

Toolkit for Returners: Roadmap Back to Work

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About the co-authors

- **Women Returners**

Women Returners is a network, consulting and coaching organisation which specialises in enabling experienced professionals to return to work after an extended career break. Through Women Returners Professional Network, they provide free return-to-work advice, information, opportunities and inspiration. They pioneered the introduction of returner programmes into the UK and partner with leading organisations to create supported routes back to work. To find out how they can support your return to work journey, please visit www.womenreturners.com.

- **Timewise**

Timewise is a social consultancy whose aim is to unlock the flexible jobs market, enabling those who need flexibility to find good quality flexible jobs. They provide in-depth research, best-practice guidance and up-to-date insights for employers who are seeking to build and embed a flexible workplace culture. They also run Timewise Jobs, the UK's first jobs board to only advertise roles that are flexible or part-time; and which also provides careers advice on flexible working. For further research and resources, please visit their website www.timewise.co.uk

Introduction and overview

This Toolkit is aimed at supporting returners back to work, focusing on those who have taken a break of over a year for caring reasons. It doesn't matter whether you're male or female, young or old, senior or junior, what industry or occupation you worked in previously, or how long your career break has been. You may have been not working at all; you may have taken a lower-paid, part-time, temporary or self-employed role to fit around your caring responsibilities, and now be looking for a job which is more in line with your skills and experience.

Whatever your circumstances, we've designed the Toolkit to cover all the different stages of getting back to work, giving you advice, tips and support to make the process of returning as smooth as possible.

There's never been a better time to be a returner. More and more companies are investing in returner programmes, and more and more employers are waking up to the value of returners' skills, experience and maturity. The Government has a dedicated Returners Team working on this area and a £5m Returners Fund was allocated in the 2017 Spring Budget to support returners to work through a variety of initiatives.

People around the UK are returning to great jobs using their skills and experience, even after 15 to 20 years out of the workforce. We hope that this Toolkit will help you to join them and we look forward to hearing your return to work success story.

Government Equalities Office, Women Returners and Timewise, 2018

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How to use the Toolkit

Whether you're just starting to think about getting back into work, or you're part-way through the journey back and looking for some extra advice and support, this Toolkit can help.

It's been designed as a roadmap that takes you through every stage of the return-to-work process, with a wide range of information, ideas and actions. You can start from the beginning and work through it, or dip in and out of the stages that are most relevant to you - choose the way that suits you best.

A number of resources are mentioned throughout the Toolkit. You'll find links and signposts to these and other sources of support in the Resources and Signposts section.

1. Set yourself up for success

Getting back to work takes time and commitment. Here are some practical steps to help you to carve out the time you need and to stay focused, positive and productive.

(i) Make time for your return to work

Finding work after a career break is a job in itself, which can be hard to fit into your already busy life. These ideas can help you create some space.

- **Balance your needs with those of others.** As your career break was for caring reasons, you may be used to putting everyone else's needs ahead of your own. It's time for that to change. Set aside a regular time in the day for your job search, rather than waiting until all your other tasks are completed.
- **Identify activities you can stop doing, delegate or make alternative arrangements for.** Can you start to get support with your caring responsibilities? Do you have others in your family (such as a partner or older children) who you can allocate more household chores to? If you're involved with time-consuming voluntary or community work, can you find someone to take this on? These actions will not only help you to make time now, but will also help you to be ready for when you start work.

(ii) Make a return to work plan

You stand more chance of being successful if you treat your return to work like a project, breaking the process down into manageable steps, with related actions:

- **Give your job search a project name.** Such as "Project Back to Work".
- **Decide on your end goal.** Make sure it is specific and motivating, such as 'Find a well-paid marketing job in Manchester'.
- **Break down the process.** Divide it into smaller steps, using this Toolkit to help. The first step could be 'Investigate childcare options' or 'Assess my skills'.
- **Set actions for each step.** For the first step, create a set of small and achievable actions with realistic deadlines. Don't write down too many actions in one go.
- **Work through the actions.** Set aside some regular time (ideally most days) to tackle one or two of these actions. Once you've ticked off the first set of actions, add a few more.
- **Don't get stuck.** If you keep avoiding taking a particular action, make it the first thing you do in a day (or think of an easier alternative).
- **Track your progress.** Review your actions regularly to see what you've achieved. Celebrate the small successes, such as every time you meet a deadline.

(iii) Get in the right frame of mind

Recognise that there are often ups and downs on the road back to work and it may take longer than you think. Returners who have had a longer break can take a year or two to get back into a suitable role in the workforce. Take practical steps to keep yourself motivated.

- **Be patient and persistent.** Returning to work can be a challenge, but it is possible. If you hit a setback, see it as a barrier to overcome, not a reason to give up trying.
- **Build your work confidence.** See Stage 2.
- **Let go of any guilt.** If you're feeling guilty about spending less time caring for your family, list the reasons why you need or want to work. If you are happy in your work, your return to work could benefit your family life.
- **Get active.** You're unlikely to find a job just by sitting at home thinking about your options or trawling online job sites, and this can be very dispiriting. To make progress, and to keep your energy levels up, get out and about to test out your ideas and create new opportunities. Arrange a coffee with a former colleague, sign up for a short update course or look for other ideas highlighted in Stage 4 and 5.
- **Look after yourself.** Job searching can be tiring, especially when you've got other responsibilities. Don't cut down on sleep to fit the job search in, and keep up with any activities you enjoy and find energising.

(iv) Start exploring childcare and eldercare options

If you took a break to look after your children, it's worth exploring your childcare options at this early stage. Some options may take time to set up, or need a place to become available, so it's important to plan far enough ahead.

The options available to you will depend on the age of your children, your potential income, and your location. Here are some things to think about in advance.

- Could your relatives offer free or low-cost help if you give them time to plan?
- If you're thinking about returning part-time, could you do a childcare swap with a friend?
- If you have a working partner, could they work part-time or flexibly to take on more childcare responsibilities?
- If you'll need to pay for childcare, what's your budget likely to be?

There are a range of options, with different costs: childminder, nurseries, nannies, au pairs and (if your children are at school) wraparound care such as breakfast and after school clubs.

There are childcare benefits available in some circumstances: take time to work through the Government Services and Information website. You can also get further advice and information from Working Families.

If you have been caring for relatives, start exploring community and private caring options early, as it may take some time to find the support that works for you and your family.

Again, the options available to you will depend on your specific circumstances; however here are some things to think about.

- Can other family members take on some of your caring responsibilities?
- Will the person you care for be able to stay in their home with community or private care support?
- If you need to investigate residential care, you will need to consider options to fund their care. Will it be possible to fund the care from existing funds or will you need to think about selling a property, cashing in investments?
- Have you needed to attend regular medical appointments with the person you care for? Could anyone else support you with this?

