

East Dunbartonshire Council

Career Break Policy

Chief Officer & Local Government Employees

**Teachers and employees on SNCT Conditions of Service should
refer to the SNCT Handbook**

Version 1.0

December 2025

Version Control

Version No.	Effective Date	Approval Date	Summary of changes from previous version
1.0	1 st December 2025	20/11/2025	Replacement of Career Break Scheme

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Career Break Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 East Dunbartonshire Council is committed to the development of policies that introduce flexibility into working arrangements to the benefit of the Council, its employees and the community that it services. The Council recognises that over time, employees' circumstances may change for a variety of reasons and that they may need or wish to take unpaid time out of their employment to be able to cater for these changes.
- 1.2 A career break provides a formal opportunity to obtain an extended break from work of up to two years.
- 1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Career Break policy toolkit.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 The Career Break Policy applies to all employees who have one years continuous service with East Dunbartonshire Council.
- 2.2 Teachers and other employees covered by Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) conditions of service have their own nationally negotiated arrangements as detailed in the LNCT Career Breaks Procedure Manual 2/37.

3.0 References and Related Documents

- 3.1 This forms part of the Council's Policies and Procedure base surrounding employment and other policies, procedures and toolkits may be referenced throughout this document. This policy has been developed to ensure compliance with relevant employment legislation.
- 3.2 This Procedure Manual should be applied with reference to the Charter of Commitment for Employment based Policies and Procedures.

4.0 What is a Career Break?

- 4.1 A career break is a period of special leave without pay from work which differs from other types of special leave. The purpose of which is to provide employees with an opportunity to obtain an extended break.
- 4.2 While there are no prescribed activities that a career break should involve, some examples may include the care of children or family, voluntary work, study, travel abroad or personal circumstances. Undertaking alternative employment or commercial ventures should not usually be the purpose of a career break, however, under certain circumstances, employees may apply for this (see Section 15.0).
- 4.3 At an agreed future date, the employee will return to work taking up their career with the Council where they left prior to taking a career break. Requests for leave for other purposes will be dealt with as appropriate through our agreed Policies, for example Maternity.

5.0 Who is Eligible for a Career Break?

- 5.1 All permanent and temporary employees who have **one years' continuous service with East Dunbartonshire Council** are eligible to apply for a career break.
- 5.2 The Council already has a number of family friendly policies which support work life balance and the career break scheme can only be used where the reason for, or period of, special leave without pay is not covered by any other policy, e.g. maternity leave. Each application will be considered on the merits of the individual case. The needs of the service should take high priority in the consideration of career breaks.

6.0 Length of Break

- 6.1 Subject to the business/service needs of the Service area, an employee may be allowed a career break of between 6 months, which is the minimum period, up to a maximum period of two years.

7.0 Application Procedure

- 7.1 Employees who wish to apply for a career break should discuss the matter initially with their line manager in conjunction with the Career Break Agreement (see toolkit)
- 7.2 Employees should submit their application for a career break, as per the process outlined in the toolkit, at least three months prior to the proposed date of commencement, to their line manager stating the start date, reason and anticipated length of the career break.
- 7.3 When considering a career break application, managers must balance the requirements of the employee with the operational needs of the Department and how the resultant vacancy could be filled/covered in consultation with HR. Managers will have to ensure that it will be possible to meet the operational needs of the Department and will meet with the employee to discuss the application. The application should be forwarded to the Service Manager for consideration and approval in conjunction with the process outlined in the toolkit. Employees will normally be given a written response within four weeks from receipt of the application.
- 7.4 If approved the manager will forward the application form to the relevant HR Case Adviser and Employee Services (employeeservices@eastdunbarton.gov.uk).
- 7.5 Employees will be expected to take all outstanding holidays prior to the commencement of a career break if the following apply:
 - Career break of one year or more
 - Career break is less than one year but falls over the end of a leave year
- 7.6 If an employee decides not to proceed with an approved career break, they must give the Council a minimum of eight working weeks' notice of intention to withdraw application failure to do so may result in a period of unpaid leave.
- 7.7 If a Service Manager is considering refusing an application, this should be discussed with the relevant HR Case Adviser.

