

CAREER BREAK

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RELATED POLICIES

[Maternity Policy](#)

[Taking time off](#)

[Special Leave](#)

[Attendance Management Policy](#)

[Transitioning \(Transgender\) Policy](#)

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.gov.uk/>

CAREER BREAK

POLICY SUMMARY

It is the Welsh Government's policy to assist employees, where possible, to take a Career Break to enable them to meet their domestic or family commitments or to pursue wider personal development opportunities of mutual benefit to themselves and the organisation, for example for domestic reasons or to travel, study or undertake voluntary work.

Career Breaks will be approved if the business can support them, subject to satisfactory performance and attendance. Line managers are encouraged to be as supportive as business priorities allow. Career Breaks will last up to a maximum of 5 years but **return to work will be subject to a post being successfully secured either through the Appoint system or through the current internal posting arrangements.**

Career Breaks cannot be applied for to undertake alternative paid employment.

All our policies are fully inclusive of all staff regardless of age, marriage and civil partnership (both same sex and opposite sex), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, whether they have an impairment or health condition, are neurodivergent or use British Sign Language, their gender identity or gender expression. We acknowledge that the terms 'gender identity' and 'gender expression' are not protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, however, we believe that Government policy which includes provision for those persons who identify within the 'trans' umbrella (rather than on the basis of binary gender) is a more inclusive approach and one which ensures the Welsh Ministers are in a position to comply with all their statutory duties related to equality and the promotion of well-being in Wales. If you have any feedback on the inclusivity of this policy, please email EqualityintheWorkplaceTeam@gov.wales

GUIDANCE AND PROCEDURES

1. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees are responsible for

- Familiarising themselves with the policy and this guidance and procedures
- Completing the application for a [Career Break e-form](#), in consultation with their line manager and Grade 7 Manager
- Using the Appoint system link to stay aware of job opportunities and apply for a post to return to
- Making every effort to secure a post to return to after their Career Break, including participating in dialogue or meetings necessary to achieve this, or confirming they will not be returning, i.e. resigning
- Ensuring that they inform the Shared Service Centre (SSC) of any change to their contact details, address, telephone number, email address whilst on Career Break
- Ensuring they inform the SSC of any change to their designated relative's address, telephone number, email address

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- Ensuring they contact SSC if they undertake temporary part time work and requesting a Business or other Potential Conflict of Interest Form for completion
- Using the [Newsroom](#) page on the Welsh Government external website to keep up to date with events

Line managers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the Career Break Policy and this guidance and eligibility requirements
- Considering and making a recommendation for approving or declining the request having given due consideration to business needs.
- Referring employees to the policy, and this guidance and procedures as appropriate and ensuring the employee is aware that return from the Career Break will depend on securing a post

Shared Service Centre (SSC) is responsible for:

- Processing approved Career Breaks
- Monitoring return to work dates
- Taking action to terminate contracts of employment where appropriate. (see Para 2.5.4)
- Advising staff on how to apply for posts via the Appoint
- Processing approved extensions to existing breaks, and ensuring they do not exceed the 5-year maximum

OFMCO HR Expert Services is responsible for:

- Advising on all aspects of the policy and this guidance.
- Considering, with line managers, what other arrangements could be made if a Career Break application is turned down.
- Taking action on repaying pensions contributions if appropriate (non PCSPS)

HR Business Partners are responsible for:

- Using management information to monitor appropriateness and use of Career Breaks within their Group
- Liaising with business areas and HR Policy Team colleagues as appropriate on issues relating to the policy, and this guidance and procedures.

2. THE SCHEME

- 2.1 The Career Break Scheme is a 'special leave without pay' arrangement whereby employees can apply to take up to a maximum of 5 years away from work (subject to a post being secured to return to) for a host of reasons including travel, study, work for

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a voluntary organisation or domestic arrangements e.g. caring for an elderly relative or young children. The essential elements of the scheme are that:

a. Periods of absence are for an agreed length of time with return being subject to a post being secured by the employee towards the end of the Career Break. Employees must start looking to secure a post at least 3 months prior to the end date. To ensure a timely return, it is recommended that employees begin looking to secure a post in advance of this.

b. Employees who choose to take a Career Break will usually apply for a post to return to at the same grade as the one they held before the break. They may also apply for higher or lower grade posts using the recruitment processes in place at the intended time of return. Application for or acceptance of a lower grade post is purely on a voluntary basis.

c) The Division or Group which agrees the Career Break will be responsible for any Travel & Subsistence and training costs which may arise during the Career Break (e.g. to attend training).

