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**CAREER BREAKS FOR POLICE OFFICERS
AND POLICE STAFF**

FORCE REFERENCE DOCUMENT

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POLICY

1. Northern Constabulary is committed to maintaining an efficient and effective workforce and is also committed to providing support to those individuals who may wish to develop or continue their careers to the best of their ability. The Career Break Scheme enables the Force to ensure that the talents and resources of staff are utilised to the full by retaining or assisting the return of trained staff.

STANDARDS

1. GENERAL

- 1.1 Any member of staff wishing to apply for a Career Break should complete the Career Break Application Form (AD/18/14) and pass it to his/her Divisional Commander/Service Unit Manager.
- 1.2 Applications should normally be made 3 months prior to the date on which the Career Break would start.
- 1.3 Career Breaks are available to all ranks of police officer and police staff based upon each applicant meeting a defined set of eligibility criteria.
- 1.4 Police officers can apply for more than one Career Break providing that the combined length of the break and/or other leave entitlements does not exceed the maximum of 5 years. Police staff can apply for a Career Break not exceeding 12 months. However, once the police staff member has returned to his/her employment he/she may submit a further Career Break application for consideration. He/she **MUST** however return to employment prior to further Career Break applications being considered and supported.
- 1.5 All applicants will be required to complete an agreement to the terms and conditions of the Career Break and should be aware of all the conditions of the Career Break before, during and after the break.
- 1.6 Prior to requesting a Career Break, the applicant must:
 - be an employee, and
 - must have worked continuously for at least 26 weeks on the date an application is made.
- 1.7 Where a Career Break application is received the recipient, within 28 days of receiving a valid request, must either:
 - accept the request and inform the employee of the decision in writing

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- meet with the employee to discuss his/her request – and within 14 days of that meeting, inform the employee of the decision in writing.

2. POLICE

- 2.1 Police officers must have completed the probationary period prior to making application for a Career Break.
- 2.2 With regards to “time to train” legislation this relates purely to employees on contract of employment which police officers are not. However, Northern Constabulary may wish to consider such “time to train” applications where there are obvious business benefits.
- 2.3 The combined length of Career Break applications **MUST NOT** exceed 5 years.
- 2.4 Where an officer is absent from his/her workplace for a period longer than 5 years due to Career Breaks and/or Other Leave Entitlements there will be a requirement for him/her to undertake, and successfully complete, Initial Probationer Training at the Scottish Police College.
- 2.5 The officer must state his/her intention to continuing a career in the Police Service.
- 2.6 The officer must have satisfactory levels of performance, health and attendance records.
- 2.7 Disciplinary record and/or outstanding complaints must be reviewed to determine suitability.
- 2.8 Outstanding casework and pending court commitments must be reviewed to determine suitability.

3. RETURN TO WORK FOLLOWING EXTENDED LEAVE

- 3.1 An officer will normally be required to give a minimum of 3 months' written notice to the Force (via the Human Resources Service Unit) of an intention to return to work.
- 3.2 The officer would normally return to a post in the Area Command and station he/she had previously occupied. Where this was no longer an option, e.g. due to internal reorganisation of resources, the officer would be interviewed by the Staff Development Officer with a view to the Force determining a suitable posting available at the time of rejoining the Force.

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- 3.3 In case of return to work following lengthy absences (e.g. three months or more) Line Managers should arrange to "re-introduce" officers to ensure they are fully up-to-date with changes in the workplace, or working arrangements. The appendices to FRD I6 (Induction) may form a useful checklist for this process. Key issues to be covered will be changes in staffing and/or shift arrangements and changes in legislation and police powers. Milestones for completion of re-introduction should be agreed, with regular reviews as appropriate.

4. POLICE STAFF

- 4.1 The employee should normally have completed a period of 2 years' service, except in the case of "time to train" where an applicant must have worked continuously for at least 26 weeks on the date an application is made.
- 4.2 A Career Break will be for a maximum of one year. However, once the police staff member has returned to his/her employment he/she may submit a further Career Break application for consideration. He/she **MUST** however return to employment prior to further Career Break applications being considered and supported.
- 4.3 The employee must state his/her intention of continuing a career in Northern Constabulary.
- 4.4 The employee must have satisfactory levels of performance, health and attendance records
- 4.5 Disciplinary record and/or outstanding complaints must be reviewed to determine suitability.
- 4.6 Outstanding casework and pending court commitments must be reviewed to determine suitability.

