

# ReStart impact report 2025



ReStart 2025 demonstrates what is possible when technological progress aligns with human progress.

**FIND OUT MORE**

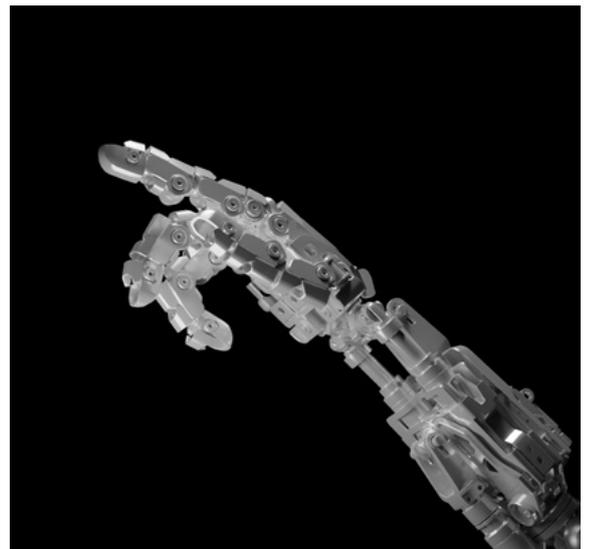
# Executive *summary*



As workplaces accelerate the adoption of AI, the human side of transformation is falling behind. Technology is reshaping roles, skills, and even what it means to be an “expert,” yet many people strategies remain rooted in another era. One of predictable careers and early exits.

For many over-50s, this gap is personal. They sit at the center of the modern workforce but too often at the edge of workforce planning. They carry the judgment, adaptability, and perspective that technology can't imitate, yet face systems that quietly exclude them.

*“ReStart helped me realize I still have something to offer and that it's needed.”*





This year's ReStart participants described that experience with striking honesty. Many had built long, successful careers only to find themselves invisible after redundancy or a career break. Recruitment technology filtered them out before an interview; job descriptions spoke a new language. "I didn't want to stop working," one participant said. "I just needed work to look a little different."

ReStart 2025 shows what happens when that exclusion is replaced with opportunity. Within weeks, participants began to rebuild their confidence and purpose. Self-belief rose by more than 60%, and perceived barriers to employment halved. Three months later, two-thirds had secured new roles or meaningful opportunities. When people are re-equipped and supported, they don't slow down—they move forward with momentum.

"ReStart helped me realize I still have something to offer and that it's needed."

These findings echo a wider trend. A 70-year-old today performs at the same cognitive level as a 53-year-old in 2000,<sup>[1]</sup> yet UK labor participation among 55 to 64-year-olds still lags behind peer economies.<sup>[2]</sup> The problem isn't capability, it's workforce culture and design.

If AI is rewriting the way we work, employers must rethink the human framework that supports it. Integrating over-50s into workforce strategy is not about sentiment; it's about resilience, innovation, and long-term productivity. Participant feedback backs research. If organizations are to reap the benefits older workers bring to work, they will need to audit their recruitment systems for bias, extend learning and development across the full working lifespan, and build cultures where experience is valued as a source of strength, not a sign of decline.

ReStart 2025 demonstrates what is possible when technological progress aligns with human progress. It offers a practical blueprint for how employers can future-proof both productivity and purpose by re-engaging those too often left behind by transformation.

AI may be teaching machines to think faster, but the future will belong to employers wise enough to help people of every age think deeper.

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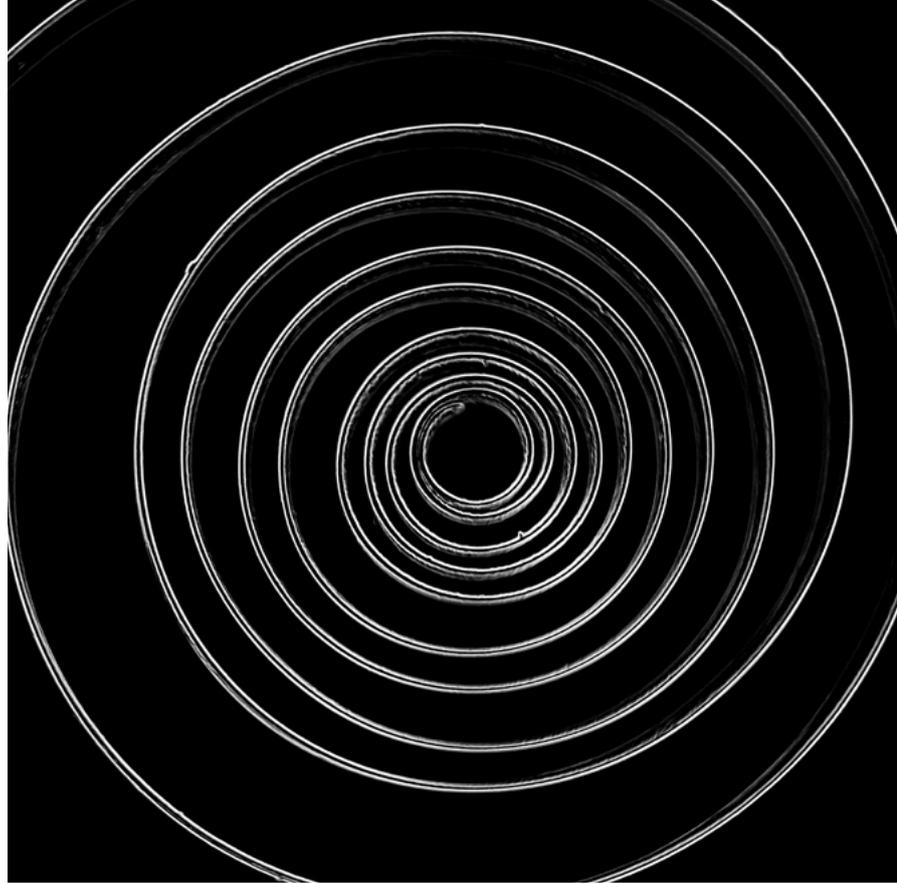


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# Context

## Over-50s are key to *realign* *workforce* management *strategy* with AI

Across every sector, AI is replacing routine tasks and reshaping roles once built on repetition. The real challenge for employers isn't adopting new technology—it's absorbing it. Finding ways to blend machine efficiency with human judgment, empathy, and experience.

This is where people strategy currently lags behind. While technology investment is typically planned in five-year cycles, too often workforce planning isn't. According to the Ladders of Opportunity Report 2025, the UK has the widest participation gap in the G7 between younger and older workers.<sup>[3]</sup> At the same time, the IMF notes that later-life cognition and health are stronger than ever, meaning older employees are capable of working longer.<sup>[1]</sup>

Yet employment policy and practice remain skewed towards youth. Government schemes spotlight early-career hiring.<sup>[4]</sup> In the workplace, HR analytics frequently track entry and early career inflows but rarely chart the retention of experience. That asymmetry leaves organizations exposed as AI replaces entry-level roles that traditionally fed career pipelines.

The future workforce cannot be sustained on early talent alone. ReStart 2025 shows what's possible when experience is re-centered and why employers need to move fast to close the human-AI gap.





## WHY OVER-50s MATTER

Across the OECD, populations are aging, but employment systems haven't adapted. In the UK, over-50s now represent nearly half the workforce growth potential.<sup>[3]</sup> They carry institutional knowledge, professional networks, and what one ReStart mentor called “the moral muscle memory”—the instinct to test, challenge, and for steady change.

And yet, many still face the last socially acceptable bias: age. A 2025 Age UK report found 36% of women aged 50-plus had experienced discrimination. And 22% juggled unpaid caring alongside paid work.<sup>[2]</sup> As AI accelerates, ignoring this cohort means sidelining the very human judgment that technology can't replicate.

