

Career Break Policy

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Appendices

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Career Break Policy

1. Policy statement

- 1.1 The Council recognises that staff may sometimes wish to take a break from their career for various reasons. This policy facilitates such a break, whereby employees may apply to take unpaid leave while retaining the opportunity to return to work at the end of a specified period.
- 1.2 The Council will, whenever possible, endeavour to help staff fulfil these wishes. The provision of high quality services is, however, the paramount consideration and must not be compromised.
- 1.3 The needs of the service are the primary consideration for determining whether an application should be approved. Factors such as the proposed duration of the break, availability of suitable cover arrangements and continuity of service will, therefore, be taken into account when deciding whether to authorise a career break.

2. Scope

- 2.1 All employees of Thurrock Council who have the required length of service, including schools based staff where the school has adopted this policy. Employees must have completed two years' continuous service with Thurrock Council are eligible to apply for a career break.

3. Aims & objectives

- 3.1 Thurrock Council aims to ensure:
 - members of staff have the opportunity to have a break from employment in order to fulfil outside commitments and ambitions;
 - valuable members of staff who may otherwise be forced to leave their employment, are retained;
 - links are maintained with staff on career breaks, ensuring they receive regular updates and, where possible, essential training to ensure that their knowledge and skills are maintained.

4. Conditions of scheme

- 4.1 Employees may apply for a career break of between twelve weeks and two years.
- 4.2 Applications should be made at least three months before the employee wishes to start the career break so that suitable cover arrangements can be made.

- 4.3 The member of staff will be asked to sign a written agreement of the terms and conditions of their career break.
- 4.4 During a career break, the manager should provide any updates about work issues and the organisation, and the employee must inform the manager about any changes in circumstances.
- 4.5 The member of staff will be invited to attend any training or refresher courses which are considered appropriate. Attendance will be voluntary and without pay.
- 4.6 Staff returning to work following a career break will be re-engaged on broadly similar duties and at an equivalent grade if their previous post is not available.
- 4.7 If an employee resigns during a career break, their normal, contractual notice period will apply. The employee may be required to work for some or all of the notice period at the discretion of their director. If they do not return to work, service with the Council will be taken to have ended at the beginning of the career break.
- 4.8 The employee must give four weeks' written notice to confirm their intention to return to work, and agree specific starting details with their manager. Consideration will be given to early returns subject to the needs of the service.
- 4.9 If the employee decides not to return to work after the career break they should inform their manager at the earliest opportunity.

5. Terms and Conditions

- 5.1 **Pay:** career breaks will be unpaid.
- 5.2 **Pension:** employees in the Local Government Pension Scheme are required to continue making contributions for the first 30 days of a career break, after which a break in pensionable service will apply and no further contributions can be made.
- 5.3 **Annual leave:** shall not accrue for the duration of the career break, but the break shall count as 'qualifying service' towards leave entitlements after the break.
- 5.4 **Continuous service:** a career break will be regarded as continuous service for the purposes of redundancy, maternity pay and unfair dismissal rights. Further details are available from the Human Resources and Payroll Services.
- 5.5 **Policies and procedures:** staff will be subject to the Council's policies and procedures during the career break.
- 5.6 **Sick pay:** staff will not be entitled to occupational sick pay while on a career break, but the duration of the break will count towards their sick pay entitlement on their return to work.

6. General Conditions

- 6.1 Any event which occurs to an employee during a career break, which may have a bearing on their employment, must be reported to their manager at the earliest opportunity. The Council will then decide whether the matter should be taken further.
- 6.2 Human Resources will maintain an overview to ensure consistency of approach regarding the implementation of this policy and will offer advice where appropriate.

7. How to apply for a career break

- 7.1 Employees should first approach their manager to discuss:
- their reasons for wishing to take a career break;
 - the proposed length of the break;
 - how their absence can be covered.
- 7.2 Depending on the nature of the work and proposed length of career break, options for cover would normally include:
- leaving the post vacant;
 - an acting-up arrangement;
 - appointing an agency worker;
 - employing a fixed term worker;
 - employing a permanent worker.
- 7.3 The employee should then complete a request form (see Appendix 1), which should be sent to their head of service, with a copy to Human Resources.
- 7.4 The head of service will discuss the application with Human Resources to ascertain the feasibility of the proposed career break.
- 7.5 If a request is refused, staff have the right to appeal to their director, or if the director has already opposed the application, the chief executive. The director/chief executive's decision will be final.
- 7.6 If approved, Human Resources will draw up a career break agreement for the employee to sign, in conjunction with their manager. This will include the terms and conditions, dates and requirements to be fulfilled by both parties for the duration of the career break.



THURROCK COUNCIL
CAREER BREAK SCHEME (Part 1)

NAME:	
PAY REFERENCE:	
JOB TITLE:	

START DATE WITH THE COUNCIL:	
LOCATION:	
PENSION SCHEME MEMBER:	YES/NO

I WISH TO TAKE A CAREER BREAK

FROM

TO

(MINIMUM 12 WEEKS, MAXIMUM 2 YEARS)

REASON FOR CAREER BREAK:

SIGNED:

DATE:



THURROCK  **COUNCIL**
CAREER BREAK SCHEME (Part 2)

For Manager's use:

I approve/do not approve the above named member of staff's application to take a career break.

If the application is not approved, or subject to conditions, please explain:

Signed:

Dated:

PLEASE FORWARD A COPY OF THIS FORM TO HUMAN RESOURCES