It's also worth noting that, if you have been receiving a Carer's Allowance or Child Tax Credits, and you start earning over a certain amount, you will need to notify the Government.

You can find more support and advice on the Government Services and Information website as well as from Working Families and Carers UK.

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Build your return-to-work support

None of us are superheroes; we all need support to succeed. Think about who can give you practical support and who can give you emotional support, helping you to stay energised and positive, both during your job search and when you're back at work.

- **Friends and family.** Talk about your return-to-work journey with positive friends and/or family members who will support and encourage you. If you have a partner, older children or extended family, ask them for practical help with your home responsibilities. If you have children, it's helpful to build a support network of other working parents so you can help each other out when needed. Consider asking friends with experience in your area of work or in Human Resources whether they could mentor or coach you through your return to work.
- **Fellow returners.** Look out for other people in similar circumstances to talk to regularly, share experiences and ideas and keep each other on track. Local return-to-work events or the Women Returners Professional Network are good places to find them. Your local authority or Jobcentre Plus may also be able to point you in the direction of job search, mentoring or other support networks in your area.

You can find out more about building and using your networks in stage 5.

2. Build your work confidence

We know that returning to work after a break can be daunting. You may be wondering whether you can still do what you did before, or whether anyone will want to hire you. If so, you're not alone; lots of very capable people feel this way after having had time out of the workplace. To boost your self-belief, spend some time reminding yourself of what you've got to offer. It's a great way to start to get your 'work identity' back.

(i) Identify your strengths and skills

Write a long list of both your strengths (things that you're naturally good at and enjoy, such as being creative or well-organised) and your skills (things you have learnt to do, such as using Microsoft Office, managing budgets or speaking French).

It can be hard to pinpoint your strengths, so here are some ideas to help.

- **Ask family and friends.** Get the people who know you best to tell you what they think you're particularly good at – they often see strengths you take for granted.
- **Think of times when you were at your best.** When have you felt like you were full of energy and doing a great job? What were you doing (your skills)? What made you so good at this (your strengths)?
- **Take stock of your skills.** Think about all the different jobs you've had, whether paid or voluntary. For each job, list the skills and strengths that you used. Don't dismiss skills you haven't used for a long time, as most can be updated relatively quickly. Now add the skills and strengths you have developed through your caring 'jobs' (such as time-management, multi-tasking, empathy and influencing). Also note any skills developed through your hobbies or other interests.
- **Look at old work reviews.** If you still have these, they can help you to remember what skills and strengths others valued in you.

(ii) Remind yourself of your experience and achievements

Create a long list of your experiences and achievements and then pick out the highlights. As well as boosting your confidence, this will be helpful when you start thinking about your return to work introduction (see stage 7) and writing your CV (see stage 8)

- **Experience.** Consider all the experiences that you have had: paid and volunteer jobs, periods of study and cultural experiences such as living in different countries. Include experiences you gained during your break, like setting up a small business from home or doing work in the community. This all adds up to the person you are now.

- **Achievements.** What are your proudest work and personal achievements? Think back year-by-year about what you've achieved in all areas of your life. Note down any qualifications or certifications, no matter how long ago you received them.

(iii) Address your self-doubts

It's easy for fears and doubts to stall your progress back to work. Tackle common return-to-work worries by looking for facts to challenge them and taking actions to reduce them:

- ***I've been out of the workplace for too long | I'm too old to get back to work.*** Fact: Many people have returned to great jobs in their 50s or 60s after breaks as long as 15 to 20 years. Action: Read through your lists of what you can offer an employer in terms of your strengths, skills and experience, recognise the benefits of your break (see box for more details) and read the success stories on the Women Returners website.
- ***I can't get to grips with new technology.*** Fact: Technology in the workplace is similar to the technology we use at home, and it's not hard to get back up-to-speed. Action: Work on your IT skills by taking a course before you get back to work (see stage 4).
- ***I'm too out-of-date.*** Fact: The valuable base of knowledge you have is still there – you just need to fill in the gaps. Action: Start to refresh your knowledge through networking, update courses and social media (see stage 4).
- ***I won't have enough energy.*** Fact: Many returners find that being back at work is energising rather than draining. Action: Start thinking about how you'll manage your work-life balance when you're back at work and try to target work you will enjoy.
- ***I've lost my work skills.*** Fact: Returners find their skills come back very quickly once they're using them again. Action: Think about how you use work-related skills, such as organising events or influencing others, in your everyday life; consider refreshing your skills through targeted volunteering if you've had a very long break (see stage 6).

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Recognise the benefits of your career break

Time away from work isn't time wasted; you will have gained a great deal. Aim to focus on the advantages not the disadvantages of your break:

- **Maturity.** You're returning to work older and wiser. Many employers are recognising the benefits that maturity brings to a team. Older workers can draw on a range of past experiences when looking for solutions and are likely to stay calmer when difficulties occur.
- **A new perspective.** Your experiences outside of work will have given you a fresh perspective which will be valuable to your next employer, helping the team to be more innovative in their approach.

- **Energy.** Having had some time away, you'll bring renewed energy and enthusiasm into working, which can boost others as well as yourself.
- **New skills.** Whether you were caring, volunteering, or taking part in other activities during your break, you will have developed a wealth of skills which are readily transferable to the workplace.

3. Get clear on your career direction

You don't need to know exactly what you want to do, but a scattergun approach rarely works. If you're clear on the type of work you want, you're much more likely to get it. Here is some advice to help you navigate this stage.

(i) Think about what you want from your next job

Priorities can change over time, so the first thing you need to do is identify what is essential and what is 'nice-to-have' for you right now. Ask yourself these questions:

- **What do you want from work?** What's motivating your return - is this just about needing or wanting the extra money? Or are you missing the social side of work, wanting to challenge yourself, to regain the sense of achievement or to get back your 'work identity'?
- **What do you need from work?** Do you need to work part-time or flexibly? How much do you need to earn? What locations can you work in? You can find more information about flexible working in stage 7.
- **What type of work environment do you prefer?** Would you rather be employed, or work for yourself? Would you rather work for a large or a small organisation? Does the brand name matter? What sector(s) do you want to work in? What sort of culture suits you best?
- **Which type of work do you enjoy?** To feel happy and productive when you're back at work, you need to like what you're doing day-to-day.
- **What opportunities exist in the current market?** Look for appealing sectors and organisations that are hiring. Look for those offering returner opportunities, such as returnships (see Stage 6). If necessary, consider how your skills and experience may be transferable.
- **Do you want to return to what you did before or to change direction?** Based on your answers, think about whether you want to return to a role using your previous skills and experience. If you are looking for a change, can you use transferable skills (i.e. using your existing skills in a different type of role or sector)? If you want a complete change of direction requiring retraining, are you ready and financially able to commit to this, or is funding available?

