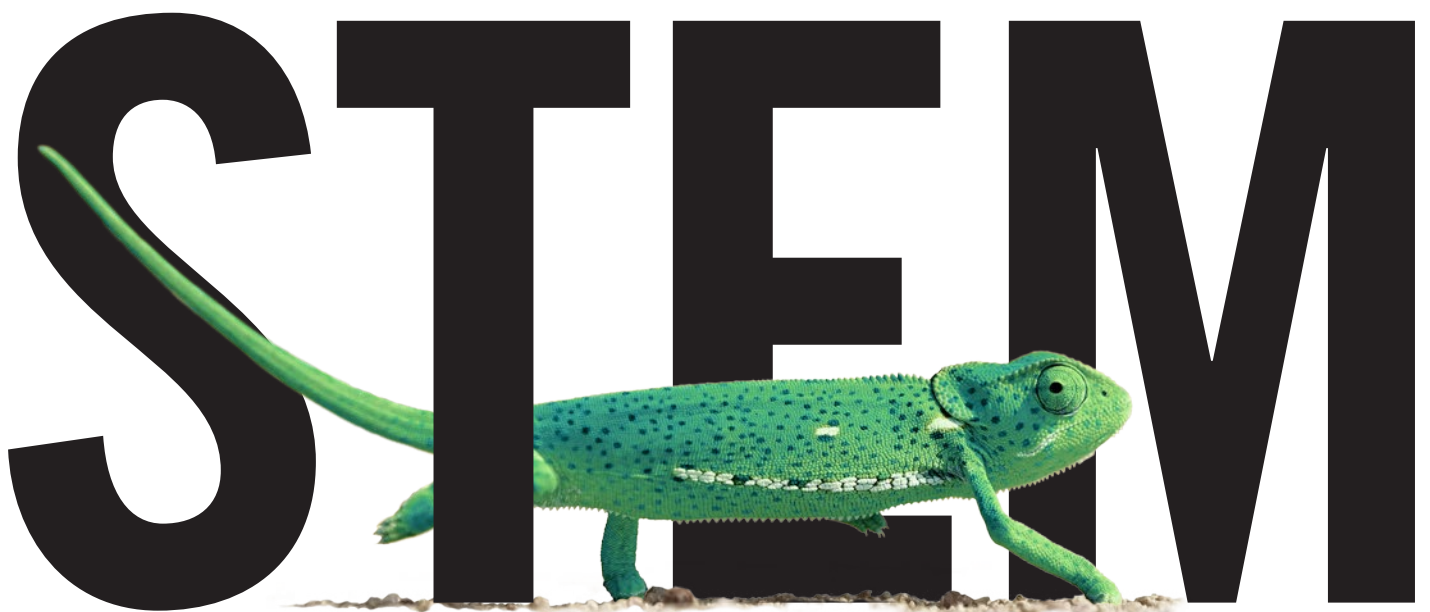


Supporting the **STEP** back into



**careers**

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**Returners to STEM**  
Best practice guidance for employers

## ABOUT THIS GUIDANCE

Since 2014, the IET and Prospect have worked collaboratively on a programme to help find solutions to issues that affect individuals working in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) roles.

This work centres around driving professionalism within the STEM industry, through providing best practice guidance for employers, with a strong emphasis on attracting, developing, supporting and retaining an inclusive, diverse and talent-rich workforce.

Ideally, employers looking to fill STEM roles should be able to access the widest possible pool of talent. This should include people considering a return to work in STEM following a period of time away.

Returners are people who already have enhanced knowledge and experience from previous roles and the technical aptitude to learn and develop skills swiftly, enabling them to step back into STEM roles generally without much difficulty.

Returners have taken a break from their STEM careers for a variety of reasons and time periods. It is well documented that women face challenges getting back into the workplace after an extended period away. Men who take time out for caring responsibilities or health reasons may face some of the same issues as women in getting back into a STEM career.

In 2013, a report from Toronto University's Rotman School of Management<sup>1</sup> found that involved fathers were looked down on by their colleagues.

This guidance considers these points and aims to help employers attract both women and men back into STEM roles. It provides focus on and understanding of the challenges returners face when contemplating a return to work and how these may be overcome.

Organisations experience varying levels of success in attracting STEM returners. This guidance considers common themes and best practice within different sized organisations such as:

- exploring the advantages STEM returners often bring to organisations
- identifying some of the real and/or perceived impediments to the successful re-entry of returners to STEM roles
- considering how to overcome such barriers. Improved flexibility is a common element of success in many cases.

### The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET)

The IET is one of the world's largest engineering and technology organisations and is committed to tackling skills shortages and gaps in the UK, and elsewhere in the world. We offer a series of awards, scholarships, campaigns and schools outreach activities to help inspire the next generation of engineers – as well as working with policy makers and other stakeholders to highlight and address key issues impacting the engineering and technology skills gap. Following the publication of the IET's 2016 Skills and Demand in Industry Survey, which found that 62% of employers believe their graduate recruits do not have the right skills for the modern workplace, the IET launched a campaign to promote the importance of practical work experience for engineering students.

### Prospect, the union for professionals

“Unions and employers have a shared interest in ensuring that they benefit from everyone's talents. We need to look for opportunities, not problems, and embrace diversity – not conformity to out-dated rules or behaviour patterns. Good employers already reap the benefits of a more flexible approach. Prospect wants to work with more employers to spread good practice – it makes sound business sense”.

Sue Ferns, Deputy General Secretary, Prospect Union.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/4561788a-b687-11e4-a5f2-00144feab7de>

# CONTENTS

- Foreword** 4
- Executive summary** 6
- Definition of returners** 6
- Background** 7
  - 1. Business case: supporting returners to STEM roles 8
  - 2. Attracting returners 11
  - 3. Easing and managing the transition back into the workplace 14
  - 4. In summary – concluding thoughts 18
  - 5. Key recommendations 19
  - 6. Acknowledging our partners 20
  
- Appendices** 21
  - A UK Law 21
  - B Help from other organisations 28
  - C Further reading and further information 29



# FOREWORD

By Professor Jeremy Watson CBE, President, IET.

## **By viewing career breaks as periods of self-development instead of interruptions, we can see them as key elements of future successful, high quality industries.**

The current misperception appears to be that career breaks get in the way and are a problem. These breaks in the continuum of work are becoming more of the norm in the global workforce<sup>2</sup> so it is timely to develop a culture that accommodates and values these breaks.

A 2013 YouGov survey<sup>2</sup> indicated that in the UK, every year, 90,000 women and men take career breaks, some of which impact businesses and their workforces. Findings state that 60% are women taking breaks, with 29% of men opting to travel, compared to 9% of women.

A recent report by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) stated that the UK's economic future lies in high value, innovative and knowledge-intensive activities<sup>3</sup>. It is not helpful that a year's break can, in some cases, lead to a decrease in salary or hourly wages upon return. There appears to be a perception that women returners (along with part-time workers) are less valuable than colleagues who have not taken family-related career breaks<sup>4</sup>. This is a short-sighted and narrow perspective, which

ignores both prior investment in skills and the benefits of wider competence and experience developed outside a workplace setting.

Career breaks can challenge traditional workforce management and the talent pipeline for businesses on earning power and career progression for individuals. Business leaders and policy makers would do well to come together to create a mutual opportunity out of a perceived problem.

So, I welcome this latest STEM guidance that highlights the importance of recruiting, developing and retaining returners to organisations and the wider economy.

