

Career Break

1. The Purpose

A career break is a voluntary, unpaid extended break from work and this policy sets out the key features of the FC's Career Break Scheme (CBS).

2. The Principles

The principles of the policy are to:

- support a healthy work/life balance culture at the FC, where employees can take time off for caring responsibilities or personal and professional development activities;
- support the FC's equality and diversity agenda;
- allow the FC to retain skilled and experienced employees, increasing the FC's return on the resources invested in recruitment and training; and
- ensure that business requirements are taken into account when applications for career breaks are considered.

3. The Policy

Any permanent employee can apply for a career break providing they have at least three years service and have achieved a good performance, conduct and attendance record during the year prior to the application. Applications will normally only be considered for the following reasons:

- Caring for a dependent
- Undertaking a relevant course of study or other skills development activity
- Voluntary work or some other personal development activity

Eligible employees may apply for a career break of between six months and two years. Extensions beyond two years will only be considered in wholly exceptional circumstances. The employee remains under the management responsibility of their Unit during the career break.

There is no entitlement to a career break. Applications will be considered with regard to business requirements and the employee's circumstances. Applications should be made via [HR Procedure – Career Break](#).

Time on a career break from the FC does not count as effective service for the purposes of pension, pay progression, sick absence or annual leave. A "Stop the Clock" principle is applied to career breaks whereby the unpaid leave does not accrue benefits. However, those already accumulated are preserved and built upon on return to work. [HR Procedure - Career Break](#) provides further details of the effect on terms and conditions.

There is no guarantee of a job to return to at the end of a career break. Your manager may be able to keep your post available for you to return to by recruiting temporary cover during the break. However, where this has not been possible, you are expected to pro-actively start looking for a suitable alternative post from six months before the end of your career break. If a post has not been found by the end of your career break, you will move onto unpaid leave for a maximum of 12 months, during which time both you and your dedicated HR team will continue to seek a suitable alternative post. If at the end of the period of unpaid leave a post has still not been found, your employment will be terminated, without any entitlement to a compensation payment.

If you reject the offer of a suitable alternative post, this will constitute resignation. Normal reasonable application of the mobility clause will apply to staff in relevant pay bands.

3.1 Your responsibilities as an employee

You are expected to:

- understand that your job may not be held open for you to return to, and that you are expected to be pro-active in identifying a suitable alternative post, including those at other FC locations;
- understand the effect of the career break on your terms and conditions;
- seek consent from your manager if during your career break you want to work for another organisation/company; and
- keep in touch, as agreed, with your manager during a career break.

3.2 Your responsibilities as a Manager

You are expected to:

- consider career break requests with regard to business requirements and the employee's circumstances;
- consider filling the employee's post temporarily whilst they're on career break or factor the employee's career break into your Unit's future staffing plans so that a career break employee has a job to return to, where possible;
- inform your dedicated HR Team when a career break application is approved;
- keep in touch, as agreed, with the employee during the career break; and

- work with your HR Team to undertake a FC-wide search for a suitable alternative post if you are unable to find a post for the individual to return to within your Unit.

3.3 Human Resources responsibilities

Human Resources have responsibility for:

- giving advice and guidance on the application of this policy and associated procedure;
- keeping employee records up to date including payroll;
- assisting the search for a suitable alternative post within the FC if the employee's original Unit does not have a post for them to return to; and
- monitoring and reviewing the policy in consultation with the FC Trade Unions.