AI can predict outcomes. It can't apply wisdom or experience. It can draft policy, but it can't gauge the political weather in a room. It can summarize, but it can't sense. As one CEO put it bluntly to AI researchers, “Experienced workers are often much better at judging the quality of AI outputs ... Senior colleagues are using multiple AIs. If they don't have the right solution, they re-prompt, iterate, but the juniors are satisfied with the first answer, they copy, paste, and think they're finished.”<sup>[7]</sup>

ReStart's participants bring that advantage in abundance. Their struggle isn't ability—it's access. Access to fair hiring, relevant learning, and flexible work. ReStart was built to change that.

*“Experienced workers are often much better at judging the quality of AI outputs ... Senior colleagues are using multiple AIs. If they don't have the right solution, they re-prompt, iterate, but the juniors are satisfied with the first answer, they copy, paste, and think they're finished.”*

**CEO, CREATIVE AGENCY [7]**

## **ABOUT THE RESTART PROGRAM**

ReStart was created in 2017 and is led by Sue Wisbey, A&O Shearman. Its primary aim is to help unemployed people aged over 50 re-enter and reposition in today's labor market, though the reality is that the program offers more than just that. It combines coaching, mentoring, and workshops led by A&O Shearman and The Executive Coaching Consultancy, supported by The Good Business Initiative (GBI) and other partners.

This year's cohort had previously worked in a wide range of sectors, including not-for-profit, finance, project management, retail, and teaching. Many had left the workforce through redundancy, restructuring, or caring responsibilities. Others were self-employed or seeking a return after career breaks.

The program aims to strengthen mindsets, refresh skill sets, and equip participants for sustainable re-entry into work, within the context of a changing world driven by AI, flexible work, and longevity.





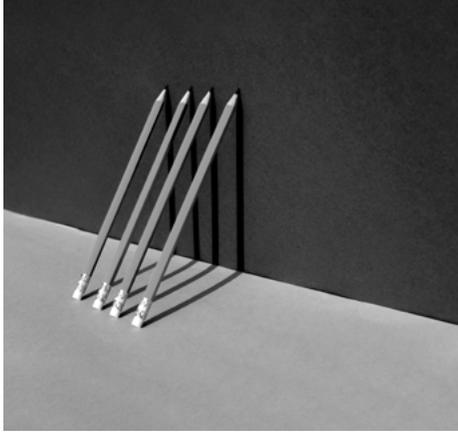
# Evaluation *framework*

## How we *measure change*

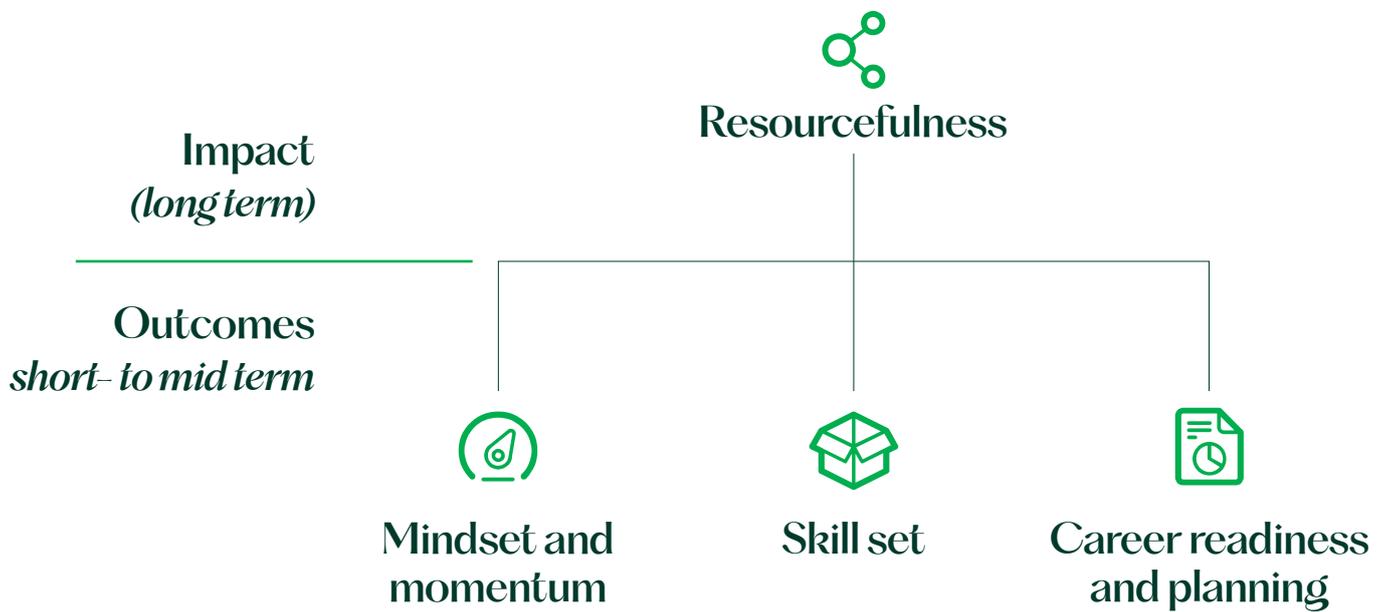
A&O Shearman is proud that many participants have returned to work following the program but recognizes that each journey is unique.

To understand the true impact, ReStart tracks outcomes across three pillars: Mindset and Momentum, Skill Sets, and Career Readiness and Planning. Together, these represent the short- to mid-term outcomes that, in turn, build participants' resourcefulness and their ability to act with confidence, adapt, and self-direct through the job application process.





**FIGURE 1: RESTART'S IMPACT PILLARS, THE GOOD BUSINESS INITIATIVE**



### WHAT WE MEASURED

Impact was assessed through three participant surveys and qualitative interviews, conducted by GBI over six months.

- Pre-program: baseline mindset, confidence, and barriers.
- Post-program: immediate shifts in skills and outlook.
- Three months post-program: sustained outcomes and employment progress.

Response rates exceeded 90%, providing robust insight. Survey feedback from ReStart mentors highlight the reciprocal benefit, describing mentoring as “a reminder of purpose and empathy in leadership.”



# Impact *report*



## Headlines

### KEY RESULTS

**+61%**

**AVERAGE INCREASE  
IN PARTICIPANT  
CONFIDENCE**

**-50%**

**PERCEIVED BARRIERS  
TO EMPLOYMENT  
HALVED**

**67%**

**TRANSITIONED  
INTO WORK OR NEW  
OPPORTUNITIES  
WITHIN THREE  
MONTHS**



These outcomes validate ReStart's distinctive design, which combines a thoughtful blend of employability, emotional intelligence, and community. It equips participants not just to find work, but to rediscover purpose.

Although the group size was slightly smaller than last year, compared with 2024, ReStart 2025 showed even stronger confidence gains (+17 percentage points higher) and a modest uplift in employment outcomes (+3%).



## SUMMARY

ReStart 2025 delivered a profound shift for its 16 participants—not just in skills, but in self-belief. Each arrived with talent, experience, and a sense of loss after redundancy or a career break. Most had been out of work for between six and twelve months, and 70% admitted to feeling unconfident about their job search.

Before ReStart, the average participant saw 6.8 barriers blocking their way back into employment, from age discrimination (90%) and low confidence (80%) to difficulty understanding the job market (70%). Over half viewed these as “very significant.”

By the end of the program, the story had changed dramatically. Barriers fell to 4.4 on average, and only 12% still viewed them as major obstacles. Confidence soared: 94% felt confident or very confident about their job search, compared with only 30% before. Three-quarters finished the course with no remaining concerns about returning to work—an emotional turnaround.

“ReStart has been a real turning point. It rebuilt my self-esteem and reminded me that my experience still matters.”

Crucially, the program delivered tangible career outcomes. Within three months, two-thirds (67%) of participants had found employment or new opportunities. These ranged from full-time roles and retraining to setting up small businesses. Every participant said they would recommend ReStart to someone in a similar position.

