



getting into
employment

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Returning to employment after having a baby or to take up a first job is a big change. It is important that you are well prepared for your return to work.

This leaflet aims to help you to prepare for employment and to encourage you to take a long-term view of work. You may find that there is a job you would really like to do but you don't have the specific skills or experience needed. Rather than giving up, with the right support and guidance you can begin to take small steady steps towards that ideal job. With the right guidance you can develop a clear plan for the future which takes you towards a rewarding and enjoyable career.

What are employers looking for?

While most jobs require specific skills, employers say there are core characteristics they want in potential employees. These include:

- A willingness to learn
- A responsible attitude
- The ability to work as part of a team
- A flexible attitude to the role
- Good communication skills
- A pleasant manner

Without these characteristics a person can be unsuitable for a job even if they have specific training. So, from the beginning, it is really important to remember what you are bringing to potential employers rather than focusing on what you think you're lacking.

Finding the right job for you

Today, there is a huge variety of jobs on offer so it is really important to think in advance about what areas of work you are most interested in and excited by.

Generally, people do better at the things they enjoy doing.

Ask yourself the following:

- What do I like doing?
- What am I good at doing and what does this say about me?
- What are my strengths?

Getting advice and support

There are a number of organisations that can offer you guidance. They will help you to match up your personal interests and skills with a career path. Having a clear idea of what you are interested in before you have an appointment with these services will help a lot:

- Your **Local Employment Service (LES)**
- **Centres for the Unemployed**
- Adult education guidance projects are available throughout the country. To find out if there is a project near you contact the **National Centre for Guidance in Education**.
Tel: 01 869 0715/6
Web: www.ncge.ie/adult_details.htm
- The **employment services officer** in your nearest FÁS office. For details of your nearest office contact FÁS head office.

Tel: 01 607 0500
Email: info@fas.ie
Web: www.fas.ie

- Your **local Partnership Company**. To find out if there is one in your area contact Pobal.
Tel: 01 240 0700
Email: enquiries@pobal.ie
Web: www.pobal.ie

- Many **local community** organisations and centres for the unemployed offer courses to help you to identify your interests and prepare for the move into employment.

The following websites also might help you to explore your interests:

- www.careerdirections.ie
- www.careersworld.com

Your local library may also have books and manuals to help you to identify the areas of work you may be interested in.

Job-seeking skills

Finding a job involves learning specific skills such as Curriculum Vitae (CV) preparation, letter writing, completing application forms and interview preparation. Many community groups and organisations now offer training programmes in job-seeking skills:

- **FÁS** – The National Employment and Training Authority have a Job Seekers Pack available.
Web: www.fas.ie
Or contact your local FÁS office for a copy.
- **Jobs Clubs** are training programmes offered through FÁS and the Local Employment Services that help people develop job seeking skills. The programme usually lasts three –five weeks. To

find out about your nearest Jobs Club, contact FÁS or your local Employment Service.

- **Local Centres** for the Unemployed.

Thinking through the practicalities

Employment and social welfare payments

If you have been in receipt of social welfare payments you need to consider how these will be affected by employment. Some social welfare payments are means tested and therefore if your income increases, your social welfare payment is adjusted accordingly.

If you have managed to get good career advice and can see a route ahead of you that will lead to a better job and increased salary, this temporary income reduction may well be worth it.

There are a number of employment related schemes to help people who have been in receipt of social welfare payments and who wish to return to employment without losing all of their benefits. These include:

- Back to Work Allowance
- Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
- Revenue Job Assist
- Community Employment Schemes
- Job Initiative

Different schemes have different requirements so you need to check if you are eligible.

Family Income Supplement (FIS)

Family Income Supplement is a payment for parents who are in employment of at least 19 hours per week and who earn a low income.

You can get more information about employment schemes and FIS from:

- Your local Employment Service (LES)
- Your local FÁS office
- The facilitator in your local Social Welfare Office
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
Tel: 01 874 8444
Lo-Call Leaflet Request Line: 1890 202 325
Web: www.welfare.ie
- Your Local Centre for the Unemployed
- The Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (INOU)
Tel: 01 856 0088
Email: welfare@info.ie
Web: www.inou.ie
- Treoir – The National Information Centre for Parents Who Are Not Married to Each Other. Treoir have produced a booklet for recipients of the One Parent Family Payment returning to work or education called *Work It Out*
Tel: 1890 25 20 84
Email: info@treoir.ie
Web: www.treoir.ie
- Citizens Information Helpline
Tel: 1890 77 71 21
or your local Citizens Information Centre
- Oasis – The Irish eGovernment information website
Web: www.oasis.gov.ie

Childcare

It is really important to ensure that you have thought about childcare arrangements and how you will pay for it before you take up a job.