5. RETURN TO WORK FOLLOWING EXTENDED LEAVE

- 5.1 An employee will normally be required to give a minimum of 3 months' written notice to the Force (via the Human Resources Service Unit) of an intention to return to work.
- 5.2 The employee will normally return to a post deemed by the Service Unit to be equivalent to the post vacated. Where this option is not available, the employee will be interviewed by the Staff Development Officer in consultation with the Divisional Commander/Service Unit Manager with a view to determining suitable alternative employment.

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- 5.3 In case of return to work following lengthy absences (e.g. three months or more) Line Managers should arrange to “re-introduce” staff to ensure they are fully up-to-date with changes in the workplace, or working arrangements. The appendices to FRD I6 (Induction) may form a useful checklist for this process. Key issues to be covered will be changes in staffing and/or shift arrangements and changes in legislation and police procedures. Milestones for completion of re-introduction should be agreed, with regular reviews as appropriate.

GUIDANCE

1. The reasons for requesting a Career Break generally fall within the following categories, although each request should be considered on its own merits:
 - (a) Personal development e.g. extended periods of travel or voluntary service overseas;
 - (b) Education, e.g. to pursue full-time education;
 - (c) Family care/carer responsibilities, e.g. to care for children or invalid dependants;
 - (d) Extended maternity/paternity leave;
 - (e) “Time to Train” e.g. training that leads to the award of a recognised qualification or training to help an employee develop specific skills relevant to their job, workplace or business. For further guidance on professional development refer to the Force Reference Document P8.
2. The provision of a Career Break is intended to supplement provisions which are laid down in other Force policies, e.g. flexible working. The reasons for requesting a Career Break should be fully discussed with the applicant to ensure all options are explored.
3. Applicants should complete the Career Break Application Form (AD/18/14) and pass it to their Divisional Commander/Service Unit Manager. Applications should normally be made 3 months prior to the date on which the Career Break would start. This will allow the Division/Service Unit time to make the necessary arrangements to ensure the break does not cause unnecessary disruption to the service.
4. The Divisional Commander/Service Unit Manager in consultation with his/her respective Business Unit Manager and Human Resources Advisor will consider the application and complete his/her section of the form indicating whether or not he/she considers the application to be acceptable and what arrangements will be made to keep the employee informed during the Career Break. A copy of the completed Career Break Application Form (AD/18/14) will be passed to the applicant and the original will be forwarded to the

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Human Resources Advisor, Police Headquarters who will monitor all applications.

5. If the Career Break application is supported, the Human Resources Advisor will complete the Career Break Agreement (AD/18/15) and pass to the Force Executive for final sign-off. Where a Career Break application is not supported the completed Career Break Application (AD/18/14) will be placed on the applicant's scan file within Human Resources. The Human Resources Advisor will progress all necessary administrative functions such as SCoPE and pay and conditions to reflect supported applications.
6. A Human Resources Advisor will ensure the member of staff signs the Career Break Agreement (AD/18/15) confirming that he/she understands and agrees to abide by the terms of the Career Break policy.
7. A number of different mechanisms exist for an individual considering a Career Break and each has implications for an individual's terms and conditions. Detailed below is a summary of the main options available.

7.1 **POLICE OFFICERS - EXTENDED UNPAID LEAVE OPTION.**

Up to 5 years.

