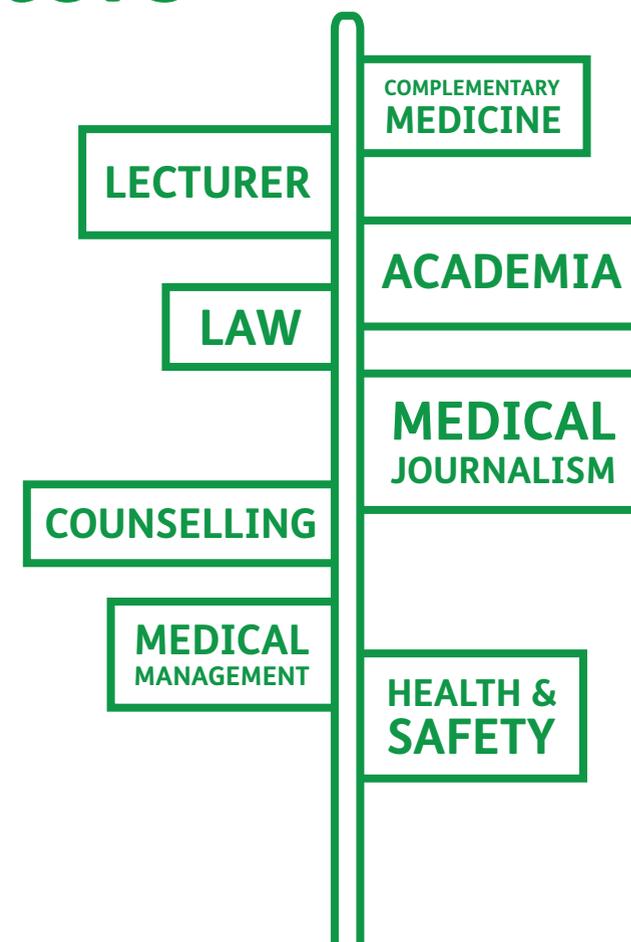




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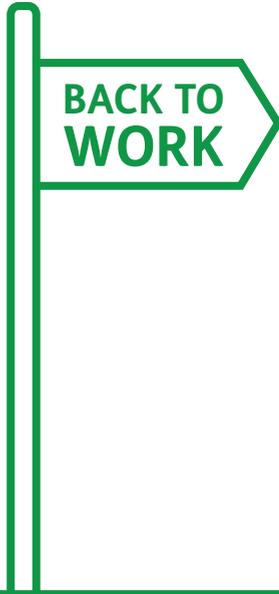
Guide to Alternative Careers for Doctors



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Guide to Alternative Careers for Doctors

Getting back to work after an accident or illness	2
Getting back to work after GMC suspension	4
What if I can't go back to being a doctor	6
Stepping stones back to work	8
What else can a doctor do?	10
An A-Z of UK careers	12
Complementary medicine – a brief career guide	14
Getting a new job	16
Job campaigning	18
Interview technique	20
Might going back to work mean I'm worse off financially?	22
Keeping your new job	24
Case studies	26
Sources of information and support	28



Getting back to work after an accident or illness

If you're reading this guide you're probably considering a change of career – perhaps due to accident or illness.

- You may have been involved in a serious accident, off work and your sick pay has run out. That would be bad enough in itself – but what if you have a family and a mortgage to pay?
- You may have a physical illness or disability which prevents you working or limits your mobility or means you need to keep taking periods of sick leave –and you're worried about the long term financial and career implications.
- You may have a mental illness – depression, anxiety or bipolar for instance – and this, in itself, may be making it difficult to manage.
- You may have an alcohol or other addiction problem, probably with GMC implications – and may be grappling with the impact not only on your career and finances but also on your family and friends.

2. _____

The first point to make is that you're not alone. There are quite a number of other doctors in a similar situation to you.

You'll hopefully be receiving clinical support. You may well be able to tap into support from one of the many peer support groups for doctors (see the listings in www.support4doctors.org). And if you're in serious financial hardship the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund will probably be helping financially, as well as providing specialist Money Advice.

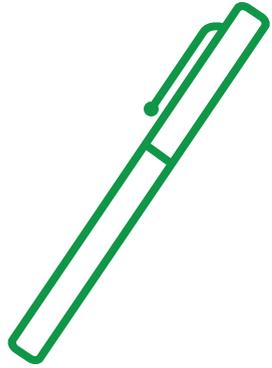
However, what you'd like ideally is probably to get back to work – whether in a medical or medically related career or by pursuing a new and alternative career path – to help restore your income, your self esteem and your contribution to society.

That's what this short guide is here to help you do. We look at:

- Getting back to work after GMC suspension
- What if you can't get back to work as a doctor
- Stepping stones back to work
- What else a doctor can do
- Getting and keeping a new job
- Checking that you won't be worse off financially by going back to work
- Case studies of doctors who've made a successful return to work
- Some of the career options open to you and
- Further sources of information and advice.