“I came into this lost, doubting whether I could compete in today’s market. I left feeling prepared, positive and motivated.”

ReStart 2025 didn’t just prepare participants for work; it helped them rewrite their professional stories with confidence, direction, and renewed purpose. Participants’ confidence gains were pronounced and their sense of direction stronger, reflecting continued refinement of the program’s coaching and mindset components.

## BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Participants began the course facing a familiar yet deeply personal set of obstacles. Many had spent years in roles where they felt they had a place, only to feel invisible after redundancy. For some, it wasn’t skills that had faded—it was self-worth.

“At the start, I was unsure how to sell myself again after years in the same company. ReStart helped me rediscover what I could offer.”

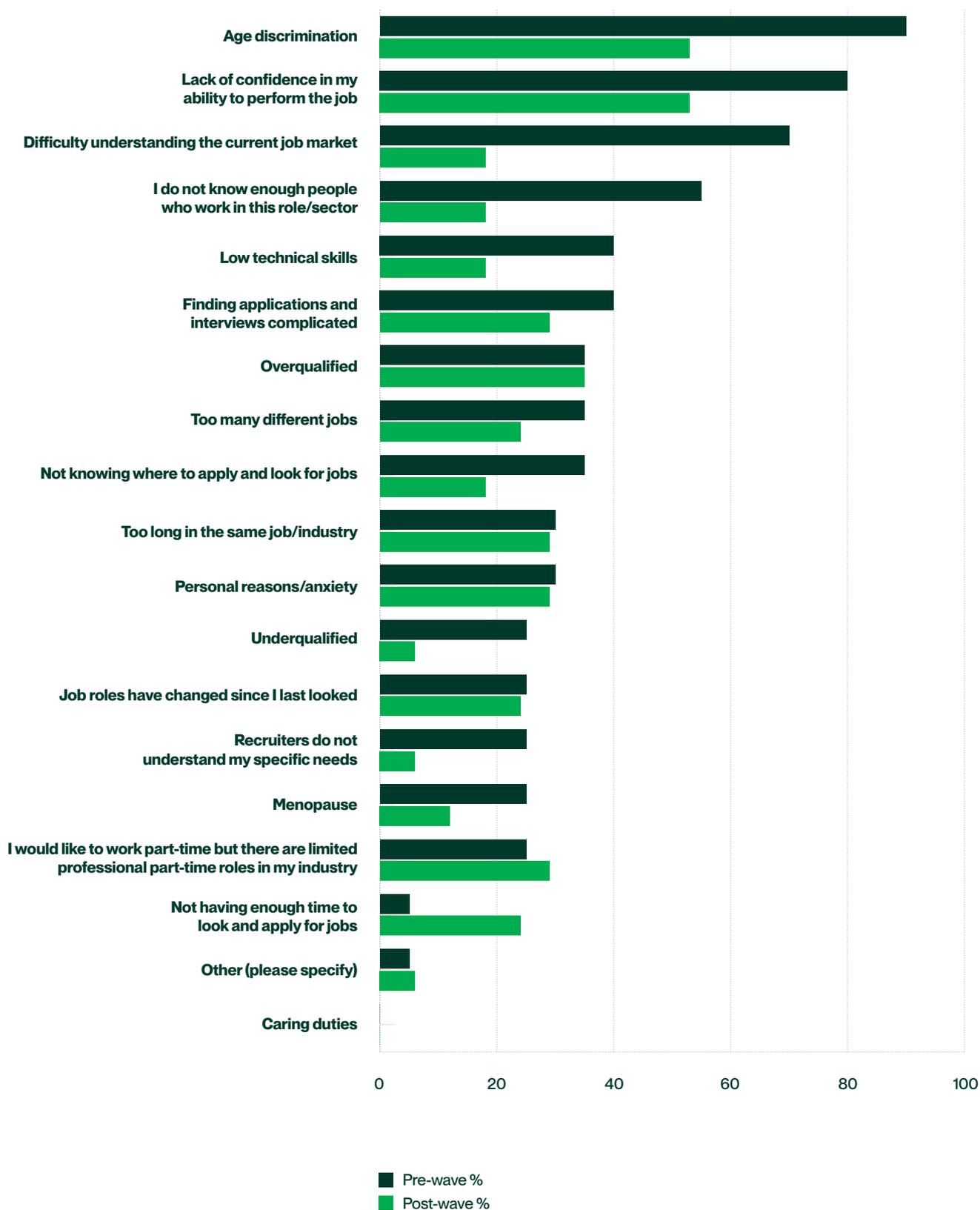
Through workshops, coaching, and mentoring, those barriers were dismantled piece by piece. “Difficulty understanding the current job market” fell from 70% pre-program to just 18% post-program. Concerns about age and ability dropped sharply. By the final survey, most participants recognized that their biggest limitation hadn’t been obsolescence but confidence.

“I realized the problem wasn’t my ability. It was that I’d stopped believing anyone wanted what I had.”

While 2024 participants reported a similar reduction in barriers (6.0 to 3.5), this year’s group began from a higher baseline of perceived difficulty (6.8). The consistency of improvement despite this harder starting point reinforces ReStart’s effectiveness in tackling deep-seated fears around employability and age bias.



**FIGURE 2: BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT PRE/POST-PROGRAM**



# Program *elements*

## COACHING

The coaching sessions were where perspective shifted. 94% of participants found coaching valuable or highly valuable. These one-to-one sessions offered space to breathe and think, and to reconnect with personal strengths rather than perceived shortcomings.

“The coaching gave me focus and structure. It helped me recognize my value and gave me practical ways to move forward.”

“I found this part of the program invaluable. The questions asked made me focus on finding the answers for myself, which led to much greater clarity.”

Coaching helped participants reframe self-doubt into self-awareness and turn uncertainty into a plan. For many, it was the first time they’d been asked not what they used to do, but what they wanted to do next.

This year’s cohort cited greater emotional clarity and focus post program, reflecting the targeted alignment of coaches and mentors to participants.

*94% of participants  
found coaching valuable  
or highly valuable*

## MENTORING

Every participant (100%) rated mentoring as valuable or significantly valuable. These relationships were the backbone of the program. Mentors, A&O Shearman volunteers, walked alongside participants throughout the program, giving their mentees time, focus, and honesty.

“My mentor was brilliant. She didn’t just polish my CV —she polished my confidence.”

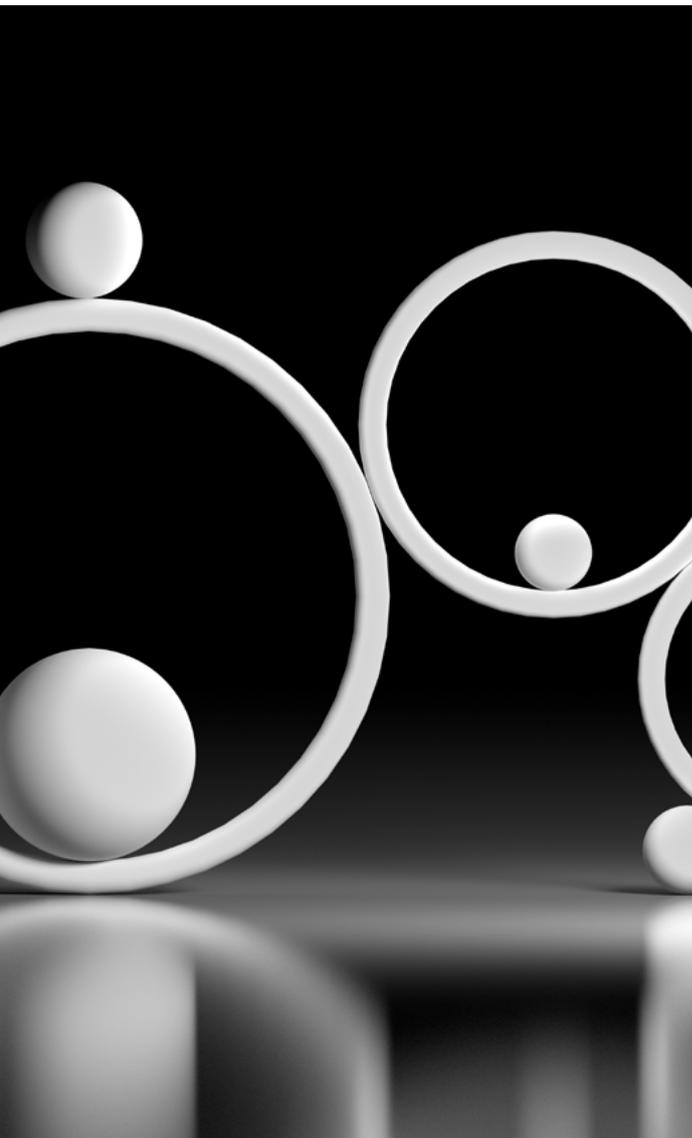
“Having someone in my corner, who genuinely believed I could do it, made all the difference.”