(ii) Work out the best route back in

Having pinpointed your overall career direction, you should then start thinking about which route or routes might be the best ways to pursue it. Here are some of the options that are available to you:

- **Returning as an employee.** For example, applying directly to a job advert, ideally with a returner-friendly employer or one who champions flexible working and diversity; through a formal returner or return-to-practice programme (see box for more details); interim roles such as maternity cover; or perhaps via an apprenticeship scheme.
- **Becoming self-employed.** For example, freelancing; project or contract-based work; setting up your own business or franchise.
- **Other opportunities.** For example, retraining into a new career; studying to gain extra qualifications; strategic volunteering; work experience.

You can find more about how to pursue these different options in stage 6.

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What is a returner programme?

Returner programmes are typically set up and run by the employer and offer a supported pathway back into work for people who have had a career break, usually of two years or more.

Most returner programmes fall into one of three categories:

- A **returnship** is a competitively-paid, higher-level fixed term contract with an employer, usually for 3 to 6 months, with a strong likelihood of an ongoing role at the end of the programme, if the placement goes well for both sides. Support such as coaching, mentoring and training is usually provided for the placement period.
- A **supported hiring programme** is also employer-led and involves hiring returners directly into permanent positions. Support such as coaching, mentoring and training is provided for the first 3 to 6 months.
- A **return-to-practice programme** is sector-based and provides training and work experience to enable you to practice again in a particular area, typically a regulated profession such as nursing or teaching.

Returnships and supported hiring programmes are still relatively new – they were first introduced in the UK in 2014. Their numbers are rapidly-growing, covering more sectors, regions and job levels each year, so it's worth looking out for new programmes that are relevant to you.

You can find out more about which companies are currently running returner programmes in stage 6. [\[link to stage\]](#)

4. Update your skills and knowledge

After taking a career break, you may be feeling out-of-date. However, it's easier than you might think to get back up-to-speed, and there's a great deal of support available.

Follow these steps to help get yourself workplace ready.

(i) Identify what skills and knowledge need updating

- Look at relevant job advertisements. What skills and knowledge consistently appear as required or desirable? Don't be put off by very long lists of what companies are looking for - remember that successful candidates usually don't tick every box.
- Focus on your key gaps to fill. Which work-related skills do you feel least confident about? What are the most important knowledge areas for the jobs you are targeting?

(ii) Find out where you can update with training courses

- **Industry associations and professional bodies.** Do you belong to a professional association or industry body, or could you join one? Often, they hold free or subsidised events as well as on-line and off-line training courses. Also, look at seminars and conferences – volunteer to help or ask about subsidised rates.
- **Government funded organisations.** LearnDirect offers a range of courses and qualifications to help you upgrade general skills (such as maths) or workplace skills (such as computer literacy), supported by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. There are also national careers services for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.
- **Local authority programmes.** Many local authorities run adult education courses, covering skills such as computer literacy.
- **Other training providers.** There may be training courses running in your local community, in a central city location or online. There is also a growing number of free open learning platforms, including courses run by leading universities.

(iii) Consider how else you can update

- **Social media.** Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are good sources of topical updates on what's happening in an industry or job area. Follow relevant companies and industry experts on Twitter and Facebook, and join groups on LinkedIn. See stage 5 for a special focus on using LinkedIn.

- **Sector news.** Subscribe to a relevant journal or publication – many are free-of-charge – and read related press. Learn the new jargon.
- **Former colleagues.** Meet with people you used to work with and talk about their experience of their workplace right now. They can give you information on anything that has changed and point you in the right direction for ways to find out more.

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Reboot your IT skills

Many returners feel nervous about their IT skills, concerned about how technology in the workplace has moved on since they left and whether they'll be able to catch up.

It's worth remembering that technology in the workplace is not so different to the technology you use at home, so you may not be as out-of-date as you think. And technology moves so fast nowadays that even people who are working can find it hard to keep up with developments. If you take some time now to get back up-to-speed, you may find yourself in a stronger position than others who haven't had that time.

- There are various free or low cost online courses that can help polish up your IT skills, including training in typical business applications. See the Resources Section for details [link to section].
 - Microsoft provides free online courses from Computer Basics through to Office (Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and Word).
 - Google provides free online courses such as Digital Garage.
 - You can find other free online IT training from providers such as Alison.
- If you prefer face-to-face support, many local libraries and community centres have low-cost IT training courses.

5. Network

Networking is a great way to gain advice and information for your job search, to get referrals to people who can help you and to find job opportunities (especially ones that aren't advertised). It may sound like a formal process, but in reality, it's quite the opposite.

Here are some tips on how to use networking to support your return to work.

(i) Use and develop your network

Everyone has a network. You probably network all the time without realising – with neighbours and in your local community. Networking is not handing out business cards or asking for a job. It simply means talking to people and exchanging information or asking for advice.

- **Your network is bigger than you think.** Who do you know? Grab a piece of paper (or a spreadsheet) and map out your network. Note all the groups that you are part of, currently and in the past, and those you can create or join. Look for ideas here:
 - Personal connections, including current and old friends, family, neighbours, school gates or carers' groups, clubs or hobbies, community groups, volunteering, religious community, local organisations.
 - Work-related connections, including ex-colleagues, ex-clients, industry or professional associations, other students from school/college/university, contacts from training courses, alumni groups, returner or job search groups.
- **Networking is all about conversations.** Start talking to people in each of these groups about your plans to get back to work.
 - Start with telling your personal connections - friends, family and regular contacts - that you want to go back to work and the type of job you're looking for. They may have great ideas and useful contacts to refer you to.
 - Get back in touch with old contacts and seek to make new contacts whenever the opportunity arises. Facebook and LinkedIn can be particularly useful for this.
 - To build your network, sign up for events where you're likely to meet people who work in your target area. Volunteer to help out to keep the costs down.
- **Use your network to get information and advice.**
 - Remember that most people love to feel their advice is valuable, and to be recognised as having useful knowledge. They are likely to be open to helping you if they can.
 - Identify people from your network map who might be able to give you information about an organisation or job area you are targeting. Organise a time to meet with them, ideally face-to-face. Be clear on your objective. Tell them you're asking for information, not a job.
 - Talk to your contacts about what they do. Be interested and curious, and spend as much time listening as talking about yourself. You never know what they might say that could lead to an opportunity.

- Think about any helpful information you can give back to your contacts: networking is a two-way process.

(ii) Create your return-to-work introduction

To help with your networking conversations, create a short introduction to yourself which makes you feel credible and confident: a few sentences about who you are, the skills and experience you bring and the type of role you're looking for.

