

Career Break

POLICY & PROCEDURE

OFFICIAL

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Policy

National Context

[Authorised Professional Practice](#) (APP) is produced by the College of Policing as the official source of professional practice on policing. All officers and staff are expected to have regard to APP in discharging their responsibilities. Essentially, our “policy” is to comply with APP as it develops to cover all areas of policing.

Rationale

Merseyside Police is committed to delivering the highest standards of policing to the communities of Merseyside through the utilisation of a highly trained, skilled and motivated workforce.

Fundamental to that commitment is the development of work-life balance initiatives that will enhance the maintenance of an efficient, effective and diverse workforce.

Merseyside Police acknowledges that changes in people’s circumstances may lead to those who have joined the service to take a break from their chosen career, with a view to a return to the organisation, without the need to resign. This career break scheme offers this facility, subject to meeting certain provisions and conditions.

Aims

The overall aim of this policy is to enable Police Officers and Police Staff to take a break from their chosen career without the need to resign from the Force. This allows the Force to retain the skills and experience of those individuals in circumstances where they otherwise may have been lost.

Objectives

- a) To provide Police Officers and Police Staff the opportunity to take a break from their career to develop themselves or to fulfil outside commitments such as caring for family and other dependants.
- b) To retain a motivated, skilled and experienced workforce.

Application and Scope

All police officers and police staff, including the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to Merseyside Police must be aware of, and are required to comply with, all relevant policy and associated procedures.

A career break is available to Police Officers and Police Staff who have successfully completed their probationary period and consent to resume a career with the Force. A career break may be taken for a variety of reasons, and the application must, as a minimum, satisfy the requirements as outlined in Section 1 – Criteria.

Police Officers and Police Staff who fulfil the criteria can apply for a career break for a period of one year, which may be reviewable up to a maximum of three years.

Outcome Evaluation

People Services will evaluate outcomes as a result of regular monitoring taking into consideration the following:

- a) The number of requests for career break approved/declined
- b) The number of staff on career breaks
- c) The reasons for taking career breaks

The information will be made available to Chief Officers and the Head of People Operations and Service Delivery upon request.

Procedure

Version History

Version Number	Date	Detailed rational behind amending/updating policy or procedure.	Policy Owner Details	Policy Author Details
5.5	24/08/17		Head of OD - PS	Head of OD - PS
5.6	17/09/26	Naming conventions; formatting updates	Head of OD - PS	Head of OD - PS

1. Criteria

- 1.1 Police Officers and Police Staff are eligible to apply for a career break provided the following conditions are satisfied:
- a) Have successfully completed their probationary period.
 - b) Consent to resume a career with the Force.
- 1.2 Applicants will not normally be permitted to commence a career break if they are subject to an outstanding complaint or disciplinary process.
- 1.3 Each application for a Career Break will be judged on its individual merit taking account of the exigencies of the service. A career break may be taken for a variety of reasons, which may include:
- a) Domestic/Dependant Care
 - b) Education
 - c) Travel
 - d) Voluntary work
- 1.4 The purpose of a career break is to enable a break in the individual's career and is NOT intended to enable staff to undertake alternative paid employment. However, it is acknowledged that individuals may wish to engage in other employment for the purpose of financially supporting the career break. In those circumstances prior approval must be obtained from the Head of People Operations and Service Delivery. Please refer to Section 10 – Police Officers and Police Staff - Status during career break, for further information.

2. Duration

- 2.1 Staff that meet the criteria as detailed in Section 1 can apply for a career break for a period of one year, which may be reviewable on a twelve-monthly basis, up to a maximum of three years.
- 2.2 The Head of People Operations and Service Delivery has the discretion to extend the period of career break beyond the prescribed maximum period in exceptional circumstances.

