

Women often find themselves returning to work after a long break. Although both men and women may have gaps in their employment for a range of reasons, women are more likely than men to have taken time away from the workplace to have children and raise a family.

### What are your reasons for returning to work?

It helps to be clear about your motives for going back to work:

- Do you need extra money?
- Are you seeking financial independence?
- Do you want to meet new people or feel like you are part of a team?
- Are you thinking about developing a new career, or returning to a previous one?
- Maybe you want to learn new skills?

Knowing what you want out of a job will help you to make better decisions when you are returning to work.

### Some of the difficulties you might be facing

As you get ready to go back to work, you may feel like you have a few obstacles to overcome. Perhaps you are:

- Lacking confidence in yourself and your abilities
- Unclear about what kind of work you want to do
- Worried that your skills are out of date
- Wondering how you can get help with childcare
- Not sure how you will balance the demands of home, family and work

### Prepare yourself

Don't be put off by the difficulties. There will be solutions to most, if not all, of them. Tackle difficulties one at a time and you won't get bogged down. Here are some ideas to get you started:

#### Improve your confidence

It's very common for confidence to take a dip after a period of non-employment. It's important to think positively about yourself and focus on your strengths rather than your weaknesses. In particular, consider all the extra skills and experience you have built up during your break from work - managing a budget, organising family routines, and caring responsibilities are all examples of skills that can be transferred to the workplace. It might build your confidence if you tried doing some voluntary work as a first step to returning to work. Or you could enrol on a course. There are courses specifically designed to help you prepare for a return to employment or to help build your confidence.

#### Work out what you want to do

If you don't want to return to the type of work you did before, you may find yourself wondering what you *can* do. This will depend on factors such as your reasons for going back to work, your interests and your skills. Why not talk it over with a nextstep adviser? nextstep can provide information and advice on careers, training, courses, as well as any funding available. Alternatively, if time is not on your side and you need to get back to work in a hurry, get some advice on up-dating your CV, interview skills and job hunting techniques. Nextstep can help with all of these.

#### Improve your skills

Brushing up on existing skills or learning new ones can help ease you back into work. You will feel more confident about your abilities, which in turn will make you feel better about yourself in general. If you don't have a particular direction in mind, doing a computer course could be useful for a number of jobs and shouldn't be too difficult to find. There are lots of flexible options these days as to how, when and where you can learn. Get advice on learning opportunities near you.

### Get help with childcare

If you need advice on organising good quality childcare for your children, get in touch with your local Children's Information Service (CIS). Whether you need advice on childminders, nannies, pre-schools, day nurseries, out of school clubs and/or holiday play schemes, the CIS should be able to help. It can also advise on Nursery Education Grants and other types of financial assistance. Whatever your formal childcare arrangements, it will also help if you can organise a back-up network of your own to provide emergency childcare cover should you need it.

### Find the right balance

If you don't want to return to work full-time, remember that many jobs these days can be done on a part-time basis. Other alternatives are job-share and flexible working. There are certain jobs, too, in addition to teaching that only involve working during school or college terms. These include jobs such as:

- Lunchtime supervisor
- Teaching assistant
- Learner support worker
- Certain administrative roles in schools and colleges

Self-employment is an option many women returners are drawn to as they feel it allows them control over their working hours. Business Link Wessex runs a 'Women into Business' programme, which covers all aspects of running a successful business. Tel: 08454 588558.

### Where can I find out more?

**nextstep** - if you want to find out about training and courses, or want advice on career direction. nextstep can also help with CVs, interview skills and job search. Freephone 0800 138 5550

<b>Bournemouth Children's Information Service</b>	<b>01202 456222</b>
<b>Poole Children's Information Service</b>	<b>01202 261999</b>
<b>Dorset Children's Information Service</b>	<b>0845 355 2099</b>

### Job Centre Plus

Keep in touch with the latest job vacancies and find out how to apply by phoning the Jobseeker Direct telephone helpline 0845 6060 234, (text phone 0845 6055 255) lines open 8.00am-6.00pm weekdays and 9.00am-1.00pm Saturdays. Calls are charged at local rates. Alternatively, visit [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk) to search for vacancies or to find out about different kinds of help and support for those without work, including New Deal 50 plus.

### Business Link Wessex

Comprehensive information and advice on business start-up and development. Speak to an adviser on 08454 58 85 58, or visit their website at [www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk](http://www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk)

### Women's Wisdom

A networking group for women looking to start up in business. Phone them on 0800 781 8597 to find out about local events or browse their website at [www.womenswisdom.co.uk](http://www.womenswisdom.co.uk)

### Useful websites:

#### **[www.learndirect.co.uk](http://www.learndirect.co.uk)**

Work through the learndirect online skills and internet explorer or browse over 700 job profiles for career ideas

#### **[www.women-returners.co.uk](http://www.women-returners.co.uk)**

A useful website offering a range of information for women returners.

**BEST Training & NextStep provides information and advice on work and learning to adults 20+ across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole.**

**Telephone 0845 450 8600 [www.bestpoole.co.uk](http://www.bestpoole.co.uk) [iag@bestpoole.co.uk](mailto:iag@bestpoole.co.uk)**