



# PREPARING FOR RETURN



Since 2001, IOM Ireland has assisted thousands of migrants to return to their countries of origin. Once they return, they often share with us their experience of “reintegration” – that is the process of adjusting to a new life, reconnecting with family and friends, and making plans for a future. From these experiences, IOM staff have seen how important it is to start thinking about your reintegration before leaving Ireland. In the coming weeks, we hope that you will use this booklet to write down your questions, prioritize your needs, and imagine your future.

Your experience with return will be unique, however many others have undertaken the same journey before you. Based on their experiences, this booklet shares ideas about what you might expect for yourself, your family, and your community after you return. In the few weeks that it may take for IOM to organise your travel, take time to think about the situation you are returning home to. Although this is a busy time, it is important that you ask as many questions as possible and prepare in whatever way you can.

Preparing for Return will help you to find the right strength of mind and resources you need to adapt to the changes you may find in your home, work, and social environments. It will also provide guidance for the path ahead, as you adapt to new situations and relationships with your family and the community around you.



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# HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET



THIS GUIDE OFFERS IDEAS TO HELP YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY. IT SHARES IDEAS THAT MIGHT HELP YOU ALONG THE WAY

## Make time

Take quiet time to look through this booklet and make space for yourself to think about what you need during return.

## Preparation is key

Read through it before you leave Ireland, as these few weeks are an important time for you to plan for your return.

## Go at your own pace

Read it little by little or all at once; once or twice or maybe more. Whatever is best for you.

## Take one step at a time

The booklet is organized into three parts: Myself, My Family, and My Community. Think about one part at a time. They are all different and important.

## What's next?

At the end of the booklet, there are some useful websites and other places where you can find more information to prepare for return.

# PREPARING FOR YOUR RETURN



1

## Focus On Your Options

### Be optimistic as well as realistic

It's normal to feel guilt, sadness, regret, uncertainty, disappointment, anxiety, and fear. Your attitude will determine how you move through these feelings. Try to focus on the options that you have now. How can you move forward with your strengths?

### Share your experience

Your own attitude may influence the way people around you respond to your return, especially those in your family and in your community. Try to help people around you to understand why you decided to return, using positive and reassuring language.

### You are a builder

You have already shown that you can adapt to change – you moved once to Ireland! Now that you are returning, you can continue to build your future. Be proactive, and be proud of what you have already achieved. Reconnect with old friends and colleagues. Look at what opportunities there may be for work or training, and what you can bring to a job with your skills and experiences gained abroad.

### Prepare – but also be open to unplanned opportunities

While you may have ideas about what your future will look like and what you want to do next, having an open and flexible approach to your expectations will let you recognize and benefit from opportunities when they arise. For instance, you may want to be a self-employed entrepreneur. However, your skills may be a perfect fit for a new company that is opening in your city. Balance your wishes with your needs and be ready to consider all your options.

### Recognize your experience abroad as valuable

While preparing to return, you may feel overwhelmed by how much you need to learn about what has changed at home. Remember that during your time in Ireland, you adapted to a new culture and you have gained new skills, attitudes, and insights about the world while being abroad. You are bringing all this back with you, to help you after your return. Draw strength from knowing you have already adapted to a new environment and can do so again.



# IDEAS TO THINK ABOUT



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## Responding To Change

Change takes time –  
give it time

The road of change has ups and downs, twists and turns. Set small goals of change, so you can go forward step by step.

Set realistic and concrete  
expectations

When you then see your progress, it is easier to be motivated to keep moving forward with your plans.

Be open to new experiences  
and new opportunities

Try to embrace chances that come your way in your future destinations. Sometimes in life we let opportunities pass by because we don't see them, or because we don't see them as opportunities! Be open to doing things that were not part of your plan.

Think about the future as well  
as the present return journey

There may be many immediate things you have to deal with when you return, such as finding a place to live and finding work. But try to make time to think about the future too. Where do you want to be in six months? In one year? Make plans and set goals, as this will help keep you moving forward. Try not to let negative experiences you may have had in Ireland or in your own country before leaving affect your attitude going forward.

Recognize that you are different  
and so is your community

You will go back as a different person than when you left. The people who lived around you, the services, and the structures will have changed as well. Even if you cannot predict now what those changes are, you should be prepared for things to be different from how you remember them. Because of the experiences you had abroad, you may also be looking at your community with new eyes.

