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## Back for business: Mark Holland, Sport in Schools

**In a new weekly series, we talk to emigrants who have returned to Ireland and have started businesses. This week we talk to Mark Holland from Sport in Schools.**

The Irish Government's [Back for Business](#) programme fosters entrepreneurial activity among emigrants recently returned or returning to live in Ireland through a peer learning approach. The initiative is supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Thirty-eight entrepreneurs from across the country have just completed the second cycle of Back for Business.

This week, we speak to Mark Holland who returned from Australia to set up his business [Sport in Schools](#) in Dublin.

### **How long were you away from Ireland and what did you do?**

I was in Australia for two years and six months and spent six months travelling home through South and Central America.

In Australia, I worked for a sport and education company. We were an external provider employed by the schools to teach; PE, Gymnastics, athletics, social skills, fundamental movement skills and all ball sports.

### **What attracted you back to Ireland? Was it for personal or professional reasons?**

It was a combination of both; personal and business reasons. I've always wanted to start my own business and I'm very passionate about children's health and well-being. A big part of me was missing family and friends.

### **What is your business all about?**

We're an external provider of physical education for primary schools around the greater Dublin area. Our biggest seller is our gymnastics program. We bring all the necessary equipment from spring board to rings & bars. Schools sign up for a term and we deliver our programme on a set day for 6-10 weeks covering all classes from junior infants to 6th class.

### **Was it hard starting up again in Ireland? What caused the most problems?**

I found the process relatively easy. My parents were extremely supportive; my dad runs his own IT

company and gave great assistance with difficult decisions. Being a part of the Back for Business programme gave me a great support network and a confidential place to soundboard ideas.

The hardest part has been contacting the schools and speaking with the principals, trying to reach them and get in touch has been very difficult.

### **What needs to change to make it easier for returning emigrants to start businesses in Ireland?**

It's difficult to understand how taxes should be done and also to understand exactly the right way to set up a business. Having tax breaks to support new businesses would be extremely beneficial.

Anyone interested in receiving an application form for the next cycle of Back for Business – the call for which will be launched in November - should [register their interest here](#).

*Written by John Kennedy*

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*Pictured: Mark Holland. Image: SON Photographic*