Through the process of developing the IET-Prospect guidance *Progressing Women in STEM Roles*<sup>5</sup>, published in November 2015, the IET and Prospect recognised that men who have taken time out of work face similar issues in returning to STEM careers too.

Ultimately, the IET and Prospect share a vision of what success looks like for the economy, workplaces and individuals. This guidance sets out some practical steps to help achieve this vision.

2 <http://theglasshammer.com/2014/06/20/career-breaks-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/>

3 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444048/High\\_%20level\\_STEM\\_skills\\_requirements\\_in\\_%20the\\_UK\\_labour\\_market\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444048/High_%20level_STEM_skills_requirements_in_%20the_UK_labour_market_FINAL.pdf)  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444048/High\\_level\\_STEM\\_skills\\_requirements\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_labour\\_market\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444048/High_level_STEM_skills_requirements_in_the_UK_labour_market_FINAL.pdf)

4 *Modelling gender pay gaps*, Olsen and Walby (2004)  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/sociology/people/swdocs/Modelling%20gender%20pay%20gaps%20WP%2017.pdf>

5 IET/Prospect Guidance, 'Progressing Women in STEM Roles' November 2015.

# FOREWORD

By Denise McGuire, President, Prospect.

## **I'm thrilled that Prospect and the IET have another collaborative work – our guide to helping women and men step back into STEM careers.**

Whatever type of career break and for whatever reason, people will have learnt new skills and benefitted from different experiences, all of which enrich the individual, their team and their employer.

The guide has some helpful and constructive checklists – we encourage individuals and employers to use them - so that organisations profit from a wide and diverse talent pool.

I encourage employers to keep in touch when people are taking a career break, to reach out to those that have moved away from STEM work and encourage them back into STEM roles – a little flexibility and imagination goes a long way!

Individuals should assess what they have gained from their break, consider how they could bridge back into STEM and what, if any, support they require (training, flexibility etc) so they can make a reasoned proposal.

There are some inspiring initiatives that will assist and will probably help you think of other ideas for your organisation.

This guide complements our earlier publication (Progressing Women in STEM Roles, November 2015) which looked at how to attract and retain women in STEM careers, so they should be read in conjunction.

I believe that encouraging women and men to step back into STEM roles is good for them, good for their employer and good for the UK economy. This guide is an important resource in that endeavour.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This guidance summarises the collaboration of and contribution from members of the IET, Prospect, industry practitioners and subject experts within academia. It provides a summary of best practice actions and examples for employers to consider in support of an effective return to work for both the organisation and the individual.**

The main areas of focus and recommendation are:

- recognising the opportunities and value returners can offer employers –contributing to developing home-grown STEM talent and sustainable growth of the UK’s STEM industries
- engaging employers in establishing best work-based practice and policies to harness the potential of STEM returners
- providing returners with appropriate training and support to help organisations develop them into highly effective and motivated employees and leaders.

## DEFINITION OF RETURNERS

**This guidance recognises returners as individuals who have been away from the workplace, having previously been in paid employment, in STEM or non-STEM roles, holding relevant qualifications or experience.**

Supporting the desire to return to work by STEM professionals is important and offers many benefits to recruiting organisations. Many individuals have been put off returning by negative perceptions about returners – it is crucial that more attention is placed on the positive aspects returners bring to organisations.

Breaks in any individual’s career can occur either for planned or unplanned reasons. Individuals could be returning from:

- a break of 6-12 months, e.g. maternity/ paternity/adoption
- a longer career break, including extended childcare, further learning, full-time study or a planned sabbatical career break
- a career change, e.g. STEM qualified but worked in other sectors and seeking either to redirect or diversify their experience
- a life-changing event, e.g. illness, bereavement, caring responsibilities or redundancy.

Each individual will have different requirements in terms of how they plan, manage and make the transition back into the workplace. In doing so, this guidance aims to provide a framework in which passive interest in returning to a STEM role can be translated into a positive and achievable pathway.

This guidance provides a summary of best practice actions and examples for employers to use to support people in returning to the workplace. The content relates to individuals returning from a career break to the same STEM employer, an alternative STEM employer as well as to individuals returning to the STEM sector after working for a non-STEM organisation.

# BACKGROUND

## GROWING YOUR OWN TALENT

Returners are an important but under-utilised resource. They are already qualified and skilled, so making better use of this talent pool makes business sense. With planning and good communication, returners could be part of any employer's workforce strategy as demonstrated by the positive feedback from employers that have participated in returnship programmes.

- 52% of UK employers are currently seeking new engineering and technology recruits.<sup>7</sup>
- 57% are currently, or have recently, experienced problems recruiting senior engineers with 5-10 years' experience.<sup>8</sup>
- 50% find that a typical new engineering and technology recruit does not meet their reasonable expectations.<sup>9</sup>

The IET's 2016 Skills and Demand in Industry Survey<sup>9</sup> confirmed a nationwide shortage of engineers in the UK, highlighting the need to develop 'home grown' talent to deliver the engineering and technology workforce employers are seeking.

When asked about the impact of Brexit on their recruitment plans, 40% of those surveyed believe their recruitment will be negatively impacted over the next four to five years. A further 36% say they don't know. Only 5% think it will have a positive impact.<sup>10</sup>

This makes the challenge of attracting, educating, training and developing the 'home grown' engineering and technology workforce essential. In addition to this, building a more sustainable talent pipeline involves recognising the wider benefits of international collaboration and an international workforce.

Employers in the STEM sector also currently face the challenge of an ageing workforce and continue to have the greatest difficulty recruiting experienced engineers.

A shortage of experienced recruits is part of the bigger picture around the need to create a more stable workforce. However, this also suggests an opportunity for employers to place greater emphasis on their in-house retention and development strategies.

Government and industry have an opportunity to work together to create a long-term strategy to develop home-grown engineering talent to support the growth of the UK's engineering industry.

The current under-use of returners presents an opportunity for STEM employers to recruit engineers with previous professional experience from this pool of talent. These individuals can bring a broad range of skills back into the workplace.



7, 8, 9, 10 The IET's *Engineering and Technology Skills and Demand in Industry 2016 Survey*

# 1. THE BUSINESS CASE – SUPPORTING RETURNERS TO STEM CAREERS

“Business is increasingly recruiting from talent pools of all ages, including those who may have been out of work for some time. We value the learnings on recruiting people that have a CV gap. It is useful to understand the support that is necessary to ensure their expertise and talent is fully recognised<sup>11</sup>.”

**Rachael Saunders**

Director, Business in the Community, Age at Work

## NORMALISING A CAREER BREAK

**A career break can be a positive experience for both employer and employee.**

Current workplace research suggests we are not there yet. Returning to work after a long break is a transition that many people find daunting - not least through the fear of negative perceptions from their employer.

Within the last decade, research has highlighted a presupposed linear career pathway, with little recognition of career breaks.<sup>12</sup> However a study by Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)<sup>13</sup> highlighted, for example, the changing career pathway for accountants and suggested traditional career paths no longer exist. The study emphasised that a linear career trajectory is not the norm. Rather, that careers now focus and fit with and around a work-life balance, as well as with the effects of globalisation, new technologies, career breaks and other issues.

Since that report, social norms, employment dynamics and personal expectations have become more diverse and complex, including as a result of the financial crisis which unfolded after 2008.