3

## Finding Acceptance and Facing Fears

It may take time to feel part  
of your community again

The more time you have spent away from your country of origin, the more changes may have occurred, both for people you care for in your country and for you. You must recognize that this can happen, and give yourself the time you need to feel settled again.

Be open-minded towards your  
community but don't always  
expect openness straight away

Community members may take time to understand where you have been, and the different experiences you have had. Give them time, information, and share your experiences when you feel comfortable.

Focus on yourself and your  
own efforts

This is a time for you to think about the future for yourself. Keep energy for you, and focus on your own plans and opportunities too.

Don't feel guilty and don't  
make excuses

Many people may perceive the return as a failure and be ashamed about it. Your family may have supported you to travel, but you won't be able to repay the debt. People may have had expectations for your time in another country, but you did not meet these expectations. You may have described the situation in Ireland as better than it was and are now ashamed that the true story has emerged. These are normal experiences in migration. You do not have to feel ashamed or excuse yourself for what happened, since what happened is not your fault. You did what you had to do. Now it's time to focus on the future.

# PEOPLE AROUND YOU

SELF



## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

You might feel guilty about having left home, and wonder how you will settle back in, or about returning and not being able to match expectations that you have created in others.

You might feel that you are starting over again. Some days you may feel this is a burden, other days you may see the positive, and think it's a new chance.

Both feelings are normal.

You might feel lonely at times, as you may think that you don't have anyone who really understands what you have been through.

You may miss some things about life in Ireland, and at times may wonder if returning was the right decision.

There may be worry about practical things – finding a job, paying debts, security or travelling home.

All of these concerns are normal, and can be faced more easily if you start to think about them now.





# HOW TO PREPARE



## Your skills

- > Think about what skills you have. Maybe you have gained new skills while living abroad. You probably have more than you realise.
- > Think about which skills will be most useful to you, ( and to your family and community) when you return.
- > Think of how you have already contributed to your family and community in the past. Think about what you have contributed in Ireland. What can you build on?

## Your Priorities

- > Think first about what you 'need', then about what you 'want'. Decide what is most important for you.
- > Consider a back-up plan. Try to think of alternatives that might be options in your future. Talk to IOM Ireland staff about the reintegration grant, which may also help you to plan.
- > Spend some time while you are still in Ireland looking for support services at home. Look at the booklet section 'Resources' and 'Questions you can ask your family and friends'. Both will give you ideas to help you prepare.

## Your Resources

- > Think about what your resources are and make a list. Resources are not just money or goods, but also your skills, ideas, and the people you know who can give you mental support.
- > How can you use your knowledge, skills, and contacts to find or create new opportunities for yourself?
- > Look for the opportunities, and then see where they match your skills and resources. You might take a chance on something you didn't consider part of your plan.

**Before you return, contact people to get ideas. They may have new information. What do they see as your skills and resources?**



# PEOPLE AROUND YOU

## FAMILY



## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

You will be restarting relationships with your family, especially with children or a partner who stayed behind.

Your family members may also have feelings about your return, some positive (such as joy, relief, and excitement) and some more difficult (such as jealousy, anger, or anxiety about the future).

If you are returning with children, think of the changes for them. Do they have different needs and concerns than you do?

You might feel sad, or have regrets that you have lost time in these relationships.



## HOW TO PREPARE



> Establish communication links with your family before you return. Remember that it may take time for you, and any family members returning with you, to get used to being home again.

> Be open and honest with your family and friends about your time in Ireland and your difficulties in readapting. This will help them understand what you have been through.

### > If you are returning with children:

- Try to prepare them as much as possible before you leave Ireland. Be honest, and let them also be honest about how they are feeling.
- Find out what's important for the child.
- Prepare for any language changes – your children may not read or write in the language in your future destination. Might they need extra help or classes after they return?
- Think about school for your child after your return. Take time to check out your options.

> Get back in touch with as many people as you can. Reconnect and talk to family, friends and members of your community.

> If you can, talk to others who have returned. You can even do this before you leave Ireland, and this will also help you prepare. Make a list of questions to ask them, about what you need to do, or what has changed.

> Share your experiences, don't hide them! Bring back photos and other things that will help you share with your family.





# PEOPLE AROUND YOU

## COMMUNITY



# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Are you worried about not being accepted easily back into your community, or having lost status since you left?

Has the community changed since you have been away? What changes do you know about? Are there other changes that you may not be expecting?

