



Career Break Policy

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Document Control

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Version	Date	Amendments	Author	Status
0.1 to 0.4	Oct 2021 to Oct 2022	Initial Draft – Reviewed by the HR Team and the Trust Board. Consultation Process – The draft was shared with the working group of senior leaders, HR, and the trade unions.	Lisa-Marie McGrath	Consulted, Reviewed, and implemented agreed points
1.0	01/12/2022	Final Draft – Approved by the CEO and The Trust Board	Lisa-Marie McGrath	Approved
2.0	12/02/2024	N/A	Lisa-Marie Flynn	Approved

Career Break Policy

1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1 We recognise that there are times when employees may want or need to take a period of time away from work. However, we are committed to long-term career development, retaining staff wherever possible, and permitting employees to apply for an unpaid career break under this policy.
- 1.2 A career break can provide staff with an opportunity for personal development (such as extended travel periods, voluntary service overseas, or pursuing further education) or to fulfil personal or domestic commitments. However, a career break may not be the most appropriate way of meeting your needs, and, in some cases, we may suggest a more appropriate alternative. For example, we will not allow a career break to take up alternative employment or start a personal business venture.
- 1.3 This policy applies to employees of the Trust. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors.

2. PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS POLICY

- 2.1 Our board of directors (the board) has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the Trust HR Manager.
- 2.2 Line Managers/SLTs have a specific responsibility to ensure this policy's fair application, and all staff members are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

3. ELIGIBILITY

- 3.1 To be considered for a career break, you must have:
- at least two years' continuous employment, although we may consider employees with less service on an exceptional basis and
 - a good record of performance in your last two annual appraisals.

4. APPLICATION PROCESS

- 4.1 You should first discuss the career break you wish to take informally with your Line Manager/SLT to outline the reason for your request and the proposed length of your absence and consider how your workload might be managed while you are away.
- 4.2 You should then submit a written application for a career break to your Line Manager/SLT at least three months before the anticipated start date. In exceptional circumstances, we may waive this time limit. Your application should set out:

- the reason for your proposed career break;
- the dates between which you wish to take your career break;
- whether you have previously taken any career breaks and, if so, the dates between which you have taken them;
- the benefits to our business, if any, of your proposed career break and
- how do you consider your work can be covered in your absence?

5. RESPONDING TO YOUR APPLICATION

5.1 Each application will be considered on its own merits. You should not commit yourself to plans before your application for a career break has been agreed by us in writing.

5.2 When considering your application, the following are examples of the factors that will be taken into account:

- The purpose of, or reasons for, the career break.
- The period of absence requested.
- Your performance records.
- The number and length of any previous career breaks taken.
- The operational needs of our business.
- The need to retain your skills, knowledge and experience.
- Our ability to cover your duties temporarily.
- The potential benefits of the proposed career break.

5.3 We will try to respond to your request in writing within five days of receipt of your written application.

5.4 We may hold a meeting to discuss your request if we think this will be helpful.

5.5 If your request for a career break is refused, we will explain the reasons for our decision. If you believe you have been unreasonably refused a career break or have been victimised for requesting one, you may raise a grievance under our Grievance Procedure.

5.6 If we accept your request, we will write to confirm the start and return dates for your career break and set out the changes to your terms of employment. However, you must sign and return a copy of the letter to accept the changes, and until this is received, your career break will not have been agreed upon.

6. CONDITIONS FOR TAKING A CAREER BREAK

6.1 Career breaks can be granted for up to two years.

6.2 To take a career break, you will have to resign from employment. We will return you to the job you were employed in before your career break, although this cannot be guaranteed. If we cannot return you to the same job, we will take reasonable steps to find a similar job to where you worked before your break. After you return, your employment will be treated as continuous with the period before the career break.

6.3 In some cases, we may only be able to agree to a career break on the condition that you remain available:

- To cover holidays, sickness absences, or assist during peak workloads.
- To attend training courses or meetings to be updated on workplace developments.
- You may not take more than one career break while working for us.

6.4 Career breaks are, by definition, the individual's choice; therefore, if a staff member chooses to take a career break at any stage, their pay progression would be 'frozen' at the pay point they have achieved on their last working day.

6.5 Therefore, the staff member returns to work at the same pay point they left.

6.6 The employees' new incremental date will be when they return from their employment break.

7. DURING A CAREER BREAK

7.1 Where possible, you will receive at least three months' notice of any requirement to attend work during your career break. These will be paid at the rate of pay applicable before the start of your career break, and any period of work during a career break will count towards your service-related benefits.

7.2 Unless specifically agreed at the time your career break is approved, you will not be obliged to do any work or attend any events during a career break and will not be penalised for declining to do so, nor is your Line Manager/SLT obliged to offer you work while you are on a career break. Any arrangements for working during the career break must be agreed upon with your Line Manager/SLT, including the work to be done and payment arrangements. Work could include any activity under the employment contract, training, or other events.

7.3 You will be responsible for keeping in touch with your Line Manager/SLT and us during your career break. Therefore, you should arrange to keep your Line Manager updated on developments. In addition, you

are expected to maintain professional links and keep up to date with significant developments in your area of work.

- 7.4 You must tell your Line Manager/SLT and the Trust's HR Department about any change of address, other contacts, or personal details during your career break.
- 7.5 If, during your absence, the role from which you are taking a career break is affected by reorganisation, restructuring or redundancy, every effort will be made to consult with you as appropriate.
- 7.6 You must obtain written approval from your Line Manager/SLT before undertaking paid work for anyone else during your career break.

8. RETURNING FROM A CAREER BREAK

- 8.1 As far as is reasonably practicable, we are committed to offering you the opportunity to return to the post you held before your career break.
- 8.2 When approving your request for a career break, we will agree when you must contact us before your return date to confirm arrangements. It is likely to be three months before your return date.
- 8.3 Consideration will be given to a request to return earlier than an agreed date, although it may not be possible to accommodate such a request.
- 8.4 If you are prevented from returning to work on your return date due to ill health, you must contact your Line Manager/SLT as soon as possible in accordance with our Sickness Absence Policy.
- 8.5 Suppose you cannot return to work per previously agreed arrangements for any reason other than ill-health. In that case, you must immediately contact your Line Manager/SLT in exceptional cases, and consideration might be given to extending the period of your career break, providing that your overall period of absence does not exceed two years.
- 8.6 If you wish to terminate your employment while on a career break, unless the amount of notice required from you to do so has been varied by agreement with us, you will be required to give notice in accordance with the terms of your contract.
- 8.7 On your return, your Line Manager/SLT will organise for you to attend a re-induction process. This will include training on any new systems or procedures that have been introduced during your absence and briefing on any changes that have taken place that will affect you.

9. GENERAL CONDITIONS

- 9.1 An employee who has an outstanding loan for Cyclescheme or Techscheme organised through the Trust must satisfy the Trust that the agreed payments will be maintained; otherwise, the Trust reserves the right to delay the commencement of the break until the loan has been repaid or cancelled.

- 9.2 Employees who have a work laptop or any other Trust property should arrange to return it to the Trust before commencing their employment break.
- 9.3 It will be necessary for a new DBS Criminal Records check to be applied for and a satisfactory result obtained before the member of staff can return to work. In addition, all staff whose roles require a DBS Check must complete a self-declaration form before returning to work.