Women Returners has developed the 'Career Break Sandwich' to help you structure your career break story:

- **Start with your background.** First summarise your work experience: e.g. *"I have 15 years' customer service experience in the consumer goods sector"*. Then mention key companies and clients (especially household names), as well as a few relevant projects and achievements. State any relevant qualifications, however old (a related degree from 30 years ago still boosts your credibility).
- **'Sandwich' your career break in the middle.** Don't defend or apologise for your career break, but also don't make it the focus of your story. You don't need to say the length of your career break. Keep it concise e.g. *"I took a parental career break with my young family"* or *"I have been caring for an ill relative."* Include activities from during your break if relevant or unusual.
- **Finish with what you're looking for now.** Summarise the job you're aiming for: *"I'm now looking for [type of role] in [industry] where I can use my skills in [x] and [y]"*.

Put all those parts together into a concise, confident summary – around one minute or so – and practice it out loud with friends and family until you can say it naturally. You can use a longer version, with a similar structure, to answer the *"Tell me about yourself"* question in an interview.

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Social Media and Networking

Social media platforms are increasingly useful ways of refreshing work connections, demonstrating your availability and identifying potential opportunities. LinkedIn is seen as the primary platform for professional roles.

LinkedIn Tips:

- **Photo:** Use a recent professional-looking headshot, not a holiday photo.
- **Headline:** Describe yourself based on your skills and experience. Put 'Marketing Manager' not 'On Career Break' or 'Looking for work'.
- **Summary:** Talk about your experience, qualifications, interests and what you are looking for now. Use the 'career break sandwich' structure to include your break.

- **Sections:** Fill in the Experience and Education sections. You can summarise, group or exclude earlier experience if you've had a long career. Include a '[Parental/Caring] Career Break' section to explain what you have been doing in recent years.
- **Settings and privacy:** Set 'Sharing Profile Edits' to 'No' while you make profile changes.
- **Connect:** Using your network map, send a personalised invite to connect with people you know, even if you have not been in touch for a long time. Use this as a first step to arranging a call or a coffee in person.
- **Follow and join:** Follow relevant companies, industries and people and join groups to keep up-to-date.
- **Search for jobs:** Many jobs are posted on LinkedIn. Keep an eye out for what's advertised and who's hiring.

Check your online image

- Think about what your social media presence says about you to a potential employer. Google your name and see what comes up. Make sure your Facebook settings are private if you don't want an employer to see your personal photos.
- If you have an informal email address, or a family email account, set up a new account based on your name specifically for job applications.

Social media platforms are also useful ways to network and to update any knowledge gaps. See stage 4 for more details.

6. Find job opportunities

Having decided on your overall career direction, worked out which route or routes you could follow to get there (see stage 3), got your skills up to scratch (see stage 4) and identified potential networks (see stage 5), you're ready to start job-hunting.

Here's some advice on how and where to look.

(i) Networking

Networking is the best way to find out what is available, and isn't daunting as it might sound. It simply means being open about wanting to get back to work, and talking to anyone you know who might be able to help.

You can find detailed information on building and developing your network in stage 5.

(ii) Jobs boards and recruiters

Increasing numbers of recruitment agencies and job boards are now specialising in flexible work, and some are specifically targeting returners.

- Look at the listing of **returner programmes** and **returner roles** on the Women Returners website and get updates about new returner opportunities by signing up to their free professional network.
- Search jobs boards with a **flexible focus**, such as Timewise Jobs, and sign up for alerts for **returner programmes** through their returner register.
- Talk to recruitment agencies who focus on **flex-friendly and/or returner roles**.

If you have decided to go freelance, or work on a project or contract basis, there are sector-specific agencies which place candidates. People in your network should be able to help you find out which are the best.

(iii) Government supported schemes

There are a range of government schemes available to help people get back into the workplace:

- **Return-to-practice** programmes are sector-specific schemes for people who want to return to the same profession that they previously worked in, often where practice certification is required. They usually offer an element of retraining and skills refreshing, and are sometimes funded. You will find examples in the Resources section.
- The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017 is encouraging more employers to offer **apprenticeships**. Today's schemes include both entry-level and higher-level roles, many open to older applicants, and offer a real opportunity to retrain whilst working. See what's available through the government's find an apprenticeship service.

(iv) Speculative applications

If there is a company that you would really like to work for, where you don't have any contacts, it may be worth putting in a speculative application. Even if they don't have a specific job advertised, this will show them that you are proactive and enthusiastic, and may help put you at the top of their list when a suitable role becomes available.

Here are four tips that will improve your chance of success.

- **Do your research** into any employers you are interested in contacting.
- **Target your applications** to companies which have potential – avoid a scattergun approach.
- **Identify the right person to write to** – never use Dear Sir/Madam.
- **Follow up** on any approaches you make – for example, you could call and ask to discuss your letter and CV after seven days.

(v) Retraining support

- If you want to train into a new career, you can search for courses across a range of subjects and sectors through the Government's National Careers Services for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. You can also speak to an advisor to help your search.
- There are a number of organisations which offer specific opportunities targeted at returners, such as retraining to support a move into the tech industry.
- You may also need to refresh or upgrade some of your core skills such as IT or numeracy. You can find more information in stage 4.

(vi) Start-up advice

If you have decided you would like to set up your own business, here are some useful resources:

- Great Business is a government-funded organisation offering support, advice and inspiration for starting and growing your business, from how to write a business plan to where to find financial support.
- Buying a franchise offers a supported route into setting up on your own. You can find more information from the British Franchise Association.
- HMRC have produced a guide to the legal implications of setting up on your own, covering everything from registering your business to tax and insurance requirements.

(vii) Volunteering opportunities

For some returners, skilled volunteering can be a good stepping-stone back to work. It can help you to re-familiarise yourself with the workplace and expand your network. You could update your skills in your previous field or gain skills and experience in a new area. Adopt a targeted approach by thinking about what kind of opportunity would help support your career plans.

- Search for volunteer opportunities through national organisations such as Do-it or TimeBank. Seek out senior-level volunteer posts through organisations like Trustees Unlimited.
- Work experience isn't just for teenagers. Use your network to approach local organisations in your area of interest to ask if you can work with them to refresh your skills or try out a new area of interest. However, if the work experience is unpaid, make sure it's only for a short period.

7. Explore flexible options

The world of work has changed significantly in recent years with an increased focus on work life balance and employee wellbeing. With the technology available to support people to work anywhere and at any time, employers are changing their attitude to flexible working. And you don't have to have worked somewhere for years to reap the benefits; flexibility is increasingly being given to employees from day one – and that includes returner programmes.

Whatever your reason for taking a break, you may want or need to return to a role that is part-time or flexible in some way. And you wouldn't be the only one: recent Timewise research has shown that 87% of the UK's full-time workforce either work flexibly already or wish they could.