7.1.1 **During a Career Break the Following Conditions of Service Apply:**

- (a) Individuals will continue to be regarded as employed by Northern Constabulary and it is, therefore, important that any changes in personal circumstances, involvement in legal proceedings or criminal convictions are reported to the Force.
- (b) The duration of the Career Break does not qualify as reckonable service for pensions, incremental purposes, annual leave, sickness and redundancy.
- (c) Salary and allowances will not be paid during the Career Break. Salary points are frozen during the Career Break.
- (d) Pension is frozen during the Career Break. Pensionable years cannot be bought back upon their return; officers would have to work the period of their break to make up their full pensionable service. In the unlikely event of a married officer dying while on a Career Break, the spouse would be entitled to half the officer's pension at the time of commencement of the Career Break.
- (e) Individuals will not be permitted to take up alternative employment. However, if they need to obtain employment to support themselves

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financially they may do so by obtaining permission from their Divisional Commander/Service Unit Manager. In this event, details must be reported and prior approval obtained. Police officers should register and obtain authority to pursue a business interest in the first instance.

- (f) Annual Leave will not accrue during the Career Break.
- (g) Housing/Transitional Rent Allowance - no allowance will be paid during the Career Break to eligible officers. Upon return to duty the allowance will resume. Payment will be at the same entitlement as prior to undertaking the Career Break, provided no personal circumstances have changed. Should an officer's personal circumstances change, the allowance would reflect this upon return to duty.
- (h) Police officers residing in accommodation provided by the Force may be required to vacate those premises depending on the Force's needs.
- (i) Officers wishing to remain members of the Police Federation and to retain associated benefits should contact the JBB Secretary.
- (j) An individual requiring to attend court commitments during the Career Break should seek reimbursement for any costs incurred from the Procurator Fiscal Service.
- (k) Pregnancy - if an individual becomes pregnant during a Career Break she must notify the Force. Maternity pay will only be paid where the individual is eligible.
- (l) Promotional prospects - a Career Break in itself will not be detrimental to promotional prospects.
- (m) Warrant cards, uniforms, items of equipment and other items of Force property must be returned to the Divisional Commander/Service Unit Manager prior to commencement of a break.
- (n) Any failure to abide by the Career Break agreement could lead to a termination of the Career Break.

7.2 POLICE STAFF - EXTENDED UNPAID LEAVE

Up to one year.

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7.2.1 During a Career Break the Following Conditions of Service will Apply:

- (a) Individuals will continue to be regarded as employed by Northern Constabulary and it is, therefore, important that any changes in personal circumstances, involvement in legal proceedings or criminal convictions are reported to the Force.
- (b) The duration of the Career Break does not qualify as reckonable service for pensions, incremental purposes, annual leave, sickness and redundancy.
- (c) Salary and allowances will not be paid during the Career Break; the incremental scale point and salary grade are frozen during the Career Break.
- (d) Pensions - individuals will be required for the first 30 days, beginning on the first day of the leave of the Career Break, to make a contribution equal to one that would have been made had the individual been employed during that period.
- (e) If the individual gives notice in writing to Northern Constabulary within 30 days of their return, they may reckon the period of the Career Break as reckonable service by making a contribution equal to the one they would have made if they had been employed at that time. This amount must be paid within a period equal to the period in question. Superannuation death benefits would remain applicable but any period without remuneration would not count as reckonable service unless it had been paid for.
- (f) Individuals will not be permitted to take up alternative employment. However, if they need to obtain employment to support themselves financially they may do so by obtaining permission from their Divisional Commander/Service Unit Manager.
- (g) Annual Leave will not accrue during the Career Break.
- (h) An individual requiring to attend court during the Career Break should seek reimbursement for any costs incurred from the Procurator Fiscal Service.
- (i) Pregnancy - if an individual becomes pregnant during a Career Break she must notify the Force. Maternity pay will only be paid where the individual is eligible.
- (j) Promotional prospects - a Career Break in itself will not be detrimental to promotional prospects.
- (k) Identification cards, uniforms, items of equipment and other items of

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Force property must be returned to the Divisional Commander/Service Unit Manager prior to commencement of a break.

- (1) Any failure to abide by the Career Break agreement could lead to a termination of the Career Break.

8. RIGHT TO APPEAL

- 8.1 Any individual wishing to appeal against the decision reached, following application for a Career Break will have recourse to the Grievance Procedure.
- 8.2 Where staff and managers are considering Career Break applications they **MUST** liaise with the Human Resources Advisors available at Police Headquarters.

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