27%) respondents.

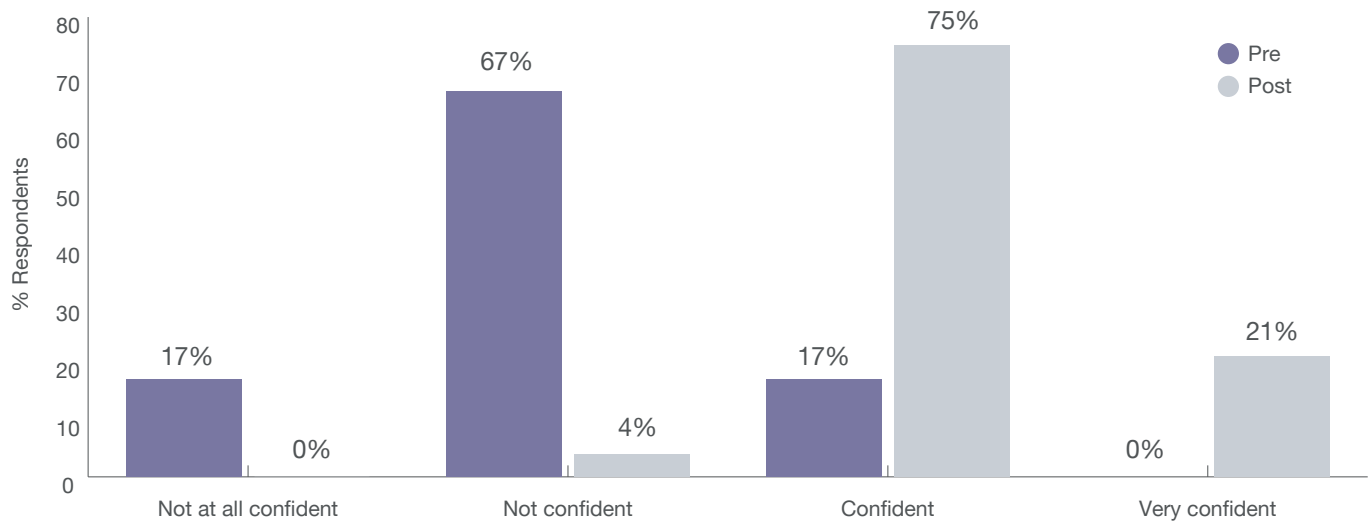


Figure 11: The increase in ReStart participant's confidence levels from before to after the programme.

The 'Other' responses show a variety of next steps following the programme, including starting their own company, undertaking further training and using that in volunteer work, and project work. One respondent stated: "The programme gave me the confidence to say yes to a three-month project which has been instrumental in further identifying what I want/need out of my next career decision."

A couple of respondents mentioned how the programme had encouraged them to explore further

training opportunities such as upskilling in office/computer skills to access other online training courses. Furthermore, nearly all participants emphasised the importance of the supportive network of friends they gained through the programme, highlighting its value in creating access to new opportunities: "**I met and built good relationships with the ReStart cohort.** The sharing of information between us is invaluable and has given me access to courses/seminars etc that I wouldn't have been exposed to."



Barriers to Employment

When asked about the barriers to gaining employment that participants felt they experienced, the average number of barriers fell from 6.0 before the programme to 3.75 after. This is a really positive change that indicates that ReStart has supported participants to develop their skills, think about their options and role preferences in new lights, and change their approach to the employment search.

Before the programme, age, more specifically, being seen as too old, or not having the tech skills of younger employees, or not feeling as “sharp as their younger selves”, was referenced by respondents. Out of all the suggested barriers, 'age discrimination' was listed most frequently both before (by 83%) and after (by 75%) the programme, which indicates the systemic bias that an individual typically can't alter alone. However, it was positive to see the reduction in how many times that barrier was listed after the programme.

The next-most frequently cited barriers before the programme were 'Not knowing where to apply and look for jobs' and **Lack of confidence in my ability fell from 67% to 13%** and 29% respectively after the programme. In line with the responses from other questions around the recruitment process, **Findings applications and interviews complicated decreased from 38% to 4%** which was fantastic to see. The 'Other' responses can largely be covered by the other barriers, albeit with more specific details. One 'Other' response expanded that they felt having career breaks and gaps in employment were still discriminated against.

