

No Limits Programme funded by



In association with our delivery partners



2022-24 Impact Report

**'No Limits'
Programme**

Foreword:

The **'No Limits'** programme was developed as an integral part of OxLEP Skills' Social Contract Programme, a £1.7m suite of targeted interventions benefiting Oxfordshire businesses and communities, funded through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) by Oxfordshire County Council.

Commencing November 2022, OxLEP Skills contracted SOFEA, in partnership with Aspire, to deliver **'No Limits 1'** which offered a comprehensive package of support to those most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This included intensive assistance for those economically inactive and furthest from the labour market, offering free digital devices to combat digital deprivation, digital skills development, and travel bursaries for those needing financial help to get to work or an educational institution.

Working across 19 community settings in Oxfordshire, the programme funded 5 full-time triage workers who were focused on helping people at risk of being held back by the detrimental effects of the pandemic, and subsequently affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

The target for **'No Limits 1'** was to engage 224 participants. It far surpassed this, engaging 472 participants with significant outcomes in supporting 79 people into employment and ensuring that hundreds more were work-ready and making positive steps forward.

Due to funding, 'No Limits 1' ended on 31st December 2023. Thanks to prudent



budget management of the Social Contract programme, OxLEP Skills was able to extend the programme (calling it 'No Limits 2') for a further 6 months from 1st January to 31st June 2024.

The revised programme reduced the number of triage workers from 5 FTE to 2.5 FTE to cover the whole of Oxfordshire, with scaled back delivery which only focused on supporting those considered 'work ready'. **'No Limits 2'** exceeded an ambitious target of engaging 112 participants by engaging 127 participants.

As we reflect on the success of the **'No Limits'** programme, it is evident that our collective efforts have made a significant impact across Oxfordshire. The dedication and collaboration of our teams have not only supported hundreds of individuals in securing employment and becoming work-ready but have also addressed critical issues such as digital deprivation. With the ongoing support of our partners and stakeholders, we are confident that we will achieve even greater success in the coming phases. Together, we will continue to drive positive change and create lasting opportunities for the people of Oxfordshire.

OxLEP Skills, August 2024

Overall Impact of 'No Limits 1 & 2'

The 'No Limits' programme made a remarkable impact across Oxfordshire, supporting almost **600** individuals across two phases.

The initiative helped **110** people secure employment, with **262** individuals becoming work-ready or making significant progress towards the labour market.

A total of **538** digital devices, including laptops and tablets, were distributed to combat digital deprivation, along with **135** travel bursaries and **9** Train the Trainer sessions.

Individuals Supported:

• Engaged:

472 (No Limits 1) **127** (No Limits 2)

• Into Employment:

79 (No Limits 1) **31** (No Limits 2)

• Work Ready:

147 (No Limits 1) **115** (No Limits 2)

• Progress towards the Labour Market:

306 (No Limits 1) **123** (No Limits 2)

• Positive Steps Towards the Labour Market:

342 (No Limits 1) **127** (No Limits 2)

Travel Bursaries:

123 (No Limits 1) **12** (No Limits 2)

Laptops & Tablets:

538

distributed devices (No Limits 1 & 2)

Mobile Phones:

61

distributed phones

Sim Cards:

52

distributed

Wi-Fi Dongles:

43

distributed

Train the Trainer:

9

sessions delivered (No Limits 1)

This innovative programme exceeded expectations, transforming lives by offering crucial resources, training, and support to those most affected by the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis.

Programme Delivery

The purpose of the Oxfordshire County Council's Contain Outbreak Management Fund was to assist individuals aged 16 and above in overcoming barriers to education, employment, or training and to engage with 224 participants, aiding them in moving into employment, becoming work-ready, and getting closer to the labour market.