Participants met mentors an average of four times outside of formal sessions, sometimes as many as eight. They practiced interviews, refined CVs, and learned to translate decades of experience into concise, compelling narratives.

Mentoring continued to deliver outstanding results, matching 2024’s high standards (96%) and reinforcing the lasting value of A&O Shearman’s volunteer mentors.

*100% rated mentoring  
as valuable or significantly  
valuable*





## WORKSHOPS

ReStart's group workshops were described as "invaluable" and "very informative" by 94% of attendees. The ten structured sessions covered everything from CV writing and LinkedIn strategy to personal branding, resilience, and modern hiring practices.

The Employability Masterclass achieved a Net Promoter Score of 95, with particular enthusiasm for sessions on AI, ATS systems, and digital job search tools.

"The workshops were a real highlight—practical, relevant and confidence-building."

"It was such a positive, safe environment to share experiences and learn from others."

"I really enjoyed the in-person sessions of the program. Being back in a professional environment reignited a sense of belonging, surrounded by recruiters, peers, and the energy of possibility."

"Just being in that space made me feel like a professional again. I went home and rebuilt my profile that evening."

The workshops blended the practical and the psychological: a mix of upskilling, storytelling, and self-redefinition that gave participants both the tools and the confidence to re-enter the world of work.

In ReStart 2025 the workshop experience maintained high satisfaction, with participants highlighting more relevance around digital and AI-led hiring; a clear evolution of the curriculum in response to a changing job market.

*94% of attendees rated  
workshops invaluable*

## OUTCOME AREA 1: CAREER READINESS AND PLANNING

Participants' self-assessed career readiness leapt by 88%. Confidence in their ability to articulate value to an employer increased from 10% pre-program to 82% post-program. Those who felt they had made informed decisions about their future career rose from 20% to 71%.

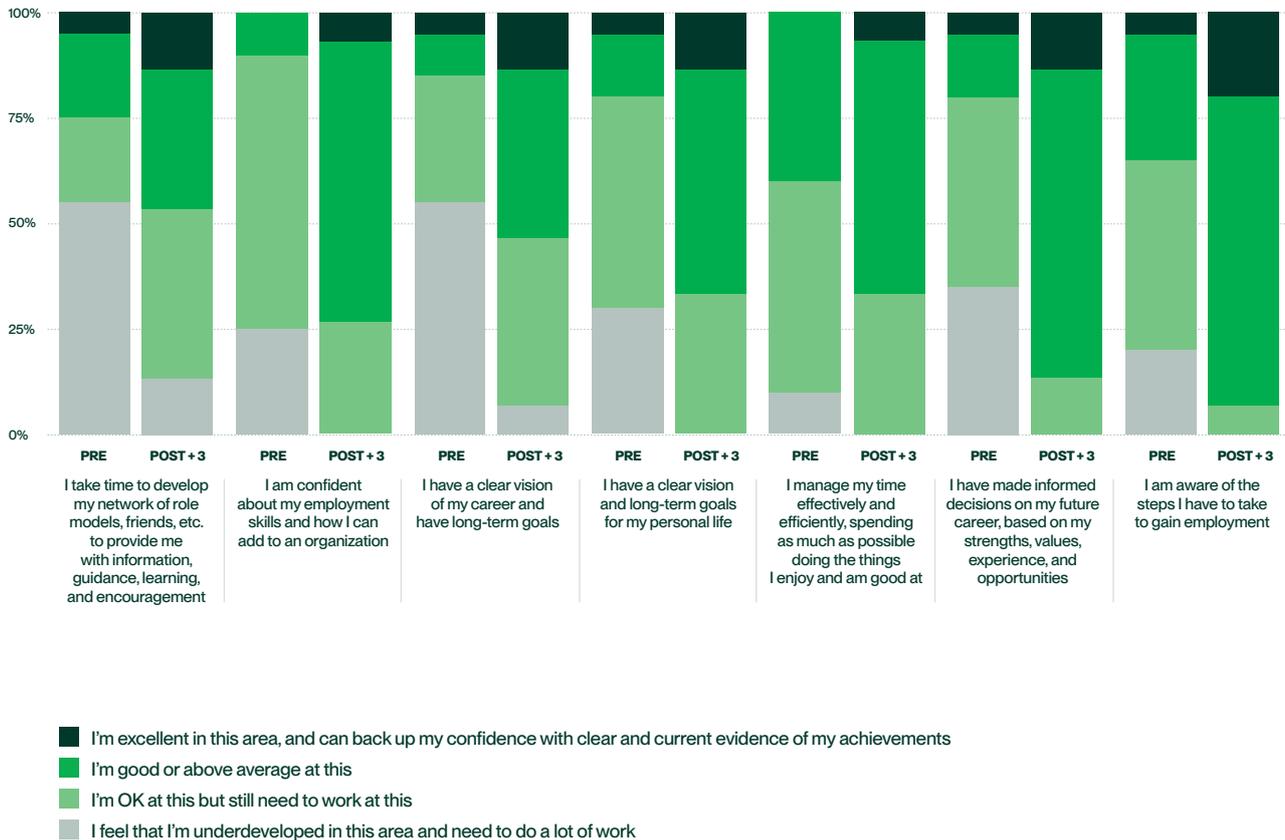
"The structured activities and one-to-one coaching gave me the space to reflect on my values, create a long-term plan, and build resilience when facing the ups and downs of job seeking."

"Before this, I was applying for everything. Now I'm applying for the right things and getting responses."

This year's participants spoke more about clarity, purpose, and aligning personal values with professional goals. Through targeted exercises and guided reflection, participants learned to match their experience with opportunity. Not chasing "any job," but pursuing the right one.



FIGURE 3: RESTART ANALYSIS 2025: CAREER READINESS AND PLANNING



## OUTCOME AREA 2: MINDSET AND MOMENTUM

ReStart’s greatest strength lies in the way it helps people to think differently about themselves and their prospects. Before joining, 55% of participants viewed their barriers to work as “very significant.” By the end, that figure had fallen to just 12%. The proportion who felt able to maintain their self-worth after rejection rose from 15% to 65%.

“I’ve completely changed my outlook—I now see rejection as redirection.”

“The course reignited my self-belief and gave me energy to keep going, even when it’s tough.”

The program built optimism, resilience, and self-awareness—qualities not always addressed in employability support. By the close, 71% of participants said they could identify their own strengths and knew how to use them, compared with 30% at the start.