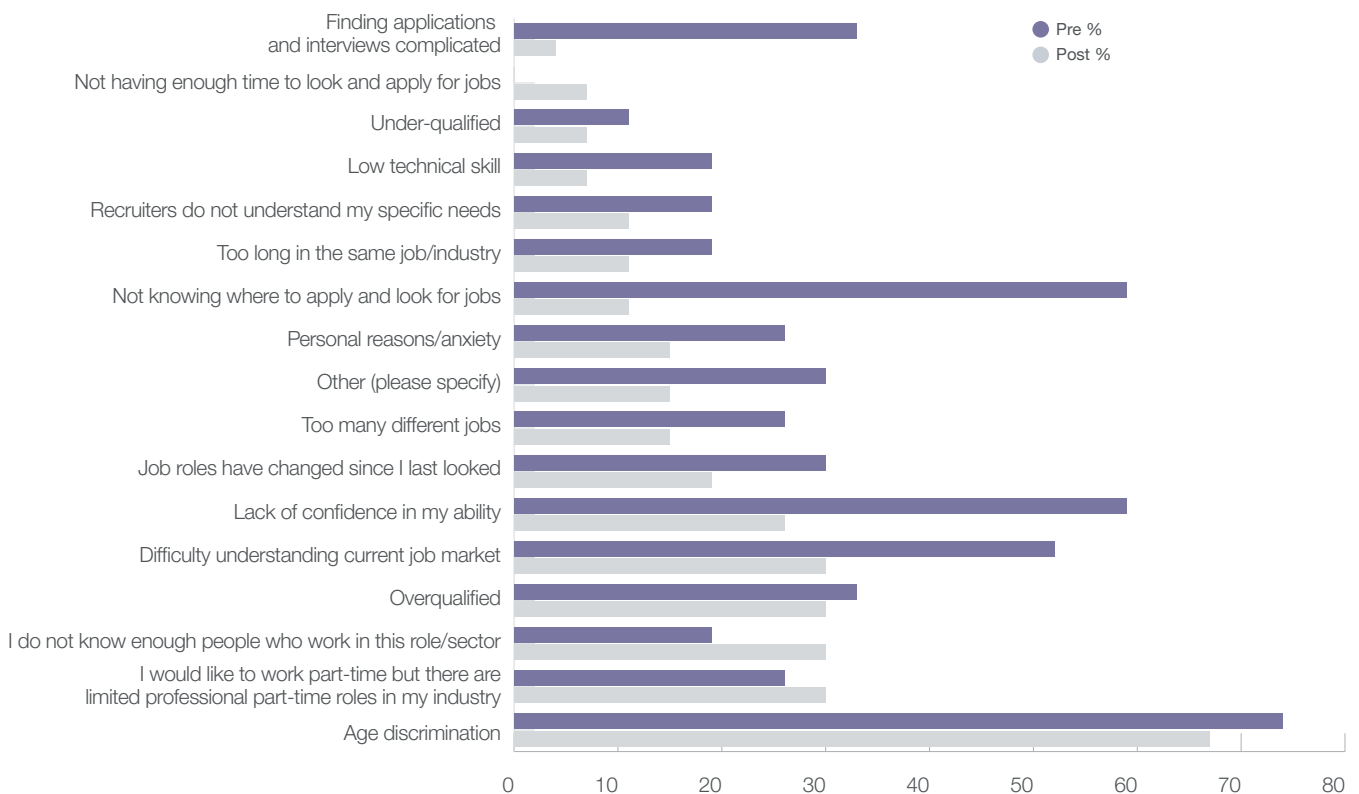


Figure 12: The barriers to gaining employment which the participants felt they experienced, both before and after the programme.

Programme Elements

Every participant saw value in every form of the programme's components, which is very positive to see (Figure 13). 100% of respondents saw the workshops and mentoring as 'Valuable' or 'Significantly Valuable'. More than 90% of respondents also saw the Coaching sessions as either 'Valuable' or 'Significantly Valuable', with two respondents describing them as 'Slightly Valuable'.

Peers/Other Participants is a new option for 2023. This option seeks to quantify the anecdotal feedback from previous ReStart programmes relating to peers. As this was the programme element that the highest percentage of participants ranked as 'Significantly Valuable' – by 88% of respondents – this demonstrates the importance of peer support. One respondent said: **“The kindness shown to us all, the journey we have been taken on, has been incredible and to see my fellow participants blossom has been truly inspirational. We are so lucky to have been part of this.”**

Overall, how valuable were the following elements of the programme to you?