As a result, an increasing number of employers are exploring the option of offering flexible working – and not just in office based jobs. For example, several large retailers, and organisations within sectors such as nursing and social care, have been working with Timewise to design and develop flexible roles.

As the image below shows, there is much more to flexible working than part-time jobs. The important thing is to find a flexible working pattern that suits both you and your potential employer; you'll be more successful if you spend some time thinking about it before you get to the interview stage. Here are some things to consider.

(i) Work out what kind of flexibility you need

In stage 2, we explored issues like childcare and social care which could have an impact on the kind of flexibility you need. These are some of the questions you need to ask yourself now you're getting closer to returning.

- **Where could you work?** Does the role require you to be in a certain place or have face-to-face contact with clients or colleagues? Is commuting going to be an issue? Do you have space to work from home if you need to?
- **When could you work?** If you have children, will you need to be available for school drop offs or pickups? How would you manage school holidays? If you have other responsibilities, are there any other factors that might regularly affect what time you could start or finish?
- **How much could you work?** Do you have responsibilities, health issues or other factors which would limit your ability to work full-time?

Sit down and write a list of all the things that apply to you, in order of priority, to help you work out what kind of flexibility to ask for. Some of them may be deal breakers, but you may be able to compromise on others.

(ii) Think about how and when to ask for it

However important flexible working is to you, it shouldn't be the main focus of your application or interview, even for a role which is advertised as flex friendly.

- Focus on your skills and experience first, and explain why you would be suited to the role.
- If an opportunity comes up at interview, you could ask about the company's approach to flexible working, but it is generally best to wait until you have been offered the job.
- When you're ready to raise it, treat it as a discussion not a demand, and don't expect an immediate answer. It may need to be discussed more widely within the organisation.

(iii) Look at it from the employer's perspective

Employers are likely to be more receptive to a flexible working request when it's presented as a solution, rather than a problem. So being clear about how it will work for them and for the job itself, will help you get what you want:

- **Research the company** to see what kinds of flexibility they currently offer. They're more likely to agree to an arrangement that they're already familiar with. You can usually find information on work life balance and examples of what it is like to work at a company on the careers page of their website.
- **Unpick the role** to show how it could be fulfilled within the arrangement you would like to suggest, and how it could benefit the employer. For example:
 - If it involves some solo work, could it be done remotely?
 - Would you be able to concentrate more on in-depth projects if you were working from home?
 - Could you deliver the same number of hours by starting and finishing earlier (or later)?
 - If the organisation has particularly busy periods throughout the month/year, could working less in the quiet times and more in the busy times be an option?
- **Find examples** of how you have made flexible work in a previous role, or case studies that show how others are making it work. Live examples can really reassure employers who aren't experienced in flexible working.

You can read more about how to negotiate flexibility in stage 10.

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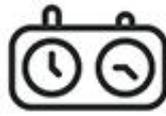
TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING



PART-TIME



**HOME /
REMOTE WORKING**



**FLEXIBLE START &
FINISH HOURS**



TERM TIME WORK



JOB SHARE



COMPRESSED HOURS

Here are some further definitions of how you might choose to work flexibly:

Part-time can be:

- Working a set pattern of days each week e.g. 3 days a week, Monday to Wednesday
- Working a percentage contract (e.g. 80%) which can be applied on a weekly, monthly or annual basis

Flexible start and finish times:

- Some employers will have core hours, say from 10am until 4pm, when they need everyone to be working, but will then leave it up to each individual to make up their hours either side of that time.

Term time work:

- As the name suggests, some organisations are able to support term time working. This might mean that no work is done during school holidays, or it might mean that a percentage contract is divided into portions, for example working 4 days per week for the 39 weeks of term-time during the year and working 2 days per week for the 13 weeks of school holidays (i.e. a total of 70% full-time equivalent)

Compressed hours can be:

- Working 5 days in 4, for example, where you work 4 longer days to make up the hours of your 5th day
- Working a 9-day fortnight – similar to above but spreading the hours of your 10th day over 9 longer days and having 1 day off every 2 weeks

8. Write your CV and cover letter

For most roles that you apply for, you'll need to have an up-to-date CV. You often also have the opportunity to include a cover letter. This is your first chance to stand out in front of your potential employer, so it's important to spend time on them.

- **Tailor your CV and cover letter to each specific role.** A generic application is a missed opportunity to get your most relevant skills and experience up front. Create a skeleton CV and cover letter, and then tailor them for each role you apply for.
- **Begin with a profile statement.** Recruiters don't have much time to read a CV, so summarise your career experience and highlights at the start. Write a tailored personal profile, focusing on your tangible experience, qualifications and skills (but not a list of generic strengths).
- **Be open about your break.** Don't start your work experience section with your last job. Include your career break with dates and give a reason (for example, *Parental career break*, *Health-related career break*). If you have gained any extra qualifications or relevant experience during your break, include these too. The career break section is particularly important if you are applying to a returner programme, as the employer will need to see that you fit the eligibility criteria.
- **Consider which format suits the role.** The two most common ways to lay out your CV are:
 - **Reverse chronological CV**
Put your personal profile at the top, followed by your career summary (in reverse chronological order), then your education history, any qualifications and skills you have gained, such as languages, IT or project management courses, and finally your interests.
 - **Skills-based CV**
For some applications, it may make more sense to group your previous jobs together by skill set, such as all customer service roles, instead of chronologically. This will make it easier for an employer to see the experience that is particularly relevant for the role you are applying for.

In either case, you may want to highlight any specific skills that meet the requirements for the job you are applying for, at the top of your CV. This can be particularly useful if you have had a number of different jobs for relatively small amounts of times. For example, if the role you are applying for requires significant project management experience, it would make sense to pull out these aspects from your career summary.

See the links below for example templates.

- **Sell your achievements.** When summarising your career history, don't just list the duties you carried out. Look at the skills, qualifications and experience that the job requires,

and build your (brief) summary around how you have demonstrated them in your previous roles.

- **Limit your CV to two pages.** A CV shouldn't be an in-depth account of your career to date; it should be the highlights, clearly presented, so a potential employer can quickly get a sense of whether you match what they're looking for. Prioritise what is most relevant to each role.
- **Use your cover letter to say more.** Use your cover letter to provide extra information rather than repeating your CV. Explain how you meet the requirements for the role, using your most relevant skills or achievements as evidence. State why you are interested in the job and would like to work for the organisation, based on your research.
- **Get a friend to read through your CV with you.** You want your CV to be clear and concise so that a potential employer can quickly see what skills and experience you have. It may be helpful to get someone from your network to read through your CV before you send it, as they will be able to point out areas that are unclear or where you have used acronyms or jargon that an employer may not be familiar with.
- **Check for mistakes before sending.** Employers often reject CVs with spelling mistakes or poor grammar. It's easy to miss your own mistakes, so get a friend to check if you can.

