



# Doctors returning to the workforce: guidance for hospitals

The pandemic has led to 28,000 doctors returning to the GMC registry. They include consultants, GPs, staff and associate specialist (SAS) doctors, trainees, and medical academics.

Even though we are under great pressure, this valuable resource isn't being used to anywhere near its full potential. Only 4,000 (14%) are currently working, so many more could be helping, particularly with the rising backlog of elective work.

The RCP recommends that hospitals:

**1. Contact people who have recently retired.**

Many of those who have returned did so on their own initiative. They contacted colleagues and discussed how they could be most useful. Many could be waiting for a phone call or email, and assuming they're not needed if they don't receive one.

**2. Ask them what they are willing and able to do.** Ask returning doctors what they feel comfortable doing – clinical work, non-clinical tasks or both. The RCP survey 2017 showed that in times of workforce shortage teaching is the first activity to be cancelled, so helping with this could be valuable.

**3. Fully include and value returners as part of the team.** Even if someone is only returning for a short while and working at a distance, they should feel valued, involved and appreciated.

They must be part of a clinical team and have a mentor. All trusts should have flexible working champions, who should be ready to help and support returners.

**4. Have a trial period.** An initial trial period to make sure things work well is important for both the trust and the clinician. It is an opportunity to ensure their skills are appropriate for the work they will be doing and that the right support is in place.

**5. Provide an induction.** All returners should have a tailored and focused induction, particularly in the use of IT. IT has been reported as a major source of anxiety for doctors returning to work.

---

For more detail, please refer to *Working flexibly: A toolkit* and *Later careers: Stemming the drain of expertise and skills from the profession*.

And if you have any questions or need more information, contact us via [policy@rcplondon.ac.uk](mailto:policy@rcplondon.ac.uk)