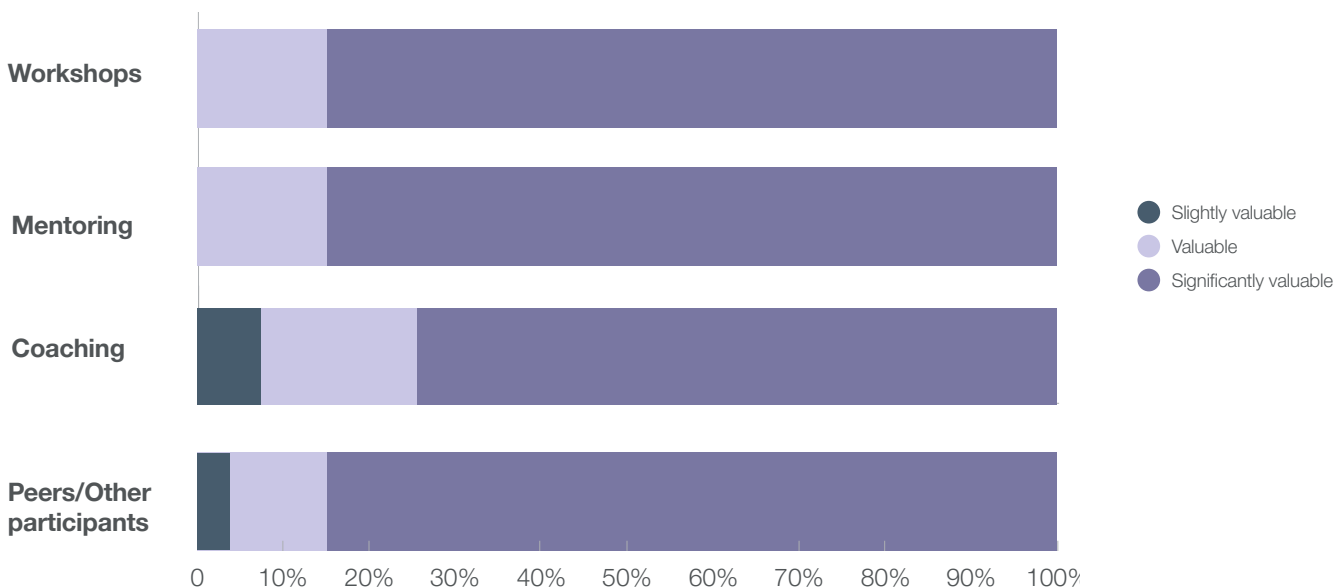


Figure 13: The participants were asked how valuable the different programme elements were.

“The coaching gave me a lot of confidence; it really shook me up. The coach said “Think about your strengths. What would you really like to do? What motivates you?”

Dean, ReStart Participant, 2023

“My coach and mentor were really good, I was delighted with both of them. I liked bouncing ideas off them and they went with what I wanted as opposed to dictating the content or the structure.”

Sheila, ReStart Participant, 2023

Mentoring

The feedback for mentors was overwhelmingly positive, with **100% rating mentors as ‘Valuable’ or ‘Significantly Valuable’**. Mentors helped participants on their journeys, giving honest feedback and acting as non-judgemental sounding boards. Participants felt mentors were interested in their development, were supportive and that they held them to account due to the regularity of meeting throughout the programme. Additionally, participants valued being able to hear advice from people with shared experience or up-to-date (and relevant) experience of the job market.

Workshops

100% rated the workshops as ‘Valuable’ or ‘Significantly Valuable’. Workshops offered a psychologically safe environment to go through a range of insightful and informative exercises as a group. Participants valued the practical and useful tools and techniques, as well as the fact that these could be revisited alone. Survey respondents noted how the group discussions were well-moderated and facilitators offered new perspectives and a chance for individuals to share their experiences.

The time and experience in the office environment was useful, however one respondent did comment on reducing the length of these sessions or increasing the number of breaks to improve them. Another respondent offered that the expert LinkedIn session could have been done earlier in their journey, so they had more time to fine-tune their skills whilst the programme was ongoing.

Coaching

Many respondents talked about how the insightful exercises helped them to understand themselves better.

92% saw the coaching sessions as either ‘Valuable’ or ‘Significantly Valuable’. The most popular elements were the strengths, values, purposes and goals exercises, and the activities related to thinking about how personal and professional lives intersect and affect each other.

There was one piece of negative feedback indicating the importance of finding the right coach match, but overall, the coaching was motivating and confidence boosting.