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CV and cover letter templates

<< Click through button to Worksheet Activity(s)>>

[Worksheet 13: Template for your cover letter](#)

[Worksheet 14: Template for your reverse chronological CV](#)

[Worksheet 15: Template for your skills-based CV](#)

9. Prepare for interviews

It may be many years since you last had an interview. Knowing what to expect and preparing well will help you feel confident and communicate what you offer. Be sure to ask which type of interview you will have to help you prepare effectively.

And remember, it's a two-way process. You're also assessing whether you want the role and want to work with this organisation. They've offered you an interview because, based on your CV and application, they believe you can do the job. Focus on giving them the evidence to show you are the person that they need.

(i) Understand the different types of interview questions

- **General.** Most interviews start with questions to assess your motivation and 'fit' for the job. Questions may be about you as a candidate ("*What are your strengths and weaknesses?*", "*What are your career aspirations?*"), your last job and your break ("*How did you keep up to date on your career break?*"), or the job itself ("*Why do you want this job?*", "*Why do you want to work for us?*")
- **Competency-based.** Larger organisations often use structured interviews of this type, to assess if you have the skills and experience to do the role. Questions ask for concrete examples from your experience, such as, "*Tell me about a time when you ...*" or "*Give me an example of when you ...*"
- **Strengths-based.** Some companies now use questions focused on what you enjoy rather than your abilities. Typical questions include: "*What energises you?*", "*When are you at your best?*" or "*What do you find draining?*"
- **Technical.** You may be asked questions to assess your industry and functional knowledge, such as your views on an industry development, a discussion on your experience in a certain area, or how you'd handle a technical job scenario.

(ii) Preparing for general interview questions

- Look at a list of typical questions and prepare a few bullet points to answer each type.
- Do your research on the organisation and the job.
- Stick to around three points per question, for example, the three reasons why you want this job.
- Keep your answers concise and focused on the question.

(iii) Preparing for competency-based interview questions

- **Identify the relevant competencies.** Look through the job description and highlight the competencies or abilities which the role requires (e.g. leadership, communication, teamwork).

- **Develop personal examples.** Think back on all your work experiences to date (paid and unpaid) and your personal achievements outside work. For each competency, select two examples that demonstrate your ability, and prepare to talk about them enthusiastically and in detail.
- **Structure your answers using the STAR model.** This simple technique is a helpful way to make sure you cover all the relevant points:

Situation Set the scene – give short background and context.

Task What had to be done? By when? What were the challenges?

Action Describe what you did to achieve this objective (always reply 'I' not 'we'). Provide evidence of the competency.

Result What did you achieve? Give quantifiable results and/or feedback. What did you learn?

- **Keep your answers concise.** Focus on the key information that is relevant to the question you've been asked. Aim for around three minutes per answer, and make each point count.

(iv) Preparing for strengths-based interview questions

- Think about what you most enjoy and are energised by.
- Think about situations when you have felt at your best.
- Find examples of experiences you have enjoyed which relate to the achievements on your CV, and be able to explain why.

(v) More interview tips

- **Leading up to the interview**
 - Research the organisation, department and role.
 - If it hasn't been made clear to you, you may want to contact the employer in advance to ask what format the interview will be. Remember to treat any interaction with the employer as part of the interview process, so be polite and engaging at all times.
 - Prepare thoroughly for potential questions and practise your answers out loud. Organise a mock interview with a friend, if possible.
 - Think about any questions you might want to ask the interviewer; for example, about the company or the team you will be working in.
- **On the day of the interview**
 - Allow time for travel, plot out your route, and have a contingency plan.
 - Relax and breathe. It's okay to feel nervous but remember they wouldn't have invited you for an interview if they didn't think you could do the job.

- Listen to their questions. If you're not sure what they're asking, clarify.
- Keep your responses positive and brief.
- Show your enthusiasm and interest in the role and the company.
- Think about your body language. Give a firm and friendly handshake and smile confidently; sit straight in your seat; make eye contact.
- Close the interview positively and thank them for their time.

- **Following up afterwards**

- If you don't get the job this time, ask for feedback, and treat it as a learning process.
- Some vacancies attract so many applications that it is not possible for the employer to provide individual feedback. If you don't get any feedback, don't worry. Remind yourself about any questions that you struggled to answer and take some time to think about how you would answer these at future interviews.
- Remember that it takes time to get back into a suitable role after a career break. Stay positive and persevere – the perfect job might be just around the corner!

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Talking about your career break

Your interviewer may ask what you did during your career break. Don't justify, defend, or apologise for your break. Follow these steps to create a concise, confident answer.

1. **State the reason:** *"I took a career break to [raise a family; relocate with my partner; care for my elderly father; recover from an illness]."*
2. **Say what you did:** *"During that time I [any relevant achievements, experiences, volunteering, qualifications or learnings that you've gained during your break]."* If you haven't got any experiences from your career break that you think would be appropriate to share, go straight to step 3.
3. **Say what you want now:** *"[Now my children are at school; I've fully recovered; my father has passed away; we're back in the UK], I'm ready to return to work and am looking forward to using my skills and previous work experience in a role like this in your organisation."*

10. Negotiate effectively

Getting through the application and interview process and being offered a job is a real achievement, particularly after a career break.

However, returners sometimes feel less confident about negotiating things like salary, level or flexibility than they would have before. The fact is, you've been offered the job because you're the best candidate, so you shouldn't be afraid to discuss the terms on which you would be able to accept it. We talk more about building your work confidence in stage 2.

Don't feel you have to accept the job straight away; thank them for the offer and clarify when they need to know by, when they would like you to start, and the proposed location, salary and hours. Then take the time to decide what, if anything, you might want to discuss further before accepting.

Here are some pointers to help you agree the terms you need.

Before you start negotiating

- **Negotiating is normal.** And yet a lot of people, women in particular, don't do it. It is important to recognise that negotiating is a common part of the recruitment process today. So remind yourself of the value you will bring to the company (see stage 2, and make sure that you are getting the best deal for you.
- **Work out your priorities.** There are a number of points that you might want to negotiate; four key ones are salary, seniority, flexibility and benefits such as holidays. Decide which ones are deal breakers and which you could compromise on. Think about what the employer's priorities might be, too.
- **Do your research.** Arm yourself with some fact and figures before you start negotiating. For example, look at what similar roles are paid in other organisations, or find out whether other people in the organisation are working flexibly. This helps make the conversation less about what you want and more about what is generally acceptable.
- **Think about your pathway.** If you have decided to take a stepping-stone approach to coming back to work, and taken a less senior role than you held previously, it's also worth thinking about how quickly you could get back up to speed. Consider asking for a regular review to be built in to help you progress.
- **Be realistic.** Some routes back into work may have specific timeframes or working hours which are not up for negotiation. For example, you may not be able to negotiate start dates or working hours for a formal returner programme. If this is the case, it's worth remembering that there may still be opportunities to renegotiate later on.

