

**DfE/Government Equalities Office: 2017 Returning to work after time out for caring survey (2017):**

**Organisations or individuals with knowledge of returners – response:**

**1. Please give a description of the capacity in which you have experience or knowledge of this group:**

The Daphne Jackson Trust is an independent charity which offers unique, flexible, part-time, paid Fellowships to enable women and men to return to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) research with confidence after a career break. Founded in 1992 in memory of Professor Daphne Jackson, the UK's first female Professor of Physics, the Trust has helped 340 individuals return to STEM careers, working with over 80 UK universities and research institutes. The Trust makes a major contribution to the UK science and engineering workforce by returning and reintegrating talented scientists and engineers who would otherwise be lost to the sector.

Fellowships are normally 2 or 3 years in length and based at UK universities and research institutes. Fellows undertake a challenging research project and a retraining programme. There are currently over 50 Daphne Jackson Fellows in universities around the UK. The results of the Trust's 2015 survey of former Fellows, covering 30 years of Fellowships, confirmed that 9 out of 10 Fellows stay in STEM related careers until they retire, with many going on to permanent academic positions. To date, 6 Fellows have reached professorial level. We award up to 25 fellowships each year. Fellowships are sponsored by universities, research councils, learned societies/professional institutions, industry and charities. We also work closely with the Equality Challenge Unit's Athena SWAN Charter initiative; 82% of universities with an Athena SWAN Bronze Award have hosted a Daphne Jackson Fellow.

The Trust's work has been highly praised by Government and it has established itself as a leading source of expertise within the policy arena with regard to women returners to scientific careers. Examples include work undertaken for the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (2013 study into returning qualified female engineers returning to industry); the Royal Society Diversity Steering Group; and the Science Council Diversity Group. In 2014, the Trust was a major contributor to the Commons Science & Technology Select Committee Inquiry on Women in academic STEM careers. Recommendation 28 of the report stated that support for the Daphne Jackson Trust was a key mechanism for increasing the participation of women in STEM careers through return following career breaks. The Trust is a member of the Parliamentary & Scientific Committee and the Women & Work All Party Parliamentary Group, and was a named contributor to the latter's Women Returners 2016 Annual Report.

**2. In your experience, what are the key barriers or difficulties faced by this group**

Given that the Daphne Jackson Trust's expertise and knowledge is focussed on STEM research returners to work, we have focused our response on this sector. Nevertheless, we hope and trust that the comments made are generic enough to be of interest and relevance to other sectors; the issues facing returners to work are universal.

In the fast moving world of STEM research, highly qualified and skilled individuals who temporarily step back from research quickly find themselves lagging behind their peers and, when seeking to return to work, often struggle to find research-based employment which fully utilises their knowledge and experience. Such individuals require more than simply a relatively brief and intensive skills update,

rather they need longer and in-depth immersion in the area of knowledge in which they previously operated. Highly trained STEM researchers who do not return to STEM careers are a substantial loss to UK PLC and this is a particular issue for women, who are equally talented, motivated and committed to research as their male peers, but often find themselves taking a career break to bring up young children or to act as carers to elderly relatives. The impact of such a career break can also be compounded by issues such as relocation, as partner's career continues to develop, with a planned maternity break extending into a longer career break. In most cases, this comes at a time when both the individual concerned and their sponsors have invested a significant amount of time and money developing the skills and knowledge required to become an expert in their chosen discipline. Once on a career break there are few opportunities for women to return to research at the level commensurate with their skills and experience without help from a returners scheme such as the Fellowships offered by the Daphne Jackson Trust.

Loss of confidence is an issue faced by all returners and can severely impact upon making a successful return to a career. The Daphne Jackson Trust's Fellowship Advisors offer one to one support, mentoring and advice to applicants as they progress through the Fellowship application process. It is this one to one approach which highlights any confidence issues in returners and works to overcome them by the time the Fellowship starts.

### **3. What support or information are you aware of to help this group to return to work. This could be from employers or other organisations (including your own)**

The Trust's website provides comprehensive details of the types and availability of Fellowships (<http://www.daphnejackson.org/>). Other bodies and organisations which promote the Trust and advertise our Fellowships via websites and/or journals include Athena SWAN, PSCI-COM, jobs.ac.uk, WES (Women's Engineering Society), WISE (Women in Science & Engineering), numerous learned societies and professional bodies (such as the Royal Society, Royal Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Physics), the UK research councils, and those universities and sponsoring organisations which collaborate with the Trust. Some of these organisations also offer their own support mechanisms. The Trust benefits from its position as a pre-eminent provider of reskilling and retraining for women STEM researchers and enjoys a high profile – and regard – within the sector. This in turn ensures that the Trust is well known as the 'go to' organisation for STEM research returners, though we work constantly to maintain and enhance our profile through all appropriate avenues.

### **4. How useful do you feel the current support or information available to this group is**

In general, the UK higher education sector is highly effective in publicising and promulgating information. In fact it could be argued that the plethora of information available can almost be counterproductive at times. Rather than offering generalities with regard to sectoral levels of enquiries from women returners, the Trust has set out below some baseline statistics relating to the number of enquiries it has received from December 2016 to September 2017.