Outcome Area 1: Skillset

There has been big improvement across all of the statements relating to skills. **'I know how to improve my CV', increased to 80% in the three-month post-programme survey, up from 25%** in the pre-programme survey, and 'I understand the importance of having a network to support me in my career goals' and 'I feel confident about the way I come across in interviews' increased from 25% and 21% to 75% and 63% respectively.

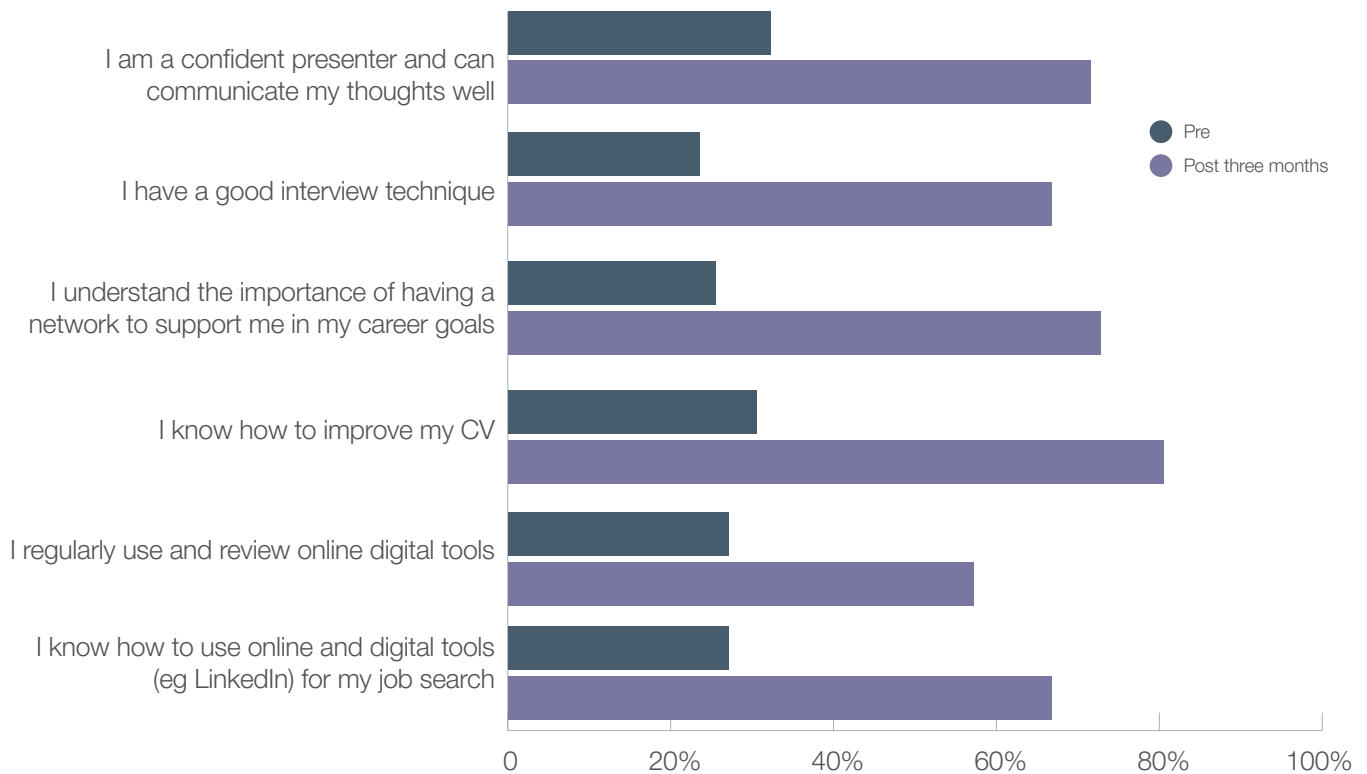


Figure 14: Participants who responded that they felt 'good' or 'excellent' to each statement relating to Skill Set, before the programme and three months after completing it.

Outcome Area 2: Mindset and Momentum

Again, across all statements relating to the motivations and drivers of participants there were huge increases from before to three months after the programme. 'I have examined how my current set of skills and experience could be applied to different specialties' **saw the largest increase with over 60% scoring this a good or excellent from a base of just 8%.**

'I am aware of my personal 'brand' and I know how to develop it' alongside 'I handle employment setbacks to my employment search well' **also saw big improvements, rising from 13% and 17% to an average of 64% and 70%** respectively across the two waves. Whilst 'I know what motivates me' saw a smaller increase compared to other statements (from 42% to 96%), almost all respondents rated themselves as good or excellent at this, which is brilliant to see.