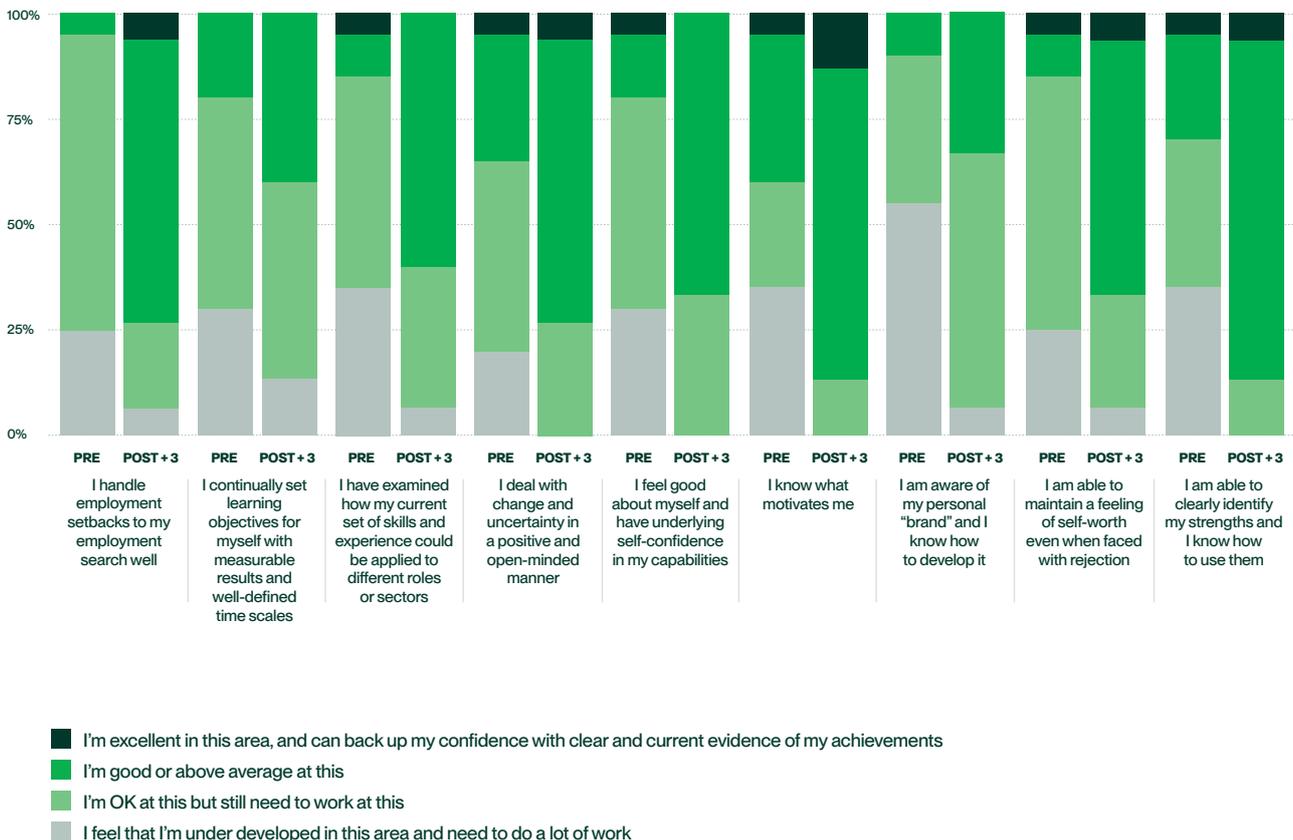
Momentum followed mindset. Initial hesitation gave way to purpose and action. Participants finished with renewed confidence, clearer direction, and the belief that their careers were not ending but evolving.

“I’m not starting over,” said one participant. “I’m starting differently.”

“I now believe in my ability to adapt and bring value in new ways.”

The data and reflections show that participants left not only better equipped for work, but more assured in their ability to navigate change.

FIGURE 3: RESTART ANALYSIS 2025: MINDSET AND MOMENTUM



### OUTCOME AREA 3: SKILL SET

The practical gains were equally striking, but what stood out most was the sense of renewal that came with them. Participants arrived wanting to modernize their skill set—to feel fluent again in a world that had moved on—and they did.

Confidence in improving a CV rose from 20% to 71%.

Interview self-assurance jumped from 28% to 65%.

Personal branding awareness grew from 10% to 59%.

Participants said:

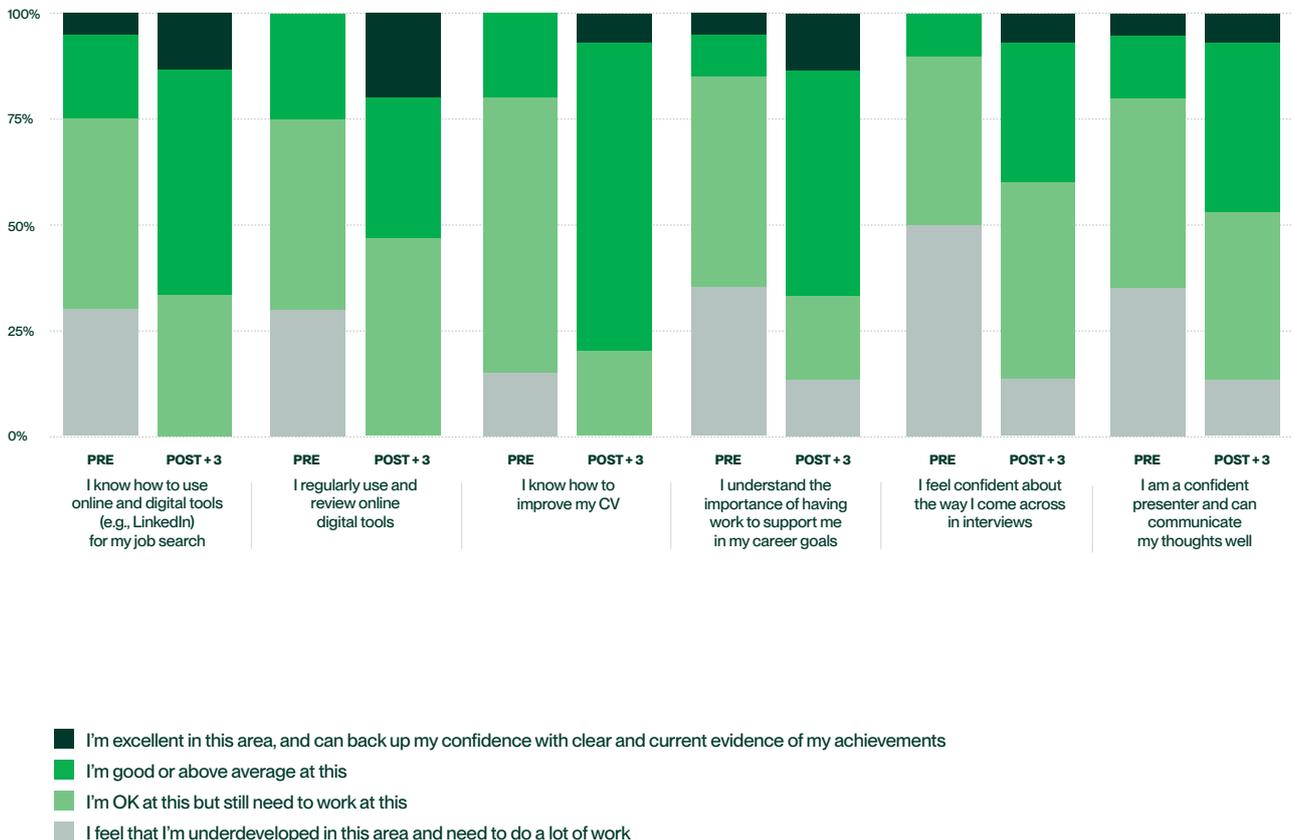
“Learning about ATS and AI was a game-changer. I realized I wasn’t being rejected for being too old, my CV just wasn’t talking to the machines properly.”

“I updated my LinkedIn, tailored my CV, and suddenly recruiters started contacting me.”

