

RETURN Project Final Report Career Break Support for Professional Engineering Institution (PEI) Members

Abstract

This is the final report of the RETURN Project undertaken by the Women's Engineering Society between March 2015 and March 2016 on behalf of the Royal Academy of Engineering as part of the Engineering Diversity Concordat. It focuses on ways that the Professional Engineering Institutions can support their members who are on career or maternity breaks and its aim is to increase retention and levels of support for these members.

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RETURN Project Final Report

Career Break Support for PEI Members

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Summary

The RETURN project is a year-long activity funded by the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng) and coordinated by the Women's Engineering Society (WES) which forms part of the work of the Diversity Concordat.

The aim of the project is to work with the Professional Engineering Institutions (PEIs) to find ways to support their members who are on career or maternity breaks.

The project commenced with a benchmarking exercise to identify the current level of support that the Professional Engineering Institutions offer to their members who are taking career or maternity breaks (and by this we mean extended breaks as opposed to the statutory maternity breaks after which members generally return to their former career and are supported by their employer). This benchmarking exercise showed that, in almost all cases, these members were not well tracked, not supported, and not monitored. Reduced membership and professional registration rates were offered to them in some cases but not all, and these members were rarely identified or identifiable and consequently not offered any additional support during their break.

The following phase (2) of the project identified some potential ways that these members could be supported during their breaks, and these included membership tracking, baseline data and measurement of equality statistics; support offered through the Institution website; career progression support whilst on career break; financial incentives to retain membership; methods to help stay connected; training and mentoring; foster community links; back to work help; and the appointment of Equality Action Plans, Diversity Policies and dedicated Diversity and Inclusion Managers.

Phase 3 of the project focused on a smaller number of Professional Institutions who had committed to running pilot schemes, based on a number of the suggested mechanisms of support, to see whether these schemes would have an impact on their members. This phase lasted six months and seven of the Professional Institutions identified pilot schemes to trial.

The final phase of the project reports back on the success of these pilots and any other initiatives that were identified by Institutions not part of the pilot phase.

Of the seven Institutions trialing the pilot schemes, most reported that the work had made a positive impact. Conversations had been started about the need to support these members more effectively, and ways of measuring and increasing retention were receiving more focus. Due to the short duration of the pilot schemes it has been difficult to measure impact on retention, but in most cases it has been possible to assess whether the work seems like to be successful in the longer term. Where a positive impact has looked unlikely from one of the trials it was relatively easy to see a way of adjusting the support to improve the chance of success.

In all cases where the Professional Engineering Institutions have engaged with this project it has been evident that this work is seen as necessary to address the issue of retention of members taking career or maternity breaks, and generally there has been an acceptance that this is an important role for the Professional Engineering Institution to play in the retention of skills within engineering.

Much further work can be done to provide the level of support that is ultimately required, and there is a lot to be gained from the sharing of best practice and the pooling of resources.

It is recommended that this work continues to be monitored, encouraged and supported by the Royal Academy of Engineering over the next few years.

Background

It has been identified in a number of reports and surveys that the engineering sector is losing a lot of skilled and experienced engineers – particularly women – by not supporting them through their extended maternity and career breaks, and consequently not giving them the opportunity to return to the engineering sector when they are ready to return. It has been estimated by Ernst Young that the cost to an employer who has trained an engineer from graduation of losing them after a career or maternity break as much as £200,000. The Engineering Council tell us that 57% of female engineers drop off the engineering register of professional engineers under the age of 45 compared to only 17% of men, and by losing this already precious resource we are diminishing the number of women who make it to senior positions in the industry even further.

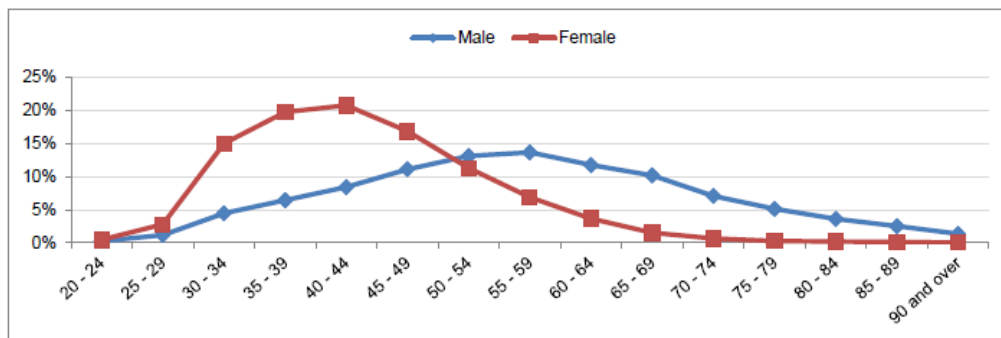


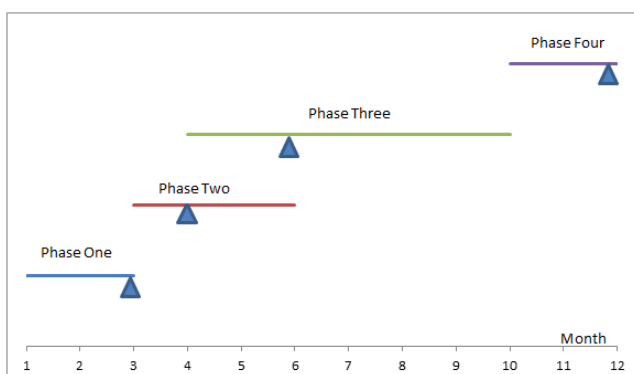
Figure 1. Age profile in percentages of male and female registrants (Engineering Council)

The Professional Engineering Institutions have a crucial role to play in supporting these members during their extended maternity or career breaks, as members who take a longer break than the statutory maternity break will no longer have the benefit of support from their employer, and will rely solely on support given by their Professional Institution. The relationship with the Professional Institution, therefore, is crucial in ensuring that these members have a chance of returning to the profession. This project aims to look at ways that this support can be maximized.