The Trust has received 285 enquires during this timeframe - 92 by phone and 193 by email. 73 individuals subsequently submitted application forms. The Trust monitors how individuals find out about the Trust and our Fellowships, with information available for 124 individuals. Of these 45 (36%) had found information during a web search, 44 (35%) had seen an advertisement, 3 (2%) had received an email, and 32 (26%) had heard via word of mouth.

## **5. What do you feel works well, and what could be improved**

A massive culture change is required to support and facilitate women returners to working life. Within many employment sectors, addressing issues of gender inequality is viewed merely as a recruitment issue. Leaders in the private, public and third sectors should collaborate and co-operate on the 'big picture' issues relating to women returner strategies, to (a) ensure consistency of approach wherever possible and (b) enable critical mass to develop, maximising leverage. In all cases, it is critical to ensure senior management engagement and support within organisations, businesses, sectoral thought leaders, professional bodies and trade organisations. In the case of higher education and STEM research, it is a relatively straightforward exercise to identify the key players and it is gratifying that all of the university mission groups, individual universities and a sizeable majority of professional bodies and learned societies have bought in to issues of gender equality and the culture change necessary to address this issue. The challenge for other sectors is to identify and maximise the involvement and support of equivalent bodies and associations.

It goes without saying that increased funding, direction and support from government would prove highly beneficial, with a specific Minister (ie: the Minister for Women and Equalities) and a specific department (eg: BEIS or DfE) co-operating to drive forward the cause of women returners to work, codify best practice, promote initiatives that encourage sustained and embedded change, award success and identify high profile champions. The benefits to the UK economy in terms of skills, knowledge, the talent pool and the recruitment pipeline mean that coordinated national support for women returners to work should form part of the new Industrial Strategy. A focussed and high profile publicity campaign is essential – too many returners to work are unaware of the levels and types of support that may already be available to them.

Consideration should be given to a series of kite marks for commitment to gender equality within employment sectors. An excellent example from within higher education is the Equality Challenge Unit's Athena SWAN charter, established in 2005 to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in higher education and research. The charter has become increasingly influential in the higher education sector.

A generic voucher scheme to enable women returners to access sectoral-specific retraining, perhaps via appropriate professional bodies and trade associations, would be highly beneficial. Along with a skills deficit, one of the major recognised impacts of a career break, as stated previously, is a loss of confidence. The Daphne Jackson Trust application and Fellowships process, with its significant level of personalised support, case-specific mentoring and suite of compulsory retraining and upskilling components, offers an exemplar within higher education and research sector, which could be adapted and rolled out in other sectors.

## **6) What other support or information do you feel would be useful in helping this group to return to work, and why? In responding, please consider specific interventions focused on this group as opposed to more widespread policy reforms**

From the Daphne Jackson Trust's perspective, despite significant progress in recent years in returning women STEM researchers to meaningful careers, the limiting factor in the number of Fellowships the Trust can award each year is still the amount of sponsorship available. Additional funding from Government would make it relatively easy to ensure that most universities and research institutes in the UK were in a position to host and sponsor Daphne Jackson Fellows. The Trust would be interested in working with the Government Equalities Office to investigate how the 2nd round of the Government Returnships Fund might be utilised as a means of meeting this need.

As an example, the average cost of a 3yr half-sponsored Daphne Jackson Fellow is £15k pa. If Government, via the Returnships fund, provided seed funding for the half-sponsorship of 15, 3yr Fellowships over a three year period, the Trust would arrange for a matching half sponsor for the Fellowships. As set out below, this will come to a total contribution of £675k.

Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Total:
£225k	£225k	£225k	£675k

Alternatively, standalone funding for general Trust development could be used for the provision of Fellowship training courses, a one-off contribution toward core costs, or a specific campaign to increase numbers of Fellowships in an under-represented area.

**7) Is there anything further you would like to tell us about your experience or knowledge of the challenges faced by this group in returning to work?**

Turning from specific career-based issues to more general family concerns, raising children cannot be confined to evenings and weekends and most parents strive to find a balance where one or other parent is regularly available during the child's waking hours to provide a secure and loving environment. It is often the female parent who undertakes this. Despite changes in legislation, flexible working needs to become embedded as part of employment culture. There is still a need to (a) remove the prejudice that part-time workers are less ambitious, (b) dismantle the informal barriers to flexible working, (c) utilise strong role models for how part-time work can be undertaken successfully, (d) provide on-site and/or subsidised childcare facilities, (e) recognise that home working can be an appropriate form of flexible working, (f) correct the misconception that flexible working equating to an individual being available 24/7 and (f) resist the easy appeal of 'presenteeism'. The Trust would also like to take this opportunity to emphasise the critical importance of shared parental leave and free/heavily subsidised childcare as aids in supporting women returners.

**8) We may undertake future research on this topic. If you would be interested in participating, please supply your organisation's contact information below**

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