2.2 The Career Break Scheme is designed primarily to enable staff to meet their domestic or family commitments or, in some limited circumstances, to pursue wider personal or development opportunities of mutual benefit to themselves and the organisation whilst maintaining their links with the Welsh Government. **Staff cannot apply for a Career Break for the reasons of taking up employment with another employer or to be self employed, except for the specific reason set out in 2.4 below.**

2.3 **If, while on a Career Break, employees wish to take up temporary part time employment, they must contact the [Shared Service Helpdesk](#) to request a Business or other Potential Conflict of Interest Form which they will need to complete and return.**

2.4 There is one exception to the rule that staff cannot apply for a Career Break to take up employment with another employer. This is that special leave without pay may be granted at the discretion of the Welsh Government to enable an employee to undertake paid work outside the Civil Service for personal reasons for a limited period, not normally exceeding 2 years, which is in the public interest in a wide sense. For example, voluntary service in a developing country or service of a vocational nature which will broaden an employee's background knowledge and experience and serve as a significant development opportunity.

3. ELIGIBILITY

3.1 Permanent employees in any grade or location may apply for a Career Break. Employees on a Fixed Term Contract, Seconded, Contractors or Temporary Workers are not eligible to apply. Management will need to be satisfied that the employee has:

a. completed one year's satisfactory service, including

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- b. a satisfactory record of attendance, and
- c. a satisfactory record of performance

3.2 The Career Break Scheme is a **discretionary provision**, and it must be recognised that there may be cases where, despite satisfying the criteria, an employee cannot be granted a Career Break because of the need for business continuity, although every effort will be made to do so. In these circumstances the line manager can consider with the employee and HR Expert Services (via the SSC on 029 20825454 or e mail [Shared Service Helpdesk](#)) whether other arrangements could be made to help the employee meet, for example, domestic responsibilities. These might include flexible working patterns such as part-time working or job-sharing; term-time working; short-term special leave to cover school holiday periods or ill health of children and childcare provisions.

4. APPLYING FOR A CAREER BREAK

- 4.1 Applications for a Career Break should be made, via the line manager, to the Grade 7 Manager using the [Career Break e-form](#). If the application is approved the agreed terms of the Career Break will be confirmed in writing by the Shared Service Centre, including the amount of annual leave entitlement to the date of commencement of the career break. **The employee must bear in mind from the outset that returning from a Career Break will be subject to a post being applied for and secured via the recruitment system in place at the time of return. The employee should start to seek such a post at least 3 months prior to the planned end of the career break.**
- 4.2 The Shared Service Centre will provide the following to the employee at the commencement of the Career Break:
- Link to the Appoint (recruitment) system (to stay aware of job opportunities) – which can be accessed externally
 - Advice on creating 'job alerts' on Appoint
 - A link to the [Newsroom](#) on the Welsh Government external website
 - Access the Maternity and Shared Parental Leave Return to Work Network, which is also available for staff on a Career Break.
- 4.3 The employee must ensure that their contact details, home address, telephone number, email address, are up to date before commencing a Career Break and must make the SSC aware of any change of contact details during the Career Break. In addition any queries during the Career Break can be raised with the Shared Service Centre - Tel: 029 20825454 or e mail [Shared Service Helpdesk](#)

