

Returning to the UK

Many of us come to Spain hoping to find a better life for ourselves and our family. Unfortunately, for some it does not work out and we find ourselves having to face the prospect of returning to England whether it is for personal, medical or financial reasons (another article to follow next month on this side of things).

I have recently spoken to quite a few people who have already gone ahead and returned to the UK, or, are now thinking about it so thought now seemed good timing to write an article.

The thought of returning to your home country can be a very scary thought for many people, especially if complete ties have been lost with that country, e.g. you no longer pay into the tax or social security system. People have to think long and clear about returning to their country of origin and what it involves.

The most important thing to remember when returning to the UK is "planning". If you are planning to return to the UK you need to think things through carefully, just as you "hopefully" did when you made your move to Spain!

Things that need to be done in Spain

In Spain, if you have taken out Residencia, you will need to cancel this and you will also need to inform the town hall so you can be removed from their records.

If you have been working legally and obtaining healthcare, you will also need to contact the local Social Security Office (Seguridad Social) and tell them of your intention to move back to the UK. If you have been working in Spain for a Spanish employer, you can gain confirmation of your tax payments and social security contributions from your employer or their Gestoría (if known to you).

Unfortunately, many people think they have the right to leave Spain and return to the UK to be entitled to benefits. However, you are not automatically entitled to this, so this is a serious thing to take into consideration as you will need to ensure you have a right to live in the UK, especially if you have been out of the country for a long period of time.

If you have retained your British Passport you will be in a much better position.

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Prior to your return to the UK

- You will initially need somewhere to live so you can prove residence, even if it initially means living with friends or relatives. It might only be a temporary stay but you may need to stay there long enough to satisfy the benefits agency that you are resident in the UK full time and not just returning "as a tourist"! Even if you are a British citizen!
- Schooling – remember if you have children, if you know the area you are going to and want to try and get your children into a specific school, you must do your homework and ensure they are in the catchment area. It is also worthwhile phoning the local council before leaving Spain to ensure they have room in their school for your children, otherwise you could end up sending them some distance.

Benefits and Medical

Once you have a firm place to live and present proof of residence along with your passport, you can contact the benefits agency.

It seems that the rules for benefits change from county to county and talking to people who have returned, it seems that benefits will be given much more leniently in one county than another. On average, you might have to wait up to 3 months to receive any benefits, so bearing this in mind you will need to ensure you are able to "survive" for at least three months with no benefits and help.

As for medical cover, some people say that people are denied NHS medical cover for up to 6 months upon entry to the UK unless you are prepared to pay. However, people I know who have returned have not experienced these problems and have not had medical cover denied to them.

Settling in and good news

Although it takes time (especially for those with children), many of the people that I know, who have returned to the UK, are happy to be back there - working, and not having to struggle to survive. Children re-adapt quickly, and the experience of life is put down to just that – "an experience and adventure"! So for those of you, who are really thinking about your future here in Spain – or not, although it is a painful decision at the time, things do usually work out for the best.

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