In 2004<sup>14</sup> the length of career breaks from work was around two years. The gap reduced in 2012 to six months<sup>15</sup>. What is interesting is that the content of many topical articles have now moved away from stating specific gap timescales and more towards refocussing on how individuals positively explain their career breaks. For example, their focus is on what new skills have been acquired during a career break, as well as explaining the effective use of time during a career break.

11 <http://age.bitc.org.uk/news-opinion/news/returnships-attract-experienced-and-talented-individuals>, March 2016

12 *Women Matter: gender diversity, a corporate performance driver*. Available at <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/gender-diversity-a-corporate-performance-driver>

13 <http://www.accaglobal.com/content/dam/acca/global/PDF-qualifications/2014/Career-survey-2013.pdf>

14 *What can we learn by disaggregating the unemployment vacancy relationship?* Ghayad and Dickens. Research discussed in [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/15/unemployment-discrimination\\_n\\_3085686.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/15/unemployment-discrimination_n_3085686.html)

15 *Equalitec: career prospects after career breaks*, Niki Panteli, University of Bath, 2004 (cited in <http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/returners-reentrants.pdf>)



**HOW LONG IS TOO LONG?**

There are some returners who have very successfully reintegrated into senior roles after career breaks of more than 10 years. However, many returners suggest it often takes six weeks to regain their professional confidence and skills.<sup>16</sup>

*“I moved from a story where I hadn't done any work for nine years, to a story where I've never stopped working, applying my skills, solving problems, achieving 'continuous improvement'”<sup>17</sup>*

**Woman returner**

Supportive employers can contribute to a smooth transition. With many large UK employers beginning to realise the benefits of recruiting experienced staff, we are seeing the introduction of returnship programmes.

For this to be successful there has to be a 'win-win' for both employers and employees. Businesses need access to the largest possible talent pool and individuals need the security of permanent roles.<sup>18</sup>

Finding the balance calls for a deliberate best practice approach to both existing employees and also returners that makes a break and return to the workplace a normal activity.

*“Experience in areas, such as volunteering, pursuing higher education, freelancing or working in another field, means returners can offer unique perspectives when they return to their careers”<sup>19</sup>*

**When employers normalise career breaks, they...**

- create a culture that respects diversity and diverse life courses
- emphasise the relevance of prior work experience, qualifications and knowledge
- focus on the positive, meaning many more candidates are willing to apply for returner roles
- get to choose from the very best and most competent workforce when recruiting
- are able to alleviate the doubts and fears of individuals through returnship programmes
- gain a person with enhanced skills and better company and industry knowledge than a newly recruited member of staff<sup>20</sup>
- benefit from professionally qualified returners who can enhance business performance
- can develop an agile and highly skilled workforce swiftly within their organisations
- retain skilled employees who are grateful about the company's flexibility
- bring on board mature people with increased life and work experience
- may begin offering more flexible working that can potentially cut workforce costs.

These are the more obvious benefits to employers. Less tangible factors include improved morale, productivity and competitiveness from the overall workforce. Crucially in today's world the focus should be on diverse thinking to reflect and respond to an increasingly varied customer base and the avoidance of 'group think'.

From working under pressure to project management and multi-tasking to conflict resolution, it is important for employers to embrace the possibility that the experience of returners may be even better for taking the career break.

16 <https://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/mar/23/the-five-things-i-want-to-tell-employers-about-women-returning-to-work>

17 <http://www.equatescotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/EQUATE-Women-Returners-FINAL-COMBINED.pdf>

18 <https://www.vennpoint.com/returnerships-offer-win-win-employers-returners/>

19 <https://www.robertwalters.co.uk/content/dam/robert-walters/country/united-kingdom/files/whitepapers/Attracting-Women-Returning-to-The-Workplace.pdf>

20 <http://www.daphnejackson.org/news/reports/Real%20Returners%20%20-%20barriers.pdf>

## A SUPPORTIVE STEM ENVIRONMENT CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

“It’s important that managers know how to ensure processes such as promotions are fair for the whole workforce – and how their organisations can implement effective ‘return to work’ programmes to re-integrate workers coming back from career breaks<sup>21</sup>.”

**Naomi Climer**

Past IET President 2015/16

### **Successfully transitioning STEM returners into the workplace depends on providing support to the team, line manager and returner.**

Examples of beneficial approaches to help with this include:

- coaching both the line manager and returner
- offering a mentor to both the line manager and returner
- enabling flexibility options
- tailoring training and skills refresher courses at the right level.

This applies to both men and women returners. Men must be part of the solution both at work and in the domestic sphere. It is important to engage with decision makers, irrespective of their gender.<sup>22</sup>

An inclusive STEM environment should fully reflect all the skills and talents in society. Recognising prior experience and enhanced skill sets helps to boost confidence as individuals return to work and consider transitioning between different workplace environments.

This guidance aims to help employers to focus more specifically on the value of the wide ranging social, educational and personal experiences many individuals have had during a career break.

Coupled with these experiences and STEM related skills, qualifications and workplace knowledge, returners often have a unique offering to STEM employers. It is essential that employers are conscious of the tone and language applied during job interviews to positively draw out all relevant information experienced during a career break.

21 Quoted in an Independent supplement by MediaPlanet, June 2016

22 <http://www.managementtoday.co.uk/mt-editor-recognised-champion-gender-equality/women-in-business/article/1412597#MlxVrrSrJu4ZaSeJ.99>

## 2. ATTRACTING RETURNERS

“It is widely recognised that one of the biggest pools of untapped talent is with professionals who have taken a break from their career, and then found it difficult to find work in their area of expertise because of the gap of relevant experience in their CVs<sup>23</sup>.”

**Andy Mitchell**  
CEO, Tideway

### REACHING THE TALENT

**For STEM employers, an untapped pool of highly qualified individuals exists – skilled people who have been on a career break and not been able to find a natural path back into the sector.**

Stepping back into work can be challenging. It can be difficult enough just after a short break of 9-12 months, let alone a longer period away from the workplace.

So, how can STEM employers attract these people back to their business, given that the rapidly changing nature of the STEM sector only adds to the issues returning employees face?

Individuals who have been out of the work environment for long periods can be more difficult to reach. Working, through shared initiatives with a wide range of organisations can help to reach some of these individuals, for example, supporting returners to work programmes.

Professional institutions, recruitment agencies, trade unions and advisory organisations, such as the Women's Engineering Society (WES) and Equate, all have wide networks. University alumni networks and organisations, such as Mumsnet, have an extended reach.



<sup>23</sup> <http://age.bitc.org.uk/news-opinion/news/returnships-attract-experienced-and-talented-individuals>

## UNDERSTANDING THE OBSTACLES

Prospect, Women in Manufacturing, TRS and the WES commissioned a large survey to explore the views of women, with a STEM-related qualification, on returning to work.<sup>24</sup>

Of 5,000 respondents:

- 14% were looking to enter or re-enter the STEM workforce
- 60% felt that a range of different barriers existed preventing their return to the workforce, following a maternity or career break.

3,000 women classified these barriers as:

**Financial:**

including the cost of childcare (52%)

**Time:**

not enough flexitime, job sharing, condensed hours, part-time opportunities (27%)

**Training and Guidance:**

not enough help and support offered (25%)

**Geographical:**

not able to move to find work (16%)

Asked to identify ways in which these barriers could be overcome, respondents provided words and phrases, as follows:



In a survey about attracting women returning to the workforce<sup>25</sup>, findings stated:

- 74% of women plan to return to the same employer following a career break.
- 24% of women return to the same employer.
- 87% see inclusive hiring and flexible working as top priorities in a potential employer.