3. Application

- 3.1 Police Officers and Police Staff considering applying for a career break must first familiarise themselves with the contents of this policy document and pay particular attention to SECTION 8, 9 and 10 - status during career break – conditions of service.
- 3.2 Police Officers and Police Staff are advised to discuss fully the proposed career break with their relevant Line Manager before making a formal application.
- 3.3 Police Officers and Police Staff wishing to apply for a career break must submit their application via the automated process on Smartforce not less than twelve weeks before they wish to commence a career break. Once the application has been sent via Smartforce the applicant will receive an email confirming receipt.
- 3.4 The Line Manager will be responsible for making recommendations via the Smartforce application regarding the person's eligibility to take a career break. They will discuss the application with the staff member and make a recommendation to the BCU Commander/Head of Department.
- 3.5 In making the recommendation consideration should be given to the following:
 - a) The current responsibilities of the individual, e.g. completion of a project or attendance at court.
 - b) Whether operational requirements would be undermined due to lack of resources.
 - c) Whether it is known at the point of application that the individual's post is subject to review under the Force change programme.
 - d) Is the individual subject of an outstanding complaint(s) or discipline process.
 - e) Any other objective reason based on operational need.
- 3.6 The BCU Commander/Head of Department has the authority to approve or refuse an application for career break. The decision as to whether to accept or reject the individual's application must be notified within 28 days of receipt of the application.

- 3.7 Where the application is rejected, the decision must be documented and written reasons for the rejection will be provided.

4. Appeal

- 4.1 The applicant may submit notice of appeal to the Head of People Operations and Service Delivery via HR Shared Services within 28 days of receipt of the written notification of refusal.
- 4.2 All the information provided by the applicant, line manager and BCU Commander/Head of Department will be independently reviewed.
- 4.3 The decision to uphold or reject the appeal by the Head of People Operations and Service Delivery will be final.
- 4.4 The Head of People Operations and Service Delivery will communicate the decision in writing within 14 days of receipt of the appeal.

5. Agreement

- 5.1 On commencement of the career break the individual will be asked to complete a career break agreement form which will apply for the duration of the career break. This will be a standard Force agreement between the BCU Commander/ Head of Department and the individual. It will cover the obligations and expectations of the Force and any individual in relation to:
- a) Commencement and end date of the career break
 - b) Reason for the career break
 - c) Use of Police Powers (if applicable)
 - d) Codes of conduct
 - e) Status during the break - Conditions of service

6. Contact

- 6.1 The responsibility for maintaining contact during a career break will rest as much with the individual as with the Force. All Police Officer and Police Staff must provide a current point of contact (phone number and/or email address) and address whilst on an approved career break in order that regular contact can be maintained.
- 6.2 Where the break has been approved for the purpose of travel, officers and staff will be required to provide the details of a resident of the United Kingdom who is able to make contact with them whilst abroad.

- 6.3 It is the responsibility of the individual to update HR Shared Services within 4 weeks of any changes to the contact details during their period of career break.
- 6.4 Keeping in touch is an important element of the Career Break Scheme and helps ease the return-to-work process. HR Shared Services will provide as a minimum, 6-monthly contact with the individual and record the details on the HR Personnel system.
- 6.5 The individual must also notify HR Shared Services of any changes that may arise that have implications for their returning to the workplace on the agreed date.
- 6.6 It is incumbent upon the individual to keep abreast of current developments through accessing the [Force Website](#) on a regular basis.

7. Review

- 7.1 At the commencement of a career break, the BCU Commander/ Head of Department and the individual will sign an agreement, which will clearly define the obligations and expectations of both the Force and the individual. This may be reviewed at any time during the career break by agreement between the Head of People Operations and Service Delivery and the individual. In all cases, HR Shared Services will review the individual and their circumstances annually.
- 7.2 Officers and staff will be under a general duty to inform HR Shared Services of any circumstances, which may affect the agreed objectives, or timescales of a career break.
- 7.3 Where there are reasonable grounds for believing that the agreed objectives and timescales of a career break may no longer be achievable, the individual may be required to attend a review meeting with the People Services. As the result of such a review, an individual may be required to return to duty, after a minimum notice period of one month. However, the individual may make representations to the Head of People Operations and Service Delivery before a final decision is reached.
- 7.4 The individual's right to privacy will be balanced against the Chief Constable's need to know.