At the point of negotiation

- **Negotiation is all in the delivery.** So be clear, calm, and professional. Don't let your emotions come into play and remember that it is a discussion, not a series of demands. Never be apologetic about your career break; instead, focus on your skills and what you will bring to the organisation.
- **If you can, take the lead in the negotiation.** Thank the employer for the offer, and explain that you would like to explore the terms with them.
- **Set out your proposal as a whole** rather than splitting it into separate issues. Show how the different points you are negotiating (e.g. salary, flexibility) are connected, rather than negotiating one point first and then starting again with the next point. If you are able to give and take on some of the points on offer, that will help you achieve your main priorities.
- **Listen to what they have to say.** Respond creatively to any points they raise, and always remember the option of a trial period for anything you're suggesting. Remember to look at the whole package they are offering; additional benefits may make a baseline salary more acceptable.
- **Seal the deal.** Finally, once you've come to an agreement that works for both sides, make sure you get it in writing as soon as you can. And if you really can't agree the terms you need, don't be afraid to walk away.

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Negotiating flexibility

We explored flexible working options and how to decide what flexibility you might need in stage 7 [[link to stage](#)]. Here are some specific tips on how to negotiate flexibility once you have a job offer.

- **Be clear about how they could benefit.** For example, you could explain that you could be more productive working from home on certain tasks, or that you are confident that you could fulfil the role in fewer days. By doing the thinking for them, you're making flexible working feel like a solution, not a problem.
- **Think creatively about flexibility.** For example, if you have school-aged children and the company's activity tends to slow down in the summer, you could suggest an annualised approach, in which you work more hours in term time and fewer in the long holiday. This would give you time off when you need it most, and help your employer be staffed efficiently at a quiet period.
- **Give examples of how you have made it work in a previous role,** or share case studies from other organisations. You can find inspiring stories on [Timewise Jobs](#) and read more about the flexible successes who make up the [Timewise Power 50](#).

- **Explain that you're willing to be flexible in return.** For example, if you're asking for a part-time role because of caring responsibilities, but would be able to switch your days if there were team meetings, say so.
- **Suggest a trial period,** after which you and your employer can review how well it's working and make any changes needed. This is particularly valuable after a long career break, as what you think you're going to need and what you actually need may be quite different.

Flexibility works best when it works both ways, and this approach will demonstrate that you understand the employer's needs as well as your own.

11. Get ready to return to work

After all your hard work, you've been successful, and your new job is about to start. Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for the role itself and the changes it might bring.

(i) Plan for changes at home

- **Share out the jobs.** If you've been on a career break, you've probably been taking the lead on the home front – bills, shopping, cooking, cleaning and caring. If you haven't already done so in stage 1, now is the time to share out these tasks if you can. If you have a partner or older children, have a conversation about who will do what once you're back at work. Can you afford a cleaner?
- **Think about what you can stop doing.** Can you book a regular food delivery to save you shopping? Can you simplify your cooking? Can you hand over any volunteering activities?

(ii) Find solutions for any caring responsibilities

- If you still have caring responsibilities, pin down how these will be taken care of while you're at work. Decide what option or combination will work for you and your family and allow you to return to work fully focused. See stage 1.
- Start the arrangements well before your first day back at work, to give everyone time to settle in to the new routine and iron out any challenges.
- Remember to plan a back-up option – and have a back-up for the back-up.

(iii) Get into a return-to-work mindset

- **Boost your work confidence** Reflect again on your strengths, skills and experience as you did at stage 2 and practise your introduction to new colleagues. This will help you feel confident that you have lots to offer in your new job.
- **Accept that change can be tough at first.** For anyone starting a new job, the first few weeks can be a steep learning curve, and can be exhausting at times. And the longer you've been away, the more of an adjustment it will be. Be kind to yourself during this time and remember that within a couple of months you will feel much more settled.
- **Let go of any guilt.** You may feel guilty about spending less time caring for your family. Remember the reasons why you want or need to work; and how it improves your wellbeing and helps your family. Guilt can come from judging ourselves by impossible standards, so don't aim for perfection; good enough is usually good enough.
- **Focus on the positives.** Remind yourself of the rewards, personal and financial, that working will bring you and the family. This will help you to feel positive about your work-home balance and to be able to overcome any challenges.

(iv) Work through your finances

It can come as a bit of a shock when wages are paid in arrears – often a full month after you’ve done the work. And as a returner, you may have additional costs to pay upfront such as buying work clothing and season tickets, or paying for care. So it’s worth making sure you have the funds to cover those costs and bridge the gap until you receive your first salary payment.

(v) Congratulate yourself

Pause to reflect on how far you have come since you first started on the road back to work. You have sharpened your job search skills and effectively demonstrated your abilities to an employer. It is a great achievement to successfully get yourself back into the workforce after taking an extended break. Good luck for the next stage of your life!

Resources & Signposts

General advice

- **Acas**
Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law.
www.acas.org.uk

- **Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and Working Forward**
The EHRC is the national equality body for Great Britain. The body working in conjunction with businesses and industry has launched the Working Forward campaign to support pregnant women and new parents in the workplace.
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/pregnancy-and-maternity-workplace/working-forward>

- **Government Services & Information**
Covering everything from Benefits advice, detail on your employment rights, and information specifically for carers, parents and disabled people
www.gov.uk

- **Timewise**
Timewise is a social consultancy whose aim is to unlock the flexible jobs market, enabling those who need flexibility to find good quality flexible jobs.
www.timewisejobs.co.uk
 - A range of articles, including a three-part series on how and when to ask for flexible working: <https://www.timewisejobs.co.uk/careersadvice/>
 - Practical support and exercises to help with everything from building confidence to writing CVs: <https://www.womenlikeus.org.uk/advicepacks/>

- **Women Returners**
Women Returners is a consulting, coaching and networking organisation which specialises in enabling women professionals to return to work after an extended career break. www.womenreturners.com
 - A wide range of advice on return-to-work topics: <http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/advice/>
 - A library of inspiring return-to-work success stories: <http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/success-stories/>
 - Return-to-work signposts from recruitment agencies to professional associations: <http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/resources/>