The Project

The project started in March 2015 and was split into four phases as shown below:

- Phase One: Benchmarking
- Phase Two: Identification of Best Practices and Identification of Mechanisms of Support
- Phase Three: Identify and run pilots with a number of the Professional Engineering Institutions
- Phase Four: Reporting



Phase One: Benchmarking

Members of the Royal Academy of Engineering Diversity Concordat were asked at the beginning of the project to summarise the support that they currently gave to members on careers through the return of a benchmarking questionnaire. The questions can be seen in Appendix 1 and the replies are summarised below:

- Most PEIs who returned the questionnaire do not measure or track the number of members who are on career or maternity break
- PEIs do not generally have the capability to record this data on their membership databases, other than alongside an individual's data as a note.
- Reduced fees are generally offered to this group of members, but the reduction varies in percentage terms from institution to institution.
- Reduced fees are applied when a member offers the information on a voluntary basis, but all organisations show their fee reductions to a greater or lesser extent on their website and in written communications, although generally it was felt that this could be improved.
- Some Institutions do not know or pass on the reduction from the Engineering Council for reduced registration fees
- Few institutions have products and services which have been developed specifically for this group of members who are on career break or maternity leave
- CPD is sometimes requested of this group of members, and sometimes not, but never mandated.
- Benevolent funds are occasionally used to help members at this time who have financial difficulties.
- In terms of tracking members who leave, some PEIs were aware of lapses due to career change, and this was recorded, but others were not able to produce this information even if it had been recorded in an exit interview
- Some PEIs contacted lapsed members at a later date, but most did not
- All responses indicated that they would be willing to look at increasing the support they give to members in this part of their career, assuming practical and affordable.

Phase Two: Identification of Best Practices and Identification of Mechanisms of Support

Based on the responses to the questionnaire which showed that many of the Professional Institutions would be willing to look at increasing the support that they give to members on maternity or career breaks, a list of possible ways of supporting these members was identified. These are summarised below and listed in full in Appendix 2.

- Membership Tracking, Baseline Data and Equality Statistics
- Website Support
- Career Progression Whilst on Career Break
- The Financial Incentive
- Stay Connected
- Training and Mentoring
- Foster Community Links
- Back to Work
- Attraction of New Members
- Equality Action Plans, Diversity Policies and Dedicated D+I Managers

From this list a number of PEIs identified pilot schemes that they would like to run.

Phase Three: Identify and run pilots with a number of the Professional Engineering Institutions

The following pilot schemes were identified by the institutions named below, and details of the plans for their pilot schemes are given in Appendix 3.

- **Institution of Engineering and Technology:** Website support and Financial Incentive
- **Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE):** Mentoring Support
- **Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE):** Various Support Mechanisms
- **British Institute of Non Destructive Testing (BINDT):** Various Ideas
- **Institute of Acoustics (IOA):** Mentoring, Website Support and Returnships
- **Institute of Physics (IOP):** Members' Survey and benchmarking
- **Engineering Council:** Enhanced Gender Reporting

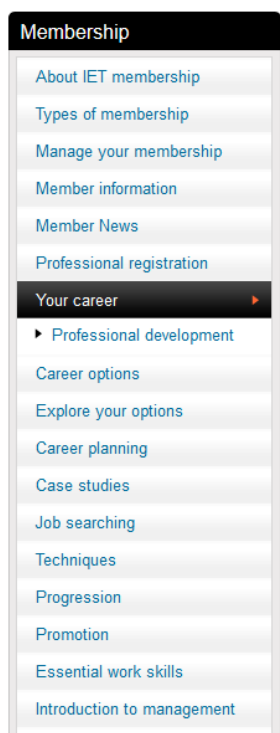
A number of other Professional Institutions responded to say that they are not able to participate at all in the programme, due to lack of resources.

Phase Four: Reporting

The following reports have been received from the Professional Institutions in relation to the pilot schemes that they have participated in.

Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET)

Website support – The Career breaks and support section of the IET website has been updated to include more ways in which members can stay engaged with the IET and industry whilst on a career break. <http://www.theiet.org/membership/career/career-options/breaks/> There is also a section on keeping skills up-to-date whilst on career breaks here <http://www.theiet.org/membership/career/career-options/breaks/up-to-date.cfm> which also gives details of reduced membership costs that are available to members on career breaks. (Members on a career break are entitled to receive a 50 per cent discount.)



Membership

- About IET membership
- Types of membership
- Manage your membership
- Member information
- Member News
- Professional registration
- Your career**
 - Professional development
 - Career options
 - Explore your options
 - Career planning
 - Case studies
 - Job searching
 - Techniques
 - Progression
 - Promotion
 - Essential work skills
 - Introduction to management

Career breaks and support

Advice on taking a career break including sources of support for those dealing with redundancy or other career related issues.

Here's some information and advice on how to plan a career break, the benefits of taking time out, career break options and preparing to return to work. The IET is also only able to provide general information and support with regard to your career, but understands that at difficult times you may need additional support. We have listed some further resources to help you in the index below.

Planning your career break

What to consider when planning a career break and the types of career breaks available.

Benefits of taking a career break

A career break allows you to develop both personally and professionally.


Keeping your skills up to date

Ways to keep your professional skills and knowledge up to scratch, while on a career break.

Returning to education

Information on further education and returning to the classroom as a mature student.