“Some of the best talent has taken a career break and isn't sure how to get back in<sup>26</sup>.”

**Jennifer Howland**

Executive of the IBM Pathways Program for Experienced Technical Women

24 *Women in STEM: Are you in or out?* 2014. (<http://www.wes.org.uk/inorout>)

25 *Attracting and engaging women returning to the workforce*, Robert Walters, 2016. Available at <https://www.robertwalters.co.uk/content/dam/robert-walters/country/united-kingdom/files/whitepapers/Attracting-Women-Returning-to-The-Workplace.pdf>

26 <http://www.fastcompany.com/3057081/the-future-of-work/how-paid-re-entry-programs-can-get-more-women-in-tech>

## ATTRACTING AND SUPPORTING RETURNERS: EXAMPLES

Deloitte and DaVita are increasing top-quality staff by re-recruiting previously top performing employees.<sup>27</sup>

The Open University is offering an 8-week 'Returning to STEM' course, intended for

anyone who wants to get back into STEM work after having a break, for whatever reasons. Course highlights include case study videos showing how other people have managed unconventional careers and how they got back to STEM employment after a career break.<sup>28</sup>

## ATTRACTING RETURNERS: BEST PRACTICE TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Lead from the top** – but be aware that changing organisational culture requires sustained commitment from all levels.
- **Discover what motivates STEM professionals to return** – ask what they look for in a job and how and where they are looking.
- **Be open to flexible work practices** – including family friendly policies. This is especially important for professionals returning from a career break. Be clear that such opportunities are available to all employees.<sup>29</sup>
- **Understand the value of the experiences returners may have gained while out of the workforce** – reinforce the value of transferrable skills achieved outside the workplace, such as volunteering and parenting.
- **Review policies and benefits to attract a wider talent pool that includes returners** – implement and embed a transparent returner strategy supported by leadership from the top.<sup>30</sup> Typically, a returner strategy focuses on building and maintaining up-to-date processes and support that enables a talented and diverse workforce. This might include provision for coaching programmes, mentor/buddy support schemes, training and development pathways. In addition, other recruitment initiatives aimed at returners, such as paid internships for returners.
- **Develop an inclusive, diverse and engaging internal culture** – reassess organisational culture, including proactive career management for men and women and succession planning.
- **Ensure your employer brand is up to scratch** – your reputation is increasingly important in attracting the best people to your business.
- **Ensure company communications are inclusive and positively welcome people returning from career breaks** – use diverse images of employees through all channels.
- **Make the most of large technology industry events to recruit returners** – consider running a CV clinic for STEM professionals who may be interested in attending.
- **Explain to recruitment agencies that you are interested in returners to work** – ensure they communicate that the organisation is interested in recruiting potential returners and that balanced shortlists can help to attract such candidates.
- **Partner with educational establishments, particularly those engaging in returnship programmes** – demonstrate what 'good' looks like through successful case studies of returners.
- **A flexible and open minded approach** – this can be beneficial for all concerned e.g. trial periods or return to work internship programmes can help individuals to test out what working patterns suit them whilst allowing time for employers to assess competence and contribution.
- **Advertise broadly and select advertising platforms used by women** – e.g. women's magazines, websites, social media, WISE and WES.
- **Encourage uptake of shared parental leave.**
- **State in advertisements that the organisation is open to conversations about flexible working practices** – use the 'Working Families' 'Happy to talk flexible working' logo and strapline in recruitment.
- **Review recruitment processes.**
- **Ensure that the organisation portrays positive and diverse images of its employees through all channels.**

27 <http://www.bersin.com/Blog/post/Best-Practices-in-Re-Recruiting-Top-Talent.aspx>

28 <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/science-maths-technology/returning-stem/content-section-overview>

29 Attracting and engaging women returning to the workforce, Robert Walters, 2016. Available at <https://www.robertwalters.co.uk/content/dam/robert-walters/country/united-kingdom/files/whitepapers/Attracting-Women-Returning-to-The-Workplace.pdf>

30 <http://www.balfourbeatty.com/returnersprogramme>

### 3. EASING AND MANAGING THE TRANSITION BACK INTO THE WORKPLACE

“The company allowed me to return part-time for the first three months until my childcare was established. I was offered training during 10 ‘keeping in touch’ days, which I took to progress my career on my return to work. I have been back at work for seven months full-time and have since received notification that I am to be promoted. I have found it easy to return to my STEM role, but it clearly helps that I have a good employer<sup>31</sup>.”

#### CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

**Today, there is an array of evidence that highlights the benefits (to organisations and returners themselves) of enabling returners to work at all levels. These include: improved financial performance, increased innovation and enhanced customer understanding. Not to mention maximising the return on the investment through recruitment and individual development of returners.**

Benefit realisation requires a focused and dedicated approach by employers who are best placed to help returning professionals make a smooth transition back into work.<sup>32</sup>

Employers and managers can help returners in many roles become productive staff members within a matter of a few months.

Managing the successful return to work of employees needs to reflect an understanding by employers that returners are not an anomaly. In addition, they need to accept that career breaks are a normal part of life for many individuals.

Key success factors depend upon employers creating a supportive environment that recognises the importance of work-life balance for STEM professionals. In addition, that offers STEM returners opportunities to reach their full potential, both personally and professionally through unprompted access, where relevant, to appropriate re-training and re-induction. Since such an environment will benefit all employees, regardless of career path or working patterns, action should be taken as part of an organisation’s business strategy.

31 Women in STEM: Are you in or out? 2014 (<http://www.wes.org.uk/inorout>)

32 A Pocket Guide for Managers: Pregnancy, maternity leave and a successful return to work <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/staff/humanResources/pdf/returnToWorkEmployer.pdf>

## PROGRESS IN STEM ORGANISATIONS

Some STEM organisations are starting to follow the financial sector approach to returner recruitment. They are looking to invest in tailored programmes for returners and provide the supportive environment required, such as, returnships, fellowships and internships. Employers can build a workplace which is more flexible and responsive to both employee and client needs, by reviewing their processes specific to:

- maintaining and refreshing professional and technical skills
- practical arrangements for training that take account of working patterns and team needs
- enhancing 'softer'/transferable skills through training, coaching and mentoring
- updating and briefing on recent strategic and business developments
- understanding employee strengths
- rebuilding confidence
- offering flexible working arrangements
- providing networking opportunities.

## RECOGNISING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

However long the career break, an employee needs to re-familiarise themselves with systems, re-establish contacts and rebuild their confidence. This can take time. But how much time and how well the re-integration goes, often depends on how employers support returners through this transition period.<sup>34</sup>

For those taking career breaks, this can mean missing out on the latest skills development. Worrying about this deficit can present a barrier to a returner's success.

It is worth noting that many returners, particularly women, continue to face obstacles associated with 'unconscious bias' – assumptions around skills, experience, gender and age that an employer or work colleagues may not be aware of making.<sup>35</sup>

Assumptions are based on perceptions. Fortunately, the growing number of returnship programmes offered by UK employers provides the opportunity to challenge and change perceptions, such as 'career breaks result in the deterioration of skills' and 'she was a professional, now she's a home maker.'