Getting Ready

1. Set yourself up for success

- General government information & advice: www.gov.uk
 - Carer's Allowance: www.gov.uk/carers-allowance
 - General advice on benefits: www.gov.uk/browse/benefits
 - Advice on childcare related benefits: www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs
- Carers UK: www.carersuk.org
- Working Families: www.workingfamilies.org.uk
 - Advice on finding childcare: www.workingfamilies.org.uk/article-categories/childcare/
 - Advice for carers of adults and disabled children: <https://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/article-categories/caring-for-adults-and-disabled-children/>
- Women Returners Professional Network: www.womenreturners.com
- Timewise: www.timewisejobs.co.uk
 - Advice for carers: www.timewisejobs.co.uk/caring/
 - Timewise advice for Returners: www.timewisejobs.co.uk/returning-to-work/
- Find your local Jobcentre Plus: <http://los.direct.gov.uk/>
- Find your local council: <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

2. Build your work confidence

- Women Returners success stories: <http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/success-stories/>

3. Get clear on your career direction

- Women Returners List of Returner Programmes and advice:
 - <http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/returnships/>
 - <http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/advice/>
- Women Like Us: <https://www.womenlikeus.org.uk/careers-advice/>

4. Update your skills and knowledge

- Learn Direct (professional development courses): www.learndirect.com/
- MOOCs (Interactive step-by-step courses aimed at reaching an unlimited number of participants worldwide to create a community of lifelong learners): www.mooc-list.com/
- Free learning from the Open University: <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/>
 - For example, the Return to Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths programme: <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/science-maths->

[technology/returning-stem/content-section-overview?active-tab=description-tab](https://www.shawacademy.com/technology/returning-stem/content-section-overview?active-tab=description-tab)

- Shaw Academy: <http://www.shawacademy.com/>
- Dot Native: <https://www.dotnative.com/>
- CIPD mentoring - <https://www.cipd.co.uk/steps-ahead-mentoring>
- Microsoft - digital skills: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/athome/digitalskills/improve/>
- Google - online marketing training <https://learndigital.withgoogle.com/digitalgarage>
- Alison - online IT training <https://alison.com/courses/it>

Job Searching

5. Network

- Women Returners Professional Network: www.womenreturners.com
- LinkedIn: www.linkedin.co.uk
- Twitter: www.twitter.com

6. Find job opportunities

- Jobs boards and recruiters
 - Women Returners Professional Network membership: <http://womenreturners.us8.list-manage1.com/subscribe?u=ee33738f891a2e40840c33f2e&id=ef607d28d2>
 - Timewise Jobs flexible and part-time roles: www.timewisejobs.co.uk
 - Timewise Jobs' returners register: <https://www.timewisejobs.co.uk/article/join-our-returners-register/>
 - Agencies and jobs boards that specialise in returner and flex-friendly roles: <http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/3-uk-recruitment-agencies-specialising-in-professional-level-flexible-part-time-jobs/>
 - Mumsnet Jobs: <https://jobs.mumsnet.com/>
 - Working Mums: <https://www.workingmums.co.uk/>
 - The Return Hub: [The Return Hub](#) (financial services)
 - F1 Recruiting: [f1 Recruitment](#) (advertising and marketing)
 - Capability Jane: <http://candidates.capabilityjane.com/>
 - 2 to 3 Days: <https://www.2to3days.com/>
 - Ten2Two <https://www.ten2two.org/>
- Government supported schemes
 - Return to Social Work: <https://www.local.gov.uk/return-to-social-work>
 - Return to Practice (for allied health professionals)
 - Return to Teaching <https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/explore-my-options/return-to-teaching>
 - Apprenticeships - Government [find an apprenticeship service](#)

- Apprenticeships – UCAS higher level apprenticeships: <https://www.ucas.com/higher-apprenticeships>
- Retraining
 - National Careers Services - Government careers development and training: www.gov.uk/career-skills-and-training
 - TechPixies (start-ups, tech industry): www.techpixies.com
 - Makers Academy (coding): www.makersacademy.com
 - Digital Mums (social media): www.digitalmums.com
- Start-up advice
 - Great Business is a government funded organisation offering support, advice and inspiration for starting and growing your business: <http://www.greatbusiness.gov.uk/>
 - The British Franchise Association offers advice and support for people considering setting up a franchise: <https://www.thebfa.org/>
 - HMRC Guide to the [legal implications of setting up on your own](#)
 - Freelance consulting website: <https://www.talmix.com/>
- Volunteering
 - Do-it: <https://do-it.org/>
 - TimeBank: <http://timebank.org.uk/>
 - Trustees Unlimited: <https://trustees-unlimited.co.uk/>

7. Explore flexible options

- Timewise: www.timewisejobs.co.uk
 - Advice for carers: www.timewisejobs.co.uk/caring/
 - Timewise advice for Returners: www.timewisejobs.co.uk/returning-to-work/
 - Case studies of people working flexibly: <https://www.timewisejobs.co.uk/careersadvice/hire-me-my-way-campaign/>
 - General advice & support on flexible working: <https://www.timewisejobs.co.uk/careersadvice/how-to-ask-for-flex/>
 - Case studies of flexible working: <https://www.timewisejobs.co.uk/careersadvice/inspiring-stories/>
 - Senior flexible workers' stories: <https://timewise.co.uk/power-50/>
 - Research on flexibility: <https://timewise.co.uk/what-we-do/research/talent-imperative/> and <https://timewise.co.uk/what-we-do/research/>

8. Write your CV and cover letter

- Timewise: www.timewisejobs.co.uk
 - CV & Interview advice: <https://www.timewisejobs.co.uk/careersadvice/cv-and-interview/>

- Women Returners: www.womenreturners.com
 - Writing a post-break CV: <http://blog.womenreturners.com/2014/11/how-to-write-your-post-break-cv.html>
 - Writing your return-to-work cover letter: <http://blog.womenreturners.com/2015/02/how-to-write-back-to-work-cover-letter.html>
 - Advice on writing a CV: <https://www.womenlikeus.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/AP8-How-to-write-great-CV.pdf>
 - Advice on writing a cover letter: <https://www.womenlikeus.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/AP9-How-to-write-great-cover-letters1.pdf>

Preparing to Return

9. Prepare for Interviews

- National Careers Advice: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/get-a-job/interview-advice>
- Women Returners: www.womenreturners.com
 - Advice on preparing for interviews: <http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/advice/>
- Timewise: www.timewisejobs.co.uk
 - Advice on CV and interview: <https://www.timewisejobs.co.uk/careersadvice/cv-and-interview/>

10. Negotiate effectively

- Advice and information on the market value of current roles:
 - www.salary.com
 - www.glassdoor.co.uk
 - www.payscale.com
 - www.emolument.com
- Timewise: www.timewisejobs.co.uk
 - Negotiating flexibility: <https://www.timewisejobs.co.uk/careersadvice/how-to-ask-for-flex/>

11. Get ready to return to work

- Women Returners: www.womenreturners.com
 - Advice on returning to work: <http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/advice/>