

## CAREER BREAK

### 1. Introduction

The [Talent Management Business Strategy](#) describes the Council's current and future approach to attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining talent. A key aim of the strategy is the retention of talented staff through adopting a more flexible approach to the labour market. In conjunction with flexible working initiatives, this policy aims to address work life balance issues that could lead to the loss of talented employees thus providing an incentive mechanism by which staff can return to the service of the Council.

The objectives of a Career Break are to;

- provide employees with the opportunity to take an extended period of unpaid leave and wherever possible to resume their career with the Council, thus retaining skilled employees
- ensure that the Council can continue to provide excellent public services by retaining the knowledge and skills of staff in the longer term and
- supporting the Council's aim to be 'an employer of choice'.

### 2. Eligibility

- 2.1 Career breaks will be available to permanent employees with a minimum of one year's continuous service with the Council.
- 2.2 This policy will be applicable to all employees including those schools who buy into the HR Service.
- 2.3 A career break can be used for a variety of purposes, for example:
  - time off for childcare, other caring responsibilities or other family responsibilities; (although parental leave may be another option)
  - overseas travel, for example for the purpose of visiting family and friends
  - to undertake a full time course of study relevant to their current duties

This list is not exhaustive and there may be other reasons an employee may wish to apply for a career break.

- 2.4 Employees must state their reason(s) for the request of a career break and provide any available documentary evidence in support of the application.
- 2.5 Employees who have a current disciplinary warning on their personal record will not be considered for the scheme until the warning has expired.
- 2.6 Employees who subject to action under the misconduct, capability, attendance management or subject to an ongoing investigation or who have been formally

advised in writing that their jobs are at risk through redundancy are excluded from the Scheme.

### 3. Consultation

- 3.1 Any employee who would like to take a career break should first raise the matter with their line manager and explain the purpose for which they wish to take the break, the intended length of the break and when they would like the break to start.
- 3.2 The line manager will discuss the matter fully with the employee before deciding whether or not the career break can be supported.
- 3.3 The discussion should focus on:
- implications of taking a break in terms of likely loss of continuity of service.
  - full consideration of other options, flexible working, special leave, parental leave, homeworking, job share etc
  - impact on the employee's pension scheme benefits
  - any other statutory or contractual rights that are dependent on length of service.
  - the employee's period of continuous service will begin again once they are re-employed at the end of the career break.
  - the fact that the employee's post could be made redundant whilst they are on a career break (with any severance payments based on service to the start of the career break)
  - the commitment to sign an agreement to be available to return to work on a specified date at the end of the career break.
  - that when the career break ends and the previous job is no longer available or it is not reasonably practicable to offer the same job, the employee will be given the opportunity to apply for another job on terms and conditions not less favourable.
- 3.4 Line managers should seek advice from HR when considering initial applications for a career break.

### 4 Conditions

- 4.1 Chief Officers may, at their discretion and subject to certain conditions being satisfied, allow employees to take a career break and return to work afterwards.
- 4.2 Employees who are granted career breaks should be aware that their continuity of employment will be broken by the career break and that this will have an effect on any statutory rights and contractual benefits that are linked to length of service.
- 4.3 The conditions are:
- (a) Career breaks will **always** be unpaid

- (b) A career break may be any period of time not less than 6 months and not more than 3 years
- (c) The granting of a career break and the length of the break will be entirely at the Chief Officer's discretion and will depend on business needs
- (d) The career break scheme will be open to all employees with the requisite service, including part-time employees
- (e) During the period of any career break, the employee should keep in touch with their line manager at regular intervals and must get in contact two months before they intend to return to work
- (f) The employee will not be permitted to take up any other paid employment during a career break (other than existing declared outside paid work) for another organisation in the course of the career break. There may, however, be circumstances where a Chief Officer considers it to be reasonable to allow paid work to be undertaken where the employment is consistent with achieving the objectives of the break. Examples could include:
  - o temporary work, if the employee is going on a travelling overseas or studying,
  - o work of a developmental/voluntary nature such as charity work overseas
  - o work associated with a course of study

In considering requests to undertake paid work elsewhere, the Chief Officer should take account of whether the paid work might undermine the reason for the career break or might be in competition or potential conflict with the Council's services.

- (g) Employees resign from their current position and managers are under no obligation to keep their specific post open or guaranteeing a suitable alternative, when they intend to return
- (h) Repayment in full of any outstanding Council loans before starting their career break
- (i) Undertake to inform the Council at all times of any change to their personal address during the career break period, in order that the Council may communicate with them
- (j) Declare immediately to their line manager if they have taken up employment with another employer during the career break period

4.4 A breach of the terms of the career break agreement by an individual may result in termination of the agreement by the Council with subsequent non re-engagement at the end of the career break.

## 5. Terms and Conditions of Employment

- 5.1 **Continuity of service:** Employees length of service with the Council prior to the career break will be aggregated with the length of service after the break for the purposes of calculating service condition entitlements.
- 5.2 **Pensions:** Employees are advised to speak to the pensions department regarding contributions to the Council's superannuation scheme while on career break.
- 5.3 **National Insurance Contributions (NIC):** Employees will not make NIC's during a career break as they will not be in receipt of an income during this period.
- 5.4 While on the career break the following will **not** accrue:
- Annual leave
  - Incremental entitlements
  - Sick Pay nor the accrual of sick pay entitlements
- 5.5 It is the duty of every employee applying for Career Breaks to provide true and accurate information.

## 6. Return to Work

- 6.1 Employees intending to return to work must give a minimum of 6 weeks written notice to their former line manager of the date they are able to return to work. On receipt of this notice, the line manager will submit a copy to HR Shared Services Recruitment Team who will undertake a job search and despatch internal vacancy bulletins to intended returners on a regular basis throughout the job search period.
- 6.2 The job search will commence from the notified date of return and will be for a maximum of 6 months. This period is to allow for opportunities of re-employment only and will not entitle the employee to receive pay.
- 6.3 Individuals on the Scheme will be given priority over external job applicants but not over those employees who are currently within the Council's employment and are displaced, for example, medical redeployees, and employees affected by restructuring and subject to the Redeployment Procedure.
- 6.4 If the Council is unable to find suitable employment within 6 months, any job search arrangements between the Council and the individual will terminate. The Council will be deemed to have discharged its obligations in full to the individual in respect of the Career Break Scheme and employment opportunities.

## 7. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed after 2 years of operation.

## 8. Additional Information

For additional information managers should refer to the following Barnet Council policies which provide alternatives to a career break.

- Flexible Working
- Job Share
- Homeworking
- Parental Leave

For additional information please refer to;

Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development – [www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk)

## **CAREER BREAK AGREEMENT**

I (name of employee) tender my resignation from the London Borough of Barnet with effect from (date). The resignation is on the basis that I intend to take a Career Break of (period not less than 6 months and not more than 3 years).

The reason(s) for my career break is/are:

My expected date of return to work will be (date)

I agree to the following terms:

- I do not take up alternative gainful employment during the period of the break.
- I will take responsibility to maintain contact with the London Borough of Barnet during the break.
- I will notify my line manager of any change of address or telephone number.
- All of my employment rights, with the London Borough of Barnet will cease during the career break. I understand that by agreeing to a career break, London Borough Barnet is not keeping my current post open or guaranteeing a suitable alternative, they are simply agreeing to seek suitable re-employment opportunities when I intend to return. I acknowledge that I will not be entitled to any redundancy payment in the event of any organisational change.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_