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**CAREER BREAKS FOR POLICE AND  
SUPPORT 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 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 grades of support staff based upon each applicant meeting a defined set of eligibility criteria.
- 1.4 A member of staff can apply for more than one Career Break providing that the combined length of the breaks does not exceed the maximum of 5 years.
- 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.

### **2. POLICE**

- 2.1 Police officers must have completed the probationary period prior to making application for a Career Break.
- 2.2 A Career Break will be for a maximum of 5 years.
- 2.3 The officer must state his/her intention to continuing a career in the Police Service.
- 2.4 The officer must have satisfactory levels of performance, health and attendance records.

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- 2.5 Disciplinary record and/or outstanding complaints must be reviewed to determine suitability.
- 2.6 Outstanding casework and pending court commitments must be reviewed to determine suitability.

### **3. SUPPORT STAFF**

- 3.1 The employee should normally have completed a period of 2 years service.
- 3.2 A Career Break will be for a maximum of one year.
- 3.3 The employee must state his/her intention of continuing a career in Northern Constabulary.
- 3.4 The employee must have satisfactory levels of performance, health and attendance records
- 3.5 Disciplinary record and/or outstanding complaints must be reviewed to determine suitability.
- 3.6 Outstanding casework and pending court commitments must be reviewed to determine suitability.

## **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.
- 2. The provision of a Career Break is intended to supplement provisions which are laid down in other Force policies, e.g. special leave, job-share and part-time working. The reasons for requesting a Career Break should be fully discussed with the applicant to ensure all options are explored.

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3. Applicants should complete the Career Break Application Form (AD/18/14) and pass it to their 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 Service Unit time to make the necessary arrangements to ensure the break does not cause unnecessary disruption to the service.
4. The Service Unit Manager 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 form will be forwarded to Human Resources who will monitor all applications.
5. The member of staff will be asked to sign the Career Break Agreement (AD/18/15) confirming that he/she understands and agrees to abide by the terms of the Career Break policy.
6. 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.

### 6.1 **POLICE OFFICERS - EXTENDED UNPAID LEAVE OPTION.**

Up to 5 years.

#### 6.1.1 **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 30 years' 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 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 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.

### 6.1.2 **Return to Work Following Extended Leave**

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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

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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.

- (c) 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.

### **6.2 SUPPORT STAFF - EXTENDED UNPAID LEAVE**

Up to one year.

#### **6.2.1 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.

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- (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 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 Force property must be returned to the SUM prior to commencement of a break.
- (l) Any failure to abide by the Career Break agreement could lead to a termination of the Career Break.

### **6.2.2 Return to Work Following Extended Leave**

- (a) An employee will normally be required to give a minimum of 2 months' written notice to the Force (via the Human Resources Service Unit) of an intention to return to work.
- (b) 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 Service Unit Manager with a view to determining suitable alternative employment.
- (c) 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.

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7. Any individual wishing to appeal against the decision reached, following application for a Career Break, will have recourse to the Grievance procedure.
8. Further information on Career Breaks and the possible options is available from the Human Resources Service Unit.

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