

## *Career Breaks for Teaching Staff*

### **Guidelines**

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## **1. Introduction**

On 1 August 2008 the SNCT introduced a Career Break scheme for Teaching Staff which supersedes the Council's Career Break scheme which applied to Teachers until that date. Within the scheme there are a number of areas which would benefit from a shared understanding between management and the Trade Unions to ensure consistency of application.

The SNCT Career Break scheme expresses clearly that a Council retains discretion to decide whether a Career Break is allowed and that employees have no right to payments or allowances from the Council during their break. While there is a local right of appeal against a decision to reject an application for a Career Break, there is no subsequent right of appeal to SNCT.

## **2. Definition of a Career Break**

Fife Council recognises the benefits which can be gained from granting Career Breaks to Teaching Staff. However, in considering applications for Career Break, managers should be mindful that there should be some benefit to the Council in agreeing to the request. This can be through skills and experience gained while on the break, or ensuring a valued member of staff has the right to return to work after needing an extended break from work for example for care of children/dependants.

A Career Break should not normally be an opportunity for an employee to undertake a new Career. If employment is undertaken during the Career Break, this should enhance the professional development of the employee in his/her substantive post. There will be circumstances where casual employment may be undertaken to alleviate financial hardship during the period of the Career Break. This could include casual work during extended periods of travel or study e.g. bar work, picking fruit, labouring.

Where an employee is undertaking a Career Break for additional qualifications, it may be appropriate to allow him/her to undertake supply work related to the *ir* substantive post.

## **3. Eligibility**

Employees must have at least two years service with Fife Council prior to commencing the Career Break.

This policy applies to all teaching staff including promoted posts up to and including headteachers. However, it must be recognised that there are likely to be additional operational issues which need to be considered before agreeing to a request from promoted staff.

In considering requests for Career Breaks, managers should take into account a range of operational issues within the particular school eg the number of staff at that time in temporary positions or on long term leave for whatever reason.

## **4. Duration and Frequency**

Career Breaks will normally be approved over full academic years. Employees granted Career Breaks for other periods should be aware that they may not accrue a full leave entitlement on their return.

## **5. Extension of or Reduction in the Duration of a Career Break**

For an extension of or reduction in the duration of a Career Break to be considered, there must be a significant change in the circumstances of the individual from when the Career Break was originally approved.

In some circumstances, the member of staff concerned may not be able to immediately return to his/her substantive post.

An application may be rejected, for instance where the number of staff at that time in temporary positions or on long term leave for whatever reason is too great to facilitate the request.

## **6. Contact during Career Breaks**

Prior to the commencement of a career break the Council and employee must discuss if and how contact can be maintained. Both parties should have a clear understanding of the nature and frequency of any contact. The provisions set out below contain the minimum arrangements, but there is flexibility to allow further arrangements to be agreed as appropriate.

To ensure that staff on Career Breaks are able to resume their duties effectively following the Career Break it is important that they are kept up to date with changes to the workplace or work organisation that may impact on their role. This could include:

- Details of any restructuring
- Changes in staffing (including vacancies)
- Details of inservice training
- Minutes of staff meetings
- Details of new relevant policies
- Changes in Curriculum

Employees have the responsibility to ensure that the Council can contact them during the Career Break. Where the arrangements for contact change during the career break, the employee must advise the Council of these changes to ensure contact can be maintained. The Council would normally expect a postal and/or e-mail address from the employee.

While the level of contact may vary depending on individual circumstances, the minimum expectation would be to contact the school/establishment during each school term (for associated professionals, this should be on a 3 monthly basis).

Part of this may include

- a suitable induction period prior to the employees return; and/or
- a number of 'keeping in touch' days throughout the period of the Career Break

Such arrangements should be mutually agreed at an appropriate time, taking into consideration the length of the Career Break. These periods of work will be paid at the employee's normal rate of pay.

## **7. Placement on Return to Work**

Where a Career Break lasts less than 2 years, the employee will normally return to his/her substantive post. For a Career Break of over 2 years duration, a suitable alternative post will be identified. For the purposes of clarity, a promoted post will be considered suitable if it is within two job sizing bands, either higher or lower, of the employee's original post. If a lower graded post is identified, the normal rules of conservation of salary will apply.

If no suitable post is identified, the principles of the Transfer Policy (LNCT/6) will be applied.

## **8. Non-commencement of Career Break**

Where an employee who has been granted a career break and who, prior to the date of commencement, decides not to proceed must give the Council 4 working weeks notice.

When, owing to unforeseen circumstances, an employee is unable to provide 4 weeks notice, the Council will consider waiving this requirement subject to the individual circumstances of each case.