Do you worry that your community will expect you to return with success and wealth, and you may have to deal with those expectations from your community?

You have lived in a different country and culture in Ireland – will your community understand this, or will there be some difficulties around this?





# HOW TO PREPARE



## Before you return

- > Before you return, look on the internet for information, such as recent photos, maps, and news.
- > Remember how your country was before you left. Make a list of things you remember, and think about how you will feel if they are different when you go back.
- > Talk to family and friends and ask them for information about changes.
- > Talk to other returnees both before and after you return if you can. You can learn from their experiences.

## After you return

- > Find support groups and peer groups where you can connect with people who have similar interests and experiences.
- > If you have difficulties with your own community after you return, these groups may provide support.
- > Share things from your journey with your community. Bring information and talk to them about your experiences. You could even bring small things that remind you, of Ireland to show them.
- > Become part of your community again in an active way. Find ways to participate and contribute.



# RESOURCES

## Use The Time In Ireland Before You Leave To Help You Prepare

### Websites

Check what you can online. It is an easy and confidential way of getting information before you speak with people at home.

### Web forums

This can be a useful way to talk to others from your community, both in Ireland and in your home country. You can do so anonymously if you wish. You can ask questions and get information this way, but always check if it is accurate.

### Talk to people who have already returned

Call them, Skype them, email, or ask your family to talk to them if you cannot. If you do not have access to the internet, ask IOM Ireland staff members if you can set a time to do this from the office.

### Is there a Diaspora organisation from your home country in Ireland?

They may have useful information for you and links that you can use, or people you can contact before or after return.

### Look for newspapers or radio programmes from your country online

They may be a good source of news on the current situation socially, politically, and economically. They also may contain small adverts for employment which may be a useful indicator of what sectors have current vacancies.



## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK YOUR FAMILY & FRIENDS

Ask your family, friends, and community as much as you can before you return. This can help you to get vital information which is up to date and realistic. Before you talk to them, make a list of questions you want to ask. Check, if you can, that the information you receive is accurate by using the resources discussed in that section.

How have things changed since I have been away?

Have there been family changes, or changes in our social community?

Are there new support organisations (for housing, medical treatment, education, etc.) that I can get in touch with before or after I return?

Has the local economy changed? What are living costs like?

What are the local sources of employment now? Have they changed?

Encourage your family and friends to ask you about your life abroad too. How have you changed? What do you wish they knew about your experiences? After you speak to your family and friends, think again about the new information, as it may bring more questions!



## STRENGTH & 'RESILIENCE'

Dealing with change is part of life. At some point, everyone experiences challenges and setbacks. Resilience is what gives people strength to deal with problems and move on with their lives.

Here are 10 ideas to help you deal with change and move forward positively:

### 1. Be positive about your abilities Self-esteem helps us cope with stress.

Remember your own strengths and achievements. Be confident in your own ability to deal with problems.

### 2. Find a sense of purpose in your life

This might mean becoming involved in your community, or participating in activities that are meaningful to you.

### 3. Develop a strong social network

Having caring supportive people around you will help protect you in times of crisis. It's important to have people you can talk to honestly. Talking about your situation will help you get support, and come up with possible solutions to problems you encounter.

### 4. Be accepting of changes

Be flexible. By learning to adapt you will be better able to face life's challenges.

### 5. Be optimistic and realistic

This can be difficult when times are hard, but positive thinking does not mean ignoring

problems – it means focusing on positive outcomes. It means understanding that problems are not there forever, and that you have the skills to deal with the challenges. It is important to be hopeful and positive about the future.

### 6. Look after yourself – put yourself first too!

When you are stressed, it can be easy to forget your own needs. Always make time for yourself, even when life is hard. This will help boost your health and make it easier for you to deal with problems.

### 7. Develop your problem-solving skills

When you have a new challenge, make a quick list of ways you might solve it. By practicing problem solving skills regularly, you will be better prepared to cope when a serious problem arises.

### 8. Make goals for yourself

Step back and make small step by step goals for yourself. By breaking down the goals into small steps, you will achieve them more easily.

### 9. Take small steps to solve problems

Start working on resolving whatever the problem is. It will not go away otherwise! There may not be any quick solution but you can plan small steps to solve things.

### 10. Keep working on your skills

Keep these **10 ideas** in your mind during daily life. Remember your own skills, and continue to build on those too!



