



Frances Sherratt

When Frances first joined the Prosper pilot she had been a Research Associate at The University of Liverpool for just over five years. Working within Public Health, Policy and Systems within the Institute of Population Health, her focus included leading a variety of projects exploring opportunities to make research more inclusive to individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.



Following her year with Prosper, Frances made the decision to move beyond academia into the UK Civil Service, to work as a User Researcher.

The Challenge

At the start of the Prosper pilot, Frances was at a crossroads regarding her long-term future. She knew she was in a strong position to advance her academic career. However she was also in the process of completing a number of large projects that she sensed could make her an attractive candidate for roles beyond academia too.

Frances wanted to ensure that any decision she made was as informed as possible. Like many postdocs in her situation, she felt she lacked a detailed enough understanding of the options open to her outside the academic world. In addition to the chance to identify employers that suited her interests, she was keen to gain insight into what those organisations look for, and strengthen her ability to market her skills.

“I was aware that there were probably jobs out there that I’d not considered before – roles that I’d not only be suitable for but also really enjoy.”



The Prosper Journey



Resources within the ‘Explore’ element of Prosper helped Frances to get a much deeper sense of the range of career options open to someone with her background. The ‘Fireside Chats’ and other sessions with employees from a range of organisations – usually ex-postdocs themselves – gave her a chance to ask questions about their work and sector, how they found life beyond academia, and their experience of the transition itself.



This information coupled with the ‘Reflect’ portion of the pilot helped Frances focus her thinking on what she wanted to do next. Group coaching sessions provided a useful forum to talk through her options with others, and she started to consider more seriously the possibility of a move outside of academia.

“Prosper was really useful for the process of thinking through my options – I became far more open to finding something outside of academia than I had been at the start.”





The 'Act' part of Prosper helped her to put her thinking into practice straight away – before long she had applied for a number of roles and gotten to interview stage. One was a role as a User Researcher in the Civil Service – a role she ended up accepting.

“The journaling, the individual and group coaching, the CV writing workshop – all of these and more were great, and tremendously helpful to me in terms of securing my new position.”



Next Steps

In June of 2022 Frances started working for the UK Civil Service as a User Researcher. Her new role involves planning, designing and conducting user research and usability testing to understand user needs and behaviours in support of the design and development of government digital services.

“I wasn't sure what to expect from Prosper at the start, but in the end it proved surprisingly valuable, prompting me to explore my options in full, and figure out what was right for me.”



“I heartily recommend postdocs take the time to be more reflective and explore pathways outside of academia. Speak to those who have stayed, others who have made the move – get a feel for what you'd be interested in.”