Returnina to work



Progressing women in STEM roles Report and Guidance (2015)

The IET also joined forces with the trade union, Prospect, to launch practical guidance towards the end of 2015, titled 'Progressing Women in STEM Roles' to support employers in STEM related industries to improve their gender diversity and inclusion. The report and guidance 'Progressing Women in STEM roles' was put together by IET and Prospect members who formed a working party as part of the IET-Prospect strategic alliance. www.theiet.org/women-in-stem

The guide offers employers suggestions and best practice examples on how to attract more female candidates to retain them and develop their careers. Tips are given to managers how to ensure promotions are fairer among workforces of different genders – and how their organisations can implement effective 'return to work' programmes to re-integrate women coming back from career breaks.

Over half (57%) of businesses in the UK do not have gender diversity initiatives in place and 41% have acknowledged that they could do more to recruit staff from diverse backgrounds. This guidance gives employers suggestions and best practice examples of how they can not only take steps to attract more female candidates, but also ensure that women in their organisation have a fair and even playing field to develop and to progress their careers.

Returners to STEM roles project (2016)

With the 'Progressing Women in STEM' report's recommendations in mind, the IET-Prospect alliance has set up another working group of members, who will begin to prepare guidance specific to a second phase of work 'Returners to STEM roles'. This second phase will encompass guidance and tangible help, for men and women in STEM roles, relating to (a) managing a career break and (b) returning from a career break. Individuals and/or employers who are interested in contributing to this work should contact: Annmarie Dann, IET Alliances Development Manager by emailing adann@theiet.org
Phase 2 'Returners to STEM roles' is scheduled to complete the guidance in the autumn this year (2016).

Contact: Jo Foster, Member Engagement Manager for Gender Diversity, Institution of Engineering and Technology

Institution of Mechanical Engineers Support Network (IMechE)

Mentoring Support

The IMechE – through their Support Network - have set up a pilot programme of mentoring through the MentorSET scheme (www.mentorset.org.uk) in which they are inviting members on a maternity break to be mentored by members who have experience of taking maternity leave and returning to work. In the first instance this is applying to 10 members are being invited to participate in the yearlong pilot. They are also extending this to involve members who have experience of setting up their own businesses. This is being delivered through an arrangement with the Women's Engineering Society who co-ordinate the MentorSET programme and is being funded through the IMechE's Benevolent Fund.

This mentoring pilot is the first of a number of strands of support that the Support Network are putting in place for members, with a view to improving retention in the sector. Other initiatives will include some research on the reasons members don't retain their membership and whether they move to a different sector, and why; whether training be provided to ensure retention; and whether there are there other forms of support that can be provided (e.g. in collaboration with a professional Union) to ensure that members remain in the profession.

Contact Anni Broadhead for further details:

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Institution of Mechanical Engineers
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Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)

The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) established a pilot project called its 'Civils Comeback' (www.ice.org.uk/civilscomeback) scheme aimed at helping qualified professionals return to a career in civil engineering. There are several components of this scheme:

A. *Which role is right for you?*

ICE published numerous career profiles which attempted to explain and help potential returners learn more about specific industry roles - the skills required, how the role has evolved, and where demand currently lay.

B. *Returnship work placements (See Appendix 4)*

ICE has been attempting to encourage civil engineering companies to offer work placements to potential returners, and promoting schemes such as Tideway returners through its networks.

C. *Back to work mentoring and coaching*

The Civils Comeback Scheme was assisted by the ICE Benevolent Fund's back to work scheme, the expert support team of ICE's Benevolent Fund help with everything from rebuilding confidence to learning new skills for civil engineers not currently employed. Participants receive up to six coaching sessions with a personal career advisor who will guide you through the process.

The Benevolent Fund's personalised coaching covers many areas, including:

- How to identify your transferable skills, strengths and experience
- Evaluating your job options, including self-employment
- How to develop an eye-catching CV that will generate interviews
- How to create your own successful personal marketing plan
- How to improve your interview technique with simulated training and feedback using CCTV

ICE hopes to build on this initial phase, and encourage more companies to offer these trial returnship placements which we can promote through our communication channels and recruit website.

"The work done so far has been a really great step in the right direction, however it needs to be kept alive and we need to keep 'banging the drum'. Institutions such as ICE need to be continuously looking at how we support our members throughout their careers. A large part of this is around communication and storytelling. Letting others know how people overcame their challenges. We have started this with our engineering change campaign and we hope to continue to highlight that there are many different journeys through civil engineering." Adam Kirkup, Institution of Civil Engineers

Contact: Adam Kirkup – 020 7665 2262 – adam.kirkup@ice.org.uk

Institute of Acoustics (IOA)

Mentoring, Website Support and Returnships

The IOA committed as part of their pilot to put a number of services in place to support members on maternity/career breaks and those who wish to return, in an effort to support both employers and individuals. They held a list of people willing to act as mentors to members wishing to return to work, who were willing to share their experience and offer advice and guidance to help prepare for and adjust to returning to work. They also planned to have a section on their website where members seeking a 'returnships' can place a statement outlining their background, experience, availability and contact details with the option to attach a CV with the aim of writing to employers informing them of the scheme who would then be able to search for potential candidates.

All members of IOA were contacted and asked whether they are wishing to return to work, would be interested in becoming a mentor, or whether they are employers looking at offering returnships.

As a result of this pilot the IOA identified only one woman member who wanted to be mentored during a career break, and in fact this member was really only looking for employment rather than looking for a mentor.

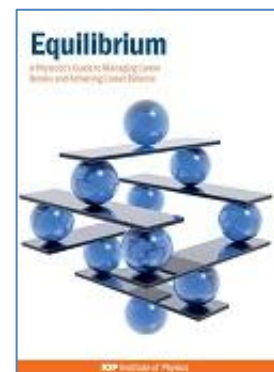
The pilot has therefore highlighted the fact that actually it is career support that is likely to be more useful to potential returners, and that actually this is a service that would be more valuable to provide. Career opportunities including returnships will therefore be more of a focus.