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- 7.8 If the application is refused the employee will be advised as to the grounds for refusal. An employee will normally have to wait 12 months from the date of the last application before applying again. The employee has a right to appeal as per section 10.

8.0 Extension of/or reduction in length of Career Break

- 8.1 Managers should recognise that an individual's circumstances can change rapidly, and should allow flexibility, **in exceptional circumstances**, for employees to return to work sooner than envisaged. Employees should be aware that there is no automatic right to return early and it may not be operationally feasible for managers to accommodate this. Each application will be considered on the merits of the individual case.
- 8.2 Should employees request an extension of, or reduction in the length of their career break, they will be required to give a minimum of three months' notice.

9.0 Maternity/Adoption/Shared Parental Leave and Career Breaks

- 9.1 A career break may be taken immediately after a period of maternity, adoption or shared parental leave where the employee meets the qualifying criteria. The employee will be required to take any annual leave accrued during the maternity, adoption or shared parental leave period immediately prior to commencing the career break. The career break will thereby commence on the date immediately following any such period of annual leave.
- 9.2 If the employee has received the 12 weeks occupational maternity/adoption pay at 50% of their pay and fails to return to work for at least three months at the end of the maternity, adoption, shared parental leave, they will be required to pay back the 12 weeks occupational maternity/adoption pay.

10.0 Appeal Process

- 10.1 The employee has the right to appeal the decision if their request is refused. The following process should be adhered to:
- The employee may lodge an appeal within 14 calendar days of the date of the application outcome
 - The appeal should be made in writing and clearly state the grounds on which they are appealing
 - The appeal should be submitted to the Executive Officer for the Service
 - The decision of the appeal will be final and there will be no further right of appeal.
 - The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the employee within seven calendar days of the appeal decision
- 10.2 An appeal should be conducted by way of a review where the manager considering the appeal, with support from the HR Case Adviser, to ensure that the initial decision was handled properly following the format outlined below:
- The manager (who will have had no prior involvement with the case before the stage of appeal) will consider the appeal and any related information
 - Review all of the information pertaining to the appeal

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- If required the manager can arrange an appeal hearing (appendix 6 toolkit) to establish further information
- Confirm their decision to the employee in writing within 14 calendar days from receipt of the appeal

11.0 Communications

- 11.1 During a career break the Council and employee should, where possible, maintain informal contact, and employees must ensure they update their line manager if their contact details change.
- 11.2 Prior to commencement of the career break, a meeting should be arranged to discuss how contact will be maintained. Both the Council and employee should have an understanding of the nature and frequency of the contact.
- 11.3 The Council will advise an employee who is on a career break, of the vacancies within the team and, in the later stages of the career break, of acting appointments, where appropriate.
- 11.4 Employees should also be informed of changes to the workplace or work organisation that may impact on them to involve them in the relevant process. Where every effort has been made but it has not been possible to contact an employee advice should be sought from HR and changes may have to be progressed.
- 11.5 Such informal contact, as detailed above, does not constitute “work” and employees will not receive any remuneration in respect of such informal contact.
- 11.6 For the purposes of preparation for a return to work it shall be open to the council and employee to agree either a formal engagement during the career break and/or an induction period on return to work. A formal engagement will normally be undertaken in the three-month period prior to the end of the career break and may encompass:
- (i) Attending CPD events, including annual review discussions.
 - (ii) Attending team or departmental meetings
 - (iii) Attending a refresher course.
 - (iv) Work shadowing with a colleague or liaison with a colleague.

A formal engagement would be paid or subject to time off in lieu upon return to work. An induction would take place on the commencement of paid employment following the career break.

12.0 Conditions of Service

- 12.1 A career break is a period of special leave without pay. Pay and benefits will be suspended during the period of the career break and will start again on the employee's pay and conditions at the stage they were at prior to the career break.
- 12.2 The period of a career break will not be recognised for the following:
- Incremental progression of pay.
 - Qualification for and entitlement to Occupational Sick Pay.
 - Entitlement to Occupational Maternity Pay.

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- 12.3 Entitlement to annual leave during the leave years in which the career break commences and ends will be calculated pro rata to the part year period of service. Additionally, employees will not accrue any annual leave entitlement under the Working Time Regulations.

