



## Career Break Scheme - Procedure for Schools

## Career Break Scheme (Schools)

### Objective

1. The Sunderland City Council is committed to maintaining an efficient and effective workforce. In doing so the School/Council recognises that some employees may wish to interrupt their careers, for a period and return to the employment of the School/Council to continue their employment at a later date. In order to maintain good employee relations it is necessary to develop a scheme to facilitate this.
2. Further to this a Career Break Scheme has the additional objective of enabling the organisation to maximise the benefits obtained from the investment the Sunderland City Council has placed in its workforce. The scheme also encourages the retention of experienced and skilled employees, who may otherwise need to resign from the organisation in order to carry out personal commitments.

### Definition

3. The term "career break" applies to an unpaid break in career for a variety of reasons.
4. The purpose of the career break must be clearly stated in each application, which will then be considered on its own merits. A career break may be granted for a specified purpose such as:
  - i. Family – to care for or support family members;
  - ii. Personal – extended periods of travel, voluntary service, or personal development;
  - iii. Education – time to pursue full-time education.
5. The purposes listed above are not exclusive and Headteachers/managers should give due consideration to all requests.

### Eligibility

6. An employee who has completed 26-weeks continuous service with Sunderland City Council is eligible to apply for a career break.
7. The following conditions also apply:
  - i. The applicant must have a valid reason for requesting the break;
  - ii. The Headteacher/Manager and Governors must support the application.
8. An individual is not permitted to take a career break in order to take up any alternative employment – either within the School/Council or externally. However, unpaid voluntary work is permissible. An employee wishing to take up temporary employment can, if appropriate, apply to do so as a secondment. An employee who wishes to undertake paid employment during the period of the career break must advise the School of the nature of employment that s/he hopes to obtain.

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## Duration

9. The length of the proposed career break will be for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 5 years.
10. More than one career break can be requested during an employee's career with the School/Council, though the combined length of career breaks cannot exceed 5 years. In such situations an employee should apply for each career break separately and consideration will be given to each application as appropriate.

## Procedure

11. Applications for breaks, under the scheme should be made using the Flexible Working application form outlined within the Requesting Flexible Working Procedure.

## Conditions of Service

12. All terms and conditions of employment will be deferred during the break. Continuity of service is not broken, however, for the purposes of calculating length of service the period of the break will be discounted for all purposes (e.g. annual leave) other than for redundancy where length of service will continue to accrue.
13. Where an employee becomes pregnant during the career break she will not receive any occupational maternity payments from the School/Council. However, should the career break be due for completion prior to the start of maternity leave or during the period where occupational maternity leave would be paid (e.g. – prior to 18 weeks after the birth of the child), Occupational Maternity Pay will be paid on completion of the career break. The same terms apply for Paternity Leave and Adoption Leave.
14. Pension Scheme payments will be deferred during the period of the break. Alternatively an employee can arrange to continue contributions prior to commencing the break. During the break no employer contributions will be payable by the School/Council.
15. Annual leave should be taken before commencing a career break as no payment will be made in lieu, of unused annual leave.
16. Where a school carries out a restructure or a when redundancy situation arises, whilst an employee is on a career break, the employee will be kept informed and treated no less favourably, and discussions/procedures related to redundancy/redeployment will take place as if the employee were not on a career break.
17. Following a career break an employee will return, at the same incremental grade point, to his/her original post on the terms and conditions that would apply had the break not occurred, except where a restructure or redundancy situation has occurred.

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## **Employee Responsibility**

18. All employees must give their Headteacher/line manager a contact number and address for the duration of the career break.

## **Trade Union Subscriptions**

19. An employee who receives approval to take a career break may wish to remain a member of a trade union. An individual will need to make alternative arrangements to pay subscriptions prior to commencing the career break.

## **Returning to Work**

20. Three months prior to the completion of the career break the employee is required to confirm that s/he intends to return to work on a specified date. It may be necessary for the employee to have a short handover period and any training that has been implemented during the break should, where practicable, be given as soon as possible on return to work.
21. An employee, as mentioned above, will be expected to undertake any relevant training on return to work. The content and duration of the training will depend on the length of the break and any changes in legislation/policy that have occurred during that time related to their employment.