The sessions were practical, but their effect ran deeper. Every workshop, coaching session, and mentoring conversation added another piece of confidence. CVs were sharpened, LinkedIn profiles rewritten, and long-unused networks brought back to life. These tangible skills restored a sense of professional ease. A feeling of being back in the rhythm of working life.

Participants left no longer apologizing for time out of the market, but ready to compete on equal terms. The group showed stronger digital confidence and a clearer grasp of how AI shapes hiring by the end of the program, and felt they benefited from the new additions in content surrounding this topic.

FIGURE 3: RESTART ANALYSIS 2025: SKILL SET



## POST-PROGRAM EMPLOYMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES

Three months after completion, 67% of respondents had secured new employment or meaningful opportunities. From full-time positions to training, volunteer work, or starting their own ventures. Almost half pursued further learning, signaling a deeper shift: a return to work and growth.

“ReStart helped me prepare for the interview for my current job. I walked in feeling confident and capable.”

“I used what I learned to pivot into consultancy work, and it’s been thriving.”

“I haven’t yet found the right role, but I’ve found my momentum. I’m networking, applying, and optimistic.”

Even among those still job-seeking, there was a renewed sense of confidence and direction, and a clear plan for what comes next.

## UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

ReStart 2025 delivered far more than employability skills. Many participants said the experience “far surpassed expectations,” reshaping not only their confidence but also how they saw themselves.

“It altered my perception about my job search. I stopped feeling sorry for myself and started feeling proud of what I’ve done.”

“I didn’t expect to make friends, but the group was incredibly supportive. We’ve stayed in touch and cheer each other on.”

A strong sense of community developed among people who understood each other’s experiences. Participants described the group as a “safe space to share challenges and celebrate successes.”

They finished the program with more than just practical tools; they left with genuine connection, self-awareness, and a renewed sense of control over how they shape their working lives.

“ReStart reminded me that I still have something valuable to offer—and that matters more than I realized.”



## MENTOR PERSPECTIVE

“Seeing their transformation and shift in attitude made it unquestionably worthwhile.”

The ReStart program proved deeply rewarding not only for participants but also for the mentors who supported them. This year, A&O Shearman engaged 19 employees as volunteer mentors, each paired with a participant for one-to-one guidance.

74% of the mentors (14) completed the feedback survey. Responses were unanimously positive: all reported a good relationship with their mentee, felt well prepared and supported, and agreed it is important for A&O Shearman to continue offering volunteering opportunities of this kind.

Mentors consistently observed real progress. 86% believed their mentee had made positive steps toward employment and grown in confidence since joining the program. One noted, “Seeing my mentee realize they didn’t have to be shy about their experience was a stand-out moment.” Others highlighted similar progress:

“Helping my mentee focus their efforts on fewer directions was a big achievement.”

“They received two offers in the space of a few days.”



## PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The experience proved enriching for mentors too. Every respondent (100%) said they had developed new skills through mentoring, describing it as a rewarding chance to contribute beyond their day-to-day work.

“I wanted to do meaningful work outside the day-to-day.”

“It helped me strengthen my mentoring skills while supporting someone’s growth.”

“I was unsure of the value I could truly bring to the program or to the individual involved ... [though] I quickly realized that mentoring with ReStart goes far beyond traditional job search support. It’s about listening, building trust, and walking alongside someone as they rediscover their confidence and sense of direction.”

## CONTINUED COMMITMENT

The program also inspired lasting engagement. 93% of mentors said they would volunteer again, and all (100%) would recommend becoming a ReStart mentor to a colleague.

“It’s an important program. You realize how much difference encouragement and focus can make.”

“Watching someone else’s confidence and self-belief grow has been incredibly rewarding. The progress they made in just a few months has been inspiring and I feel proud to have played a small part in their journey.”



14

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**A&O SHEARMAN  
MENTORS COMPLETED  
THE SURVEY**

86%

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**SAID THEIR MENTEE  
HAD GROWN IN  
CONFIDENCE**

100%

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**MENTORS DEVELOPED  
NEW SKILLS**

93%

---

**WILL VOLUNTEER  
AGAIN**

100%

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**WOULD RECOMMEND  
BECOMING A MENTOR**





# In their *own words*

Five participants  
*share their journeys*



# Theya

I discovered the ReStart program through **Rest Less**, which my job center had recommended. When I saw what it offered, I knew it was exactly what I needed. The program was wonderful. I honestly wouldn't change a thing.

The coaching was the highlight for me. My coach guided me through the belief cycle and helped me reframe my negative self-doubts. That process took me to a new place in my life. I also gained fresh ideas about networking, especially on LinkedIn, and people have since reached out, even inviting me to business events.

As an introvert, it was reassuring to know I wasn't alone in my challenges. The program created a safe space for people like me to learn and grow.

The group was incredibly supportive. They inspired and reminded me how much mindset matters. Staying connected through WhatsApp allowed us to keep encouraging each other and share advice.

My biggest breakthrough came during the coaching sessions, when I realized how many negative beliefs I was carrying about myself. Reframing them helped me see my strengths clearly again. I rediscovered my transferable skills and realized how much I could still grow and contribute.

Learning about networking was another turning point. Once I understood how it worked in the UK, I saw possibilities I hadn't imagined before.

At the start, I wasn't sure about my direction or how to move forward. Through the program, I gained clarity and confidence. I became calmer and more grounded. I got back to gardening and volunteering at Action for Happiness, which helped me create balance and space for new opportunities.

Before ReStart, I felt lost about my professional direction, and I struggled to see how to align my work with my purpose. Now, I've found a role I love—teaching children about food, well-being, and sustainability. I enjoy developing lesson ideas and working with a diverse team of all ages. The discussions we had about mindset and ageism helped me stay open and appreciate everyone's strengths.

When I went for my interview, I felt fully prepared. Everything I'd learned through ReStart came together perfectly and helped me succeed.

My mentor was incredibly supportive. She even came to visit me at my new workplace where I took her on a nature walk. Mentoring built on all the parts of the program. You meet the people in your life that you need to help you.



*“Before ReStart, I felt lost about my professional direction, and I struggled to see how to align my work with my purpose. Now, I’ve found a role I love.”*

# Paul

When I applied for ReStart, I was questioning whether I was looking for the right job, and what I was doing to find it. My previous role was bespoke to me, and I came to realize that would not happen again. I'd also had a few bad interviews which brought my confidence right down.

Based on the ReStart advert, I thought the program would be more in-depth and with more support than previous employability courses that I had attended. There's so much more to ReStart than just CV, cover letter, and interview preparation.

The start of the program focused on coaching and looking inward. Sandra, my executive coach, spent the early days trying to understand me, where I was coming from, and helping me to be less hard on myself. I would overthink interviews and stress about what questions they were going to ask. I'd convince myself I wouldn't get the job before the interview had even started.

Sandra taught me to not to put that pressure on my shoulders by thinking about an interview as a dummy run. I also spoke with my two mentors about this. We talked about taking that negative energy and mentally putting it into a box until the next stage of the interview process. This helped me manage my hope of doing well in an interview for a job that I particularly care about and feeling disappointment afterwards.

The skills workshops were useful. Learning how an ATS system works was an eye opener. I realized my CV contained tables, which made it hard for ATS to read my CV. I used AI to help me create a more ATS-friendly CV.

My "ah-ha" moment came reading my strengths profile. I now know what my "unrealized strengths" are and have the words to talk about them. I learned many useful things, but that was the most worthwhile session for me. When the Job Center asked for my transferable skills, I got ChatGPT to create the document using my strengths profile and CV.

I have a brilliant relationship with the rest of the group. We support each other and share anything interesting we find online. Everyone involved in delivering the program was great and the content was varied and fresh. I found my two mentors Oonagh and Maria particularly helpful. They come from very different backgrounds, which meant they brought different perspectives to our discussions. I felt like they saw my potential more than I saw it myself.