Employers applying a positive approach to supporting returners back into work are beginning to adopt best practice for employees involved in recruitment and promotion processes. For example, providing them with effective equality and unconscious bias training.<sup>36</sup>

*“All we want is an opportunity to do what we love, the confidence to get back on track. We add maturity to the workplace and because of life experience we are more focused and more determined than ever, thus, we perform, we excel and we add value to the workplace”<sup>33</sup>*

**Amina**, attended a returners to STEM course after WiSET invitation at Sheffield Hallam University

<sup>33</sup> [www.wiset.org.uk/uploads/documents/women%20returners%20article.docx](http://www.wiset.org.uk/uploads/documents/women%20returners%20article.docx)

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.farrer.co.uk/how-we-help/employment-issues/WorkLife/WorkLife/Dates/2014/7/Top-tips-for-helping-returners-return/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/mar/23/the-five-things-i-want-to-tell-employers-about-women-returning-to-work>

<sup>36</sup> A list of actionable recommendations are included in the IET-Prospect 2015 'Progressing Women in STEM Roles... Best Practice Guidance for Employers'. ([www.theiet.org/women-in-stem](http://www.theiet.org/women-in-stem))

## THE CONFIDENCE FACTOR

**Besides the stresses put upon returners through unconscious bias, it is important to consider how returners might be feeling in themselves – the emotions, anxieties and concerns around returning to work that individuals put upon themselves.**

Much of this may appear in the confidence a returner shows. Some people can feel less effective than before, perceived differently by others. It could lead to changes in their own behaviour. The manner in which they communicate could become hesitant or apologetic.<sup>37</sup>

Employers can pre-empt these possibilities by putting in place a coaching programme that, where necessary, helps a returner develop a

sense of self and control, working on elements of behaviour, such as:

- developing a professional, clear, articulate speaking tone
- being more aware of body language
- preparing for challenging discussions
- participating effectively in meetings
- confidence building.

## HOW ORGANISATIONS ARE HELPING RETURNERS

The **Atkins** Returners Programme offers a two-day course shortly after returning to work. It also runs a Women's Professional Development Programme – a four-day course run over three months.<sup>38</sup>

The **PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)** 'Back to Business' initiative is a 12-week programme to help people back into the workplace after an extended career break. Aiming to encourage women back into the workplace, the programme is also open to men. Following a week-long induction to provide training and support, people get a dedicated manager to work with them to set and achieve objectives.<sup>39</sup>

At **Arup**, 98% of women return to work after maternity leave. This is largely due to a range of programmes designed to support women on their career paths, including mentoring, a well-established and active networking group, leadership training, flexible working policies and a working culture that empowers women to excel.<sup>40</sup>

The **Amey** returners programme is different. It is for women and men who have had a career break over two years without ever having worked for Amey – people with skills in short supply, especially engineering. 90% of applicants so far have been women. Amey offers a 12-week paid internship with no guarantee of a job. The minimum working hours are 30 hours per week, but are flexible about pattern. Each returner is assigned a mentor/buddy. Managers undertake unconscious bias training.<sup>41</sup>

Paid 12-week professional internships also feature at **Thames Tideway Tunnel**. The company introduced these for professionals returning to the workforce after two or more years. Returners receive assignments, coaching support and an internal mentor. Due to the success of the first year launch in 2015, the company re-ran the internship programme in 2016.<sup>42</sup>

At the **Science and Technology Facilities Council**, returners are strongly encouraged to apply for Post Doctoral and Advanced Fellowships. If successful, they may receive up to three years of grant, with host institutions encouraged to provide mentorship and updating.<sup>43</sup>

The **Wellcome Trust** offers Career Re-entry Fellowships for returner applicants. This scheme offers postdoctoral research scientists the opportunity to re-establish their scientific careers after a continuous break from research of at least two years.<sup>44</sup>

A number of other organisations operate career break schemes and actively welcome back returners. These include BAE Systems, EDF Energy, E.ON and UK Power Networks.

37 <http://www.essentialconciierge.co.uk/supporting-returners-to-work/>

38 <http://www.womanthology.co.uk/breaking-down-the-barriers-for-women-if-we-dont-who-will-saphina-sharif-business-planning-manager-for-atkins/>

39 <https://www.workingmums.co.uk/pwc-launches-returner-initiative/>

40 <https://www.wherewomenwork.com/Career/267/arup-women-returners>

41 <https://www.amey.co.uk/careers-at-amey/inclusion-and-diversity/women-at-amey/>

42 <https://www.tideway.london/our-community/tideway-returners>

43 <http://www.stfc.ac.uk/funding/fellowships/>

44 <https://wellcome.ac.uk/funding/research-career-re-entry-fellowships>



## MANAGING RETURNERS: BEST PRACTICE TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Keep communication channels open** – the more an individual is kept informed about what is going on within the organisation/team, the more involved they will feel and the more likely to return.
- **Plan for the return** – the first day and week back at work can be quite daunting after a period of time away. Returners are not new to the workplace even if they have not previously worked in the company to which they are returning. Carefully thought through induction programmes can provide beneficial support for returners, especially where a level of tailoring can be included.
- **Find support to help returners back into the workplace from a range of organisations** – including professional bodies, unions, as well as other third sector bodies. The following websites pose questions for individual reflection as well as offering further resources:
  - <http://www.careersmart.org.uk/career-change>
  - <https://www2.open.ac.uk/students/careers/exploring-your-career-options>
- **Apply positive changes to all employees, not just returners** – e.g. make flexible working available to all, not only returners.<sup>45</sup>
- **Set up guidelines and training to help managers manage and support returners** – for the benefit of team relationships, educate the workforce and managers before employing returners.
 

Communicate openly and honestly about the process of returning to work. For example, if an individual is undertaking a phased return to work after a long period of illness, this requires clear and concise information to the existing team
- **Policies** – although a successful return to work depends crucially on creating a supportive environment, having a supportive policy framework helps to set expectations, instills confidence and provides a breathing space so that individuals do not constantly have to justify themselves.
- **Build trust** – when making a commitment to action, stick to it and ensure there are opportunities for personal interaction as well as electronic communications. This could be provided by a returners' mentor or champion.
- **Consider implementing trial periods or a return to work programme** – this can help individuals test out what working patterns suit them while allowing time for employers to assess competence.
- **Avoid unnecessary assumptions about motivations or attitudes** – it is important to understand the actual needs of individuals returning to work. Everyone's circumstances are different – so try asking. Do not assume that part-time workers are less committed to their careers or that anyone who takes a career break has 'taken their foot off the pedal' with respect to career ambitions. There should be an explicit distinction between practical compromises (which may be unavoidable) and ongoing career intention.
- **Clearly articulate the skills set required for the role** – be sure to base this on current job-related functions, not past practice.
- **Ensure returners are not held back by their lack of understanding** – let them know about new strategic and business objectives.
- **Take time to review progress with returners** – agree timescales to check how things are going from both perspectives.
- **Take care of the basics** – e.g. reintroducing people to the payroll on time, ensure that their IT is set up and working, keep people informed of any changes in management responsibilities.

<sup>45</sup> Prospect's survey 'Raising our sights for women in STEM' identified positive flexibility over their working arrangements as the top priority for women. It also found that there was a strong desire for flexible working to be available to all, regardless of gender or grade.