3. _____



Getting back to work after GMC suspension

Q: What work can I do whilst suspended?

A: This will depend on the reasons for your suspension, bearing in mind that patient safety is always the most important factor. For example, you may be interested in a research-based job and, if the underlying issue is health related, and the research does not directly involve patient care, employers may be prepared to continue employment, with adequate supervision.

If the suspension is due to misconduct, options outside of medically-related work may need to be explored.

4. _____

Q: What happens after suspension is lifted?

A: After your suspension is lifted, again depending on the reason, returning to work shouldn't prove to be a problem.

Sometimes, the suspension may be altered to 'registration with conditions' which will allow you to work, but certain conditions will apply. The aim of these is to give some time to 'remedy' any deficiencies in your practice. Examples are regular supervision with a Postgraduate Dean or an educational supervisor or informing the GMC if considering working abroad.

Q: Will I still get paid by the Trust if I'm suspended?

A: This is likely to depend on your contract and/or whether the suspension is on ill-health or misconduct grounds.

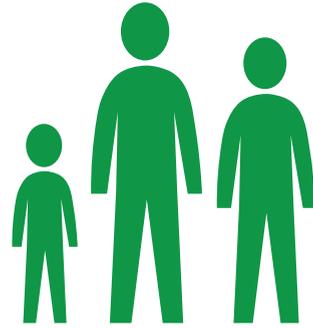
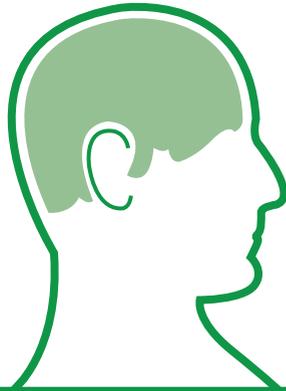
Either way, if the suspension is for over 6 months and you're a GP, the PCT will remove you from the list of those entitled to practise so your contract, and pay, immediately lapses.

Q: If I am a GP Partner and have been suspended, is all locum insurance null and void or will it depend on the arrangement I have with my Partners?

A: Suspension is immediate. If you're a GP Partner, your locum insurance may cover suspension – check the small print. A lot will depend on your relationship with your Partners and the specifics of your insurance.



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What if I can't go back to being a doctor?

There are likely to be at least three implications i.e.

Financial

Your life style will probably be based on your earnings as a doctor – with, for instance, a mortgage and car and possibly school fees to match. Unless you're still on sick pay or have income protection insurance, money could be a big issue for you, so:

- Make sure you've taken advice from Jeff Brown, the RMBF's specialist Money Adviser – and followed the advice.
- Look for ways to cut your spending. What is essential and what is just nice to have but not affordable? See www.moneysavingexpert.com for up to date money saving information, ideas and contacts.
- Consider alternative work, to boost your income and fill a gap in your cv.

6. _____

Psychological

Being a doctor didn't just pay the bills. It gave you a reason to get up in the morning, a sense of purpose and structure for your life and, very importantly, a sense of identity and self esteem.

So not being able to continue as a doctor can be stressful and challenging. It usually helps to recognise this so that, with self awareness, you can understand and work through the lows and not let them prevent you working out an action plan to achieve a new career – and then putting it into action.

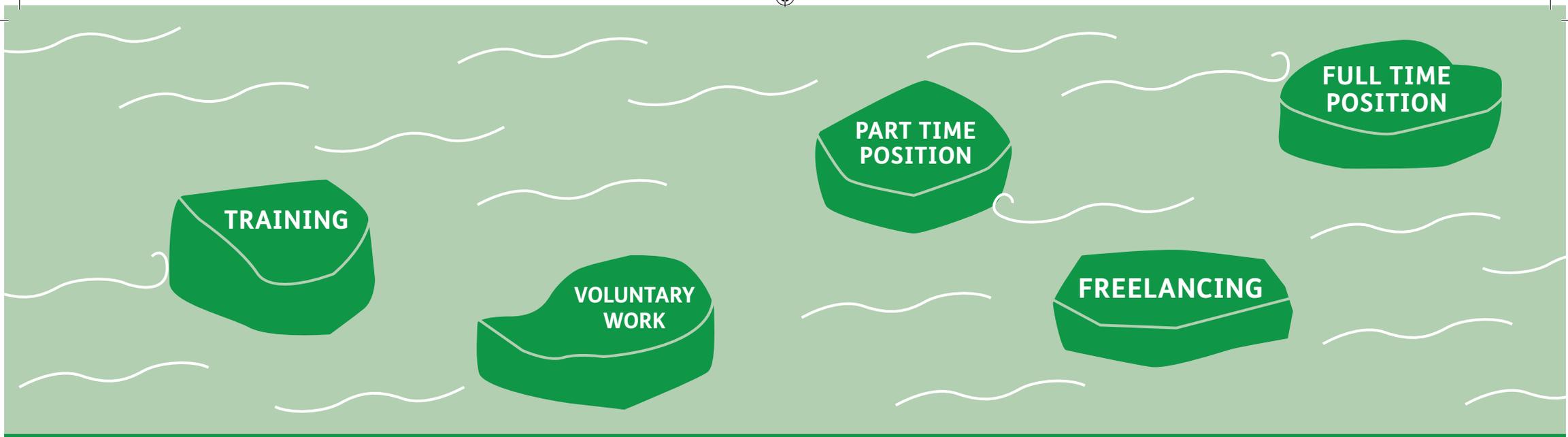
Faced with change we're not happy with we often go through a number of distinct phases, from denial (this isn't happening) through anger and frustration (WHY is this happening) to acceptance (coming to terms with the change) and then development (finding a way to make the change work for you). This is normal, although what we're focusing on in this guide is mainly how to make this change work for you.