"I feel a lot more confident. I've got a change in attitude and self-motivation."

Dean, ReStart Participant, 2023

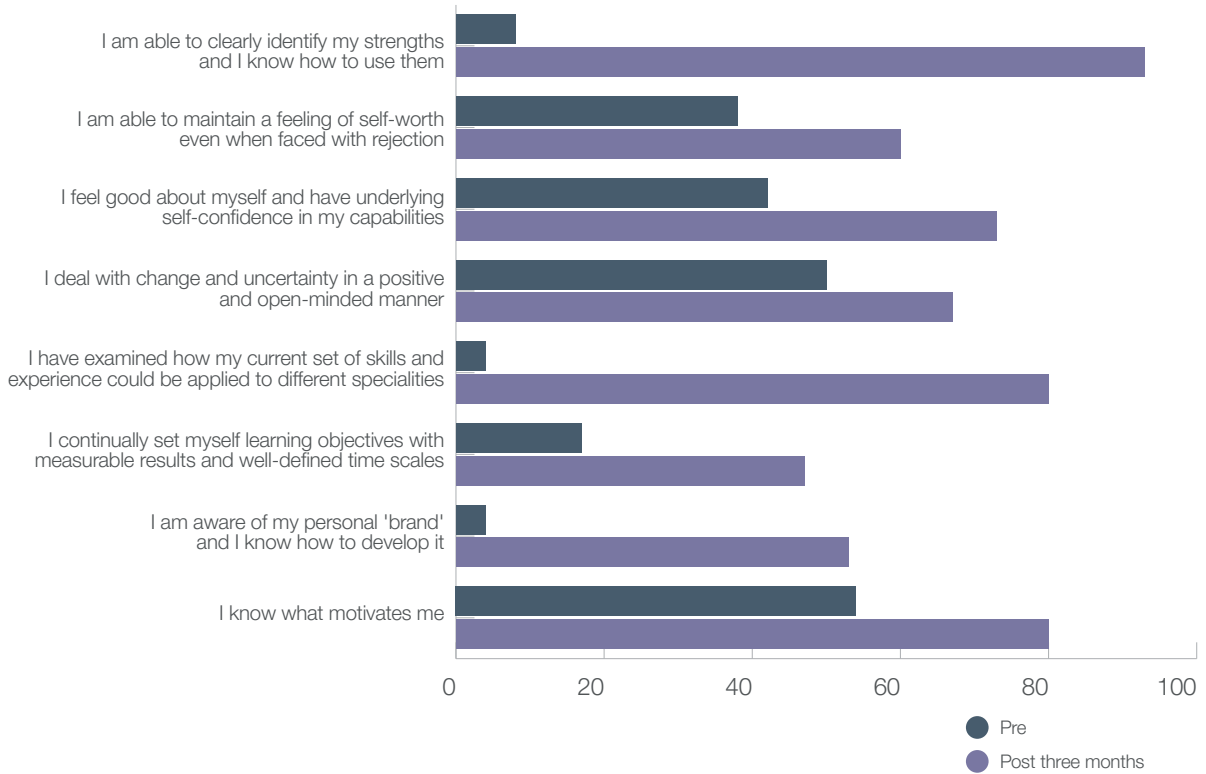


Figure 15: Participants who responded that they felt 'good' or 'excellent' to each statement relating to Mindset and Momentum before the programme and three months after completing it.

Outcome Area 3: Career Readiness and Planning

Across the board there were improvements in Career Readiness and Planning. The statement 'I have made informed decisions on my future career, based on my strengths, values, experience and opportunities' **increased from 13% to an average of 82%** in the post-programme survey waves – demonstrating the practical impact of the programme for participants. It is very encouraging to see the increase in the statement 'I am aware of the steps I have to take **to gain employment**' from 17% to an average of 82% in the post 3-month survey.

