



East Dunbartonshire Council

CAREER BREAK SCHEME

1.0 INTRODUCTION

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.

2.0 WHAT IS A CAREER BREAK?

2.1 A career break is not for the purpose of taking up alternative employment. A career break is a period of special leave without pay from work for a minimum period of 6 months to allow an employee to:

- Continue childcare following a period of maternity/adoption leave (up to 2 years)
- Care for your family and children (up to 2 years)
- Undertake voluntary work (up to 2 years)
- Travel abroad (up to 2 years)
- Personal circumstances (up to 2 years)

2.2 At an agreed future date the employee will return to work taking up their career with the Council where he/she left prior to taking a career break. Requests for leave for other purposes will be dealt with as appropriate under the Scheme of Special Leave.

3.0 WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A CAREER BREAK?

3.1 All permanent employees who have **one year's continuous service with East Dunbartonshire Council** are eligible to apply for a career break. The scheme is equally available to both male and female, part time and job-share employees. Temporary employees or trainees are not eligible to apply for a career break.

3.2 The Council already has a number of 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.

4.0 LENGTH OF BREAK

4.1 Subject to the business/service needs of the Department an employee may be allowed a career break of between six months, which is the minimum period up to a maximum period of two years.

5.0 COMMUNICATIONS

5.1 Keeping in touch is essential to the career break scheme to help keep skills up to date and to enable Departments to maintain contact with employees and keep them up to date with changes, business developments and so forth. This is also seen as a demonstration of the commitment by the employee to eventually return on a permanent basis. It helps to maintain an employee's confidence, skills and knowledge and by doing so eases the return to work process.

5.2 The information needs of an employee on a career break will vary according to the size of the Department, the type and level of job and the length of the career break. It is therefore essential to strike a balance between too much and too little information. Information could include some of the following:-

- Staff Newsletter
- Meetings/Seminars/Briefings
- Social Events

5.3 In order to ensure this contract is maintained, a Career Break Partner should be nominated. Ideally, this person would be a colleague who works in the same area.

5.4 It is beneficial for employees may also be required to attend training courses aimed at updating their skills in response to changes and developments in work and to maintain knowledge and skills in their work area during the career break. If this is not possible, employees may require training immediately before returning to work from the career break. Line Managers will discuss and agree contact arrangements with employees.

6.0 CONDITIONS OF SERVICE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 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. For an employee who has an average bonus payment scheme, they will receive average bonus on their return.

6.2 Employees will be offered the right to return to the post they had prior to their career break. If this is not practicable, 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, normally within the same Department, subject to any organisational change.

7.0 NATIONAL INSURANCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 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.

8.0 PENSION SCHEME

8.1 Local Government Pension Scheme

8.1.1 Contributions to the above scheme will cease while an employee is on a career break, however, the Local Government Pension Scheme will still pay out the death in service lump sum payment to the Estate of a deceased employee in the event of death during the career break.

8.1.2 On return to work the employee may arrange to buy back lost pensionable service which will mean double payments until such times as the lost years have been recovered. An election to repay pensions must be submitted within 30 days of returning to work at the end of the career break.

8.2 Scottish Public Pension Agency

8.2.1 Contributions to the above scheme will cease while an employee is on a career break, however, the Scottish Public Pensions Agency will still pay out the death in service lump sum payment (based on actual service) to the estate of a deceased employee in the event of death during the career break.

8.2.2 The employee may arrange to buy pensionable service either during their career break or on their return. It is the responsibility of the employee to make the necessary arrangements with the Scottish Public Pensions Agency prior to commencing their career break.

9.0 ASSISTED CAR PURCHASE AND CAR LEASING SCHEME

9.1 As the assisted car purchase contract is between the employee and the Finance Company, any employee starting a career break will require to make arrangements with the Finance Company to continue paying any outstanding balance on a car loan under the provisions of the Council's assisted car purchase scheme.

10.0 ALLOWANCES

10.1 Allowances such as telephone rental will not be payable during the period of a career break. This includes contact periods.

11.0 MATERNITY/ADOPTION LEAVE AND CAREER BREAKS

11.1 A career break may be taken immediately after a period of Maternity /Adoption Leave. The break will commence when the period of Maternity /Adoption Leave ceases. Employees eligible for Occupational Maternity/Adoption Pay paid by the Council i.e. 12 weeks at half pay can decide to defer payment of this until they return to work after the career break. If employees elect to receive this and decide not to return to work for a minimum period of 3 months at the end of the career break, this money must be refunded to the Council.

12.0 OTHER EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER BREAKS

12.1 Employees who are on a career break and wish to undertake work for another employer should complete a Per 11 - Application To Undertake Outside Employment/Private Work.

12.2 Employees wishing to undertake any other employment whilst on a career break must seek prior approval from their Head of Service.

13.0 FILLING THE RESULTANT VACANCY

13.1 How the resultant vacancy is filled/covered will depend on each individual case e.g. such as the length of the break, type of vacancy and could be filled by one of the following:-

- Employees temporarily acting up
- Responsibility Payments
- Advertised internally as a temporary post with the successful applicant, if currently employed on a permanent bases, having the right to return to their original post.
- Advertised externally as a temporary contract.
- Advertised internally/externally and filled on a permanent basis, in exceptional circumstances

14.0 RETURN TO WORK

14.1 If an exact date has not been agreed at the start of the career break, employees must give three months notice to their line manager confirming the exact date of when they wish to return to work after a career break.

- 14.2 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. Should employees request a return to work earlier than the agreed date, they will be required to give a minimum of 3 months notice. It may not be operationally feasible for managers to accommodate employees returning to work early and employees should be aware that there is no automatic right to return early.
- 14.3 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.
- 14.4 Any Department which has specific difficulties in finding a suitable vacancy for an employee following a career break should contact Human Resource Services for advice and assistance.

15.0 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

- 15.1 Employees who wish to apply for a career break should discuss the matter initially with their line manager in accordance with the principles of the career break scheme. The Career Break Checklist should also be completed by both the employee and manager at this stage.
- 15.2 Applications for a career break should then be made using Form PER/CAR/1. Employees should submit their application for a career break **at least three months prior to the proposed date of commencement**, to their manager stating the anticipated length of the career break as well as providing full details of the reason for the career break.
- 15.3 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. Both Managers and employees will have to ensure that it will be possible to meet the operational needs of the Department and therefore employees should give as much notice as possible of their application for a career break. Managers must complete section B of the application form and forward it to their Head of Service for approval/rejection as appropriate. Employees will normally be given a written response within four weeks from receipt of the application.

15.4 If approved, the Head of Service will pass the application form to the Head of Human Resources who will advise the employee and line manager accordingly. The correspondence will be filed in the employee's personal file.

15.5 If a Head of Service is considering refusing an application, this should be discussed with the Head of Human Resources. Where an employee has made an application for a career break and that application has been rejected, the employee may appeal against this decision through the Council's formal Grievance procedures if appropriate.

16.0 NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY AGREED TERMS AND CONDITIONS

16.1 This agreement complements existing Council decisions and nationally agreed terms and conditions of service and the entitlement of individual employees to seek enforcement of their rights and within nationally and locally agreed terms and conditions of service

17.0 RELATED POLICIES

- Maternity Leave
- Adoption Leave
- Paternity Leave
- Maternity Support Leave
- Paternity Support Leave
- Scheme of Special Leave