I noticed changes in myself throughout the program. I have developed more resilience and confidence and got better at taking action. The AMS Recruiters spoke about resilience in health, not just work. This made me realize I'm more resilient than I thought I was. I've written down something my mentor said, "left foot, right foot." If there's a barrier, just keep going. The wonderful Sue Wisbey (the Community Investment Manager at A&O Shearman) sent me a nice email saying she can see how much I've grown in confidence. I just need to get it all together at the right job, right interview for the right person.

I'm doing voluntary work while I apply for permanent jobs. I've expanded my geographical search to include London.



*“There’s so much more to ReStart than just CV, cover letter, interview preparation.”*

# Kirk

ReStart gives you the tools to build resilience and structure your job search. Realizing this changed my mindset. I took the learning onboard and applied it in conversations with hiring managers. I found the lessons, whether big or small, very powerful. The session on LinkedIn was unbelievably helpful. I never imagined I'd get to do something like this.

The strengths report was an “ah-ha” moment. Understanding what sort of person I am, and how I prefer to interact with people—it refocused my thinking and probed how to get into the areas I want to work in.

Before the program, I was getting loads of rejections. I didn't know how to adapt my application to a role. Then I used the networking and CV application key words to do this. Despite getting a job three weeks before the end, I stayed on the program because I could see there were still new things I could pick up to help me on my longer journey.

The program has changed how I interact with people and my resilience. I apply what I learned in my new role. The difference people can bring, that and that everyone brings something different to the table. At the start of the program, I felt I was missing momentum, and if I had a rejection, I would dip. I can now see myself moving towards action. Now I'm looking to be more adventurous about what I may go on to do and experience different ways of working and people.

Mentoring was really helpful and encouraging. I'm pleased I got my first choice mentor after the speed networking mentor activity early on. It was important to me that I worked with someone I had a connection with, and I got on really well with mine. Immediately she could see what sort of person I was. She was really helpful with my CV and applications and gave me lots of suggestions about things I could consider.



*“I found the lessons, whether big or small, very powerful. The session on LinkedIn was unbelievably helpful. I never imagined I'd get to do something like this.”*

# Dina

ReStart came at the perfect time. A difficult yet effective time for me. I'd been out of the workplace for so long, caring full-time for my family. I was very confused about what I wanted and how to focus on me.

Then, a week before the course started, a shock change in life circumstances changed how I think about things. During this difficult period, ReStart taught me that I've got this, I can take these next steps, and life still has lots of choices. Here's how to present yourself, and here's where to start and keep the momentum going. The course crystalized where I'm going and what I want. I feel that I can stand on my own two feet. The wide range of support—coaching, mentoring, workshops, and group support—kept me buoyant and focused on me at a time where it would otherwise have been hard to.

I wanted to get back to work but felt nervous and thought it wouldn't happen because I didn't understand the job market. I needed to bridge the gap between where I was and where I wanted to be.

All the sessions were really useful. My coach tuned into me almost immediately, which I wasn't expecting as I thought that my experiences are so unique that nobody can relate to me. She didn't let me get off topic. After our three sessions, she produced a summary for Matt (my mentor) on what we had discussed and what I wanted to achieve and get from the course.

Matt then helped me to no end. I don't know how Sue decided that he would be the right person for me, but we really gelled, and he understood me, and I respected what he was saying. Matt set targets between sessions and reviewed progress at the next. Consequently, I felt I was moving forward.

Matt gave practical advice to improve my CV, which two of the practice interviewers rated ten out of ten.

I knew the course content would be challenging due to the prior knowledge I had of A&O Shearman, but the content turned out to be more in-depth than I was expecting, which I really enjoyed. For me, it was really pitched at a perfect level and allowed me to get the most out of it.

Following the program, I can see a difference in my self-esteem and job search skill set. We talked a lot about pitching yourself, your narrative, and telling a story. Things I had never thought about before. Back in my day, job hunting involved responding to an advert with a handwritten letter. If recruiters felt your qualifications matched, they would invite you to an interview. The job application process felt more basic, whereas now things feel quite complex. Before I attended ReStart, I wasn't aware of how to navigate this complexity without confidence or self-assuredness. Now I think I can. It won't be easy, but I have the skills—an elevator pitch, a story to present myself with. It's given me confidence in what I know and where I can go to find what I need to know to make my job search more effective.

Networking was something I had never done before. I always thought it was meeting people to ask for a job. I learned how to approach people you don't know but want to link with without seeming obsequious or putting people off. As a result, I have started the networking process and realize it's value.

I feel better equipped to take action in my job search. I used to procrastinate because I didn't know what I was doing or have a clear plan or confidence in my CV. ReStart has been a worthwhile journey for me. I'm grateful for everyone involved, but especially Sue as she puts her heart and soul into it. I don't know of any other program as committed to helping over-50s move forward.



*“Following the program,  
I can see a difference in my  
self-esteem and job search  
skill set.”*



# Anonymous

I was drawn to ReStart because I had been struggling to get a longer-term position. I was excited by the opportunity the program presented, to help me think more about what I bring to the job market and how to translate that into how I present to the job market. It met my expectations, using the Strengths Profile, working with a coach, and applying that in practical ways, you can turn into potential job opportunities.

My coach was good, offering different perspectives. She had strategic perspectives that helped me reconsider how to frame my experience. My coach set up the bigger picture. The coaching is personal and helps to challenge your thinking, especially around the barriers you've created with yourself. My mentor helped guide me through the program and provided a soundboard for advice and is good with consistency to help you keep showing up. I really valued my mentor's intelligent additional perspective, and our conversations helped me see things more from a company's recruitment perspective.

The workshops were good. I found the piece around the comfort zone and the competency zone interesting. It helped me consider what other things I could do. Practically speaking, the mock interview was brilliant. It's always good to practice answering questions and think about how you could improve.

Other participants were supportive, and some people met up in person. I think this worked well to keep people connected.

I benefited most from the coaching sessions. We talked a lot about how I would position myself around marketing transformation, and this broader sense made me consider how I could make this my selling point. The work around how to push beyond your comfort zone struck a chord for me.

Compared to where I was at the beginning of the program, I have more tools to bolster my resilience. I know there are things I learned on the course that I can go back to, to help me in times when things aren't going my way. This helps keep momentum and positivity going. Vision was my biggest issue, because it helps me know why I'm doing this, and helping me be more specific about the sorts of roles I'm applying for.





*“I have more tools to bolster my resilience. There are things I learned on the course that I can go back to, to help me in times when things aren’t going my way.”*

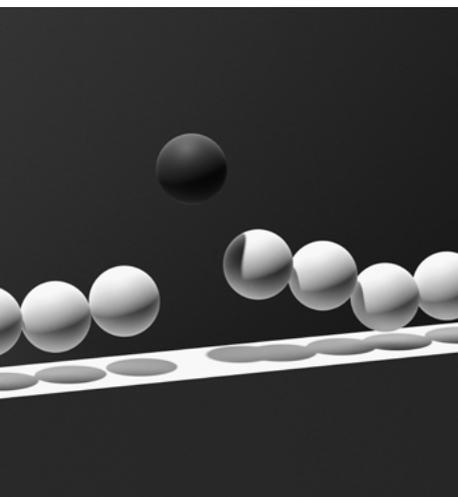
# Five ways to *effectively manage* over-50s' talent

We asked ReStart participants what they believe organizations should be doing to better support and employ people over 50. The aim was to understand the experience of those navigating the job market later in life.

What we heard was clear: the barriers are rarely about ability. They're about access, perception, and being given the opportunity to stay visible and valued.

“We don't want special treatment. Just understanding and open-mindedness.”

Over-50s are not a niche group; they represent almost half of the UK workforce and bring decades of knowledge, resilience, and judgment. Yet many still feel overlooked once they reach a certain age. ReStart 2025 shows that with the right space to rebuild confidence and refresh their skills, participants' self-belief rose by over 60%, and perceived employment barriers halved. The capability is there. It is systems and attitudes that need to evolve.





