

WILTSHIRE POLICE

FORCE PROCEDURE



CAREER BREAK PROCEDURE

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| Date of Publication | June 2013 |
| Date of Next Review | June 2016 |
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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| CONTENTS | 2 |
| PROCEDURE – Career Break | 3 |
| INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| SECTION 1 – Aims and Objectives | 4 |
| SECTION 2 – Career Break Guidelines | 5 |
| SECTION 3 – Career Break Application | 6 |
| SECTION 4 – Handover and Review | 8 |
| SECTION 5 – Employment Status | 9 |
| SECTION 6 – Keeping in touch | 10 |
| SECTION 7 – Maternity | 10 |
| SECTION 8 – Return to Work | 11 |
| INDEX | 13 |

PROCEDURE – CAREER BREAK

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This document has been produced to provide guidance to Police Officers and Police Staff who wish to apply for extended unpaid leave known as a 'Career Break'.

Data Protection Notice

Any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual recorded as a consequence of this procedure will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulations and the [Force Data Protection Policy](#).

Aims

The aim of a Career Break is to reduce the premature wastage of Police Officers and Police Staff ensuring that the skills, abilities and aptitudes of our employees and officers are retained and utilised. This will be achieved by providing the opportunity for an individual to spend a period of time pursuing a full time activity without having to give up their career.

A Career Break is not intended to replace:

- Compassionate Leave
- Sick Leave
- Maternity Leave
- Flexible Working Arrangements

Objectives

The objective of a Career Break is to allow Police Officers and Police Staff to take a Career Break without having to give up their careers, thus maintaining an efficient and effective workforce.

This will be achieved by:

- Enabling the organisation to retain staff who may otherwise leave and not return
- Providing a framework for individuals to be able to take a Career Break
- Enabling individuals to take a period of unpaid extended leave for domestic reasons or for personal development
- Determining the reason for requesting a Career Break to ensure the most appropriate option is taken
- Determining the terms and conditions of employment on return from a Career Break
- Providing a programme for return and re-integration following a Career Break.

SECTION 2

CAREER BREAK GUIDELINES

A Career Break will normally be granted for the following purposes:

- Extended periods of travel
- Voluntary services
- Caring for dependants
- Caring for children
- Course of study
- Personal Development

A Career Break will not be approved in the following circumstances:

- To pursue any activity which may adversely affect the image of the Force
- Where there is ambiguity with regards to the intention to return to work and resume a career with Wiltshire Police

NB: Paid employment whilst on a career break may be permitted if it is of a temporary or casual nature.

Eligibility

The applicant must meet the following requirements for a Career Break to be granted:

- Have a credible and valid reason for requesting the break, which meets the above criteria
- Have successfully completed their probationary period
- Are not employed on a fixed term or temporary contract
- Have completed 2 years service (this includes part time staff working 16 hours or more per week)
- The length of the proposed break is not less than 6 months

There is no automatic right to a Career Break, each application will be considered on its own merits.

Career Break Duration

Police Officers can apply for extended unpaid leave for a minimum of six months to a maximum of five years.

Police Staff can apply for extended unpaid leave for a minimum of six months to a maximum of three years.

The objectives, commencement and return dates must be agreed by the Line Manager / Commander / Departmental Head and a Human Resources Officer before the leave commences.

Career Break Limits

As a general rule, only one Career Break can be taken in the course of an individual's service. Under exceptional circumstances the Chief Constable may authorise a further Career Break. Exceptional circumstances may be the need to look after a dependant relative.

Wiltshire Police have the right to refuse an application from a Police Officer or member of Police Staff due to the skills an individual has and the resilience required by the organisation.

SECTION 3 CAREER BREAK APPLICATION

Application

Applications for a Career Break must be submitted via a 232 no less than three months prior to the required commencement date.

All applicants will be notified of the decision within 28 days.

Considerations

In reaching a decision consideration will be given to the following:

- Operational requirements
- Previous applications for a Career Break
- Availability of a post at the end of the Career Break
- Any outstanding discipline matters
- Any outstanding grievances
- Any current health issues

An Individual must clearly demonstrate a commitment to return to work.

