0405 Career Breaks

ORDER 4/5
WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE
CAREER BREAKS

1 STRATEGY

West Midlands Fire Service recognises the need to support individuals where possible by balancing the needs and aspirations of each individual against those of West Midlands Fire Service. A career break will offer an individual an additional option to pursue a development goal, travel or care for dependants in the longer term with the potential to be considered for re-employment at a later date.

A career break is a termination of employment and is not intended to replace other policies such as special leave and flexible working.

2 POLICY

2.1 Eligibility

The scheme is available to all employees who have completed at least 12 months continuous service.

Reasons for taking a career break will be considered on an individual basis by the employee's Line Manager

2.2 Re-employment

The career break scheme will not guarantee that an individual will be re-employed when their career break comes to an end. All Career Break returnees will be considered for re-employment subject to vacancies being available and prior to advertising vacancies externally.

2.3 Length of a career break

A career break can be for any period from six months up to a maximum of three years.

2.4 Application

To apply for a career break an individual must:

- discuss and agree details of their proposed career break with their line manager; and
- Complete the application process on HRMS Employee Self Service under a Flexible Working Request.

2.5 Entitlements

Entitlement to car loans and car lease benefits will also be terminated with the resignation. Any other outstanding loans or debts must be repaid in full by the date of resignation. You should consider the implications of this before the career break is agreed.

2.6 Career break after maternity leave

At the end of maternity leave an individual may be eligible to take a career break.

Following maternity leave, employees must return to work for a minimum of 3 months to retain the enhanced payment arrangements. Failure to return to work may result in the Service reclaiming part or all of the additional payments made. For more information, please refer to 0408 Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption SP Provisions Leave and Pay 06 .

Any individual considering a career break for child or dependent care, you could contact People Support Services to review other available options, e.g., flexible working, etc.

2.7 Returning to work

An individual will be considered for re-employment subject to suitable vacancies being available and re-join the Service on the conditions of service applicable to new entrants to the Service. Please refer to Appendix 1 for more information.

The organisation will provide any additional training or support whilst the employee is more competent in role. Development plans should be in place from the return back from Career Break to help the employee return.

2.8 Pension rights

Taking a career break will result in you ceasing to be a member of your pension scheme. When you return to employment after your career break you will be treated as a new employee and placed into the appropriate pension scheme at that time. This may not be the same scheme that you were a member of previously. Please refer to Appendix 1 for more information.

2.9 Continuous Service

Previous service will not count towards any benefits based on length of service including sick pay, maternity leave or pay, annual leave, notice entitlement and redundancy pay.

Where an employee returns to local government service following a break for maternity reasons, or caring for children or other dependants he or she will be entitled to have previous service taken into account in respect of the sickness and maternity schemes, provided that the break in service does not exceed eight years and that no permanent paid full time employment has intervened (Please also refer to 0401 Annual Leave, Public Holiday, TOIL and Flexi Time.

2.10 Termination of a Career Break

If, during a career break, an individual no longer wishes to be considered for a return to work, they must contact their appointed PSS Business Partner stating their intention to terminate the agreement. A Career Break will automatically be terminated if a period of three years has elapsed and no intention to return is received.

2.11 Variations to the scheme

The Authority reserves the right to vary the conditions of the scheme for individual applicants and to alter or withdraw its provisions at any time.

2.12 Right of appeal

If an individual feels that their application for a career break has been unreasonably refused, an appeal against the decision may be made to the senior manager within seven days of receipt of the decision. Where this is not practical, it will be heard by a manager who has the authority to review and change the original decision. Please refer to Appendix 1 for more information.

2.13 Further information

Further information can be obtained from People Support Services – HR team at Fire Service Headquarters.

3 CROSS REFERENCES

Reference is made in this Order to issues concerning rates of pay, maternity leave, sick pay and annual leave entitlement. Information on these issues is detailed more fully in the following Standing Orders:

0202 Grievance Procedure

0227 Flexible Working

0403 Special Leave

0404 Parental Leave

0401 Annual Leave, Public Holiday, TOIL and Flexi Time

0408 Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption SP Provisions Leave and Pay 06

5 KEY CONSULTEES

Fire Brigades' Union

Fire Officers' Association

Unison

6 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EIA is not required for this standing order.

7 OWNERSHIP

This Standing Order did not require SET or Authority approval.

8 RESPONSIBILITY AND REVIEW/AMENDMENT DETAILS

8.1 Responsibility SET Member/Department

SET Enabler for people, People Support Services.

8.2 Created/amended/fully reviewed

Fully reviewed and amended by Resourcing and Employee Relations in August 2018.

If you have followed any of the processes included in this Policy please complete the following Policy Debrief Form by clicking here

APPENDIX 1

GUIDANCE

Returning to work

On completion of your career break, the option to return will be considered but is subject to appropriate vacancies being available. You may be required to undertake selection for re-employment alongside other career break returnees and your selection will be subject to meeting the minimum requirements for the new role.

You are required to re-apply in writing to the People Support Services Manager to re-join as a new entrant to the Service. You should give People Support Services at least three months' notice of your intention to return to work, to enable the identification of potential vacancies. Individuals, who have not submitted an application to return at least three months before the end date of their career break agreement, will not be considered for re-employment.

The process of re-joining will mean that you are subject to standard recruitment clearances, this may include a medical examination, a criminal conviction declaration, where appropriate and you will have to complete a satisfactory probation period before your appointment is confirmed.

Every effort will be made to identify employment of a broadly similar nature and level to that you undertook prior to the career break. During the notice period you will be considered for suitable vacant posts. If at the end of this period suitable posts have not been identified or the offers that have been made have been refused, a review of the circumstances will take place and a decision taken to either extend the notice period or terminate the career break agreement.

Salary on Return

After returning to work from a Career Break your salary will depend on the length of time you have been away:

- If you leave the organisation before you are competent in role you will return on development rate until you prove competent.
- If you return within 2 years of leaving for a career break and depending on your training records you will return on competent pay.
- If you return after being out of the organisation for more than 2 years you will return on development rate until you prove competent in role.

Training and support

If returning to work an induction/work-up development training will be put in place to reintroduce individuals to the organisation and any changes that may have taken place during their absence. This may include any health and safety training required to fulfil their role.

Additional training and support may be required to ensure that an employee is up to date with any changes that may have taken place during their absence. Similarly, if returning in a different role a development plan will be put in place to support integration back into the Service.

Right of appeal

If an individual feels that their application for a career break has been unreasonably refused, an appeal against the decision may be made to the senior manager within seven days of receipt of the decision. Where this is not practical it will be heard by a manager who has authority to review and change the original decision. The employee may be accompanied at the meeting and a written response will be sent within seven days of the meeting. Where, for any reason, the timescales set out above cannot be met, this will be communicated in writing to the employee and an appropriate extended timescale arranged.

Pension Rights

For full details of the impact a career break will have on your pension benefits please contact the Pension Section on 0121 380 6932 or 0121 380 6933.

Change of circumstances

Individuals must notify the Resourcing Team as soon as possible of any change of address to ensure that internal records are up to date.