# Actions employers can *take today*

## 1. RE-CENTER EXPERIENCE IN WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Participants told us they want their experience to be seen as an advantage, not a liability. Investment in mid- and late-career talent strengthens capability, continuity, and culture. AI may be reshaping how we work, but long-term value will come from organizations that help people at every career stage to think smarter, not just faster.

“There’s still a lot we can contribute—we just need the chance to show it.”

## 2. CONFRONT HIDDEN BIAS IN RECRUITMENT

Several participants described being “screened out before being seen.”

Recruitment technology has made bias less visible, but no less real. Applicant tracking systems (ATS), algorithmic shortlists, and narrow definitions of “culture fit” often filter out experienced candidates before a human even reviews their CV.

Employers should audit their data and challenge assumptions. If hiring pipelines narrow at mid-career, it isn’t a talent shortage—it’s a systems issue. Fairness isn’t about favoring older workers; it’s about ensuring everyone has a fair chance to contribute.



## 3. RETHINK RETENTION: FLEXIBILITY AND LEARNING DRIVE LOYALTY

Flexibility and continued learning were the strongest themes in participant feedback. People don’t leave work because they can’t do it; they leave when it stops fitting the shape of their lives.

“We don’t leave work because we can’t do it anymore. We leave when it stops making sense.”

Flexible hours, project-based work, and lifelong learning help retain expertise while keeping people motivated and connected. When training includes all age groups, employees know the organization still expects them to grow, and that expectation itself builds commitment.

#### 4. MAKE MENTORING A TWO-WAY EXCHANGE

ReStart participants said mentoring was one of the most powerful ways to rebuild confidence. Sharing experience helped them rediscover purpose, while learning from others kept them engaged and curious.

“I found as much value in listening and learning as I did in giving advice.”

True intergenerational mentoring works both ways—experience shared, insight gained. Pairing experience with potential should be more than a program: it should be a way of working. It costs little and creates a culture of mutual respect.



#### 5. LEAD THE CULTURE SHIFT

Participants were clear that real change begins with leadership. They want age to be talked about with the same openness and respect as any other aspect of inclusion—and for success at every career stage to be seen and celebrated.

“It’s about being valued, not just being tolerated.”

Creating that shift doesn’t require grand gestures, but consistent visibility. Recognizing later-career achievement, encouraging mixed-age teams, and showing that progression has no expiry date all signal that experience is valued.

Culture isn’t defined by policy; it’s shaped by everyday behavior. When experienced colleagues feel trusted and respected, they bring energy, stability, and insight that lift the whole organization.



## The *human* edge

Creating a human-centered workplace isn't sentimental, it's strategic. In an AI world, what sets organizations apart is not how fast they automate, but how wisely they balance machine intelligence with human judgment.

The ReStart program points to what's possible when experience is seen as an asset, not an afterthought. With the right space, the right learning, and the right respect, people in their 50s and beyond don't fade, they reignite.

The challenge for employers is to stop managing age as a risk and start leading it as a strength. The future of work won't belong to the youngest or the fastest. It will belong to those wise enough to harness the whole span of human talent.

# Appendices

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# ReStart *partners*

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

Partnership organizations:

**A&O Shearman** is an international legal practice with approximately 4,000 lawyers, including 800 partners, across almost 50 offices and 28 countries. For many years, a key theme of our social impact 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 the A&O Shearman Foundation funding. Schemes like Smart Start and PRIME in the UK have positively impacted individuals and the wider legal community to ensure quality work experience and employment opportunities are available to everyone.

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 AO Shearman to target, source, and place participants onto their ReStart program 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.

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 provides insights and coaching solutions that are needed to ensure workplaces are equitable. ECC partnered with A&O Shearman on the design of the ReStart program. This included five days of workshops for participants and mentor training for A&O Shearman volunteers, delivered by ECC facilitators. In addition, 19 executive coaches each gave participants three hours of 1:1 coaching time to complement the workshops and add highly tailored, individual support.

The **Good Business Initiative (GBI)** is a not-for-profit sponsored and launched by ECC in 2018. ECC provides its ReStart program contribution through GBI. GBI also designs the impact framework and independently analyzes and reports against it on behalf of A&O Shearman. GBI works with organizations to help them improve their positive impact on society.

**LinkedIn** welcomed participants to their London offices where they spoke in detail to participants about the uses of having a LinkedIn profile, and how to best tailor it to get the most from the website.

**Luminate** delivered a session on building resilience to ReStart participants. "Luminate is a mental health consultancy, working with businesses and their employees to radically improve workplace cultures. Founded in 2015, their innovative well-being programs can achieve seismic change—boosting productivity, reducing staff sickness, attracting new talent, and helping improve employee well-being across all levels of the organization."

**Sarae Pratt Leadership Coaching & Training** is led by Sarae Pratt, who has over 20 years of experience and education in HR and people and leadership development. Together with her associates, they deliver interactive, impactful workshops, programs, 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 centers 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.

Joanna Rawbone has been working with A&O Shearman since the mid-2000s initially through Embedding Performance and, more recently, through her own company, **Scintillo Ltd**. Joanna is intent on "making learning and development personal," which means designing and delivering with diverse needs in mind, thereby promoting inclusivity. She specializes in enabling introverts to flourish in our increasingly extraverted world and shaking out bias where it prevents equity. Alongside her training, facilitation, and coaching work, Joanna is also a coaching supervisor.

# Program *outline*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Launch session</b>                       | Introduced participants to the program and understand the elements and structure of the program. An opportunity to hear from ReStart alumni.   |
| <b>Workshop 1</b>                           | Setting out the program objectives to help participants understand their career journey and the reality of the challenges that they are currently facing. Starting the journey with developing self-awareness. |
| <b>Mentor matching virtual session</b>      | Opportunity to meet with a variety of A&O Shearman mentors online.   |
| <b>Individual coaching</b>                  | Three hours of individual online coaching from an ECC coach to support each individual to set clear goals for the program and allow them to get the most from their support.                                   |
| <b>Workshop 2</b>                           | A virtual session and deep dive into the Cappfinity Strengths Profile that participants completed and received at Workshop 1.  |
| <b>Workshop 3</b>                           | Action planning and how to get the most from the program. Initial meeting with A&O Shearman mentor.  |
| <b>Individual mentoring</b>                 | Individual mentor from A&O Shearman works alongside participants to support them for the rest of the program.  |
| <b>Workshop 4</b>                           | Guest speaker session: Luminare – personal resilience and well-being.<br>Guest speakers: Maya Bhose, The Well Placed and Paulina Prouty, Greenworkx.   |
| <b>Workshop 5</b>                           | Planning your job search, understanding job descriptions and mapping your fit to them.   |
| <b>Workshop 6</b>                           | Working styles; personal brand; the importance of a network.   |
| <b>Workshop 7</b>                           | LinkedIn session at LinkedIn's office, and then Neuroscience with ECC.   |
| <b>Workshop 8</b>                           | Employability clinic: CV review, personal statement, online assessments, recruitment practices including ATS, and interview preparation. Virtual introduction to the digital community for over-50s Rest Less. |
| <b>Workshop 9</b>                           | Positioning yourself in the new business environment: transferable skills, growth mindset, reframing expectations. Virtual mock interviews with A&O Shearman volunteers.                                       |
| <b>Workshop 10</b>                          | Maintaining momentum: scenario planning; identifying one's own saboteurs; HR and recruiter panel session including introduction to 55 ReDefined.   |
| <b>Workshop 11</b>                          | Taking stock and action planning for success; Q&A panel session with ReStart alumni.   |
| <b>AMS Insight day</b>                      | Participants spent the day with AMS where they got to practice mock interviews with recruiters and learn about the power of personal brand.  |
| <b>Follow-up session three months later</b> | Sharing successes and experiences, managing current challenges, and maintaining momentum.  |

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