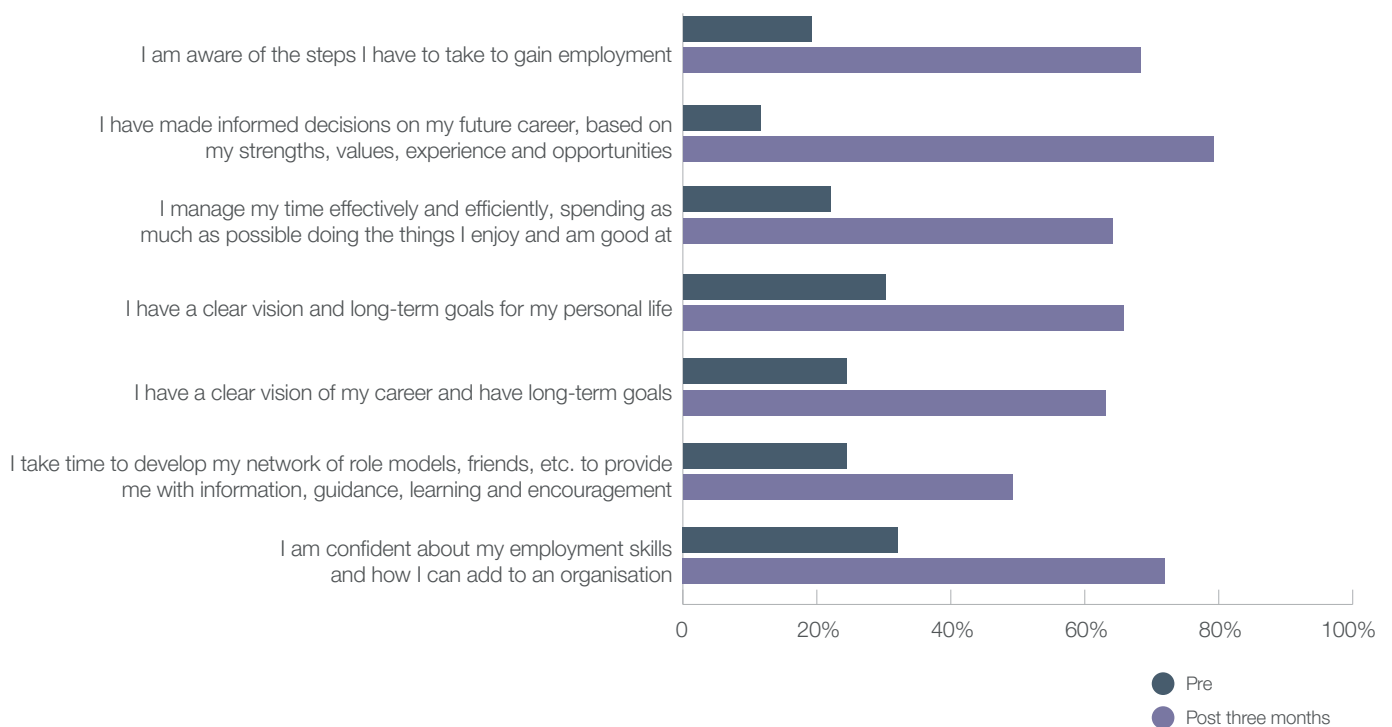


Figure 16: Participants who responded that they felt 'good' or 'excellent' to each statement relating to Career Readiness and Planning, before the programme and three months after completing it.

Mentor Perspective

The 27 ReStart mentors from A&O were invited to share their reflections on the participants' journeys. There was an 81% response rate to the mentor survey, with 22 mentors responding. Of the 22:



100%

thought they had good relationships with their mentees



100%

thought it's important for A&O to provide volunteering opportunities to staff



100%

said they would recommend being a ReStart mentor to a colleague



95%

said they would volunteer to be a ReStart mentor again. The other respondent was 'neutral' and said they would volunteer in the future but that in the short term their work commitments wouldn't allow

“The scheme resonates with me as I was made redundant before joining A&O in 2020 and I am around the target age for the ReStart Programme. It is a fantastic opportunity to help and support somebody take the next steps in their career journey.”

Dan, ReStart Mentor, 2023

“I would love to be part of this programme again. This programme has given me immense satisfaction and has helped me to discover myself and also improved my emotional intelligence behaviours.”

Naresh, ReStart Mentor, 2023

Considerations

Looking Externally

It's interesting to note how 79% of ReStart survey respondents said they would like to retire above the state pension age of 66. Considering publicly available employment data is widely recorded only from ages 16-64, we are at present missing the age 65+ workers from the equation. National data collection needs to be adjusted with rising state pension ages and the motivations of ageing workforces to account for accurate portrayal of workers in the UK.