Contact: Allan Chesney, CEO, Institute of Acoustics

Institute of Physics (IOP)

Members' Survey and benchmarking

The IOP had planned to do a survey of members to find out more about who has taken a career break, what support they received, what would have been helpful and generally try to identify how we can support their members better. Tracking of members on maternity break, has been identified as a difficulty and this survey is a way of identifying members who are taking or who have previously taken maternity breaks. Unfortunately due to staff illnesses this has not progressed as quickly as had been anticipated but still remains something that the IOP would like to carry out.



In addition, it was identified that the excellent publication *Equilibrium – a physicist's guide to managing career breaks and achieving career balance* – should be readvertised to members.

Contact: Jenni Dyer, Head of Diversity, Institute of Physics

Engineering Council

Enhanced Gender Reporting

The Engineering Council have recognised that the drop-out rate amongst male and female registered members is significantly different, with 57% of female members under 45 dropping off the register compared to 17% male members. This is a significant issue, and by reporting these statistics more visibly this will allow individual Institutions to recognise that it is an issue that needs addressing. The Engineering Council have agreed to look at ways of making this gender related information more accessible in an attempt to ensure that it is addressed.

Other Institutions

Other Institutions' Responses to the Final Questionnaire include:

"The topic has stimulated discussion internally and is one we wish to see developed further probably focusing on all nature of career breaks. A Board Sponsored Task Group is being established to consider the Institution's overall effectiveness on matters relating to Diversity and Social Exclusion since to date our level of engagement has not been sufficiently robust. We have now identified a member of staff to lead on related issues. With a staff member now leading on engagement, I expect to see us make some good and sustainable progress over the next 12 months."

Martin Powell, CEO, Institution of Structural Engineers

"Our reduced fees application form has been updated to ensure that it is clear that a member on
www.wes.org.uk

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maternity/paternity leave is eligible for reduced fees.”

Aggie Hedley, Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology

“The IHE have just appointed a new membership manager who will be tasked with devising a method to assist these members on career breaks. We are intending to send out a member survey in the very near future to assist in this. From this we hope to find out members on career/maternity breaks.

IHE student membership is free and our female membership is currently 20%. We aim to build on this but also share good practice with others including our corporate partners.

Our Executive Board and then council will then discuss the feedback from the survey and suggest and agree a way forward. This will happen in 2016

IHE launched the IHE Engineering Academy (NHEA) last month which could also assist any members on career/maternity breaks prior to returning to work.

There is a portal area within the members’ area for members to record members profile and CPD. We have not yet encouraged corporate partners to look at providing returnship programmes. As previously stated this is an area we can look at.

Regarding CPD for members on career breaks the IHE hope to address this initially by giving members the opportunity to revise /upgrade their knowledge through our professional certificates. These could be achieved whilst on maternity breaks and could be developed into returnship programmes.”

Ellie Gormley, Institute of Highway Engineers

“At CIHT we have just released our Diversity and Inclusion toolkit which has examples of company good practice which cover the issues of retention and supporting staff on career/maternity breaks. The toolkit provides practical guidance, case studies and links to reliable sources of expert advice for employers to help recruit, retain and develop a more diverse workforce. [The link is www.ciht.org.uk/diversity.](http://www.ciht.org.uk/diversity)”

Sue Percy, CEO Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation

“Increased diversity and increased engagement are at the heart of the vision for the next 5-year strategic plan (2017-2021) and so a number of initiatives will emerge to achieve these aims – including support for stakeholders (not just women and not just members) on career breaks.”

Cameron Sinclair, CEO, British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing

Conclusions

This report has highlighted the need and real requirement amongst Professional Engineering Institutions to support their members who are on extended career or maternity breaks. It has been recognised that not enough support is currently given to this group of members, and that these members are generally an unseen and unsupported group who are allowed to drop out of membership too easily without being noticed.

What is evident, however, is that with the impending skills shortage that we are facing in engineering, these well qualified and generally very scarce resources are a hugely valuable talent that we can ill afford to lose, both from a financial perspective but also from a skills viewpoint. These members - usually women - are needed back in the engineering sector when they are ready to return to their careers, but beyond this they have a very important role to play in the community they live in whilst taking their break. They are an untapped talent who skills we could be nurturing and using in a number of ways, if only we put in the effort and the resources to nurture them.

The report has highlighted that many of the Professional Engineering Institutions have recently come to recognise this fact, and that many are willing to do something about it. A number of ways of supporting and using the talents and potential of these members have been identified, and the pilot projects undertaken by six of the Professional Engineering Institutions have sought to find different ways of supporting these members.

Mentoring has been tried by two of the Institutions. The Support Network of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers have used an existing mentoring scheme (the MentorSET scheme) to offer support to a pilot group of 10 members on career breaks, and these will be supported over the course of a year. The Institute of Acoustics have also sought to use mentoring to support its members on career breaks, but has found that after surveying all of its members not enough demand for this service existed.

Instead the IOA has identified that finding ways of helping members back into the industry after their career break is what is needed, and some work to encourage Returnship schemes would instead seem to be more useful.

The Institution of Civil Engineers have also identified Returnships as a way of supporting women back into engineering, and these programmes are being promoted amongst their corporate members. In addition to the Returnships the ICE has a number of other strands to its *Civils Comeback* programme including training offered in conjunction with their Benevolent Fund, and also role model and career profiling work.

Other Institutions are adding support information to their websites, and ensuring that there is more visibility for the reduced membership fees offered for members on career breaks.

