



West Yorkshire  
Fire & Rescue Service

# Career Break

## HRPOL001

### OFFICIAL

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## 1 Introduction

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to developing work practices and HR policies that support work-life balance and enhance the staff experience. The aims of the career break are to attract, retain and motivate staff by demonstrating a commitment to their long-term career and personal development.

The career break scheme is an arrangement in which any employee can apply to take an extended period of unpaid time away from work. All career breaks will be subject to operational requirements.

A career break could be used for a variety of purposes, for example:

- time off in order for the employee to undergo a university or college course;
- personal or professional development;
- time off on account of childcare or other family responsibilities;
- time off to allow an employee to pursue a personal interest or undertake a personal project;
- overseas travel, for example for the purpose of visiting family;

and any other substantial reason acceptable to the Service.

## 2 Conditions of Career Breaks

The conditions of an approved career break are as follows:

### 2.1 Prior to a Career Break:

- Employees who apply must have successfully completed their probationary period and have at least five years' WYFRS service and are limited to one career break application every twelve months.
- Employees submitting career break requests must give a minimum of three months' notice before they wish the leave to commence.
- A career break may be any period of time between four weeks and a maximum of one year to avoid excessive skills fade. However, the granting of a career break and the length of the break will be entirely at the Service's discretion and will depend on the needs of the organisation at the time in question.
- An employee requesting a career break must be prepared to commit to an agreement to return to work on a specified date at the end of the career break. If the employee does not return to work on the agreed date following contact from the HR department they will have been deemed to have resigned.

### 2.2 During a Career Break:

- Employees on a career break do not accrue annual leave and for the duration of the career break will be unpaid.
- The employee must obtain written consent from the Authority before they undertake any work for another organisation during a career break. Such consent will not be unreasonably withheld and the requirement is primarily designed to avoid any conflicts of interest.

- Employees will continue to be employed by the Service and be subject to Fire Service Disciplinary procedures, with organisational policies adhered to whilst on career break.
- If an employee suffers an illness or injury during the career break which could potentially prevent them returning to full operational duties at the end of the break, they must notify the Service as soon as possible.
- If an employee decides to resign during a career break, they must submit written notice of resignation to the Human Resources department. The contract of employment will normally cease from the date when the resignation is received, i.e. it is not expected that a notice period will be worked.

## 2.3 For Pension Purposes:

- Employees should take account of the effect of their absence on their individual pension situation before applying for a career break and seek advice from the pensions department.
- A career break is not counted as pensionable service. An employee can choose to repay the missing pension contributions when they return from career break. All employees have 30 days from their return date to make their election. If the employee chooses not to return to employment after their career break they must make an election to repay **before** their date of termination.
- Providing an election is made within the timescales mentioned, members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) are only liable for their element of the missing contributions, if the election is outside the timescales LGPS employees will be liable for both the employee and employer contributions. Firefighter Pension Scheme (1992, 2006, 2015 and RDS Modified) employees are liable for both the employee and employer contributions.
- The payment amounts and mechanism will depend on the pension scheme to which they belong; quotations will be supplied by the Pensions department upon the employees return.
- Death in service will still apply whilst on a career break. The benefit entitlement would be based on the salary/wage the employee was in receipt of prior to the career break. Should an employee die whilst on career break their death in service provision will still be valid, this is on the proviso that they are an active member of one of the following pension schemes: LGPS, 1992 FPS, 2006 FPS, 2015 CARE FPS or RDS Modified.

## 2.4 Returning from a Career Break:

- All employees must confirm their return to work in writing two months prior to agreed return to work date. If that notification is not received, the employee will be deemed to have resigned.
- Towards the end of the career break, the employee will be required to keep in touch with the organisation and provide contact details to discuss any return to work arrangements and dates. If the organisation is not able to get in touch with the employee and/or the employee does not respond, they will be deemed to have resigned.
- Following a career break, Grey book employees will return to a similar post, however, this may not be the post originally vacated. Green book employees will return to their previous post (providing the post still exists).
- Grey book employees will undergo a full health assessment/medical declaration by Occupational Health prior to the beginning of the retraining period to ascertain their capability to carry out

operational retraining. This must be arranged by the individual with Occupational Health during the period of the career break.

- Grey book employees must complete return to work training following a career break within the authorised period of absence. Any such training will be counted as part of the career break and will therefore be unpaid. Termination of contract may result if an employee fails to successfully complete return to work training.

### **3 Application for Career Breaks**

Applications for career breaks should be submitted using form [HRFRM214](#) (which can be found under the forms on the HR site) via line management to GM (Employee Resourcing) for Grey book employees or Corporate Human Resources Manager for Green book employees. The application should include an acknowledgment that the individual has read the terms and conditions of the career break and accepts their obligations under the scheme. It should also give details of the dates of the anticipated period of career break and the purpose of the break.

In the event of the application being declined or deferred the individual will have a right of appeal to the Chief Employment Services Officer. Grounds for appeal should be put in writing within 7 days of the original decision.

Applicants must be aware that the provision of career breaks will be dependent on factors such as the exigencies of the service and the number of individuals who will be on career breaks at any one time. In addition employees should be aware that applications might be rejected if, for example, there is a cost for a replacement or training, or the member of staff is in a specialist role and the resultant vacancy would be difficult to fill.

### **4 Organisational changes during a career break**

If organisational changes occur, the Service will ensure that, where possible, employees taking a career break are involved in any consultations or other appropriate procedures on the same basis as all other affected employees.

Where an employee's post is likely to become at risk of redundancy during the career break the Service will inform the employee and where possible discuss the situation with them, as required by law and the Service's procedures.