

Smart Works' Return on Investment Summary

Based on an independent analysis conducted by Frontier Economics

Smart Works operates in an increasingly competitive funding landscape, making it essential that we clearly demonstrate the value created through our services. To support this, Frontier Economics has conducted an independent analysis of the social return on investment (SROI) generated by Smart Works across our centres nationwide in FY2024/25 based on available data and existing literature.

The study examines the benefits experienced by women supported by Smart Works and compares their outcomes with a counterfactual scenario in which they did not receive our support. This allows the analysis to estimate the additional value created by our interventions and calculate the social return generated for every £1 of external funding or donations received.

Key Findings

A strong return on investment



For every £1 of funding*, Smart Works delivers approximately £8 in economic and social benefits.

Even under the most conservative sensitivity analysis which assumes the highest level of caution in terms of our impact, the return remains significant, at least £5 benefits per £1 funding*

*including financial and clothing donations

Source: Frontier Economics analysis

Reaching women facing the greatest barriers

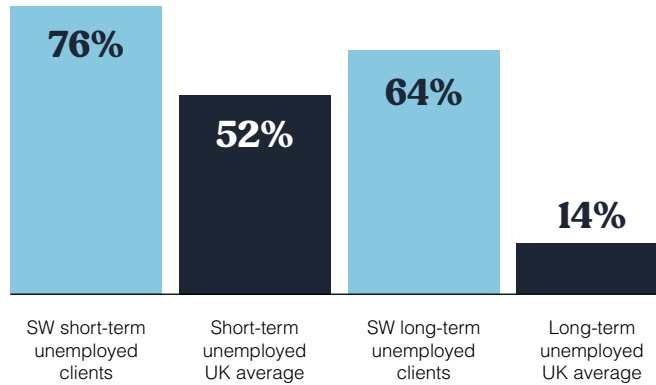
The report confirms that Smart Works is supporting women who are furthest from the labour market.

- 42% of clients were out of work for 12 months or more
- Many faced additional barriers including caring responsibilities, disability, or structural inequalities affecting ethnic minority women

Employment outcomes exceed national benchmarks

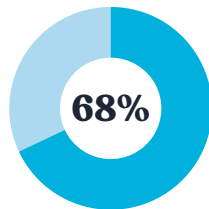
Smart Works clients achieve job outcomes significantly higher than UK averages for unemployed people returning to work.

Benchmarking the Smart Works job success rate against the UK



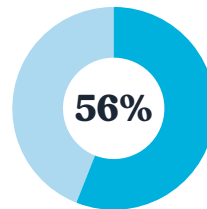
Source: Frontier Economics analysis
Note: Due to data availability we are not able to compare re-employment rates for the same period or for women only. As a result these results should be treated as an indication of the relative success of Smart Works schemes helping women back to work.

On average, 68% of clients who accessed interview preparation went on to secure employment.



Source: Frontier Economics analysis

Career coaching also delivers strong results: 56% of career coaching clients secured a job interview.



Outcomes for parents, disabled clients and ethnic minority clients were slightly lower but broadly comparable, demonstrating that Smart Works provides effective support for groups facing higher barriers.

Health and wellbeing gains

Beyond employment, Smart Works generates meaningful improvements in women's wellbeing. Using a recognised public health approach based on Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs), the analysis captures the value of improved mental health, confidence and stability associated with moving from unemployment into work.

These benefits are particularly significant for lone parents—who make up 29% of clients securing employment—and are driven not only by income but by the identity, autonomy and social participation that work provides.

Wider ripple effects

Academic literature suggests that supporting women into work can have long-term positive effects on their families, including improved educational attainment and employment outcomes for dependent children. While these wider benefits are not quantified here, they represent an important part of Smart Works' broader social impact.

Defining the Costs

The SROI calculation is based on Smart Works' direct external funding and donations in FY24/25. This includes £3.7 million received from grants, corporate and individual donations, and high-quality clothing contributions. To maintain a clear focus on the value generated by external investment, the SROI calculation excludes income raised through Smart Works' own fundraising events and investments, and it does not monetise volunteer time or other non-financial contributions, despite their significant role in service delivery.



Source: Frontier Economics analysis

Defining Benefits and Impact

The report quantifies two types of direct benefits:

Economic Benefits: Earlier entry into employment generates economic value through increased productivity and earnings, estimated using average earnings data for the industries and roles clients typically enter.