Organisational Retention of Over 50s

We asked the participants what they think organisations should be doing to support older workers. The aim was to further understand the lived experiences of those who are over 50 and out of work. Feedback was focused on four main themes.

- **Tailored recruitment strategies** – ensuring that recruiters understand the benefits and also the needs of over 50's returning to the workplace.
- **Inclusivity** – from adverts to job specifications to interviewers – employers should receive training and support to be more inclusive. Similar to employers being Menopause Friendly accredited.
- **More training and schemes** – work experience/ part-time opportunities/internships specifically for the over 50s. These could be government or privately funded opportunities.
- **Connection** – Specific over 50s networking events were mentioned.

In specific reference to what more ReStart itself could do, there were a few mentions of how the programme could be extended further to help connect people with recruiters who have experience working with the over 50's. A&O are pleased with the participants' suggestions and are looking at ways they can implement this.

Intersectionality

Statistics show that more women aged 50+ are out of work than their male counterparts. In 2023 there were 3.5 million people aged 50- 64 years who were economically inactive in the UK, of which 40% were men (1.4 million) and 60%, or 2.1 million, were women (**Gov.UK, 2023**). Women tend to be carers, typically for children or older relatives much earlier in life than men, which can be a barrier to them returning to work. Furthermore, one in ten women around this age bracket leave work every year due to symptoms of the menopause (**Fawcett Society, 2022**). Additionally, older Black and minority ethnic individuals face more discrimination than their white counterparts. Older Black British job applicants are 9.4 times less likely to be interviewed than older white British candidates (**Centre For Ageing Better, 2023**). Whilst data pertaining to ethnicity and race was not collected in the last four years, the data shows that significantly more women are applying to ReStart than men. The table shows the percentage increase from the number of applications completed by men to the number from women each year. This is curious, and poses several questions, including: What more could be done to provide tailored and targeted support to older people out of work?

	Completed Applications Each Year			
	2023	2022	2021	2020
% increase from men to women applying	49%	15%	111%	39%

Figure 17: The table shows the jump in the percentage of completed applications for ReStart from men to women that are received each year.

To ensure ReStart reaches those who face disproportionate bias and barriers to re-entering work, it's recommended that a deeper understanding of the participants is conducted for next year's cohort. A&O and Connectr have been discussing how to learn more about ReStart applicants and their motivations to seek work, to ensure that those who would benefit the most from the initiative are reached.



Petya's Journey

With ReStart's help, Petya has altered her approach to her job search, to analyse if a job is right for her, rather than just if she's right for the job. The passion of the facilitators, support from her mentor and the community of the cohort has been instrumental in her success in transforming her approach and building her confidence.

I feel not only confident, but I feel more powerful now.

I've been thinking about my strengths and using them in this process of looking for a job. Now I think about if I am good for this company, or if I can bring anything new to the table.

I am so grateful that I met so many nice people and made new friends; some of us have met up many times since. A few have started working and let us know in the group chat. I asked one man with civil service experience if he could help me as I was applying for a role there, we met before the last group session to work on the application which I really liked.

I have had interviews for two jobs since the programme. For one company, I had one interview and the other I had two interviews. And even though the results were not positive from the interviews, I feel more confident after the programme. **Every session, I could find something that was very useful for me.**

I am so grateful to Sue and all the others involved in the programme. **My ReStart mentor helped me a lot. She was one of my references for a volunteer job that I applied for.** The people who teach us these new things are so passionate about them and about how we can help each other. I don't have words to explain!



Dakhsa's Story



Dakhsa's take-away from ReStart has been how to focus on her transferable skills to seek work in different environments. The programme helped her to think outside the box career-wise and realise how important it is to be in a role where she can have space to grow and be challenged.

Before I started this course and **being in my 50's, I initially thought it was too late for me to start my second career** in an office environment, as my working background is in Retail.

That is why it is so important that companies carry on offering these types of courses as there are so many people in similar situations, who given the opportunity can bring a level of experience, critical thinking and knowledge that simply cannot be taught to the workforce.

Being a part of this course, I soon realised that I was not alone in my thinking. This was a real comfort to me; it was uplifting and reassuring.

I have done online courses before, but this was different. From day one, there was an instant sense of community and belonging. It has been vital in helping me build on my knowledge, skills and confidence across several areas. Accredited coaches from ECC provided one-to-one coaching sessions and A&O volunteers provided invaluable mentoring.