## 4. IN SUMMARY – CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

**Following the successful 2015 publication of *Progressing Women in STEM roles, report and guidance for employers*, the IET and Prospect are keen to help STEM employers make headway in bringing into the workplace skilled staff that can add value to business. In particular, a greater focus on support for STEM professionals who may be returning to STEM from a non-STEM sector – for example: individuals returning from the legal industry, or financial sector or city banks who may offer highly paid alternative roles to engineers and scientists. In the changing world of work, this requires thinking differently about career pathways and the value of more diverse experience both within and beyond STEM-based sectors.**

- A shortage of experienced recruits suggests an opportunity for employers to place greater emphasis on their in-house retention and development strategies.
- The current under-use of returners presents an opportunity for STEM employers to recruit STEM professionals with previous professional experience who can bring a broad range of skills back into the workplace.
- With relevant STEM skills, qualifications and workplace knowledge, returners often have something unique to offer STEM employers.
- Employers focusing positively on returners often gain individuals with enhanced skills, valuable company and industry knowledge as well as broader perspectives.
- Returners to STEM can be the best brand ambassadors for employers.
- The business benefits delivered by returners is realised through persistence in developing contacts with those who are, at times, more difficult to reach. Employers need to discover what motivates STEM professionals to return and be open to supporting flexible work practices.
- To attract returners (and for many other reasons), employers should consider the value of developing an inclusive, diverse and engaging internal culture - and ensuring that their employer brand is up to scratch.
- Best practice for managing returners starts with keeping communication channels open and planning for the return.
- It is important to avoid unnecessary assumptions about motivations or attitudes, while clearly articulating the skills set required for the role.
- Supportive employers can realise the benefits of recruiting experienced staff, through returnship programmes, contributing to a smooth transition.
- Transitioning STEM returners into the workplace successfully, within a matter of months, depends on providing support to the team, line manager and returner.
- Re-familiarising themselves with systems, re-establishing contacts and rebuilding confidence takes time for all returners; coaching programmes can help returners develop a sense of self and control, working on elements of situational adjustment.
- Many returners continue to face obstacles associated with unconscious bias – assumptions around skills, experience, gender and age that an employer or line manager may not be aware of making.
- Positive employers are setting up guidelines and training to help managers manage and support returners, including effective equality and unconscious bias training.

Returning to a STEM role after a career break is not just a female issue. Men may also be returning to work after wide ranging reasons for a break. While there may be a different pattern of reasons and motivations, the workplace also needs to make leaving and returning an acceptable norm for them too.

## 5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Through collaboration, the IET and Prospect suggest the following key recommendations:

- 1. To signpost specific information guidance for STEM professionals planning a return to work after a career break, including up-to-date links to support a planned return to work that may include:**

CV clinics, skills workshops, topical webinars, case studies, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) information and a range of other supporting services from the IET, Prospect and many other organisations.

- 2. To explore the development of a 'returners network' for STEM professionals through primary research with a range of stakeholders led by the IET.**

- 3. To promote the importance and relevance of STEM returners to the UK economy as an accepted part of the talent pipeline, through a structured and collaborative partner approach.**

- 4. To normalise wide-ranging employment and work patterns.**

- 5. To explore the extent to which current employment and recruitment practice mitigates against returners, with pro-active review to develop current practice in recruitment, employment and retention that respects diversity in employment, life choices and the customer base.**

- a. make use of the 2015 IET-Prospect guidance on Progressing Women in STEM Roles, which includes practical advice that is also of relevance to all returners.**

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# APPENDIX A

## UK LAW – THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

### A summary of key points affecting individuals working in STEM

Much current legislation, especially that relating to equality and discrimination, is good news for both businesses and employees. This appendix provides a summary from the Equality Act 2010 of the key legislative issues that affect returners to STEM.

## 1. GENERAL EQUALITY LAW

The Equality Act 2010 (EA10) makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against employees because of their gender. Both men and women are protected under the Act. There are four types of sex discrimination:

### 1. Direct discrimination

Treating someone less favourably because of their sex, or because of that of someone with whom they associate.

### 2. Indirect discrimination

Where there is a policy, practice or procedure that applies to all workers, but particularly disadvantages workers of a particular sex (this type of discrimination can only be justified if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim).

### 3. Harassment

When unwanted conduct related to sex has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

### 4. Victimisation

Unfair treatment of an employee who has made or supported a complaint about sex discrimination.

Employers should ensure they have policies in place that are designed to prevent discrimination in:

- recruitment and selection
- pay determination
- training and development
- selection for promotion
- discipline and grievances.



## 2. DISCRIMINATION LAW: PREGNANCY & MATERNITY

**A large number of women continue to take primary responsibility for childcare. The statutory right to request flexible working provides the opportunity for returners to optimise their work-life balance. Shared Parental Leave applications can enable all concerned to decide on the best method of sharing time off work following the birth of a child, or after a child is placed for adoption.**

In any one year, there are approximately 441,000 pregnant women at work ([www.tuc.org.uk/publications.2014](http://www.tuc.org.uk/publications.2014)). Yet statistics pertaining to discrimination against pregnant women are cause for concern. Under the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA96), it is unlawful to dismiss a woman by reason of her 'pregnancy, childbirth or maternity leave or other pregnancy related reason'.

As well as unfair dismissal claims, pregnant women who are treated badly due to their pregnancy, childbirth or maternity leave may also have claims under the ERA96. A dismissal and/or detrimental treatment may also amount to pregnancy and maternity discrimination under the EA10, which identifies 'pregnancy and maternity' as a protected characteristic.

## 3. POSITIVE ACTION

**The EA10 gives employers the right to engage in positive action to support people with a 'protected characteristic' where they have identified an under-represented group in the workplace. Employers are also allowed – but not compelled – to engage in 'voluntary positive action' in recruitment and promotion processes. This provides employers - when presented with two 'equally qualified' candidates - with the option of selecting the candidate from the under-represented group (as long as there is evidence of under-representation).**

The term 'positive action' refers to a number of methods designed to counteract the effects of past discrimination and to help abolish stereotyping. Positive action is often confused with positive discrimination.

Positive discrimination - which generally means employing someone because they come from a deprived group, regardless of whether they have the relevant skills and qualifications - is unlawful.

The law relating to an employer's ability to select candidates from under-represented groups is largely under-used and not clearly understood. As the potential risk of discrimination claims tends to be exaggerated, it is important to ensure that returners are not disadvantaged as a result.

## 4. FLEXIBLE WORKING

**A large number of women continue to take primary responsibility for childcare and similarly dependent care for elderly relatives. But changes to the law on flexible working, from 30 June 2014, gave all employees the statutory right to request a change to their contract terms to work flexibly, as long as they have worked for the employer for 26 weeks.**

This not only provides the opportunity to dispel the notion that lack of part-time opportunities suggests incompatibility with a STEM career,

but also expands the range of opportunities for part-time working, job-share or career break initiatives.

## 5. SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE (SPL)/PATERNITY

The new statutory system of shared parental leave and pay that came into force on 5 April 2015 was introduced with the aim of enabling all eligible mothers, fathers, partners and adopters to choose how to share time off work after a child is born or placed for adoption. (<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4911>)

## 6. CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

There are a range of provisions for returners in respect of caring.

Employers can assist by setting out what is available, how facilities can be accessed,

provisions for time off and the scope for changes to working arrangements.

## 7. EQUAL PAY ACT 1970

The law on sex discrimination in pay and other contract terms forms part of the EA10. Like the Equal Pay Act 1970, the EA10 operates by automatically implying a sex equality clause into every contract of employment, entitling an employee to equal pay. This includes the right to sick pay, bonus payments, annual leave, overtime, mortgage interest allowance and special retirement privileges. It also includes certain non-financial contractual benefits, such as the right to a company car or access to social benefits. Women are able, despite abolition of the statutory equal pay questionnaire in April 2014, to ask structured questions in writing about their pay.