8. Police Officer – status during career break

- 8.1 Police Officers will continue to be regarded as engaged under the direction of the Chief Constable Merseyside Police and will therefore remain subject to Police Regulations and Codes of Conduct as per Police (Conduct) Regulations 2008. Acts of misconduct committed whilst on a career break will be dealt with in the usual manner.

8.2 Pay and Pensions

- 8.2.1 A career break is regarded as unpaid leave and, therefore, the duration of the break does not qualify for the purposes of reckoning entitlement to pay and annual leave.
- 8.2.2 An officer's rank and pay point will be protected and on return will be on the same basis as before, subject to any changes in Regulations, PNB agreements or Home Office Circulars.
- 8.2.3 Officers will not be entitled to housing or rent allowance for the duration of the career break. They will, however, retain their current entitlement and dependent on their circumstances, the appropriate payments will resume on their return.
- 8.2.4 In accordance with the Police Pension Regulations there is no facility to pay contributions for periods of unpaid leave in respect of a Career Break. This period is not classed as membership and is therefore not reckonable. It remains open to an officer to make good any shortfall in pension benefits caused by a career break by serving on to complete the full reckonable service.
- 8.2.5 An officer remains a member of the force whilst on career break and therefore remains part of the Police Pension Scheme, unless he or she has made an election to opt out of the Police Pension Scheme. The period spent on career break will therefore be treated as qualifying (but not reckonable) service. As a result, the member remains subject to the scheme's death-in-service and enhanced medical retirement provisions. They also continue to be covered by the injury benefit provisions where applicable.

8.3 Postings

- 8.3.1 There is no guarantee that Police Officers will return to their original Post/-Department following a career break. People Services will be responsible for identifying an alternative suitable post in line with the Force Redeployment Policy.

9. Police Staff - status during career break

- 9.1 A career break is regarded as unpaid leave and, therefore, the duration of the break does not qualify for the purposes of reckoning entitlement to pay and annual leave.
- 9.2 Police staff will continue to be regarded as employed by Merseyside Police and will therefore remain subject to National and Local Conditions of Service. Acts of misconduct committed whilst on a career break will be dealt with in accordance with the Police Staff Disciplinary Procedures.

9.3 Pay and Pensions

- 9.3.1 A career break is regarded as unpaid leave and, therefore, the duration of the break does not qualify for the purposes of reckoning entitlement to pay and annual leave.
- 9.3.2 Police Staff will have their grade and pay scale protected and on return will be on the same basis as before, subject to any changes to National and Local Police Staff Conditions of Service.
- 9.3.3 In accordance with the Pension Regulations there is a requirement to pay pension contributions for the first 30 days of absence. The contributions will automatically be deducted from pay following the return to work.
- 9.3.4 If the membership is to count for pension purposes, then there is also an option to pay contributions for the remainder of the unpaid leave. The decision whether to pay contributions for the rest of the period of absence and count as membership must be made within thirty days of the end of the leave of absence period.
- 9.3.5 If the option is not taken up then the rest of the period of absence will not count for pension purposes.

9.4 Postings

- 9.4.1 There is no guarantee that Police Staff will return to their original Post/Department following a career break. As soon as the career break has been agreed approval to fill the vacancy will be sought in accordance with Force procedures. Posts will be filled on a permanent basis and must not be backfilled temporarily.
- 9.4.2 Upon returning to Force, People Services will be responsible for identifying an alternative suitable post in line with the Force Redeployment Policy (Staff are advised for read this policy before applying for a career break). The Force is currently going through a major change programme where the workforce is reducing, staff need to understand that redeployment opportunities will be limited, and that Merseyside Police reserve the right to issue notice of redundancy at any stage within the redeployment process.