1 Provide up to 30 hr sessions of 1-1 support for example CV writing, mock interviews, job applications and employability support

2

Support the community with travel bursaries

3 Provide digital training

4

Distribute Wi-Fi Dongles

5 Support individuals into education, training or employment

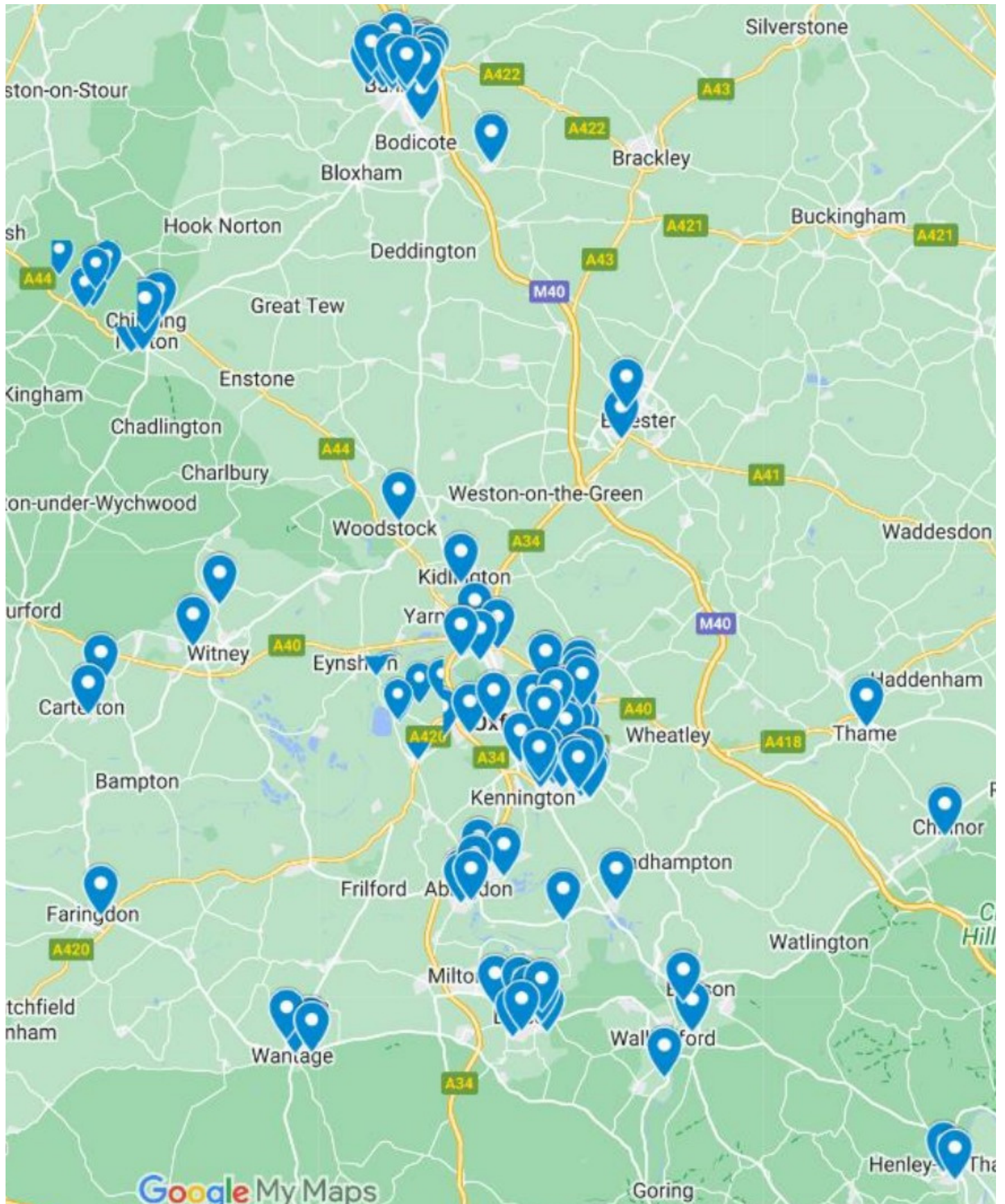
6

Distribute digital devices

7

Distribute data topped up for up to 6 months

Programme Impact Across Oxfordshire



South & Vale: No Limits 1

120 

Laptops & tablets distributed

 **21**

Mobile phones distributed

31 

Fully loaded sim cards with 6 months of free unlimited calls and texts, and 20MB of data per month for 6 months distributed

 **19x**

Wi-Fi dongles to provide 6 months of free Wi-Fi distributed

13 

People referred to Connect! for free digital training

 **141**

Individuals were supported to take their next steps towards education, employment and training

123 People supported with bus/train travel bursaries all throughout Oxfordshire



Oxford City: No Limits 1

94



Laptops & tablets distributed



11

Mobile phones distributed

11



Fully loaded sim cards with 6 months of free unlimited calls and texts, and 20MB of data per month for 6 months distributed