For family and friends

This can be a difficult time for your family and friends too, so don't forget them – and remember they can be a resource when it comes to looking for an alternative career, through their varied knowledge and contacts.



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Stepping stones back to work

You may not be well enough to go back to full time paid employment yet. However, each month you're out of work leaves a bigger gap in your CV and makes you less desirable to potential employers.

Fortunately there are a number of potential stepping stones you can take which will start to fill out your cv and provide potentially useful experience and contacts:

Training / Retraining

As you'll know from your own experience as a doctor these days training/retraining is available through a range of providers and a range of forms of delivery, from traditional lectures to interactive online learning and various other permutations – so you should be able to find an approach that suits you.

Any form of study, training or retraining has value in showing you engaged in constructive, structured activity, rather than leaving a gap in your CV – and may provide potential contacts. However, given the cost of courses you'll probably want to choose an area of specific or generic value for the new career you're interested in pursuing.

8. _____

Voluntary work

The time commitment can range from a few hours a month to regular weekly hours and you can volunteer while claiming Benefits – so this is a very flexible option.

St John's Ambulance, British Red Cross, local hospitals and hospices and medical research charities are some of the medically related organisations looking for volunteers. Alternatively your local Volunteer Centre/Council for Voluntary Service will have information about other volunteer opportunities in your area and www.reachskills.org.uk has volunteering opportunities for professionals.

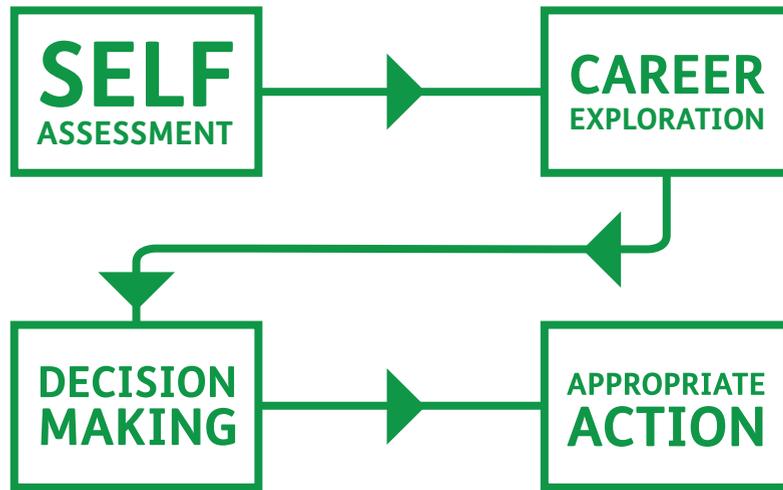
Working part time / Less demanding roles / Freelancing

These are options if a return to a demanding full time role isn't feasible yet.

If you're receiving good State Benefits then working part time and/or in a less demanding role may not leave you better off financially – but as a stepping stone back to longer term career and employment opportunities either is worth considering.

As with training/retraining and voluntary work the main point is to enable you to present yourself to prospective employers in a more positive light in the years ahead.

9. _____



What else can a doctor do?

Careers advisers often describe a four stage process i.e. first know yourself, then explore the opportunities available which match what you know about yourself, decide which specific opportunities to explore and take appropriate action.

Fortunately, as a doctor you should have been used to self appraisal, the first step if you're making a career change. You can start with some basic questions e.g.

- What are my interests?
- What are my values?
- What are my skills?
- What are my needs, responsibilities and constraints?
- What do I want from work?
- What is my preferred working style?

10. _____

If we take your skills as an example – what skills have you developed through study, what have you developed through medical practice and what have you developed in your life outside work?

For instance, can you give examples which demonstrate your analytical and diagnostic skills, your inter personal and team working skills, your IT skills, your communication skills and your ability to work under pressure and to achieve deadlines?