The Engineering Council is ensuring that visibility of data is available to the Institutions that enable them to monitor where problems are occurring with members dropping off the professional register, which will in turn ensure that appropriate action can be taken.

The CIHT have published a toolkit which draws attention to best practices which take place within industry so that members can see what other employers are doing to help retain retain talent.

And a number of Institutions have employed a dedicated member of staff to address the issues of diversity and retention, and are confident that this will be impactful in finding ways of supporting members taking career and maternity breaks.

In conclusion, therefore, the work done by the Professional Engineering Institutions over the course of the year in identifying and trialing ways to support their members taking career and maternity breaks has already brought some tangible benefits to the Institutions and the individual members, and certainly the general awareness of the need to do more to support this vulnerable and very valuable group of members has increased.

Further support, guidance and encouragement from the Royal Academy of Engineering Diversity Concordat will be able to further assist in making progress.

It is recommended that a suite of shared resources could be compiled that can be accessed by all Institutions, and this could include:

- Website guidance on services and support mechanisms for engineers on career breaks
- the guidance '*Equilibrium – a physicist's guide to managing career breaks and achieving career balance*' produced by the Institute of Physics (which is currently available only to member of IOP)
- Advice on recommendation of Returnship programmes to corporate members of Professional Institutions
- Further information on the *School Gate SET* programme which utilises the skills of women on maternity or career breaks in the school environment
- Support Mechanisms for parents and carers such as that offered by 'My Family Care'
- Information on reduced fees from the Engineering Council
- Training courses suitable for returners
- Mentoring support mechanism such as MentorSET
- Best practice guidance from employers on supporting employees on career/maternity breaks
- Access to Union support or guidance for members of Professional Institutions to support with retention issues

These shared resources could be useful for all Professional Institutions in their work to support and retain members and access by all would prevent the work being duplicated a number of times.

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Appendix 1 Phase One: Benchmarking

PEI Benchmarking Questionnaire

1. Do you measure the number of your members on a career or maternity break at any one time? If so, please give this number as a percentage of your membership. Do you think that this is an accurate measure?
2. Do you monitor and record the reasons why your members are taking career breaks (e.g. maternity leave, caring responsibilities, change of career, secondment abroad etc)?
3. What method do you use to find this information? (E.g. Do you ask directly when members renew their membership? Do you rely on members offering this information voluntarily?)
4. Do you offered reduced membership rates for people on career or maternity breaks? If so, what are they?
5. How do you communicate these rates to your members? (Do you actively tell them or do you wait for them to ask?) Please give details.
6. Are you aware of the implications for career breaks on members' professional qualifications with the Engineering Council (CEng, EngTech etc), and do you pass this information on to your members? Is there anything that you think could be done by the Engineering Council to encourage members to keep up their professional registrations whilst on career breaks?
7. Do you require your members on career/maternity breaks to continue to undertake and record CPD? If so, do you offer any guidance about relevant types of CPD that can be done whilst on a break?
8. Do you have any other services or provision to offer to your members on career /maternity breaks?
9. Would you consider offering training, mentoring, CPD or other forms of support (e.g. financial) to your members whilst having a career/maternity break, or on returning to work afterwards? Please give details.
10. When members leave your Institution do you ask why? If so, do you have any data that indicates the number of members who leave because they do not return to their previous careers as a result of being on a maternity or career break?
11. Once members have left your Institution, do you ever reconnect with them at a later date to see whether their circumstances have changed and to ask whether they would consider returning, or whether there is anything that would help them return?
12. Are there any benefits that you can identify as a result of supporting these members during and after a career or maternity break? Please give details.
13. Would you be willing to implement on a trial or long term basis any recommendations that this work identifies as best practice in supporting this group of members?
14. Do you have any other comments or ideas that you would like to add for consideration?

Responses from the Questionnaire for Professional Engineering Institutions

Based on the responses received to the Benchmarking questionnaire, below is an overview of the results.

1. Do you measure the number of your members on a career or maternity break at any one time? If so, please give this number as a percentage of your membership. Do you think that this is an accurate measure?

Overwhelming response to this questions is 'no'. Only two PEIs could tell us the number of members who fall into this category, and one noted that 'this number is an accurate reflection of notification rather than an accurate reflection of the personal circumstances of the members'. One PEI cited only 2 members in this category, one cited 1.3% of membership. One PEI is now collecting more of this personal data on renewal, but some members have been unhappy to share it, and even resigned.

2. Do you monitor and record the reasons why your members are taking career breaks (e.g. maternity leave, caring responsibilities, change of career, secondment abroad etc)?

Only one PEI noted the reason on the membership database where it was given, but this is not sortable data.

3. What method do you use to find this information? (E.g. Do you ask directly when members renew their membership? Do you rely on members offering this information voluntarily?)

In all cases information is returned voluntarily at renewal or during the course of the year, or taken from out of office replies in one case.

4. Do you offered reduced membership rates for people on career or maternity breaks? If so, what are they?

No, but reviewing in one case. Yes in most cases, and the amount of reduction varies between approximately a quarter of normal membership fee, to a half. In one case it appeared to be income related. In another there was a choice of no membership fee and no benefit (and then no cost to rejoin) OR reduced fees and retention of benefits. Usually only one concessionary rate exists and is the same as the retired rate.

5. How do you communicate these rates to your members? (Do you actively tell them or do you wait for them to ask?) Please give details.

Website in most cases. Only when asked in some cases. Website and all renewal communications in others. In one case a reduction was subject to review by membership committee, and only on application.

6. Are you aware of the implications for career breaks on members' professional qualifications with the Engineering Council (CEng, EngTech etc), and do you pass this information on to your members? Is there anything that you think could be done by the Engineering Council to encourage members to keep up their professional registrations whilst on career breaks?