Childcare places are expensive and hard to find, and there is very little financial assistance available. Think about formal childcare for the times you are at work and informal care for emergencies. For information on finding childcare see the *Childcare: Finding What Works for Both You and Your Child* leaflet.

Who can support you?

Make a list of people who can help you out in an emergency, and people with whom you can discuss issues. This is an important part of getting organised because decisions and events can be too complicated to manage entirely on your own. You might call on family, friends, neighbours, school or crèche, or your childminder. Have a list of such emergency phone numbers to hand.

Life in employment

Managing your time

Once you begin working you may find that you have less time to juggle everything that you need to do. A diary is a really good tool for managing your time and ensuring that you don't forget appointments. Think about investing in a family calendar that you can place in a central location for everyone to write down appointments and events. 'To do' lists, wipe out notice boards and black boards are also useful. Planning your day in advance will also

really help. You will probably have your own routine for the days you are working, however, taking time to plan your day in advance will mean that you make the most of extra or unexpected activities.

In your daily plan think about things like:

- What you must do for the children
- What your children can do for themselves
- What your children can do to help at home
- When homework will be done
- When TV can be switched on
- When you can take time out for you

Managing your money

As a parent you are probably already very experienced at managing your money. While your income may increase through employment, you may find that your spending also increases. If you're not already doing so, draw up a budget either weekly, fortnightly or monthly. You can get help with budgeting from The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS). MABS can also help you if you find yourself getting into debt. Contact details for local offices throughout the country are available. Tel: 01 864 8510
Web: www.mabs.ie

Employment rights

All employees have rights which ensure that they are fairly treated at work. These rights are protected in law. Further information on your employment rights are available from:

- **Employment Rights Information Unit** – Public Information Centre
Tel: 1890 20 16 15 / 01 631 3131
Email: erinfo@entemp.ie
Web: www.entemp.ie/employment/rights/
- **The Irish Congress of Trade Unions**
Tel: 01 889 7777
Email: congress@ictu.ie
Web: www.ictu.ie
- **Equality Authority**
Tel: 1890 24 55 45 or 01 417 3333
Email: info@equality.ie
Web: www.equality.ie
- **Oasis** – The Irish eGovernment information website
Web: www.oasis.gov.ie

Maternity rights

When you are pregnant at work and after the baby is born, you have the right to take time off work and then to go back to your job, no matter how long you have been in your job or the number of hours you work. Time off work includes appointments for ante-natal care, and ordinary maternity leave for up to 18 weeks during which time you may be entitled to Maternity Benefit and an optional additional 8 weeks during which Maternity Benefit will not be paid. You should take maternity leave at least two weeks before your due date.

If you tell your employer in writing that you are pregnant, you will be able to ask for paid time off for appointments with your midwife and doctor, and for any classes they advise you to attend.

You must give your employer notice of your pregnancy and that you want to take maternity leave. You need to provide your employer with medical

evidence confirming the pregnancy. The employee should give at least two weeks notice in writing of the date and time of your antenatal appointments.

There is special health and safety protection at work for you during your pregnancy which means it is a good idea to tell your employer you are pregnant early in your pregnancy, so they can remove any hazards to your health and safety. This could include changing some working arrangements such as heavy lifting, or changing your working hours temporarily.

Pay during maternity leave

Maternity leave is generally unpaid leave. However, you are entitled to apply for Maternity Benefit from the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Maternity Benefit is paid for a continuous period of 18 weeks. Your weekly rate of maternity benefit is calculated by dividing your gross income in the relevant tax year by the number of weeks you actually worked in that year. Seventy-five per cent of this amount is payable subject to a minimum payment of €165.60 and a maximum payment of €249.00 per week. Half-rate maternity benefit is payable to those receiving some social welfare payments.

Some employers offer paid maternity leave or partially paid leave, where they top up the amount you receive in Maternity Benefit to your usual wage during your leave period.

For more information on Maternity Benefit contact the Maternity Benefit Section.
Tel: 1890 69 06 90
Email: maternityben@welfare.ie

You can get the application form MB10 and booklet SW11 from your local social welfare office or download it on www.welfare.ie

- **Equality Authority**
Tel: 1890 24 55 45 or 01 417 3333
Email: info@equality.ie
Web: www.equality.ie
- **Oasis** – The Irish eGovernment information website
Web: www.oasis.gov.ie

Parental leave

Each parent is allowed to take unpaid leave for children born or adopted after 3 June 1996. Normally, the child must be under five years of age. Employees on parental leave are not entitled to pay from the employer and there is no social welfare payment available.