10x

Wi-Fi dongles to provide 6 months of free Wi-Fi distributed

7



People referred to Connect! for free digital training



161

Individuals were supported to take their next steps towards education, employment and training

123

People supported with bus/train travel bursaries all throughout Oxfordshire



West Oxfordshire: : No Limits 1

94 

Laptops & tablets distributed

 21

Mobile phones distributed

11 

Fully loaded sim cards with 6 months of free unlimited calls and texts, and 20MB of data per month for 6 months distributed

 10x

Wi-Fi dongles to provide 6 months of free Wi-Fi distributed

8 

People referred to Connect! for free digital training

 75

Individuals were supported to take their next steps towards education, employment and training

123 People supported with bus/train travel bursaries all throughout Oxfordshire



Cherwell: No Limits 1

62 

Laptops & tablets distributed

 **21**

Mobile phones distributed

31 

Fully loaded sim cards with 6 months of free unlimited calls and texts, and 20MB of data per month for 6 months distributed

 **10x**

Wi-Fi dongles to provide 6 months of free Wi-Fi distributed

8 

People referred to Connect! for free digital training

 **105**

Individuals were supported to take their next steps towards education, employment and training

123 People supported with bus/train travel bursaries all throughout Oxfordshire





The programme has exceeded the engagement goal by engaging with more than **472 individuals in No Limits 1 and 127 individuals in No Limits 2**, representing a diverse and expansive spectrum, surpassing the initial target. It also supported **63 refugees in No Limits 1 and 24 refugees in No Limits 2** in their journey towards employment and integration hailing from nations such as



Ukraine



Syria



Afghanistan

Accomplishments 2023



80

Individuals have progressed into employment



147

Individuals are ready for work



306

Individuals have made progress towards the labour market



342

Individuals have made positive steps forward



Provided digital devices to individuals to reduce digital poverty.

488

Assisted individuals with travel bursaries across Oxfordshire.

123



Quarter 4: January to March

PROGRESS

Target

224
Participants

Engaged

143
Participants

Employment Progress

15
Individuals

Work Ready

32
Individuals

Labour Market Progress

50
Individuals

Positive Steps Forward

56
Individuals

TOTAL DEVICES DISTRIBUTION



Target

460

Delivered

176

112

4

Tablet

26

Mobile Phone

35

Sim Cards

Laptop

BREAKDOWN

WIFI DONGLES DISTRIBUTION



Total Provided

21 out of 100

TRAVEL BURSARIES

Total Supported

9 out of 75

(Bus Pass - 7, Scooter/Moped Hire - 2)



Quarter 1: April to June

PROGRESS

Target

224
Participants

Engaged

325
Participants

Employment Progress

39
Individuals

Work Ready

72
Individuals

Labour Market Progress

102
Individuals

Positive Steps Forward

123
Individuals

TOTAL DEVICES DISTRIBUTION



Target
460

Delivered
339

241

4

Tablet

39

Mobile Phone

55

Sim Cards

Laptop

BREAKDOWN

WIFI DONGLES DISTRIBUTION



Total Provided

32 out of 100

TRAIN THE TRAINER



Sessions Delivered

4 out of 14

TRAVEL BURSARIES

Total Supported

42 out of 75

(Bus Pass - 40,
Scooter/Moped Hire - 2)



Quarter 2: July to September

PROGRESS

Target

224
Participants

Engaged

424
Participants

Employment Progress

63
Individuals

Work Ready

108
Individuals

Labour Market Progress

163
Individuals

Positive Steps Forward

199
Individuals

TOTAL DEVICES DISTRIBUTION



Target

460

Delivered

488

363

2

Tablet

52

Mobile Phone

61

Sim Cards

Laptop

BREAKDOWN

WIFI DONGLES DISTRIBUTION



Total Provided

43 out of 100

TRAIN THE TRAINER



Sessions Delivered

8 out of 14

TRAVEL BURSARIES

Total Supported

97 out of 75

(Bus Pass - 95,
Scooter/Moped Hire - 2)



Quarter 3: October to December

PROGRESS

Target

224
Participants

Engaged

472
Participants

Employment Progress

79
Individuals

Work Ready

147
Individuals

Labour Market Progress

306
Individuals

Positive Steps Forward

342
Individuals

TRAIN THE TRAINER



Sessions Delivered

13 out of 14

TRAVEL BURSARIES

Total Supported

123



These achievements reflect the commitment to empowering individuals and facilitating their journey towards sustainable employment and personal development.