How would you assess these skills? For example one model suggests there are four types of skill:

Motivated skills – skills that you enjoy and are good at

Developmental skills – skills you enjoy but need improving

Burn out skills – skills you are good at but do not enjoy

Irrelevant skills – skills you do not enjoy and are not good at

If you're interested in a structured way to work through a career preparation self appraisal, try one of the following:

www.open.ac.uk/careers

<http://www.windmillsonline.co.uk/interactive/intro1.html>

After accident or illness has prevented them from continuing a clinical career, doctors have gone on to pursue a diverse range of alternative careers, including: College Lecturer, Complementary Health practitioner, Journalist, Legal Executive, Librarian, Medical School lecturer – and even Zookeeper!



11. _____

An A – Z of UK careers

Depending on your interests and the time and money you have to gain the relevant qualifications if needed, here is a sample of some of the diverse careers available in the UK:

- Accountant, Archivist, Audiologist
- Biochemist
- Careers Adviser (Higher Education), Civil Servant (e.g. with the Department of Health), Company Secretary, College Lecturer
- Dietitian
- Environmental Health Officer
- Health and Safety Adviser or Inspector, Hypnotherapist
- Journalist
- Librarian/Information Manager, Legal Executive
- Market Researcher
- Optician, Orthoptist
- Pharmaceutical Physician, Proofreader
- Research Scientist
- Tax Inspector, Teacher

See www.prospects.ac.uk for information on graduate entry careers in the UK.

You may also have special skills or abilities which open up other career paths (e.g. interpreting or translating if you are bi lingual – or some field of the creative or performing arts if you have high level practitioner skills)

NHS Agenda for Change Salary Scale wef 1 April 2010

Band 5	£21,176 - 27,534	Band 8b	£45,254 - 55,945
Band 6	£25,472 - 34,189	Band 8c	£54,454 - 67,134
Band 7	£30,460 - 40,157	Band 8d	£65,270 - 80,810
Band 8a	£38,851 - 46,621		

NHS Agenda for Change High Cost Area Supplements

Inner London - 20% of basic salary (within a range of £4,036 – 6,217)

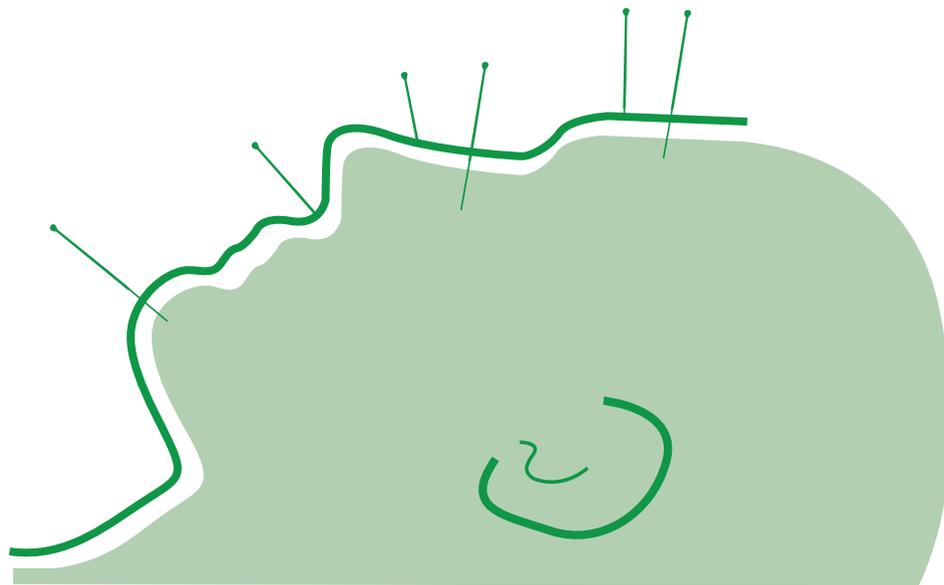
Outer London - 15% of basic salary (within a range of £3,414 – 4,351)

Fringe - 5% of basic salary (within a range of £933 – 1,616)

For fuller information, see www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

Some medically related careers

Career	Entry Requirements	Other Information
Audiologist	A good science degree, then a Postgraduate Diploma or MSc in Audiology	Salary for a trainee audiologist is £17,400 , rising to £27,000
Chiropodist/ Podiatrist	A degree in Podiatry (although a medical degree may secure exemption from some exams)	Podiatrist Band 5 Specialist Band 6 Advanced Band 7
Dietitian	Postgraduate qualification in dietetics (usually 2 years)	Dietitian Band 5 Specialist Band 6 Advanced Band 7
Environmental Health Officer	Postgraduate course in environmental health	Starting salary of £26,000 - £32,000 ; and £30,000 - £40,000 at management level
Psychologist	BPS approved conversion course, then a postgraduate qualification in the relevant area of psychology	Clinical Trainee Band 6 Clin. Psychologist Band 7 Clin. Principal Band 8a - c Consultant Clinical Psychologist Band 8 c - d
Medical Researcher	Masters degree for Research Assistant; PhD for Research Associate	£26,000 - £31,000 for a Research Assistant; £26,000 - £35,000 for a post doctoral Research Associate. Senior research scientists, leading a research team, can earn £45,000 - £67,000 See www.jobs.ac.uk
Medical School lecturer	Consultancy post in a hospital or Senior Lecturership in academic General Practice	£30,600 - 53,000 (pro rata if part time)
Occupational Therapy	Accelerated two year full time courses for graduate entrants without a degree in occupational therapy	OT Band 5 OT Specialist Band 6 OT Advanced Band 7



