

[News story: Government announces £1.5 million fund to help tackle the gender pay gap](#)

The fund, which will launch on Monday 5 March, will offer grants to projects which help people to return to work in the private sector. These projects could help returners update their skills, provide other training, or support businesses to increase employment opportunities for returners. The fund will prioritise projects that focus on small and medium enterprises, employers outside London, and projects that support returners at all skill levels. This is part of the government's wider strategy to develop the evidence base on what may help to close the gender pay gap.

Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities, Amber Rudd, said:

It is truly striking that nearly 90 per cent of people out of paid work because they are caring for the home or family are women.

Too often people struggle to get back into paid work after taking time out to care for others. That is a huge loss not only to those individuals, but to our economy and to businesses all over the country.

That's why I'm delighted to announce this government will be launching a £1.5 million fund to support people, particularly women, back into work after time out looking after children and other relatives.

By offering meaningful work that pays, the fund will give people who want to return to employment the opportunity to use their valuable skills, talents and experience.

A toolkit and guidance have been created to support companies that would like to employ returners. The guidance, which was developed by Timewise and Women Returners, is aimed at employers across sectors and of all sizes. The toolkit, sponsored by Vodafone, explains the business benefits of employing returners.

Vodafone UK General Counsel and External Affairs Director and member of the Women's Business Council, Helen Lamprell, said:

Vodafone is proud to support Returners: A toolkit for employers. Having launched ReConnect – Vodafone's programme to help both women and men return to work after a career break – we've seen first-hand the benefits of hiring returners, and the positive impact this can have on them, as well as on our business.

We are keen to share what we've learned, and to learn from other employers, so that we can all do more to support people back into work. With this toolkit, which contains best practices and clear advice on supporting returners, we hope to help even more employers develop returner programmes of their own.

The [guidance](#), toolkit and [fund](#) are all part of a commitment of £5 million made by the Prime Minister in the 2017 Spring Budget, to help people back into employment after a career break. There are already public sector returner projects running in the health professions, social work, and the civil service. In addition, a Cyber Security Skills impact fund, run by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, will be particularly looking for initiatives that help women who have been out of the labour market due to caring responsibilities to get jobs in cyber security.