No Limits 2 Phase 2024

- Focused on supporting work-ready individuals into employment.
- Successfully supported 31 individuals into work, with a target of assisting over 112 people within 6 months.



Engagement Channels

Engaged with individuals through SOFEA ladders, providing accessible support directly in communities.

No Limits 2 Phase Highlights

The programme exceeded its engagement target by reaching 127 individuals, achieving 113% of its goal. Despite setting an employment target for 28 individuals, the programme successfully placed 31 into jobs, resulting in an employment rate of 24.4% of those engaged. Notably, within the first two months, six individuals had already secured employment, demonstrating the programme's effective start and ongoing success.

Jan - June Achievements

Work Ready
Individuals

115

Individuals in
Employment

31

Devices
Requested

50

CSCS Card
Support

20

Progress Towards
Labour Market

123

Positive Steps Towards
Labour Market

127

Travel Bursaries
Provided

12

These accomplishments demonstrate our commitment to assisting individuals in gaining meaningful employment and advancing their careers.

Impact and Collaboration



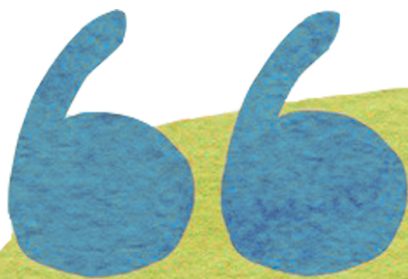
Collaborated with various organisations for referrals and support, aiming for a lasting impact.

Aiming to amplify referrals, especially in deprived areas like Cherwell district, to bridge individuals to meaningful employment.

Feedback

Alexandra, a pseudonym used for privacy, was once a refugee and her right to work had only been granted less than a month ago when she was referred to the 'No Limits' programme. Together, we embarked on a journey to transform her prospects. We crafted a compelling CV and delved into multiple job applications, meeting regularly to fine-tune her approach. In our quest to align her aspirations, we explored her personality through a series of tests, leading us to the culinary world.

After much preparation and persistence, **Alexandra** successfully secured a job. Overwhelmed with gratitude, she shared:



There are no words that can truly express how much your support means to me. From the bottom of my heart, I want to say thank you for your guidance, which helped me find a job. Especially your unwavering support before my job interview. I believe I could not have landed the job without you.



Svitlana, a Ukrainian refugee who arrived in the UK eight months ago with her young child, initially focused on improving her English. **'No Limits'** stepped in to provide crucial support, offering a bus pass for Svitlana to attend ESOL classes three times a week.

Career Transition

Recognising her desire to start working, Svitlana, a former Psychologist with a Ph.D. in Psychology, reached out for guidance. Despite lacking confidence due to language barriers, we collaborated on refining her CV and encouraged her to pursue career opportunities aligning with her expertise.

Success in the Job Search

Shortly thereafter, Svitlana secured a position she passionately desired - working as an officer on the Ukrainian rehoming scheme for the Oxford City Council. Collaboratively, we prepared a compelling application, including a recommendation email. Subsequently, she received an interview offer.

Tailored Interview Preparation

Acknowledging her nervousness and identifying potential gaps in her knowledge, we conducted targeted interview preparation sessions. Recognising a need for proficiency in UK housing procedures and legislation, resource materials were provided for Svitlana to revise at home.

Triumphant Outcome

Today, we celebrate Svitlana's achievement as she proudly announces the receipt of a job offer for the position. Her success not only exemplifies the transformative impact of tailored support but also underscores the potential for individuals to overcome language barriers and pursue fulfilling career aspirations in a new environment.





Alana, a recently finished from college, faced a unique challenge—she lacked the essential tools to kickstart her job search. Without access to a phone, data, or any electronic device, Alana's aspirations in the hospitality sector were hindered.

Supportive Intervention

Recognising her potential, a triage worker stepped in to provide comprehensive support. This included assistance with CV writing, interview preparation, and the provision of digital devices such as a phone and a laptop. These resources were crucial, ensuring that potential employers could easily contact her during the job application process.

