

Evaluation of Grants Pilot



This report provides an overview of the grants service that Young Women's Trust (YWT) piloted in 2017, following a much smaller test.

1. Introduction

Following a small-scale test of a financial grants programme towards the end of 2016, YWT decided to run a year-long pilot grants programme, to sit alongside our existing Work It Out (WIO) service.

The aim of the grants programme was *to enable young women to move towards quality work, by removing barriers, increasing employability skills and qualifications, and improving wellbeing or mental health*. Young women from our Advisory Panel described it as helping young women by giving them “the things they need to get the jobs they want.”

2. Applications to the service

Unlike WIO which is open access, albeit targeted at young women on low or no pay, we developed eligibility criteria for the grants programme - as it was envisaged that it would be very popular and we wanted to ensure the grants were focused on those women most in need. Eligibility criteria were as follows:

- Female (or identifying as female)
- Aged between 18-30
- Living in England or Wales
- Right to work in the UK
- Out of work or working 16 hours a week or less
- Currently receiving work related state benefits
- Currently looking for work or committed to progressing in work

Across all three rounds, a total of 1,167 applications were received from 949 different young women.

We deliberately allowed young women to apply for any grant items that they could evidence would help them move towards work. We gave examples of technology, travel, training, tools or interview clothing, but also had a category for 'other' where young women could ask for items we had not thought of, to allow young women to identify their own needs, and for us to learn more about what young women experience as barriers to finding quality employment.

We did however provide clear guidance about the type of items we would not fund – but despite this we still received some funding applications for 'non-fundable' items including household items and food.

3. Grants awarded

We spent a total of £59,921 on grants:

- 211 grants were offered and 182 young women received a grant (29 young women didn't take up the offer or complete the process).
- 232 grant items were purchased (some young women received multiple items as part of their grant).
- The average grant was for £329; the biggest spend was £500 and the lowest spend was £55.
- The most common grant was for technology, making up 38% of grants, followed by driving lessons (22%), clothing vouchers (17%), tools (13%), training (6%) and travel (3%).
- 40% of young women who successfully completed a grant application received a grant.

4. How we decided who was given grants?

Applicants who met the eligibility criteria were scored on a number of factors:

- Personal circumstances which represented additional barriers to finding quality employment: employment status, length of time out of work, caring responsibilities, disability, educational attainment and care leaver status.
- Evidence of how the requested item(s) fitted within a plan to find work or improve a work situation.
- The level of information provided about what had already been done to look for work or improve a work situation.

5. Outcomes: feedback from young women

We carried out a three-stage evaluation process:

- Initial online survey about the grant process and anticipated outcomes – within 5 working days of receiving grant (quantitative feedback on process).
- Online follow up survey about impact of grant –2-4 months after receiving grant (quantitative and qualitative feedback on outcomes).
- A random sample group received a follow up telephone call with independent researcher – 2-4 months after receiving grant (qualitative assessment of impact).

60% of young women completed the initial online feedback survey, a very high response rate. Key findings were:

- 91% reported the application process easy or very easy
- 100% said staff were helpful
- 98% said staff responded quickly to questions
- 80% said they got their grant quickly
- 96% said it would help them find work or improve their work situation
- 95% said it would help them feel more motivated and optimistic about the future
- 88% said it would help them increase their confidence
- 78% said they expected the grant to make them more employable in the next month
- 23% said it took a long time to hear if they had been successful

We also surveyed young women who had been unsuccessful, with a 10% response rate (we incentivised participation). 57% reported the application process was easy or very easy, 59% said staff were helpful, 50% said staff responded quickly to questions, 63% said they did not understand why they had not been successful and 50% said they felt they could not get in touch if they weren't happy about the decision. Although the sample size is small, these findings suggest more could be done to communicate effectively about why young women were turned down.

All young women who had received a grant were asked to complete a short online impact survey 2-6 months after receiving their grant. The survey was incentivised with the chance to win a voucher in a prize draw. 57% of young women who had been awarded a grant completed it.

- 93% felt more positive and optimistic about the future
- 87% said their confidence had increased
- 82% said they were more employable and ready for work
- 80% said their mental health or wellbeing had improved
- 80% had applied for more jobs as a result of their grant
- 78% had improved the quality of their job applications
- 75% had increased their skills or qualifications
- 72% were able to apply for better/different jobs than before
- 70% said they were able to support their family better
- 57% had started/applied for a course
- 50% said they had been offered more job interviews
- 26% had been offered a new or better job
- 22% had started a new job
- 13% had started working for themselves

These results are more positive than expected and show the impact of the grants service not only on work-related outcomes but also on improvements to confidence and mental health.

We also commissioned an independent consultant to carry out a series of telephone calls with successful and unsuccessful young women. These provided useful feedback on how to improve the process, the circumstances of young women's lives and the positive impact receiving a grant had made.

6. Future options

Young Women's Trust is currently considering the best way forward. More details will be shared when available. For any enquiries regarding the service or our future plans, please email workitout@youngwomenstrust.org