Entitlement to public holidays will be calculated pro rata to the part year period of service.

- 12.4 During the career break, the employee remains a Council employee and subject to any relevant Council codes of conduct. Where it is identified that the employee is engaging in activities inconsistent with the terms on which the career break was originally approved, or which potentially have a direct impact on continued future employment, the Executive Officer will determine appropriate action to be taken. This may include terminating the career break agreement and/or disciplinary investigation.
- 12.5 On an employee's return from a career break, their separate periods of employment (i.e. before the career break and after the career break) will be treated as continuous for statutory and contractual purposes. The period of the career break is not a period of employment and therefore will not count towards reckonable service.

13.0 National Insurance Implications

- 13.1 Employees considering a career break must be aware of the implications regarding National Insurance Benefits if they take a career break. It is therefore the responsibility of employees to check with the local Department of Work and Pensions office about potential implications based on their individual circumstances at the time of applying and during the career break.

14.0 Pension Scheme

- 14.1 For employees who contribute to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), contributions will cease at the point at which the career break begins and will recommence upon return to work. It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that the appropriate parties are made aware of the career break.
- 14.2 From 1 April 2009 there is a facility within the Local Government Pension Scheme to purchase additional pension on return to work, details of which can be obtained from the LGPS. More broadly, it is the responsibility of employees to consider the implications of taking a career break with regard to pension matters.

15.0 Paid Employment During a Career Break

- 15.1 As previously stated, the purpose of a career break should not usually be for undertaking alternative work or entering into additional commercial ventures. However, employees who are on a career break and wish to undertake work for another employer should complete an "Application To Undertake Outside Employment/Private Work" form (see toolkit)

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- 15.2 Employees wishing to undertake any other employment whilst on a career break must seek prior approval from the Service Manager.
- 15.3 Where it is identified that an employee is engaging in activities inconsistent with the terms on which the career break was originally approved, the Service Manager, in consultation with Human Resources, will determine the appropriate action to be taken. This may include terminating the career break and consideration of possible action under the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

16.0 Return to Work

- 16.1 Employees must give three months' notice to their line manager if they wish to change the end date that has previously been agreed.
- 16.2 As previously highlighted, employees may require training immediately before returning to work from the career break. Employees should arrange to attend a meeting with their line manager in advance of their return to work to discuss the post they are returning to and to agree any appropriate programme of training.
- 16.3 Employees will be offered the right to return to the post which they held prior to their career break. If this is not practicable due to organisational change, employees will be offered a post of a similar nature requiring similar skills with similar reward and responsibility to that held prior to the career break.
- 16.4 Where an employee whose post is covered by a higher level disclosure and has spent a continuous period of three months or more in a foreign country during their career break, a foreign criminal history check will require to be undertaken before they recommence work for the Council. In this regard, the Foreign Criminal History Checks guidance should be referred to.

17.0 Non Return to Work

- 17.1 Employees on a career break who do not wish to return to their post must provide contractual notice.
- 17.2 If at the end of the agreed career break period, the employee fails to return and has not provided written notice of their resignation, the provisions of the career break will no longer apply and consequently the employee's absence will be unauthorised and the disciplinary process may be applied, in which case HR advice should be sought.

18.0 GDPR Statement

- 18.1 East Dunbartonshire Council holds, uses and processes information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations and all other relevant national data protection laws. Further information detailing how East Dunbartonshire holds and uses personal information and copies of privacy notices used throughout the Council are available on our website: www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/council/privacy-notices.

19.0 Policy Review Statement

19.1 This policy will be reviewed in line with:

- Legislative Change
- Other external factors
- Feedback on the effectiveness of the policy
- Requests Trades Unions and/or Management

Other Formats & Translations

This document can be provided in large print, Braille or on audio cassette and can be translated into other community languages. Please contact the Council's Corporate Communications Team at:

East Dunbartonshire Council, 12 Strathkelvin Place, Southbank

Kirkintilloch G66 1TJ Tel: 0300 123 4510

本文件可按要求翻譯成中文，如有此需要，請電 0300 123 4510。

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Gabhaidh an sgriobhainn seo cur gu Gàidhlig ma tha sin a dhìth oirbh. Cuiribh fòn gu 0300 123 4510

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