Process

| Submit Application to... | Who will... |
|--|---|
| Line Manager / /Departmental Head / Commander | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview the applicant and discuss reasons for the application • Recommend whether the application should be granted or rejected |
| The HRBC will process the documents to the Head of People Standards and Support Via Resource Manager (RMU) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the consistent and equitable treatment of all applications • Review the recommendations and considerations • Use discretion on matters of health, attendance and conduct • Decide and record whether the application is supported or rejected • Make appropriate arrangements to inform the individual of the outcome within 28 days of application • Record the outcome in writing • Ensure all reports in relation to the application are held on applicants personal file |

Rejected Application

Where the application has been rejected:

- The decision will be transparent
- Written notification will be provided by the Head of People Standards and Support detailing the reason for the rejection
- The applicant will have the right to appeal in writing to the Head of People Services.

Appeal

The applicant may appeal against the decision by submitting an appeal letter to the Head of People Services. The letter should detail their grounds for appeal.

The appeal should be received within 28 days of written notification of the rejection. The decision of the Head of People Services is final.

Police Officers and Police Staff

Immediately prior to the commencement of a Career Break, the line manager will carry out a handover meeting with the individual to ensure that all outstanding work issues are noted so that appropriate action can be taken. This is particularly important for officers who have outstanding court dates.

If six months or more have elapsed since the individual's last performance meeting, a formal review meeting should be conducted and performance against objectives/targets recorded. If less than six months have elapsed, a formal process may not be necessary, however significant achievements should still be recorded.

Police Officers

Before the start of a Career Break the Head of People Standards and Support and the Officer concerned will agree the obligations and expectations on the Officer and the Force during a Career Break. Such matters must be discussed and agreement reached in the light of individual circumstances and must include:

- The Officers response to incidents that may arise and that require police action
- Restrictions on private life and business interests. Police Regulations 2003 regs 7+8 PNLD Ref 7730 and 7729
- The appropriateness and practical arrangements for any short-term returns to the force
- Keeping in Touch during the Career Break to ensure the officer remains up to date with new legislative requirements, major changes and developments and how this will be achieved
- Refresher training on return to the Force

SECTION 5

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Police Officers

Officers will not be paid during their Career Break and will not be required to resign. For the duration of the Career Break, Officers will be transferred to a 'ghost establishment' within the People Services Department.

The Career Break will not qualify as reckonable service for pension, pay, contractual annual leave, sick pay, accrual of increments or any other service related benefits. Any benefits the Officer is in receipt of prior to the break will recommence on their return to post.

An Officers grade, rank and pay point will be protected for the duration of a Career Break, subject to relevant changes in Regulations, PNB agreements and Home Office Circulars.

An Officer living in Force provided accommodation will be required to vacate the premises. In circumstances where an Officer's partner/spouse is a Police Officer, continued residence in Police accommodation will be subject to the partner/spouse's eligibility for provided accommodation.

During a Career Break, a Police Officer retains all powers and is still subject to the discipline code, therefore retain their warrant card. Access to stations will be restricted.

Police Officers taking a Career Break will have protected entitlement to all pension benefits accrued at the point of commencement of the Career Break.

Police Staff

Police Staff will not be required to resign. Employees will be transferred to a 'ghost establishment' within the People Services Department and may have their post filled by a temporary employee.

Career Breaks will not qualify as reckonable periods for pension or pay increment purposes. For the purpose of determining contractual entitlements such as annual leave, which are linked to service, service prior to and subsequent to the Career Break will be aggregated.

Any benefits the employee is in receipt of prior to the break will cease immediately the break commences. An employee will be treated as having left employment for the purposes of any payment made under the car loan scheme, relocation assistance schemes etc.

SECTION 6

KEEPING IN TOUCH

It is expected that absent individuals will liaise with Wiltshire Police periodically for the purposes of maintaining their knowledge of current legislation and procedure. In order to facilitate this, it is required that a permanent address, email address or a contact person be provided for the duration of the break.