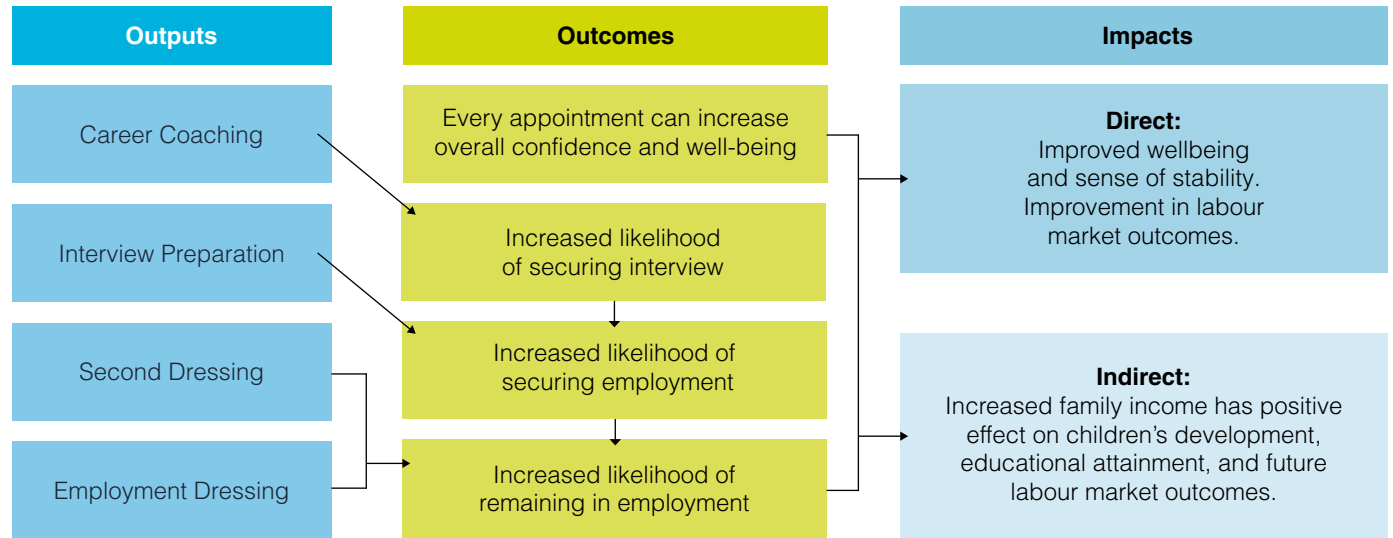
Health and Wellbeing Benefits: Measured using QALYs, these reflect the improved wellbeing associated with moving from unemployment into sustained work.

To calculate these figures, Frontier Economics used a benefit pathway analysis (see diagram, right) derived from the Smart Works logic model. This methodology compares observed client outcomes against a cautious counterfactual scenario, assuming our support enables women to secure employment six months earlier than they otherwise would.

Quantifying these two types of direct benefits results in a total social value of **£28,395,154** in the 2024/25 financial year.

Source: Frontier Economics analysis

Benefit pathway of clients who secure employment



Note: The indirect benefits were not monetised as part of this analysis.
Source: Frontier Economics analysis

Methodology

The analysis follows HM Treasury's Green Book and Magenta Book guidance and is grounded in Smart Works' Theory of Change. It draws on:

- Client survey data
- Administrative records
- Focus group findings
- A review of academic literature on employment support, confidence, presentation and labour market outcomes
- National statistics

All evidence used is either collected by Smart Works or publicly available.

The approach used to measure social value is as follows:

	Smart Works clients	The economy
What impact is measured?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in wellbeing and confidence from securing a job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in productivity
What metrics do we use to measure this impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare % clients who report job success with UK national average job success rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of clients who have secured jobs and average wages to proxy productivity increase from inactivity
What additional evidence do we use to monetise this impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature evidence of impact of unemployment on health and wellbeing • HM Treasury guidance on valuation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average weekly earnings from Labour Force Survey (Oct 24 - Sep 25) • Job level data collected from questionnaires • Best practice SROI guidance on valuation

Source: Frontier Economics analysis

Conclusion

In a challenging labour market, Smart Works' tailored support – through interview preparation, career coaching and professional clothing - provides a critical bridge into employment for women facing significant barriers.

Smart Works delivers meaningful, measurable impact for women, their families and the wider economy, offering funders a highly effective and high-value investment in women's futures.

This independent analysis demonstrates not only the effectiveness of the Smart Works model but also the substantial social and economic value generated as a result.