From 1 October 2014, Employment Tribunals were given the power to order an employer that lost an equal pay claim to undertake an equal pay audit. It is hoped that all employers will see the benefit of conducting regular equal pay audits and that this will become best practice.

Despite the Equal Pay Act 45 years ago, women still earn less than men in Britain today. The difference in pay between men

and women remains the clearest and most dramatic example of inequality for women.

Overall, women can expect to earn significantly less than men over their entire careers as a result of differences in caring responsibilities. Official figures show that, at November 2015, the mean full-time gap was 13.9% and the median gap was 9.4%. The median aggregate figure for full and part-time work was 19.2%.

There are several potential causes relating to the gender pay gap:

### 7.1 Discrimination

**It is illegal, but some women are still paid less than men for the same work. This can happen when a man and a woman are doing exactly the same role and receiving different pay, or where work of equivalent value carried out by women is underpaid.**

Research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission shows that unfair treatment of women remains common, especially around maternity. 54,000 women are forced to leave their job early every year as a result of poor treatment after they have a baby.

## 7.2 Unequal caring responsibilities

**Women continue to play a greater role in caring for children as well as for sick or elderly relatives. As a result, more women work part-time. These jobs are typically lower paid, with fewer progression opportunities.**

The pay gap opens up significantly once women hit their forties. Often, as they return from a break to raise children, women find that their male contemporaries are being promoted ahead of them.

## 7.3 A divided labour market

**Women are still more likely to be in low paid and low skilled jobs, effecting labour market segregation. 80% of those working in the low paid care and leisure sector are women, while only 10% of those in the better paid skilled trades are women.**

Feminised sectors tend to be less valued and less well paid. Women make up 60% of those earning less than the living wage - for example, in sectors such as retail, hospitality, catering and caring. There is also stark gender segregation in apprenticeships. In 2014/15, 53% of all apprenticeship starters were women. But, in the relatively well-paid engineering sector, they account for around only 4%, being outnumbered by men by a ratio of 25:1.

## 7.4 Men in the most senior roles

**Men continue to make up the majority of those in the highest paid and most senior roles – for example, there are just five female Chief Executives in the FTSE 100.**

The Equality Act section on Equality of Terms provides for equal pay between women and men who are employed on:

- like work
- work rated as equivalent, or
- work of equal value.

The Act applies equally to women and men and, of course, men can take an equal pay case. However, as pay inequality mostly affects women workers, in this section we assume that the claim is by a woman comparing herself to a male employee.

## 7.5 Like work

**Like work is where the work done by both the woman and the male comparator is the same or broadly similar and any differences which do exist are not of practical importance.**

## 7.6 Work rated as equivalent

**Work rated as equivalent is where the jobs have been assessed under a valid job evaluation system as being equivalent, though note that some evaluation schemes may be discriminatory in themselves.**



### 7.7 Work of equal value

**Work of equal value is where the work is different but considered to be of equal value or worth. This can be measured by criteria like skill, decision making, effort or level of responsibility.**

An early equal value case was Julie Hayward v Cammell Laird Shipbuilders, where Ms Hayward, a canteen cook, compared her work with that of a male joiner, a painter and an insulation engineer. Although their work was clearly very different, it was judged that she required the same level of skill, had the same level of responsibility, and was, therefore, entitled to equal pay.

### 7.8 Terms and conditions

**The Equality Act covers all contractual terms and conditions, not only pay itself. Claims can be brought in respect of unequal holiday entitlement, sickness arrangements, pension rights and even company cars.**

### 7.9 Comparators

**In order to claim equal pay, a woman must be able to identify a male comparator. The comparator may in some cases be a successor or predecessor to the post.**

Under the Equality Act, the comparator must be employed by the same employer and either work at the same establishment or work at a different establishment belonging to that employer with the same terms and conditions. Under European law, the requirement is that the comparator must be employed in 'the same establishment or service', which is a wider definition.

### 7.10 Employer's defence

**An employer has a defence to a claim for equal pay if they can establish that the difference in pay is genuinely due to a material factor other than sex. This means that, once a woman has established she is doing equal work, but receives less pay than a comparable man, the employer needs to establish that there is a material reason why she is paid less and that this reason is not tainted by sex discrimination. The courts have held that the employer's justification must be significant and relevant.**

Where a pay system has a disproportionate impact on one gender, the employer must show the pay system to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. This means that additional pay must be genuinely necessary, and does lead to objectives being met.

Material factors might be the need to pay one group of staff more than others to match market rates or geographical allowances. However, the onus is on the employer to show that such material factors are significant and relevant. Furthermore they must not be a hangover from old discriminatory arrangements or some other anomaly.

### 7.11 Transparency

**Pay systems should be clear and easy to understand, both in respect of basic pay and other components. In the Danfoss case, the European Court of Justice said that, where a female worker establishes by comparison with a relatively large number of employees, that the average pay of female workers is lower than that of male workers, and the pay system is characterised by a total lack of transparency, the burden of proof is on the employer to show that their pay practice is not discriminatory.**

Commenting on the unequal results of the performance pay system in the Danfoss case, the ECJ said it was inconceivable that work carried out by women workers would generally be of a lower quality than that done by men.

### 7.12 Pay secrecy clauses

**The Equality Act outlaws pay secrecy clauses in employment contracts. Including, any term in a contract that seeks to forbid employees from discussing their pay with colleagues, for the purpose of finding out whether there is discrimination relevant to a protected characteristic, will be unenforceable. And any detrimental action taken against an employee for discussing pay.**

These provisions aim to make pay more transparent to help deal with pay equality. They not only cover differences in pay on the grounds of sex, but any of the protected characteristics.

It is generally better to try and resolve equal pay issues without resorting to the law. An equal pay review can help to diagnose any problems or vulnerabilities, and useful guidance is provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/how-implement-equal-pay>.

In addition ACAS produces useful guidance on how to meet the new requirement on gender pay gap reporting <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5768>.

#### **Please Note:**

The information in this guidance document is current up to the date of printing (March 2017). For the most up-to-date information on UK Equality Law, please refer to the UK Government website: [www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance). Legal information is provided for guidance only and should not be regarded as an authoritative statement of the law, which can only be made by reference to the particular circumstances which apply. It may, therefore, be wise to seek legal advice.

## 8. STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

**Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. People experience stress when they perceive an imbalance between the demands and their resources to cope.**

There is a clear distinction between pressure, which can create a 'buzz' and be a motivator, and stress, which becomes a risk by being protracted. Stress is linked to mental and physical ill-health such as depression, anxiety and heart disease. It can also cause human error, increasing the likelihood of accidents.

Stress can impact individuals, their organisations and the national economy. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has put forward the business case for tackling stress:

### Economic benefits

- Lower risks of litigation – because they comply with legal duties.
- Improved return on investment in training and development.
- Improved customer care and relationships with clients and suppliers.
- Reduced costs of sick pay, sickness cover, overtime and recruitment.

### Benefits for individuals

- People feel more motivated and committed to their work.
- Morale is high.
- People work harder and perform better – increasing their earning power.
- People feel that they are part of a team and the decision-making process, so accept change better.
- Relationships – with managers and within teams – are better.
- People are happy in their work and don't want to leave.
- Line managers can outwardly show their duty of care.
- Line managers can demonstrate good management skills that could help their promotability and career development.

