



CAREER BREAK POLICY

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
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1 INTRODUCTION

NHS 24 is committed to a Career Break Policy to allow staff members an opportunity to leave their employment on a medium to long-term basis to fulfil domestic or other commitments. The policy will enable staff members to keep up to date during their career break and assist them where possible with affecting a return to work at the end of the agreed break. NHS 24 cannot provide any firm guarantee of re-employment at the end of any agreed break; the staff member should take full cognisance of this before making any decision to embark upon a career break.

The maximum period of the career break is 2 continuous years and the minimum is for 6 months. A staff member may however take a number of breaks throughout their employment provided that the total periods of absence do not exceed 5 years. A new application must be made for each requested break.

This policy demonstrates commitment to long-term career development and continued promotion of Equal Opportunities. NHS 24 believes that the scheme will help to recruit, retain and encourage the return to work of skilled staff.

Arrangements for those participating in Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) or equivalent are different, and separate policy should be applied for those taking a career break for this reason.

2. DEFINITION

- 2.1 A career break is a variation in contract for a specified period of time. The member of staff applying for a career break should understand that, depending on the length of the career break, it may impact on their pension rights. They should check the terms of the pension scheme they are a member of as they will be subject to the rules of that scheme. .
- 2.2 A career break is special leave without pay for a specified period of time.

3. AIM

- 3.1 The policy is designed for staff who are currently prevented from remaining in full or part time work but who would like to restart work when circumstances make this possible, for example after a course of further education, bringing up children, having cared for a dependant

relative or after a life experience. A career break will **not** be allowed for the purpose of taking up alternative employment.

- 3.2 NHS 24 aims to create an environment, which will allow all staff members to utilise their skills and talents and experience, and thereby encourage a well-motivated and committed workforce. NHS 24 value the contribution made by staff, and will treat all staff with dignity and respect, as an open and accountable organisation.

4. PROCEDURE

- 4.1 All staff members must have a least 12 months' service with NHS 24.
- 4.2 Staff who wish to be considered for the scheme will discuss the matter initially with their line manager.
- 4.3 Applications should be made on the application form (Appendix 1). Applications should be made at least 3 months prior to commencement of the proposed break though in exceptional circumstances this may be waived by management.
- 4.4 Each application will be considered by the staff members Director on the merits of the individual case, and a decision made normally within 14 calendar days following receipt of an application. Full details should be provided, in writing, to the staff member if an application has been rejected, clearly explaining the reasons for so doing.
- 4.5 If approved the staff member will be issued with appropriate documentation by the Human Resources department, which requires an agreement to abide by the conditions of the career break.
- 4.6 The applicant has a right to appeal to the Deputy Director of HR where a request has been refused.
- 4.7 NHS 24 will guarantee to provide career break participants with at least 15 hours paid employment per year (pro rata for shorter breaks or part time staff), in order to keep abreast with changes and developments in the service. This may include training courses and professional updating. Line Managers require to monitor that staff who are on career breaks comply with this and that HR Business services are advised of any work done in order to ensure accurate payment. There may be exceptions to this e.g. staff living abroad.
- 4.8 All documentation in relation to the scheme is available from the Human Resources department/intranet.

The staff member should be aware that, in some circumstances, the post which they left could be subject to organisational change. As such

NHS 24's policies on Organisational Change and Redeployment will apply. These apply equally to staff on career break and, consequently, where redeployment attempts are unsuccessful normal redundancy procedures will apply. Redundancy payments will be calculated in accordance with NHS Terms and Conditions.

- 4.9 The individual on a career break should provide 3 months' notice to their line manager as to their intention to return to the organisation following their career break. During this period copies of the internal vacancies will be sent to staff members HR Business Services Team.
- 4.10 Every effort will be made to allow the staff member to return on their original basis. If re-employment on the original basis is not available the redeployment policy and process will apply.

5. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

General Conditions

- 5.1 A period of absence on a career break shall not be regarded as a break in service although the break will not itself count as reckonable service.
- 5.2 Periods of working during the break will count as reckonable service.
- 5.3 As a staff member has continuous employment whilst on a career break, any entitlements accrued prior to the break will not be lost.

