

News

Mixed reaction to £5m budget pledge for returnships

9 Mar 2017

By Annie Makoff

While some back initiative as a 'win' for business, others criticise 'modest sum' and say more needs to be done to change workplace cultures

The government has announced a £5m initiative to support women back to work after a career break.

Returnships – otherwise known as 'returning professional internships' – formed part of a series of measures outlined in yesterday's budget to mark International Women's Day. The **£5m boost** will open up existing return-to-work schemes to all levels of management and will be used to target industries where women are currently underrepresented.

Annette Cox, associate director at the Institute for Employment Studies, said returnships "had the potential" to help people back into work after a career break, while Emma Codd, managing partner for talent at Deloitte, welcomed the news as a "win win" for women and business. Deloitte's own return-to-work programme, an industry first, has helped 20 women back to work since its launch two years ago.

But Sam Smethers, CEO of women's rights charity The Fawcett Society, told People Management the financial boost was a "modest sum" compared to the scale of the problem. "54,000 mothers at work are forced to leave their jobs because they are pregnant. If we really want to support working mums, we would give fathers longer and better paid time off in their baby's first year and create a culture of flexibility in the workplace that enables mothers and fathers to work flexibly," she said. "More senior part-time jobs are also essential to ensure mothers don't get trapped in low-paid part-time work when they return."

Eva Neitzert, co-director of the Women's Budget Group, added: "It is also not just about money. We need workplace cultures to be more open to accommodating caring responsibilities. This requires strengthened rights around flexible working to ensure that women can combine work with caring for their children without fear of being discriminated against."

Theresa May revealed the government's plans for return-to-work schemes ahead of the budget announcement in a **post on parenting website Mumsnet**. She wrote: "Women are driving our economy forward, securing 77 per cent of new jobs last year – and now represent a higher percentage of FTSE board membership than ever before."

"Returnships are open to both men and women but we should acknowledge that, more often than not, it is women who give up their careers to devote themselves to motherhood, only to find the route back

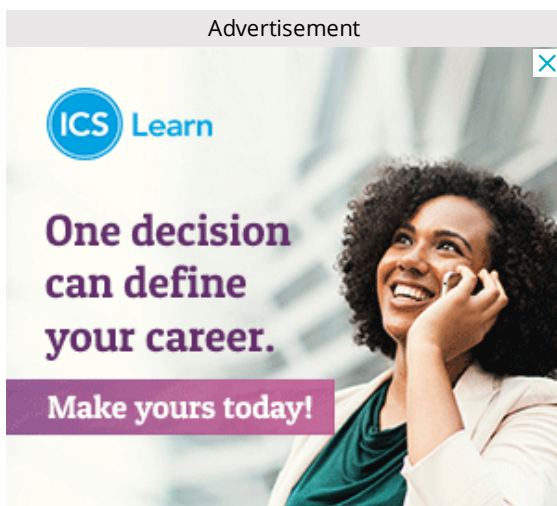
Cookies on this website We use cookies on our website to ensure we give you the best experience and relevant advertising on 3rd party websites. If you are happy with this, click the Accept and close button. Alternatively, use the following links to [view our full cookie policy](#), [manage your cookie preferences](#), or [visit this external site](#) to find out more about cookies in general.

ACCEPT AND CLOSE

easily distracted or unable to commit, or that time away would prove damaging, were incorrect, she insisted.

The government's returnship proposals follow **recommendations made in January** by the Women and Work All Parliamentary Group, which called on large firms to provide paid return-to-work programmes for women with guaranteed training, advice and support.

As part of the budget the chancellor also pledged tax-free childcare, saving families up to £2,000 a year for each child under 12 years old, while parents of three to four-year-olds will be entitled to 30 hours of free childcare a week from September.



[View More Jobs](#)

HAYS
Recruiting experts
in Human Resources

L&D Advisor - 12 Month FTC

London, England

£38000.00 - £43000.00 per annum

Hays

HR Officer

Merseyside, England

£21000.00 - £24000.00 per annum

Hays

Interim EMEA HR Administrator

London, England

Negotiable

Hays

Share



Explore related articles

Comment

There is life after full-time employment



Third of returners experience 'skills downgrading' when going back to work, government report finds

News

Almost a third of workers have taken a career break

Legal

Fancy a career break? Yes please, I'd be over the moon

Sign up to PM Daily and keep up to date with all the latest HR and business news from
People Management

[Sign up](#)

People Management

[News](#)

[Voices](#)

[Long reads](#)

[Experts](#)

[PM Jobs](#)

[Contact us](#)

[PM Insight](#)

[CIPD Events](#)

[CIPD](#)

[Terms and conditions](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Cookie policy](#)

[Social bookmarks](#)

[Anti Modern Slavery statement](#)

Join the conversation