### Management benefits

- Reduced staff turnover and intention to leave, so improving retention.
- Better absence management.
- Fewer days lost to sickness and absenteeism.
- Fewer accidents.
- Improved work quality.
- Improved organisational image and reputation.
- Better staff understanding and tolerance of others experiencing problems.

HSE has also developed management standards looking at the six key areas of work that, if properly managed, can help to reduce work-related stress. They provide simple statements about good management practice in each area:

- **Demands** – e.g. workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control** – how much say you have in the way you do your work.
- **Support** – the encouragement and resources provided by your employer, line management and colleagues.
- **Relationships** – e.g. promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- **Role** – being clear about your role and avoiding conflicting roles.
- **Change** – how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation.

**The standards are goals** that employers should work towards through risk assessment, worker involvement and continuous improvement.

For further information see <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm>

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# APPENDIX B

## HELP FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

### **Prospect's career smart website: [www.careersmart.org.uk](http://www.careersmart.org.uk)**

The Regtech project has an employer timeline, using open source, which could be adapted to provide individuals with a visual/interactive picture of organisational developments/changes and/or their return pathway model.

Volunteering can assist returners and potential returners to address identified needs, strengths and/or skills gaps or interests.

For further information, including help to find out what volunteering opportunities are available, see [www.careersmart.org.uk/volunteering](http://www.careersmart.org.uk/volunteering).

### **The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)**

The NCVO is the umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector in England. It is a registered charity. It champions the role of the voluntary sector and volunteer movement and offers policy and practical advice to its members and volunteers – see [www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering)

### **Volunteering and charitable jobs and opportunities**

<https://do-it.org/>

### **STEMNET (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network)**

A network which supports, promotes and educates young people on STEM career opportunities. Through practical experience and real applications of STEM subjects, it seeks to motivate, inspire and bring learning and career opportunities to life. STEMNET runs the UK's only network of STEM Ambassadors, who inspire young people to enjoy STEM subjects and support teachers in the classroom: [www.stemnet.org.uk](http://www.stemnet.org.uk)

### **Macmillan Cancer Support**

Lots of useful information and a variety of free resources and support geared to those affected by cancer. Their Learn Zone includes online courses and professional development tools: <http://learnzone.org.uk/>

### **Bereavement**

[www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/0/m/Managing-bereavement-in-the-workplace-a-good-practice-guide.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/0/m/Managing-bereavement-in-the-workplace-a-good-practice-guide.pdf)

# APPENDIX C

## FURTHER READING

### Organisations offering returnships or returner programmes:

#### The Daphne Jackson Trust

They offer a fellowship scheme aimed at women and men who have taken a break of at least three years from a SET career. [www.DaphneJackson.org](http://www.DaphneJackson.org)

#### Business in the Community

Exemplar Employers Best Practice Recommendations Women Returners  
<http://workplace.bitc.org.uk/node/27523>

#### Royal Society of Biology: Return to Biosciences Group and Resources for Returners

The Royal Society of Biology has established the 'Returners to Bioscience' group to examine the experiences of those who face such difficulties in returning to a career in the biosciences as well as those who achieve success. <https://www.rsb.org.uk/policy/groups-and-committees/returners-to-bioscience-group>

#### IRelaunch: Career Re-entry organisation

[www.irelaunch.com/CareerReentry](http://www.irelaunch.com/CareerReentry)

#### Equate Scotland

Equate Scotland makes a positive difference for women in science, engineering, technology and the built environment. <http://www.equatescotland.org.uk/women/getting-back>

#### The Women's Engineering Society (WES)

<http://www.wes.org.uk/returnships>

#### WISE - A campaign to promote women in science, engineering and technology

[www.wisecampaign.org.uk/uploads/wise/files/WISE\\_RETURNERS\\_PROGRAMME\\_web1.pdf](http://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/uploads/wise/files/WISE_RETURNERS_PROGRAMME_web1.pdf)

## FURTHER INFORMATION:

### Further resources/reading about returners:

#### ACAS: Advisory booklet - Managing attendance and employee turnover

[http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/7/t/B04\\_1.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/7/t/B04_1.pdf) – useful guidance for employers and questions to ask.

#### BCS – the Chartered Institute for IT: Returners and Re-entry guidance

<http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/returners-reentrants.pdf>

#### Careers Service Direct – returning to work questions and resources

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/planning/Pages/yourquestions.aspx>

#### Institute of Physics (IoP)

<https://www.aps.org/programs/women/resources/upload/CareerBreaksIOP.pdf>

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## Online articles:

### Women in STEM

Women returners

[www.womeninstem.co.uk/recruiting-women-in-stem/how-stem-employers-can-benefit-from-encouraging-women-returners](http://www.womeninstem.co.uk/recruiting-women-in-stem/how-stem-employers-can-benefit-from-encouraging-women-returners)

### The Guardian

The five things I want to tell employers about women returning to work

[www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/mar/23/the-five-things-i-want-to-tell-employers-about-women-returning-to-work](http://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/mar/23/the-five-things-i-want-to-tell-employers-about-women-returning-to-work)

### Women's Business Council

Maximising women's contributions to future economic growth

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/204751/DCMS\\_WBC\\_Full\\_Report\\_v1.0.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/204751/DCMS_WBC_Full_Report_v1.0.pdf)

### Women returners to business

Helping experienced professionals get back to work after an extended career break

<http://corp.womenreturners.com>

### MentorSET

A mentoring scheme for women in STEM

[www.mentorset.org.uk](http://www.mentorset.org.uk)

### Wellcome Trust

Getting back in to research after a career break

[www.wellcome.ac.uk/stellent/groups/corporatesite/@msh\\_peda/documents/web\\_document/wtp057274.pdf](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/stellent/groups/corporatesite/@msh_peda/documents/web_document/wtp057274.pdf)

### Working Families

The UK's leading work-life balance organisation. We help working parents and carers and their employers find a better balance between responsibilities at home and work.

[www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

## Health and Safety

### GOV.uk

Employer guidance on the FIT note

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/464398/fit-note-employers-line\\_managers-sept-2015.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/464398/fit-note-employers-line_managers-sept-2015.pdf)

### The Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

A risk assessment to help you identify the kind of stress people are most likely to experience in your business. It can be found at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

The ACAS advisory booklet - Stress at work - can help you meet the HSE stress standards.

For further advice on mental health issues, contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 ([www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)) or the Mental Health Foundation on 020 7803 1100 ([www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk))



### Podcasts

Prospect has developed a series of useful career-focused podcasts on the union's CareerSmart website, which is open to all. Each podcast lasts between just 3-7 minutes:

[www.careersmart.org.uk/body-mapping](http://www.careersmart.org.uk/body-mapping)

- Body mapping
- Evaluating your career options
- How to write an effective CV
- Looking after your own work stress
- Mentoring
- Networking
- Personal transition
- Preparing for interview
- Retirement and looking forward
- Selling your skills and strengths
- Thinking about self-employment?
- Transitions in action

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**T:** +44 (0)121 600 7500  
[www.ietvenues.co.uk/austincourt](http://www.ietvenues.co.uk/austincourt)

### IET Glasgow: Teacher Building

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### Careersmart website:

[www.careersmart.org.uk](http://www.careersmart.org.uk)



[www.theiet.org](http://www.theiet.org)

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