SECTION 7

MATERNITY

An individual who becomes pregnant while on a Career Break is entitled to the same maternity benefits as those not taking a Career Break. This includes the right to Maternity Leave and Police / Occupational Maternity Pay.

Where an individual on a Career Break becomes pregnant, notification **must** be given as soon as reasonably practicable to the People Services Department, or at least by the 15th week before the probable date of birth of the child, providing the following information in order that procedures can be put into place to take effect at the appropriate time:

- That she is pregnant
- The expected date of childbirth
- Notification of her intention to use the Maternity Leave Scheme
- The date she plans on starting her Maternity Leave

Where the individual plans on using the Maternity Leave Scheme, the Career Break scheme will be suspended at the point of Maternity Leave commencement.

The MATB1 should be produced confirming the pregnancy and the expected date of childbirth. Any Police Maternity Pay and Occupational Maternity Pay cannot be paid without the MATB1.

Resumption of a Career Break following Maternity Leave will be subjected to further agreement between the Head of Standards and Support and the individual.

Police Officers and Staff are reminded of the requirement to return to work following maternity leave in order to retain their Police / Occupational Maternity Pay.

Approximately three months prior to the agreed date of return, the employee will be contacted by the People Services Department to confirm that it is still their intention to return on the agreed date. The individual will retain their previous grade and rate of pay, updated in line with national pay awards.

Individuals will return:

- On the date agreed
- Be subject to a medical check from the Medical Officer, if appropriate
- Have a risk assessment carried out
- Satisfy the necessary re-joining vetting checks
- Have a training needs assessment which may result in a period of training

It is the line manager's responsibility to adequately prepare for the individual's return. This may involve:

- Liaising with People Services to ensure the vetting checks are actioned
- Arranging for a risk assessment to be carried out
- Arranging the medical check, if required
- Informing Payroll of the individual's return to work
- Carrying out a training needs analysis and producing a training plan accordingly
- Arrange any update meetings as required

Whenever possible, individuals will return to the same role as previously held, however, there is no guarantee that this will be available. Every effort will be made to find a role commensurate with that previously held by the individual.

Where an individual does not return by the due date they will be deemed to have terminated their contract with the Force unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Early Return

Police Officer

If an Officer wishes to return to duty from a Career Break before the end of the agreed period of leave, they shall be permitted, subject to the following:

- Subject to there being a suitable vacancy
- They return to service with the same determined hours and work pattern if possible
- The return date will be a date agreed by the Departmental Head/Commander and the individual. This date will be extended no longer than three months.

Police Staff

Employees wishing to return to work earlier than the agreed date will normally be permitted subject to the following:

- They give three months advance notice.
- The return date will be agreed by the Manager and the individual
- The post being available - It needs to be minded that an early return may not always be possible especially if the post has had to be covered by a temporary contract.

Resignation

If the individual on a Career Break has decided to resign and hence leave the scheme, they should inform their Commander or Departmental Head and the People Service Department in writing, as soon as they have made their decision.

INDEX

| | |
|---|-----------|
| CONTENTS | 2 |
| INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| Overview | 3 |
| SECTION 1 – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES | 4 |
| Aims | 4 |
| Objectives | 4 |
| SECTION 2– CAREER BREAK GUIDELINES | 5 |
| Eligibility | 5 |
| Career Break Duration | 5 |
| Career Break Limits | 5 |
| SECTION 3 – CAREER BREAK APPLICATION | 6 |
| Application | 6 |
| Considerations | 6 |
| Process | 6 |
| Rejected Applications | 6 |
| Appeal | 7 |
| SECTION 4 – HANDOVER AND REVIEW | 8 |
| Police Officers and Police Staff | 8 |
| Police Officers | 8 |
| SECTION 5 – EMPLOYMENT STATUS | 9 |
| Police Officers | 9 |
| Police Staff | 9 |
| SECTION 6 – KEEPING IN TOUCH | 10 |
| SECTION 7 – MATERNITY | 10 |
| SECTION 8 – RETURN TO WORK | 11 |
| Early Return | 12 |
| Resignation | 12 |
| INDEX | 13 |