Yes, the reductions offered by Engineering Council are passed on in some but not in all cases. Not all respondents seemed to be aware that reductions were available. One was aware but didn't pass this on to members. Engineering Council could mandate CPD during career breaks, which was felt could force

the issue, and it was suggested that the Engineering Council could usefully provide some information on their website. Also they could do more to promote the value of keeping up professional registration.

7. Do you require your members on career/maternity breaks to continue to undertake and record CPD? If so, do you offer any guidance about relevant types of CPD that can be done whilst on a break?

A range of responses including yes it is required, yes it is encouraged, yes it is hoped, yes and we give guidance, no it is not required, no not at all, but if certified then they need to.

8. Do you have any other services or provision to offer to your members on career /maternity breaks?

Benevolent fund can be accessed in a couple of cases. More regional involvement is often seen and encouraged. No other services are provided by five of the respondents. Conferences can be attended free of charge or at a reduced rate by a couple. And one gave a number of services from money to support in cases of hardship, mentoring, legal support, counselling, and post-natal depression (or other) support.

9. Would you consider offering training, mentoring, CPD or other forms of support (e.g. financial) to your members whilst having a career/maternity break, or on returning to work afterwards? Please give details.

Yes, most would consider offering this extra support, from training to mentoring, to free conference places etc. Generally a positive response here.

10. When members leave your Institution do you ask why? If so, do you have any data that indicates the number of members who leave because they do not return to their previous careers as a result of being on a maternity or career break?

Responses include: No evidence available on database to show that failure to renew is due to change in career; Don't collate data that gives reasons for leaving; In the process of developing exit surveys; Only superficial reasons noted on records; Ask but don't record the data in any usable format; 'Change of career' can be noted but nothing more than this is captured; Yes, data captured on individual record but not searchable; Exit questionnaires undertaken but only recorded if action is required; Recorded only on individual records.

11. Once members have left your Institution, do you ever reconnect with them at a later date to see whether their circumstances have changed and to ask whether they would consider returning, or whether there is anything that would help them return?

Yes in some cases. No in others (data protection policy cited in one case). Not routinely in a couple. Yes, via a letter a month after lapsing. Yes, telling them that they are no longer to use the postnominals.

12. Are there any benefits that you can identify as a result of supporting these members during and after a career or maternity break? Please give details.

Retention of members most likely benefit cited. Retention of skills in engineering. Retention of women as role models and use of member as an ambassador. Benefits to the members as individuals. Charter obligations to uphold professional standards. Regional activity often benefits.

13. Would you be willing to implement on a trial or long term basis any recommendations that this work identifies as best practice in supporting this group of members?

Yes, generally, if practical and cost effective was the overwhelming response.

14. Do you have any other comments or ideas that you would like to add for consideration?

Better use of benevolent fund can be made here. This is something that we have recently started to think about. Would be happy to be involved in a pilot. Would like to know more about what other PEIs do here, and what do employers do as best practice. Would like to offer support. Would be interested in linking up with MentorSET to provide mentoring support.

Questionnaire responses were received from:

- Royal Aeronautical Society
- Institute of Water
- Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine
- Institute of Physics
- Institution of Mechanical Engineers
- Institution of Chemical Engineers
- Institution of Engineering and Technology
- Institute of Highway Engineers
- Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology
- Institution of Civil Engineers
- The British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing
- Institute of Acoustics

Appendix 2

Phase Two: Best Practices and Support Mechanisms

This phase of the project is the identification of possible projects that Professional Institutions can choose to run as a pilot scheme. These suggestions are summarised as:

- Membership Tracking, Baseline Data and Equality Statistics
- Website Support
- Career Progression Whilst on Career Break
- The Financial Incentive
- Stay Connected
- Training and Mentoring
- Foster Community Links
- Back to Work
- Attraction of New Members
- Equality Action Plans, Diversity Policies and Dedicated D+I Managers

The ideas are explained in more detail below:

Membership Tracking, Baseline Data and Equality Statistics

The Benchmarking exercise carried out by the Questionnaire (see Appendix 2) has demonstrated that most professional institutions are not currently fully aware of the employment status of their members, and in some cases even the gender of their members is mis-represented on old databases. In most cases the PEI is unlikely to know which of its members is taking a career or maternity breaks, although it is felt that the only way to collect this information is when it is voluntarily offered by the member who is seeking a reduced fee, and this sometimes doesn't happen immediately, if at all. If the member simply resigns their membership rather than seeks a reduction, then it is thought that this information may never come to light. One Institutions in particular has recently tried to update the equality statistics of its members, to tie in with a new database, and this has led to a number of member resignations where members feel that this information is private and not necessary for the Institution to know.

The project idea here would be to set up a much more widely publicised mechanism of support for members on career breaks, and actively ask for members to let the institution know when they are taking a break. It is likely that a member who intends to return to work within a year will not inform the PEI of this change of employment status, but if this is the case then the PEI is unable to offer any further support at this time. There may have to be an incentive to ensure that members let their institution know in good time before they take their career break, so that a system of support can be set up.

Ideally this pilot would be done by an institution intending to set up a system of support for the member.

Website Support

A number of physical support systems are imaginable which will support and encourage the member to remain proactive in the profession whilst on a career break, but the simplest support of all could be offered by setting up a dedicated area of the Institution's website, where information, guidance and links to further advice can be found.

This pilot would look into what information is suitable for the member, what support can be offered, what links and other advice is available, and what can easily and suitably be provided. There is much support already available for new parents, for carers, or for members who wish to return on a part time basis, and this can easily be compiled into one place and offered to the member.

