



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle
**Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSratha Báin**

Derry Cittie & Stràbane
Destrìck Cooncil

Career Break Policy

May 2016



1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to set out details for employees who wish to apply for a career break and the circumstances in which employees can request a career break.

2. Objective

Derry City and Strabane District Council recognises that there may be times when an employee may want or need to take a period of time away from work for personal development or to fulfill personal or domestic commitments.

3. Scope

The career break scheme applies to employees:

- 3.1 who have satisfactorily completed 2 years continuous service
- 3.2 who will be in a position to complete the career break and resume duty before the termination date of a fixed term contract.

4. General Principles

The granting of a career break is a discretionary matter and not an entitlement. Each application will be considered on its own individual merits and in light of the circumstances at the time. Career breaks will be accommodated where possible providing there are no overriding business considerations or where they may cause a detriment to the service.



Terms of the scheme

4.1 A career break request will be considered under the following circumstances:

- domestic/personal/family reasons
- to undertake voluntary work
- to temporarily relocate
- to travel
- to undertake further education
- any other reason - may be considered depending on the circumstances

A career break will not normally be allowed for the purposes of taking up alternative salaried or wage earning employment. Such approval will only be given in exceptional circumstances if it can be shown that the employee may gain experience which may be beneficial to the employee's role within Council on his or her return.

Duration and Number of Career Breaks

4.2 A Career Break may be granted for a period of not less than one year and to a maximum of three years.

4.3 Normally, an employee will be only entitled to avail of one career break. However, in exceptional circumstances an additional career break may be considered. In such circumstances the employee must have returned to work and completed service equivalent to the duration of the original career break.



Conditions of a Career Break

- 4.4 Employees will not accumulate service while on career break – this means that the length of the career break will not be counted as reckonable service when calculating entitlement to benefits such as annual increments, annual leave, sick pay, contractual redundancy payments and any other benefits dependent upon length of service.

In effect the contract of employment shall be held in suspense during a career break, however, service before or after a career break may be accrued for these purposes.

- 4.5 During a career break an employee will be subject to Council's requirements in matters of conduct. Disciplinary action where appropriate, may be taken.
- 4.6 Employees are required to notify Human Resources of any change in contact details or of any change in circumstances which may affect their employment.
- 4.7 An employee remains an active member of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Scheme (NILGOSC) while on career break.

If a member wishes to cover the career break period they can do so through an Additional Pensions Contributions (APC) contract. If an employee elects to do this within 30 days of returning to work the cost of the APC contract is split 1/3rd employee and 2/3rd employer (the maximum period that can be covered with an employer contribution is three years). If an employee elects to do this after 30 days the cost of the APC contract is at full cost to the member.



5. Procedures

The purpose of this policy is to set out details for employees who wish to apply for a career break and the circumstances in which employees can request a career break.

Applying for a career break:

- 5.1 Employees wishing to apply for a career break should complete the Career Break application form which should be submitted to Human Resources through the employee's line manager and relevant Director detailing the reason for the career break and proposed duration.
- 5.2 At least three months' notice must be given of the prospective start date for a career break, unless circumstances make this impossible. The actual start date of a career break will be a management decision taking into account, among other things, the circumstances of the application and the timescale for filling any resulting vacancy.

Decision/outcome:

- 5.3 Once approval for leave under the scheme is agreed by management, the details of the scheme, as they apply to the employee, will be confirmed to the employee. Employees must sign to indicate that they have read, understood and agree to be bound by the policy.
- 5.4 An applicant who is not granted a career break will be advised in writing of the reason for the refusal.
- 5.5 If an employee is refused a career break he/she may initiate a grievance through the relevant procedure.



Returning to work from a career break:

5.6 Employees on career break must contact their line manager or the Human Resources section three months before they are due to return to work to:

- confirm that they intend to return to work on the due date
- apply for an extension of a career break (so that appropriate consideration can be given to the extension)
- indicate that they wish to resign from their post.

5.7 On returning to work, if an employee wishes to cover lost pension as a result of absence on a career break, the employee must seek a quote from the employer for 'lost pensionable earnings'. The relevant form: LGS27B (which can be obtained from the NILGOSC website) should then be completed by the employee and returned to payroll within 30 days of returning to work so that arrangements can be put in place to make the necessary deductions for both employee and employer contributions.

5.8 Employees returning from a career break will normally be assigned to their former posts, as far as is reasonably practicable. If this is not possible, due to restructuring etc., or if the break has been for longer than a year, then every effort will be made to find the employee a similar post which will include duties and responsibilities at a level similar to their former post held. However, should it not be possible to find a suitable similar position then redundancy may have to be considered.

Applying for other posts while on career break:

5.9 Employees on career breaks shall be eligible to apply for posts which are trawled/advertised during the period of the career break. However, it will be the responsibility of the employee to find out about any such posts. Employees will not be notified formally.



6. Points to consider when applying for a Career Break

Employees considering a career break should be aware of the following:

Annual Leave

- 6.1 All accrued annual leave must be taken before commencement of the career break. No payment in lieu of outstanding leave will be made nor any “carry over” of leave allowed. There is no entitlement to annual leave during the career break. On return to work, entitlement to annual leave will be the same as when the break started, and the period of the career break will not count for reckonable service for leave purposes.
- 6.2 **Trade Union Membership:** employees can continue membership of a trade union and would still be subject to the benefits of membership, providing that subscriptions are kept up-to-date. Arrangements would have to be made between the employee and the trade union as to how subscriptions should be paid.
- 6.3 **Pay:** on return to work, employees would resume, for pay purposes, at the same point or incremental scale which had been reached at the time the career break began.
- 6.4 **Conditions of Employment:** All conditions of employment, including any disciplinary penalties, remain suspended until the return to work.
- 6.5 **Council Property:** prior to an employee commencing a career break, where applicable, managers must ensure that appropriate arrangements have been made in respect of council property, i.e., return of mobile telephones, lap tops, keys, access/ID cards etc.
- 6.6 **Social Security & Inland Revenue Arrangements:** It is the responsibility of individual employees taking a Career Break to contact the Department of Social Services to determine whether they are entitled to any social security benefits and to check the position as regards national insurance contributions which may affect their age retirement benefits.

7. Review:

This policy will be reviewed regularly in light of changing legislation or where any failure or weakness in this policy is highlighted.

Career Break Application Form



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To:

From:

c.c. Lead Human Resources Officer

I wish to apply for a Career Break under the Council's Career Break Scheme.

Length of Time employed by Council:

My current post is:

My current grade is:

My reasons for wishing to apply for a Career Break are:

Proposed Duration of Career Break:

Proposed Date of Commencement:

Proposed Date of Return:

I confirm that I have read and understood the rules detailed in the Scheme and I agree to abide by the rules if my application is approved.

Signed:

Date:



1. Recommendation for proceeding with Career Break application (To be completed by relevant Director)

Please specify reasons for Career Break application:

Signed Date

2. Action taken by Human Resources

Proceed with Application YES NO
Discuss further with Director (based on above) YES NO
Inform Applicant request declined YES NO

3. Processing of Application

Approval granted YES NO
Approved/Declined by
Reason for above
Agreed duration of Career Break (if agreed)
Actioned by Date

(Human Resources)