

# Making the most of transition time

Helpful tips and pointers from the ICAS Professional Development team.

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# At the start of 2020, no one could have imagined the year we have had or predicted the national lockdown that has transitioned us to living in ‘unconventional times’

The COVID pandemic has ultimately led to some people being in a position of job uncertainty and, unfortunately, to some being out of employment. For many, this will be a time of transition, looking for a new role or evaluating what they want from their career.

A time of transition can provide space for much-needed reflection about your career and its direction, but there are a few things to consider when looking for your next opportunity or role. Probably one of the most common of these is the ineffective job search, which can lead to despair and an overwhelming sense of isolation – a situation likely to be compounded by the pandemic and not being able to see friends or family. This can lead to not looking after yourself physically and emotionally, which in turn can make returning to employment more difficult.

First and foremost, make sure that you are looking after yourself. Try to take care of both your mental and your physical health, taking time to exercise or get outdoors, maintaining good eating habits, and keeping in touch with friends and family, virtually or in-person where permitted.

Making an effort to keep a normal routine can help your motivation but try not to put too much pressure on yourself. Nobody really knows how to function in the current situation, so be kind to yourself.

## Job Search

If you’ve been made redundant, you need to get the redundancy out of your system before you starting to search for a new role.

Recognise that being made redundant is a setback in your career and there will be a process to go through. You are likely to experience a range of emotions, such as shock, disbelief, guilt, anger, resentment and

potentially even depression, before finally reaching the acceptance stage.

Individuals may go through some or all of these stages, experience them in any order, and even go through some of these stages more than once. You should allow yourself time to work through what has happened before moving on. You need to be clear about what you are looking for before starting to apply for new roles. There is no second chance for making a good first impression, so make the most of your connections and opportunities.

When you are ready to start your job, search don’t fall into the trap of just spending all your time job-hunting on the internet. This is the default method many fall into, but this alone is unlikely to yield results quickly. You also need to:

- Register with appropriate recruitment agencies.
- Network through social media, such as LinkedIn, by having an active profile. This means joining appropriate groups and taking part in discussions, requesting those who are discussing the same issues as you to become contacts.
- Looking for vacancies in newspapers and other publications.
- Making speculative applications.

Our recruitment partner Rutherford Cross has recently published an [article in our CA Magazine](#) with help and advice when looking for a new role.

## Manage your time

Don’t underestimate how much time job-hunting will take up. It will be like having a flexible part time job. Structure your day by planning how long you aim to spend on the different methods of job-hunting, (limiting time

researching on the internet if necessary), setting targets for how many contacts you will call, or aim to virtually meet each week. Keep records of who you've contacted and what the outcome was. This is a project or task not unlike one you might have to manage in the workplace.

### **Ask for and accept help**

Help can come from lots of different places. Below are some suggestions:

- [ICAS](#) – we will be able to help you access the support available, and how best to utilise your membership during this difficult period.
- [SCABA](#) – providing grants, loans and support visits. They can provide:
  - Ongoing support grants when you are struggling financially as well as one-off grants.
  - A financial advisor to help you get things under control and ease the pressure.
  - Contact from an Outreach Coordinator to provide a listening ear and practical support such as ensuring that you are accessing all the benefits and support available to you.
- Former colleagues and friends who have had CV reading or interviewing experience can help you prepare and sharpen your techniques.
- Job Centre Plus. If you've been lucky enough to receive a substantial redundancy pay-out you may not see the need to sign on at Job Centre Plus. For those who haven't been so fortunate, remember that contribution-based Job Seekers Allowance is not dependent on savings or income but rather on having made sufficient National Insurance contributions.

### **Build a support network**

News of redundancy might come as a surprise to friends and family, but it is important to be open about what has happened and to keep communicating. Work through practicalities, such as finances and daily schedules, with

your immediate family, and let them know what your job-hunting strategy is going to look like in practice. Whilst you will need the support and encouragement of your family, aim to also build an external support network. Supportive friends can take the pressure off your family and can be much more objective about your situation. Seek out:

- Former colleagues who understand the type of business you have been in.
- Friends who have already been through redundancy.
- New contacts who might be in a similar situation
- Remember to keep this new network going when you are back in work again – you might be able to support someone else who is in a similar situation.

### **Consider volunteering for a local charity, voluntary organisation or committee, or getting involved with ICAS.**

This keeps you in contact with others, helps keep you more visible on the job market, and can help you learn new skills in a new sector. If you don't think voluntary work is for you, then undertaking a long-neglected DIY project, or even just taking a more active role in looking after your family or community can be rewarding and give your self-esteem a much-needed boost.

### **Learn new skills**

Obviously keeping up to date with your technical knowledge during times of transition is important, but this may also be the ideal opportunity to brush up on your IT skills, learn a completely new skill or try a new sport. [There are lots of short online courses, and face-to-face courses provided by ICAS](#), local colleges and external providers, some of these are paid for but there are also lots of free resources you can access to help develop new skills.

### **Make time to do things you enjoy**

It's highly likely that you will have days when you feel down during and won't feel like speaking to anyone, and this is likely to be further impacted by the current situation. Try to

still make time for things you enjoyed doing before you were made redundant and have things to look forward to, whether it's going for a coffee with friends, going to the gym or simply going out for a walk.

Don't feel guilty for enjoying these things. If you are concerned about the cost, remember you may now be able to use facilities for a reduced rate at off peak times, and there's very often substantial discount for those claiming Job Seekers Allowance. Friends will also understand you have a reduced budget.

However, you choose to spend your transition, remember that a legitimate question at job-interview is to ask how you've spent the time since you were last working. Putting a positive spin on this time will be important. This is made much easier if you can truthfully say you've undertaken any type of self-development or made some kind of positive contribution to others.

Finally, remember that being out of work is a well-trodden path, and that those who have good skills and are willing to be flexible are seldom out of work for long.

**Disclaimer:**

This help sheet is designed to assist members with an important issue of general application and is not intended to be a definitive statement covering all aspects of this area. No responsibility for any person acting or refraining to act as a result of any material in this help sheet can be accepted by ICAS.

## Resources

**UK Government** – [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

You'll find useful information about benefits and how to claim them, along with advice on money & tax. There is also a useful section on redundancy rights under employment.

**Job Centre Plus** –

<https://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus>

**Future Learn** – <https://www.futurelearn.com/>

Future Learn has a range of free online courses run by many of the major universities

**ICAS** – <https://www.icas.com>

ICAS has a range of CPD opportunities, a wellbeing hub, job board and coronavirus updates as well as a range of other resources available for Members

**SCABA** – <https://www.icas.com/scaba-the-charity-for-cas-in-need>

SCABA offer a range of support, including grants and loans.

**Mental Health Foundation** –

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

The Mental Health Foundation has a range of content designed to give you more information about mental health generally, and to help you to look after your own mental health. They have podcasts, videos, inspiring stories and information about getting help if you're struggling.

**Citizens Advice** –

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

Citizens Advice is a network of 316 independent charities throughout the United Kingdom that give free, confidential information and advice to assist individuals with money, legal, consumer and other problems.

**NHS** – <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>

A range of helpful resources are available, including mood self-assessment tools, mental wellbeing and audio guides along with a selection of articles and associated reading to help you manage your wellbeing



**Contact us**

CA House, 21 Haymarket Yards, Edinburgh, UK, EH12 5BH

+44 (0) 131 347 0100

members@icas.com | icas.com

 @ICASaccounting  ICAS – The Professional Body of CAs