Complementary medicine – a brief career guide

Where are the jobs?

Most employment opportunities are in the private sector. There has also been some increase in the use of complementary medicine in the NHS, where employment opportunities are mainly part.

To practice in each area professional indemnity insurance is, of course, needed.

Proven clinical value?

The Oxford Handbook of Complementary Medicine (OHCM) evaluates the evidence for a wide range of complementary therapies. We've focused here on five for which there appears to be the most positive evidence.

Acupuncture: Doctors can train and become members of the British Medical Acupuncture Society (BMAS). www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk

Biofeedback: For further information see the Association for Applied Psycho-physiology and Biofeedback (a US organisation) www.aapb.org ; the Biofeedback Foundation of Europe www.bfe.org; www.york-biofeedback.co.uk; and www.biofeedbackclinic.org

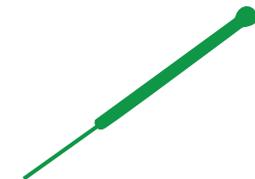
Hypnotherapy: Doctors may be trained through the British Society of Clinical and Academic Hypnosis www.bscah.com. In addition the Royal Society of Medicine has a Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine section.

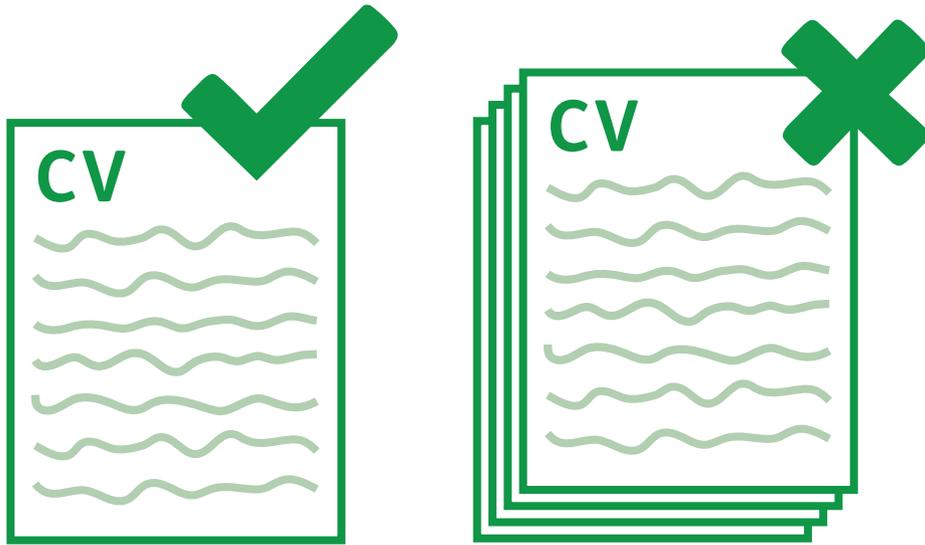
Massage: The British Massage Therapy Council is an umbrella organisation www.bmtc.co.uk

Relaxation Therapy: A Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy qualification is likely to be useful

Further information on complementary medicine?

Oxford Handbook of Complementary Medicine; Edzard Ernst, Max H Pittler, Barbara Wider, Kate Boddy ISBN 978-0-19-920677-3 (Oxford University Press 2008)





Getting a new job

Your **cover letter** introduces your **CV**, which gets you an **interview**, which gets you a **job**, so let's take each in turn:

Your cover letter

Put yourself in your prospective employer's shoes. They are likely to be busy people. So short and sweet is probably best ie why you want the job and the key strengths you can offer – ie how you can offer what they have said they want in their job ad/person spec.

Your CV

For most job applications forget long medical CVs. Employers won't have all day to read them. Two sides of A4 should be the max. Include your education, qualifications etc but don't make a meal of it – concentrate on showing what you've achieved in your life/career so far.

Probably most important is to have strong bullet points that explain what your key skills, strengths and achievements have been particularly in the most recent years of your career and in areas the employer is likely to be most interested in.

Where a career change is being considered it is often much more appropriate to have a “skills set” or “function” CV rather than a traditional “reverse chronology” CV.