6. SUPERANNUATION

- 6.1 Staff on a career break can remain members of the Superannuation scheme.

Under current Scottish Public Pension Agency (SPPA) legislation, additional Superannuation contributions can be made during a career break, as detailed in options A and B below. For full information, please refer to the SPPA website: <http://www.sppa.gov.uk/>

6.2 Staff have 3 options

Option A:

6 months only: Staff member responsible for their contributions only, with NHS 24 responsible for employer contributions. .

Option B

First 6 months: Staff member responsible for their contributions only, with NHS 24 responsible for employer contributions.

Remainder of the career break, up to a further 18 months, the staff member will be responsible for both their contributions and those of NHS 24 as employer.

Option C

A staff member who does not wish to make any contributions during their career break is affectively opting out of the Superannuation scheme. As such the staff member requires to complete the SPPA leaves form available from the SPPA website.

Staff must note that contributions made during a career break are required to be paid promptly, preferably in advance, and cannot be collected in arrears when a staff member returns to work.

If a staff member, who has selected options A or B, fails to make prompt payments this will be considered as the staff member self selecting to opt out of the superannuation scheme.

- 6.3** Staff must indicate their preferred option on the application form (Appendix 1)

Sick Leave

- 7.0** While on a career break staff are entitled to sick pay. Pay is calculated, in accordance with paragraph 14.4 of the Agenda for Change Handbook, on the average earnings for an 8 week period ending with the last pay day prior to the period of incapacity for work. If during the reference period there are no earnings then no payment will be due.

Annual Leave

- 7.1** Staff on a career break will retain accrued entitlement for annual leave. There will be no entitlement to annual leave while on a career break.

Maternity Leave

- 7.2** On return staff members will retain the same entitlement to Maternity Leave as that accrued prior to going on a career break. Only reckonable service while on a career break will count towards additional entitlement.

While on a career break, staff members will not normally be entitled to Maternity Pay as full pay is calculated on the average of the 8 week period from the 22nd week to the 15th week prior to the expected

date of confinement.

- 7.3 A member of staff who is provided with a lease car must contact the Finance Department prior to embarking upon such a break to discuss any requirement to return the vehicle and any fee implications.

8. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed in partnership on a 2-yearly basis.

APPLICATION FOR A CAREER BREAK	
Name of Staff Member:	
Pay Number:	
Job Title:	
Department and Location	
Preferred contact method during leave	e-mail / letter / telephone / mobile (details below) _____
Date commenced employment with NHS 24	
Reason for Career Break _____ _____ _____	
Proposed start date of career break	
Proposed End date of career break	
<p>I confirm that I have read section 6 of the policy and regarding my superannuation position wish the following to apply</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Option A - Remain a member of the superannuation for 6 months only when I am liable to only pay the employee contributions.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Option B - Remain a member of the superannuation for the full duration of my career break when I am liable to pay the employee contributions only for the first 6 months, then employee AND employer contributions for the remainder of the career break, paid in advance.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Option C - Not to continue with my membership of the scheme and have attached my SPPA leavers paperwork.</p>	
<p>I wish to apply for an extended period of unpaid leave under the Career Break policy and fully understand that NHS 24 cannot provide any firm guarantee of re-employment at the end of any agreed break.</p> <p>I understand that by submitting this form I will abide by the conditions of the policy, particularly in relation to not carrying out any other employment during the Career Break.</p> <p>I accept that failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the Career Break policy may result in disciplinary proceeding.</p> <p>I will advise my manager of any change in circumstances e.g. change in intended return date or change in contact details.</p>	
Signed :	
Dated:	

For completing by line manager – please tick whichever apply☐**Approved**

I support this application and confirm that the applicants work performance is satisfactory. I will ensure appropriate arrangements are made to maintain contact with the applicant, including arrangements for working hours, training and general information for the duration of the break.

☐**Rejected** Reason given below

Signed :**Printed Name****Dated:****For completing by Director – please tick whichever apply**☐**Approved – Reason(s) given below**

☐**Rejected - Reason(s) given below**

Signed :**Printed Name****Dated:****Copy sent to HR Business Support Team for processing**