Career Progression whilst on Career Break

A career break could be an ideal opportunity for members to take steps towards chartership, or work on their CV

and career development plan in readiness for their return. Could you adopt your chartership application process to take this into account? Is any extra support needed, could you adopt your chartership mentoring programme to support career/maternity break members, or offer career development support or advice on career planning? Do you have the facilities to offer chartership interviews to new mothers arriving with babies or toddlers? Are you able to offered bursaries or free conference places to members on career breaks who attend your conferences?

Financial Incentives

Are there any financial incentives that you could offer your members to retain them during their career break? Could you offer them free membership if they take an extended maternity leave but work as a volunteer or ambassador for the PEI? Do you do enough to ensure that members know that they are entitled to reduced fees whilst on a career break, or do you just wait for them to ask you? could you advertise this more, and the other benefits that you are offering. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, could you offer free conference places to members on career breaks who attend your events? Do you pass on the reduction in Engineering Council subscription to your members as per the table below?

2015 Engineering Council Annual Registration Fees

Title	Final Stage	Interim Stage	Retired/Hardship (Final Stage Only)*
CEng	£35.70	£12.70	£16.10
IEng	£30.20	£12.70	£13.50
EngTech	£17.40	£12.70	£7.80
ICTTech	£17.40	£12.70	£7.80

*Criteria for the payment of reduced fees are at the discretion of the registrant's professional engineering institution

Could you use your Benevolent Fund (or equivalent) to support your members at this point in their career?

Staying Connected

Retaining contact with members can make all the difference when it comes to supporting them and retaining their links with their engineering career. Does your Institutions have community network groups, and could you possibly set one up that supports and communicates with this group of members who are on a career break?

Training and Mentoring

As part of the Women in STEM: Are you IN or OUT? survey that was carried out by WES in 2014 training and mentoring were two of the most popular ways that women felt that they would like support in returning to engineering after a maternity break. Training was identified in life skills such as Work/Life Balance, Time Management, Career Planning, CV Writing and Job Applications. Technical training was also identified as being important, and I know from personal experience that single day updates and overviews on technical issues can be very valuable in refreshing the memory and renewing interest. An annual 'Catch Up With New Developments' conference could be something that many of your members would be interested in, and these could be offered free of charge or at preferential rates to members on career breaks. Training on unconscious bias, the benefits of flexible working, and the mechanics of returnship programmes were also identified as training needs for the employer as well as the employee. Could your Institution be offering any of this training or support? Or could you form a collective with other PEIs to offer this support if you don't have sufficient need in your own institution?

The Open University has a Return to Work online module that is due for (re)release later in 2015 and this will be

an open access resource that can be tailored to your own use. Is this something that you could offer to your members?

Mentoring is something else that has been identified as an enabler for members looking to return to work after an extended career break. Is this something you already offer, or would consider offering? The Women's Engineering Society has a mentoring programme called MentorSET which is an option that could be recommended to your members as a way of using some mentoring support.

Fostering Community Links

Of all of the mechanisms of support for members on career breaks, this is probably the one with the highest possible return. Members on career breaks are uniquely placed to form beneficial links with their local community, but the way that they do this, the support and advice that they receive from the Institution, and the resources that you offer them all need careful planning. In the box below is a new initiative being championed by Kate Bellingham called School Gate SET which recognises the enormous value of this group of qualified women and men, and finds a practical way to use their talents. How could your Institution engage with this group? What support could you offer these members, and what is your goal in supporting their engagement with the community and their local school.

In June 2014 the Women's Engineering Society launched [National Women in Engineering Day](#), and we found to our great surprise that qualified women took the initiative and used the day as an opportunity to go and deliver some outreach activity in the school that their child or children attended. This was without any specific encouragement, or the availability of any particular resource. Imagine what more could be done if we harnessed this resource and supported their activity.

Getting Back to Work

Are you active at all in helping your members back to work after a career break? Do you have good enough links with your corporate members that would enable you to know who is looking for senior women or men? Could you do more here to link your members to job opportunities? Members who have had career breaks are often at a severe disadvantage when it comes to returning to work, as their CV shows a gap in their employment which in itself is often sufficient to ensure that their application is filtered at the first cut. Members with very relevant experience and skills can be being overlooked because of this CV gap. Returnship programmes for women returners are a new initiative which is just coming to the UK, and these could potentially be very beneficial for returning members to enable them to take a step back onto the career ladder.

This activity could be linked with some training (e.g. CV writing and Job Applications/Interview technique) to ensure that members have the best chance of returning to employment.

Attraction of New Members

With all of the work that has been done supporting these members on career breaks, could your Institution use this activity to actually attract new members, as opposed to just retaining current members? Our previous Women in STEM survey has shown that almost half of the women employed in STEM are not members of a professional institution. Is this because there are not enough reasons to join? A follow up survey in 2015 by WES will ask the respondents to the original survey what services and support could be offered by Professional Institutions in order to encourage them to join and to retain their membership during and after a career break.

Equality Action Plans, Diversity Policies and Dedicated D&I Managers

Do you have these? Do you need them? Would they help in retaining members and supporting members taking career breaks? What can we learn from employers in terms of what services and support they offer to their staff on career or maternity breaks? How can we turn this career break into a positive opportunity rather than a negative barrier to the Institution?

Appendix 3 Phase Three: Identify and run pilots with a number of the Professional Engineering Institutions

The following pilots were identified by the Professional Institutions.

Institution of Engineering and Technology

Website support – The Career breaks and support section of the website will be updated to include more ways in which members can stay engaged in the IET and industry whilst on a career break. This should launch within the next few weeks.

Financial Incentive – Members on a career break are entitled to receive a 50 per cent discount. This is something that we will be highlighting on the updated “Career breaks and Support” section of the website so that more members are aware and can take advantage of it.

Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE)

Mentoring Support

The IMechE have set up a pilot programme of mentoring through the MentorSET programme in which they are inviting members on maternity break to be mentored by members who have experience of taking maternity leave and returning to work. In the first instance they are identifying 10 members to participate in this pilot, which was outlined at their volunteer conference in September. They are also extending this to involve members who have experience of setting up their own businesses. This is being delivered through an arrangement with the Women's Engineering Society who co-ordinate the MentorSET programme and is being funded through the IMechE's Benevolent Fund.

MentorSET: www.mentorset.org.uk

Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)

Various Support Mechanisms

ICE are developing and adapting a number of key initiatives to support career returners, some of which are new and others are being tailored to support this group of members. These include the promotion of Returnship programme with employers which will be advertised through their recruitment pages; mentoring support; signposting to the Benevolent fund's 'Back to Work' scheme (which has not previously been targeted at this group of returners explicitly); and appropriate level training and events. This programme has been named the 'Civils Comeback' programme. Below is the text from their website www.ice.org.uk/civilscomeback

If you're considering a return to a career in civil engineering, ICE can help you re-launch your career. Discover how you can refresh your knowledge and skills, and access support to get back into work in the civil engineering industry.

Our Civils Comeback programme will provide you with the support you need, from learning more about how the industry has evolved, to accessing work placements and dedicated careers support programmes.

What are we offering?

To help get you back in to the work place, you'll find resources including:

- Information and access to work-placements with sponsoring organisations
- Support through the ICE Benevolent Fund's 'Back to Work' scheme, providing the tools needed to return to engineering
- Access to knowledge resources and networking events
- Details about our mentoring service

Contact: Adam Kirkup – 020 7665 2262 – adam.kirkup@ice.org.uk

British Institute of Non Destructive Testing (BINDT)

BINDT are still in discussion about the way in which they intend to support women members on maternity breaks but this is likely to consist of:

- Provision of clear information on reductions in membership and registration fees for members on career breaks and maternity breaks
- Investigation of membership data to see if/when female members are lost
- Approach all lapsed members (voting grade) to encourage them to sign-up for affiliate membership (which is free)

They recognise that the most important thing is to keep women on the books of the organisation in order to maintain communication, even if they are not working.

Institute of Acoustics (IOA)

Mentoring, Website Support and Returnships

The IOA have committed to put a number of services in place to support members on maternity/career breaks and those who wish to return, in an effort to support both employers and individuals. They will hold a list of people who are willing to act as a mentor to members wishing to return to work, who are willing to share their experience and offer advice and guidance to help prepare for and adjust to returning to work. They are also planning to have a section on their website where members seeking a 'returnships' can place a statement outlining their background, experience, availability and contact details with the option to attach a CV. Once they have their first returners they will write to employers informing them of the scheme who will then be able to search for potential candidates.

All members of IOA have now been contacted and asked whether they are wishing to return to work, are interested in becoming a mentor, or whether they are employers looking at offering returnships.

Institute of Physics (IOP)

Members' Survey and benchmarking

The IOP are planning to do a survey of members to find out more about who has taken a career break, what support they received, what would have been helpful and generally try to identify how

we can support their members better. Tracking of members on maternity break, has been identified as a difficulty and this survey is a way of identifying members who are taking or who have previously taken maternity breaks.

Engineering Council

Enhanced Gender Reporting

The Engineering Council have recognised that the drop-out rate amongst male and female registered members is significantly different, with 57% of female members under 45 dropping off the register compared to 17% male members. This is a significant issue, and by reporting these statistics more visibly this will allow individual Institutions to recognise that it is an issue that needs addressing. The Engineering Council have agreed to look at ways of making this gender related information more accessible in an attempt to ensure that it is addressed.

A number of other Professional Institutions have responded to say that they are not able to participate at all in the programme, due to lack of resources, but a number have not replied at all and there is still time to start on a pilot which will make a difference to this group of members. Suggested projects are given in Appendix 2.

Appendix 4: Returnships in Engineering

Returnships are a relatively new concept in the UK, and such a simple but effective idea to help get women back onto the career ladder after an extended maternity break. Returnships for (women) returners are equivalent to internships for students or new graduates. They are placements or short term contracts in which the employee is given a fixed term contract and follows a programme of activity designed to bring them up to speed with the work of the company, move them around so that they gain a number of experiences, and monitor and support their career progression. Just as with internships, the employee in a returnship may or may not be employed by the company at the end of the contract, depending on whether a suitable role exists, and also depending whether the employer is happy with the work of the employee.

The benefits that returnships have for women and for companies are:

- They offer a way of bringing a woman back into a company who may have valuable experience but be slightly uncertain of taking on a senior role immediately on her return from a career break
- They enable companies to target experienced females specifically, and offer them a bespoke retraining programme
- They are a stepping stone for women back to an experienced position in the sector
- They are a relatively risk free placement which allows both the employer and employee to tailor the path back to full employment
- They can offer a more flexible phased approach back to full time work
- The returner gets to grips with the practicalities of coming back to work without the pressure of a senior role

Goldman Sachs see their Returnships in the following way:

"In the same way that an internship offers a guided period of exploration, a "returnship" provides individuals with an opportunity to sharpen their skills in a work environment that may have changed significantly since their last experience as an employee. It also gives participants the ability to explore a new area of expertise and learn new skills. Whether it leads to a full-time career, or serves to sharpen the skills necessary to take the next step, the Goldman Sachs Returnship Program is a valuable experience for anyone who's ready to re-enter the workforce."

Read More here:

- [Thames Tideway Returners Scheme](#)
- [The Rise of Returnships to Combat the Female Brain Drain](#), Evening Standard 29 April 2014
- [Goldman Sachs Returnship Programme](#)
- [Women Returners for Business](#)
- [A bridge back to work for women leaders](#), The Guardian April

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