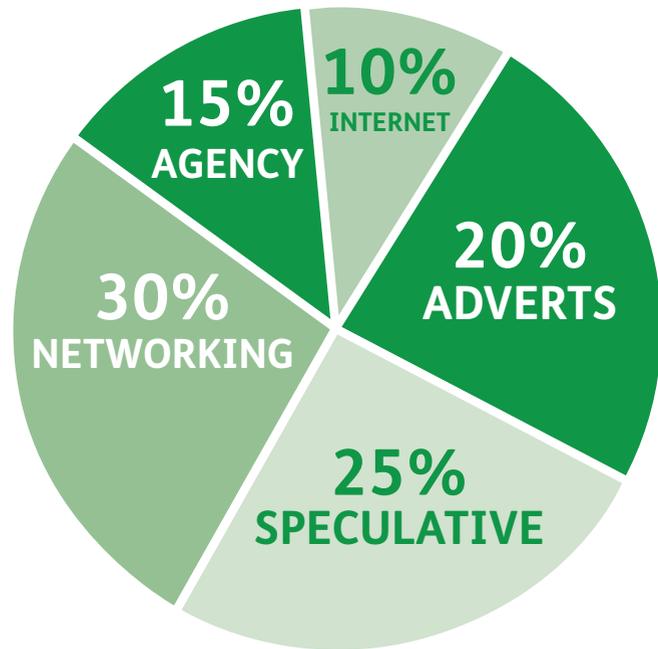
This enables the prospective employer to learn about your transferable and employable skills and achievements relevant to their organisational needs (as set out in their Person Spec) before considering the job you have previously held.

The CBI (Confederation of British Industry) identifies the following as key employability skills: self management; team working; business and customer awareness; problem solving; communication and literacy; numeracy; and application of IT – plus a positive ‘can do’ approach

Another advantage is that it enables any employment gaps to be de-emphasised and explained after you have hopefully interested them in your transferable skills and experiences.

The good news about CVs is that even to this day, the vast majority are not very good. So, by applying some best practice principles you've a better than average chance of achieving success. For example don't send every employer the same CV – customise each to show you're meeting their needs. It takes a bit longer but if you want to get an interview....





It is important to have a balanced job campaign to make sure you are tapping in to all of the potential opportunities. No one route is the magic answer. Maximise the number of opportunities by tapping in to them all.

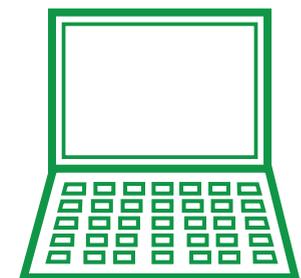
As you can also see, **networking has become the single most important route to job opportunities.** Interestingly, it also now viewed as the lowest risk way of recruiting. Networking means building up contacts and relationships with individuals who may have information or other contacts that will help you in your career and who also you may be useful to at some stage in the future.

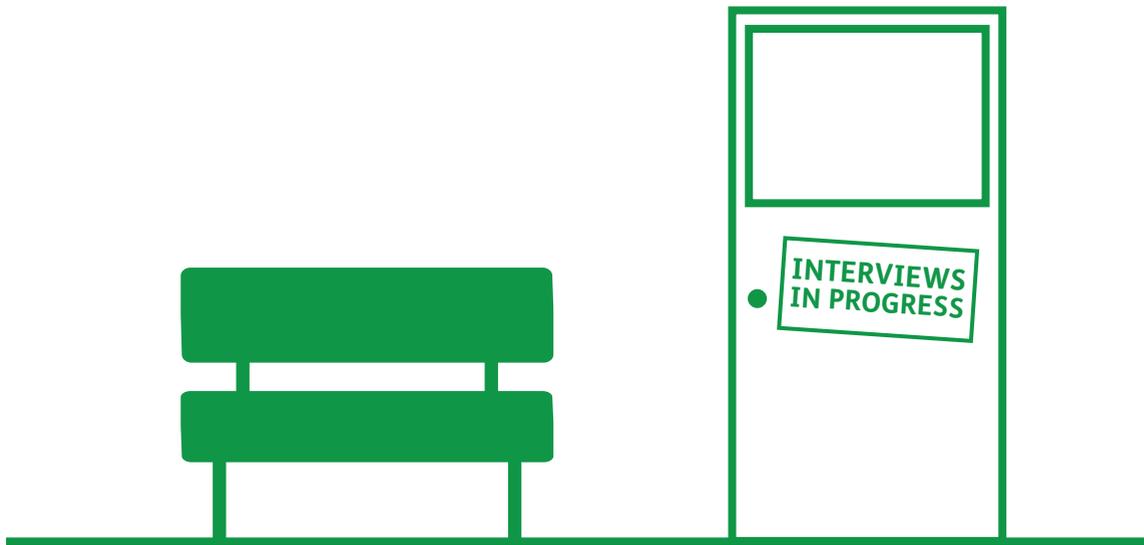
Family, friends, neighbours, colleagues (recent and previous) – and their family, friends, neighbours and colleagues – are all worth exploring.

