



Why The Welcome Back Programme is probably the best thing I've ever done in my career

By Elaine Hicks

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For me, the Welcome Back Programme is probably the best thing I've ever done in my career. I'd spent 11 years out of the workforce. Before that I'd been a police officer. So with no financial background at all, when I was accepted onto the programme I was astonished.



I don't think any of us knew what to expect when we started. I was really nervous about coming into Barclays – and especially the Global Headquarters. On my first day I just stood there feeling small. And then when I went up to the reception floor I just thought 'Wow look at this place. Why am I here?'

But from day one we had so much support. My manager has been fabulous. She has brought me on leaps and bounds. I've had some of the best mentors that I could ask for. My buddy and the programme leaders have been brilliant too.

They helped me find my feet – after all, since I was last in it, the world of work it has moved on tremendously. I looked around and I thought "Where's everybody's office?" Now most people sit in an open-plan environment!

Being an ex-police officer has been surprisingly helpful. Many of the skills you use in police work overlap with working at Barclays. Being able to work with people is crucial – having real social skills. You need to be able to look at things from a different angle. And you need to be flexible. In the Police things change from minute to minute and you have to change with it. The same applies to life at Barclays, I've often had to pull on the skills I learnt in the police force.

I work on Proposition, in Corporate, and part of my role was to embed a learning module in conjunction with an external Research company into Barclays. It's a 12-week programme and after the 12 weeks were up, I was asked by the MD to carry on, which is what I did. I've since applied for various roles and I'm absolutely delighted to be starting a new role in Advocacy from August.

One of the most memorable parts of the experience has been being lucky enough to go along to International Women's Day. I've been out of the workplace for so long and women have come such a long way in the last few years. To see so many dynamic focused women supporting other women was something that really impacted on me.

All in all, I'd say if you're fortunate enough to get offered a place on The Welcome Back Programme, grab it with both hands. Even if there's no permanent offer at the end of it, the development I got was outstanding. When I think about everything we've done, presentation skills, interview technique, important projects – where else will you get this?

The biggest thing I've probably learned from the programme is that sometimes the smallest steps you take in the right direction can end up being the biggest steps of your life. So don't think that you can't do it. Take that step and try – even if you have to tip-toe at first!