



## CAREER BREAK POLICY

Version 1.1	
Last reviewed	21/8/20
To be reviewed by	21/8/22
Specific changes	Minor amendments to take account for the new structures and changes to the pension contributions for staff on career breaks



## CAREER BREAK POLICY

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

South Lakeland District Council is committed to developing and introducing more flexible working practices that will assist employees to attain a work-life balance. Our Career Break Policy provides an opportunity for employees to take time off work in order to pursue personal interests ~~etc~~ and enables the Council to demonstrate a commitment to and retain experienced staff.

### 2.0 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all full time and part time employees of South Lakeland District Council who have a minimum of five year's continuous SLDC service.

### 3.0 REASONS FOR TAKING A CAREER BREAK

A career break can be used for any of the following reasons:

- To attend a university or college course
- To undertake voluntary or charity work
- To pursue a personal interest or project
- To travel
- For domestic circumstances e.g. caring for a dependant relative
- Any other purpose agreed with the ~~LeadAssistant Director~~

This list is not exhaustive

### 4.0 CAREER BREAK CRITERIA

The following criteria will apply to all career breaks:

- All career breaks will be dependent upon service and departmental requirements
- Any accrued but unused holiday entitlement for the current holiday year must be taken prior to the start of a career break
- Employees can take a career break once every five years
- The break will be a minimum of three months and a maximum of twelve months.
- An extension beyond the 12-month period may be possible with ~~LeadAssistant Director~~ approval

### 5.0 RETURNING TO WORK

A mutually acceptable date of return to work will be agreed by both the manager and employee partners prior to the career break commencing. Should an employee wish to return to work sooner than originally planned, they should indicate their intention to their line manager by providing two months written notice so that a return to work can be facilitated.

Employees returning from a career break lasting twelve months will be required to attend a re-induction and their training and development needs will be assessed through the job consultation process.

Employees will return to work to the post they held prior to taking the career break unless the post has been affected by organisational change. Should there be any organisational changes within the Council that involve an employee on a career break then the Lead Assistant Director or line manager will keep them informed.

## **6.0 RESIGNING DURING A CAREER BREAK**

Should an employee decide to resign while on a career break they will need to inform their line manager in writing and the effective date of leaving the employment of SLDC will be the date the letter was received by the appropriate manager. The manager will make the necessary arrangements for the termination paperwork to be completed.

## **7.0 MAINTAINING CONTACT DURING A CAREER BREAK**

The employee and line manager will agree to keep in contact at intervals of three months. Contact can be by phone, via letter or e-mail. The line manager will send the employee copies of employee communication that is circulated and information of any training sessions, seminars or social events as appropriate, to the contact details that the employee provides. Employees may apply for any South Lakeland District Council job opportunities while they are on a career break but if successful they will have to end the career break.

## **8.0 PENSION ARRANGEMENTS DURING A CAREER BREAK**

~~Employees must continue to pay their pension contributions for the first 30 days of a career break. On returning from a career break the Payments Group will give the employee the option to pay back their lost contributions in order to maintain their full pension rights. This option must be taken up within 30 days of returning to work, or within 30 days of leaving should the employee resign while on the career break.~~

~~The paying back of contributions can be made over an equivalent length of time to the career break.~~

A career break is considered to be authorised unpaid leave, for which you will not receive any pay. You will also not pay any pension for the period of your career break. Likewise, during the period of the career break SLDC will not pay any pension contributions. When you return to work you will be provided with the opportunity to buy back any lost pension at a shared cost with SLDC within 30 days of your return. You cannot buy back any lost pension if you are not an active member of the pension scheme.

## **9.0 TERMS AND CONDITIONS DURING A CAREER BREAK**

During a career break the following terms and conditions will apply:

- All career breaks will be unpaid
- Employees will continue to be regarded as employees of South Lakeland District Council
- The duration of a career break will not qualify as reckonable service for sickness
- The duration of a career break will not qualify as reckonable service for redundancy purposes
- The incremental salary point will be frozen during a career break
- Annual leave and Bank and Public holidays will not accrue during a career break
- Any failure to abide by the career break agreement may lead to termination of the career break and/or the disciplinary procedure being invoked

## 10.0 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Employees wishing to take a Career Break should complete the Career Break Application Form (Appendix A) and submit it to their ~~LeadAssistant Director~~ at least three months in advance of the proposed start date to allow time to consider the application and to make the necessary arrangements for covering the leave.

The ~~LeadAssistant Director~~ will arrange to hold a meeting to discuss the reasons for the request and each request will be considered on its individual merits, following consultation with the line manager. The granting of a career break and the length of the break will be entirely at the ~~Lead'sAssistant Director's~~ discretion and will need to take into account outstanding workloads and arrangements for replacement staff.

Should a career break be approved the employee will receive written confirmation of the terms in the form of a 'Career Break Agreement' that will be processed by ~~the HR Group~~.

Any decision not to approve a career break will be explained to the employee and confirmed in writing by the ~~LeadAssistant Director~~. Should an employee feel aggrieved that their application has not been approved they can seek redress through the grievance procedure.

## 11.0 REVIEW

~~This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis in the light of operating experience and/or changes in legislation.~~

~~This policy will be reviewed by July 2015 or earlier in the light of operating experience and/or changes in legislation.~~

Appendices to this policy

Appendix A – Career Break Application Form