Remember that networking is a long term career tool not a short term expedient. Wherever you go and whatever you do in your future career(s) it is important to keep your networking going.

Job campaigning

There are five separate, though interrelated routes to finding a new job as illustrated in the diagram above.





Interview technique

Preparation is key. The vast majority of people don't prepare effectively for interviews, because they don't know how to.

By using a structured, competency based approach to your preparation you can significantly differentiate yourself from the other candidates.

Most interviews are designed to find out four things about you:

Can you do the job? (so make sure you can show how your training, experience, skills and abilities are relevant to the Job Description and Person Specification)

Will you do the job? (so give examples of your high motivation, energy and commitment in your recent work and why you'll be even more motivated and committed working for your prospective new employer – and have a convincing answer for why you want the job!)

Will you fit in? (so be able to show how you work well with others and also research the culture of the organisation you're applying to, even down to how casual or formal the dress code is and turn up at interview ready to show you're a perfect fit - although for interviews formal dress is usually safer)

What difference will you make? (organisations are interested in results, so show what difference you've been able to make in your career so far and have ideas as to what difference you could make for your prospective employer)

When preparing for the interview, consider what questions might arise to probe these four areas and work out a structured response.

One very useful structure for answering interview questions is known as the **STAR** technique ie:

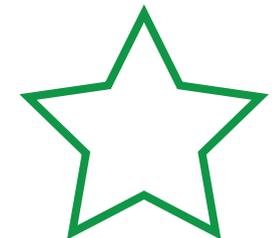
S = Situation concisely describe the problem/challenge you faced

T = Task briefly explain what needed to be achieved

A = Action explain what YOU actually DID

R = Result describe the result ie what you achieved and what the benefits were for the organisation

Also have two or three questions of your own – enough to show you're interested but not so many the interview panel start looking at their watches.





Might going back to work mean I'm worse off financially?

Sick Pay

For advice on sick pay entitlement go to:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefitsBenefitsTaxCreditsAndOtherSupport/Illorinjured/DG_10018786

Income protection

If you have any income protection policies in place then contact your relevant insurer as soon as possible after loss of income to discuss your situation. There are often exclusion periods which mean the sooner you register the sooner you will be able to benefit financially from a claim.

State benefits

For advice on the most recent position concerning state benefits entitlement you may find the following sites useful: www.direct.gov.uk ; www.entitledto.co.uk ; and www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/life/benefits.htm

If a post isn't too well paid you could conceivably be worse off financially by working if you were receiving a high level of Benefits - and getting back on the same Benefits after going back to work isn't always easy.

However, the longer you're out of work the longer you are likely to remain out of work, as employers usually prefer someone with recent work experience. If you're reasonably confident you'll make a go of it, returning to work will usually pay off over the longer term.

Pensions

The NHS final salary pension is one of the best around, so the normal advice would be hang on to it and start a new pension with your new employer.

For more information on pensions generally, check:

www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Pensionsandretirementplanning/index.htm





Keeping your new job

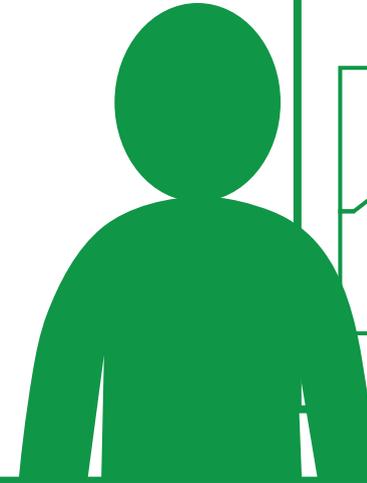
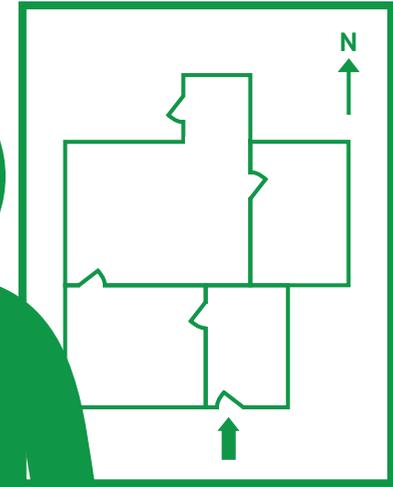
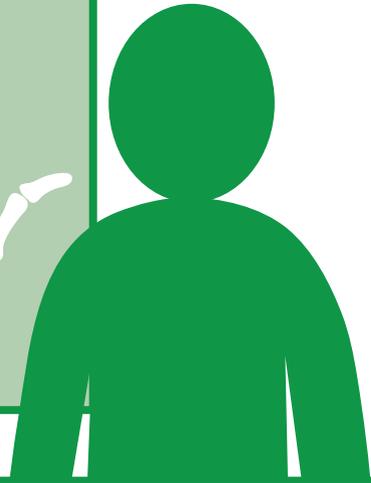
Academic research has suggested the ten most common practical tips to maximise your chances of success in your new job:

1. Make your learning curve as steep as possible – aim to understand as much about the business and your role as quickly as possible. As a doctor you'll be used to learning quickly, so should have a head start here.
2. Discuss what you need to achieve with your new boss and make sure that you both agree your objectives. If necessary negotiate.
3. Match your tactics to the environment – make sure you understand the situations facing you, particularly if you are working in a non medical environment, and make sure your responses are appropriate
4. Achieve some quick wins – identify and make happen some visible achievements that you can point to as evidence of your new success

5. Market yourself internally – working hard and effectively is important but you also need to start building your new internal network
6. Align yourself – once you have worked out what the values and culture of the organisation are (which won't necessarily be those of the NHS) then as far as you can align yourself to them
7. Build your new relationships – whether as a leader or a team member make sure you build teams positively rather than damaging them
8. Develop alliances – identify the people you readily and easily relate to and get them on your side
9. Keep your balance – during major transition you can easily lose perspective and make some poor judgements. Make sure you keep listening and take good advice and counsel
10. Help everybody – it doesn't matter whether they are reporting to you, colleagues or your boss or your boss's boss. Be positive and helpful to everybody. Employers like a 'can do' approach.

Remember too that starting a new job is a significant change and you're likely to go through a number of emotional ups and downs – perhaps a honeymoon period when everything seems to be going well and then a down as some initial problems occur. This is normal. Knowing this is likely to happen will hopefully help you work your way through and make a success of your new job.





Case Studies – Doctors who have successfully pursued new careers

Dr A is a former GP Principal. After recovering from alcoholism he resumed his medical career, then took early retirement and returned to his former University to take a law degree, followed by a Masters degree in Human Rights Law. Since his dissertation, he has retained a special interest in Inquest Law.

'I refer to myself as a Medical Law Researcher but my current work covers a variety of functions. I assist the legal profession to develop issues within medical negligence cases and inquests, directing them to the appropriate experts. I have lectured to solicitors and forensic psychiatrists. I use alternative dispute resolution techniques for patients to advocate on their behalf with health care providers and I liaise with the media and politicians to lobby on medical issues.

All in all, I have never been busier! But the most important thing is that I am twenty-five years sober.'

Dr B was a junior doctor when she became ill. She had always had an interest in art and design and decided to pursue this avenue. She secured a job as a Teaching Fellow and later on started her PhD in Systems Architecture.

'My medical practice was affected by a health condition in 2007 that left me unable to return to medicine and required me to rethink my employment from first principles. As a single parent it was not easy to make a complete adjustment to the prospect of non-clinical employment.

With persistence and determination I was able to use my scientific knowledge and apply it to a non-medical context. I was able to develop a new way of looking at the environmental health of our cities that would improve living conditions in urban populations. I was able to put together several proposals for study at MPhil/ PhD level and I was accepted at a top university in the discipline of Architecture. My research has been recognised by TED who have awarded me the only UK TEDGlobal Fellowship which enabled me to attend and speak at their high profile conference in Oxford where I spoke to private sponsors and potential collaborators for my research. For info TED is a forum in which new innovations and inventions are discussed.

The future really does look very promising now. My research projects are producing interesting results and at the end of the PhD I will be employable in an academic context with a stable career ahead of me.'

Sources of information and support

www.support4doctors.org

This is a **Royal Medical Benevolent Fund** site. You may find the following sections helpful:

Support groups and resources for doctors with health problems:
www.support4doctors.org/organisation.asp?id=51&catid=5

Advice if you're thinking of changing career, from Rob Nathan, MD of Career Counselling Services - including material on career motivators, drivers and values and on job satisfiers:
www.support4doctors.org/advice.asp?id=194

A wide ranging two part interview with Dr Anita Houghton, who has first hand experience of moving in and out of medical careers:
www.support4doctors.org/advice.asp?id=165

Career preparation self appraisal

If you're interested in a structured way to work through a career preparation self appraisal, try one of the following:
www.open.ac.uk/careers or **www.windmillsonline.co.uk/interactive/intro1.html**

Living on a reduced income

For up to date money saving information, ideas and contacts:
www.moneysavingexpert.com

For price comparisons:

www.comparethemarket.com or **www.moneysupermarket.com**

Volunteering as a stepping stone back to paid employment

www.reachskills.org.uk or **www.timebank.org.uk** or **www.do-it.org.uk**

This guide has been prepared by the
Royal Medical Benevolent Fund,
in partnership with **Working Transitions**