9.5 Organisational Change

- 9.5.1 During periods of organisational change, the Force will ensure that, where possible, those staff who are on a career break are involved in any consultations or other appropriate procedures on the same basis as all other affected staff.
- 9.5.2 The substantive post held prior to the commencement of the career break will be used for the purpose of identifying those staff affected by organisational change.

- 9.5.3 Should a redundancy situation arise during the career break the Force will inform the employee and where appropriate discuss the situation with them, as required by statute and Force Policy and Procedure.

10. All Staff

10.1 Police Equipment

- 10.1.1 Uniforms and equipment and pocket notebooks must be returned to the Department prior to the commencement of the Career Break. Form Per 11 Leaver and Career Break Clearance Certificate must be completed and forwarded to [HR Shared Services](#).
- 10.1.2 Warrant/Identity cards remain the responsibility of the individual during the career break and must therefore be kept safe at all times. Any loss of such items must be reported immediately to the relevant teams as per the [Warrant & Identity Card Policy & Procedure](#).

10.2 Recalled to Duty

- 10.2.1 Unless required to attend court, officers and staff will not normally be recalled to duty during a career break. However, in conditions of extreme emergency, (major disasters and the implementation of business continuity plans), officers and staff must be prepared to return to duty at short notice.

10.3 Secondary Employment / Business Interests

- 10.3.1 Police Officers and Police Staff will not normally be permitted to take up secondary employment. However, if they need to obtain secondary employment for the purpose of financially supporting their career break, prior approval must be obtained by the Head of Organisational Development via HR Shared Services. Any anticipated conflict between the needs of Merseyside Police and the individual may lead to the request being refused. If alternative employment is sought during the period of the career break, then authority will similarly be required.
- 10.3.2 Any business interest must be declared to Professional Standards Department in accordance with the Force Business Interests Policy.

10.4 Annual Leave

- 10.4.1 Annual leave and public holiday leave will not accrue, nor will there be payment in lieu, during the career break. Any outstanding annual leave, time in lieu and/or re-rostered rest day entitlement, must be taken before the commencement of the career break.

10.5 Maternity / Paternity leave

- 10.5.1 Police Officers and Police staff who are on a career break are entitled to the same maternity/paternity benefits as those not taking a career break. Individuals on a career break who become pregnant must give notice as soon as reasonably practicable of the expected date of confinement. The provisions of the maternity scheme will then take effect, and the career break will be suspended.
- 10.5.2 Resumption of the career break in due course shall be subject to a further agreement between the Head of People Operations and Service Delivery and the individual. If the resumption is agreed, it should be noted that if the individual does not return to work on conclusion of the career break for a period of at least one month, they may be required to reimburse part, or all of their Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP). Similarly, Police Officers and Police Staff members who qualify for Paternity Leave must give notice as soon as reasonably practicable.

10.6 Membership of Staff Associations / Trades Unions

- 10.6.1 All Police Officers and Police staff are responsible for making their own arrangements regarding relevant memberships during the period of the career break and are advised to consult with the appropriate office.

11. Return to Work

- 11.1 Subject to the provisions below Police Officers and Police Staff will return to duty on the return date agreed between the individual and People Services.
- 11.2 In normal circumstances, an individual will not be required to return to duty from a career break before the agreed date without their consent.
- 11.3 Consideration will be given to Police Officers and Police Staff who wish to return to work from a career break earlier than the agreed date. However, three months' notice is required in order to facilitate arrangements.
- 11.4 In any event Police Officers and Police Staff must return within three months of having given notice.
- 11.5 In all circumstances, at three months prior to the date of agreed return, the individual concerned will be contacted by HR Shared Services to make the necessary arrangements. Where appropriate, dependent upon the role and posting, a medical examination, physical fitness test and vetting may apply.
- 11.6 All officers and staff will be subject to a level of vetting appropriate to the post to which they are returning as outlined in the Force Vetting Policy.

- 11.7 On return, individuals will be subject to induction/training needs as a result of changes in the duties of their substantive post. Whilst undertaking training, normal payment only will be made.
- 11.8 If an individual wishes to resign whilst on a career break, they must give notice in the normal manner.