Proactive Job Search

To boost Alana's confidence and actively seek employment opportunities, the support extended beyond digital assistance. The triage worker and Alana took to the town, inquiring about available jobs and distributing her CV. This hands-on approach not only enhanced Alana's confidence but also created tangible connections within the community.

Job Placement

Through concerted efforts and a proactive approach, Alana successfully secured a position working in a cafe near her home. The newfound employment not only fulfilled her immediate goal but also marked a significant achievement in her journey toward self-sufficiency.

Future Aspirations

With a job secured, Alana has set her sights on further education. She plans to return to college in a year, aiming to acquire additional skills and knowledge relevant to her chosen field in the hospitality industry. This case study exemplifies the transformative power of targeted support, enabling individuals like Alana to overcome obstacles and pursue their professional aspirations.





In a recent support initiative **anonymity preserved for privacy (referred to as Joel)**, hailing from **Zimbabwe**, sought assistance after a prolonged period of unemployment. Struggling with debt and fervently pursuing job opportunities, Joel faced considerable challenges.

Intervention and Support

Engaging with 'No Limits', Joel received tailored support to navigate his job search journey. Within the first week of collaboration, No Limits facilitated three interviews, leveraging their network and resources to provide Joel with valuable opportunities in the engineering field.



Job Acquisition and Life Transformation

In a remarkable turn of events, Joel triumphantly secured a position in the engineering sector. This achievement not only marked a pivotal moment in his professional journey but also initiated a transformative phase in his life. The job not only serves as a source of income but has become a catalyst for Joel in rebuilding his life.



Positive Impact

The newfound employment has had a profound impact on Joel's life, providing stability, purpose, and a renewed sense of hope. Through strategic support and collaborative efforts, **'No Limits'** played a pivotal role in steering Joel toward a brighter and more fulfilling future.



This case study underscores the positive outcomes that can result from targeted support and dedicated efforts to empower individuals, like Joel, to overcome challenges and achieve meaningful success in their professional lives.



Meet Phil, a pseudonym used for privacy. At a critical juncture in his life, Phil found himself homeless and awaiting housing. Complicating matters, he needed to engage with essential services such as: Probation, Turning Point, and Mental Health Services.

Urgent Need for Connectivity

Phil's situation became urgent when his phone broke, rendering him unreachable by vital services. Recognising the urgency, a triage worker intervened to provide immediate support. Phil required not only a functional phone but also a device through which these crucial services could reach him.



Holistic Support

The triage worker not only addressed the immediate need for connectivity but took a holistic approach to support. Phil's CV, reflecting a gap in employment, was updated, instilling confidence and readiness for re-entry into the workforce.



Empowering Confidence and Aspirations

The meeting with the triage worker served as a catalyst for Phil's confidence, prompting him to actively apply for jobs. Beyond the professional impact, this step held profound personal significance for Phil – a job and stable housing would enable him to reunite with his children, a powerful motivator for positive change.



Successful Reintegration

Phil's journey took a positive turn as he secured a position in the hospitality industry. This employment not only signifies a reintegration into the workforce but also marks a significant step toward achieving personal goals, including having a place of his own and reconnecting with his children.



This case study illustrates the transformative power of targeted support, emphasising the importance of connectivity, confidence-building, and personalised assistance in empowering individuals like Phil to overcome homelessness and pursue meaningful, positive change in their lives.

No Limits 3 Phase

Funding has been received by Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council for the continuation of the **'No Limits'** programme through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

'No Limits 3' is being delivered in partnership with SOFEA and Aspire and is set to continue through to 31st March 2025. OxLEP Skills seeks future funding to enable **'No Limits'** to continue supporting the people of Oxfordshire into the future.

'No Limits 3' also has a key focus on green skills within some areas of the county, signposting and raising awareness of green skills courses, available free for residents of these areas.

Other barriers to employment, education or training – such as access to certifications or training – can also be funded through the programme.



Funded by
UK Government



Observations of the project as a whole:



There's a notable observation in the project: Employers need to consider giving more weight to individuals with career gaps, recognising that these gaps often stem from valid reasons. Many individuals with such gaps possess qualities that make them excellent candidates, yet employers frequently overlook their potential.



Encouraging employers to enhance the inclusivity of their recruitment practices is crucial. While some excel in this regard, others fall short, with a spectrum of approaches in between.

We thank you for your continued support on the programme.



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→ www.aspireoxfordshire.org

→ www.sofea.uk.com