I underestimated the course; it gave me a lot more than I realised. It's made me think outside the box and it's challenged me. **I think it's opened possibilities that I wouldn't have thought of otherwise.**

With my ReStart mentor, I realised that the skills I have are transferable, which has opened up new opportunities for me, because I am willing to learn and be challenged. The hunger I have, it excites me.

The support that was offered was immense. The facilitators boosted my confidence, the way that they were presenting – it didn't feel like learning. They made it fun and personal; they gave their own examples.

Overall, the course has helped me tremendously. I definitely see a difference in myself and my confidence has returned. The ReStart programme works, it definitely works.

ReStart Partners

ReStart brings together a number of organisations collaborating to address broader social issues.

Partnership Organisations

Allen & Overy is an international legal practice with approximately 5,800 people, including some 590 partners, working in over 40 offices worldwide. For many years, a key theme of our pro bono and community investment work has been to improve access to education for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. We undertake this work in virtually every office across our network and support it with funding from the A&O Foundation. Schemes like Smart Start and PRIME in the UK have had a positive impact on individuals and the wider legal community to ensure quality work experience and employment opportunities are available to everyone.

The **Career Innovation Company** provided ReStart participants with free access to its online career resources and Be Bold in your Career Programme. “We work with organisations to engage and empower their employees, evolving careers to make their business ready for the future. By aligning career development with business goals, we support organisations to unlock potential, offer opportunity, and build the skills and capabilities they need for growth.”

Born from the belief that every person should have equal power and opportunity to shape their future, **Connectr** delivers both multi-generational diverse talent acquisition solutions and mentoring technology alongside wider bespoke services to support enterprise partners in creating the talent success stories of tomorrow. Through a unique blend of digital and in-person engagement, Connectr supports A&O to target, source and place participants onto their ReStart programme and provide key upskilling support throughout the process via employability sessions.

As well as engaging, screening and onboarding participants, Connectr’s team supports them to feel tech-ready ahead of their first digital workshop. Through team check-in calls and digital support via their engagement platform, Connectr ensures all ReStart participants get the most out of the programme and feel confident to succeed in their next steps.

Embedding Performance (EP) has been delivering training, coaching and consulting with global clients across several sectors for many years. As their name suggests, they are committed to designing and delivering development interventions that stick and enhance organisational performance. They have a wealth of experience of working with professional service firms, building skills and confidence in essential capabilities including project management, internal consulting, influencing, facilitation and presentations skills.

The Executive Coaching Consultancy (ECC) are a women-founded B Corp and Employee Ownership Trust. Their mission is to create fairer and more equitable workplace environments using coaching as an enabler for change. ECC provide organisations with the insights and coaching solutions they need to create more equitable workplaces and embrace diversity. ECC partnered with A&O on the design of the ReStart programme. This included three days of workshops for participants and mentor training for A&O volunteers, delivered by ECC facilitators and coaches. In addition, 18 executive coaches each gave six hours of 1:1 coaching time to participants, plus additional training for mentors to complement the workshops and add highly tailored, individual support.

The Good Business Initiative (GBI) is a not-for-profit organisation sponsored and launched by ECC in 2018. ECC provides its ReStart programme contribution through GBI. GBI also compiled this impact report on behalf of A&O. GBI works with organisations to help them improve their positive impact on society.

Luminate delivered a session to ReStart participants on building resilience. “Luminate is a mental health consultancy, working with businesses and their employees to radically improve workplace cultures. Founded in 2015, their innovative wellbeing programmes can achieve seismic change – boosting productivity, reducing staff sickness, attracting new talent, and helping improve employee wellbeing across all levels of the organisation.”

Sarae Pratt Leadership Coaching & Training is led by Sarae Pratt, who has over 20 years of experience and education in HR, people and leadership development. Together, with her associates, they deliver interactive, impactful workshops, programmes and coaching paths to enable leaders to discover and refine their authentic and sustainable leadership practices. As a career transformation expert, Sarae has created and delivered numerous promotion development centres and employability initiatives for corporates, professional services firms and international business schools. Within ReStart, Sarae's session focused on holistic job searching, building on previous workshop outcomes on values, experiences and strength identification.



“Before I started this course and being in my 50s, I initially thought it was too late for me to start my second career... I soon realised that I was not alone in my thinking”

Dakhsa, ReStart Participant, 2023



“I think ReStart was an extremely well-designed programme which helped in many areas, but I think the main one was helping improve confidence in my abilities.”

ReStart Participant, 2023



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