5. CAREER BREAKS AND OTHER LEAVE

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- 5.1 The option to apply for a Career Break is not restricted to staff in post. For example, officers currently on paid maternity leave or adoption leave and eligible officers on paid/unpaid special leave may also apply. If an employee wishes to apply to begin a Career Break following maternity or adoptive leave, they could take their full entitlement of 52 weeks paid and unpaid leave followed by a Career Break of up to a maximum of 5 years. The intention to apply for a Career Break should be made clear as soon as possible.
- 5.2 When the Career Break immediately follows maternity leave, the employee will not be expected to repay occupational maternity pay unless they resign at any time during the 5 year period or fail to return to work for at least 4 weeks at the end of the unpaid special leave or, in the case of those returning on a lower number of hours than was worked before the Career Break, for the equivalent of a 4 week period at the previous rate of pay.
- 5.3 Any work undertaken for the Welsh Government during the Career Break will count against this commitment to repay. Return from the Career Break will be subject to the employee successfully securing a post.
- 5.4 Employees will not be eligible for the Welsh Government's maternity scheme or statutory maternity pay if they become pregnant while on a Career Break. However, the Shared Service Centre can formally extend the Career Break period where an employee has had a child during the Career Break period, up to a maximum of 5 years, if a 5-year period had not previously been requested and agreed. The employee should notify the [Shared Service Helpdesk](#) if this situation arises.
- 5.5 Periods of unpaid leave such as a Career Break, do not count towards re-qualifying for paid sickness absence under the Attendance Management procedures
- 5.6 As employees will cease to be working for WG at all during the career break, they will not be entitled to accrue or be paid for any annual leave

6. ARRANGEMENTS FOR RETURNING TO WORK

- 6.1 Only in exceptional circumstances, and with the agreement of the Deputy Director, will a post be kept open for an employee's return from their Career Break.
- 6.2 **Although the *actual* date of return to work will depend on securing a post**, the employee must confirm their intended date of return to work with the Shared Service Centre at least 3 months before that date. Employees on a Career Break may apply for a post at any time during the Career Break via the Appoint system and, if successful, can return to work, ending the Career Break earlier than originally planned. It is recommended that employees begin looking and applying for vacancies prior to the 3 months before their scheduled return date. There is no guarantee that a post can be secured in time for the proposed return date. This will depend on vacancies available at the time employees are seeking to secure a role to return to.

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- 6.3 The SSC can advise on use of the Appoint system and creating job alerts and can be contacted on 029 20825454 or by mailing [Shared Service Helpdesk](#).
- 6.4 Where at the end of an agreed Career Break an employee does not make a reasonable effort to secure a post to return to, steps may be taken to terminate the contract of employment. They will be contacted by the SSC to discuss and clarify the situation.
- 6.5 An employee will remain on their career break until they are able secure a post to return to and therefore will not return to payroll until such time as they start in a new role subject to the provisions set out in para 1.5.4.

7. PAY AND PENSIONS

- 7.1 **Pay:** If a post at the substantive grade is secured, the employee will start back on the pay point they would have reached had the Career Break not happened. If a post at a lower grade is applied for/accepted they would start on the pay point they would have reached if they had always been at the lower grade. Pay on promotion rules apply if a post is secured at a higher grade. Pay on promotion will be calculated with reference to the point on the lower payband the employee would have reached if the Career Break had not happened.
- 7.2 **Pensions:** The employee will start back in the same pension scheme they were in prior to commencement of the Career Break. The rules of that pension scheme will apply. Unpaid leave such as a Career Break does not normally count as reckonable service for pension purposes. However, members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) are eligible to pay Employee pension contributions for part of a Career Break on return to work if they wish. If they choose to take up this option, these contributions must be matched by Employer pension contributions and will be met by the new Group. Details including how to top-up a pension are available from the Pensions Administrators for the scheme (See Annex A -Q & As)

8. OTHER ISSUES

- 8.1 *Additional Housing Costs Allowance:* AHCA is not paid during unpaid leave such as a Career Break. Payments are resumed on return. The period of time over which ACHA is paid is not normally extended by the length of time spent on unpaid special leave except in the case of unpaid maternity leave where the 9 year payment period will be extended by the total length of any intervening periods of unpaid maternity leave.
- 8.2 *Performance Management:* A break report must be completed if a jobholder goes on a lengthy period of leave – such as a Career Break. The line manager whose area the employee is leaving must complete a break report prior to the leave commencing.

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ANNEX A

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. When can I apply for a Career Break?

A. You can apply for a Career Break, via your line manager, to your Grade 7 Manager at any time, provided you have completed one year's satisfactory service. To reduce the impact on those you work with, as much notice as possible should be given. Once the Shared Service Centre has received a completed application which has been agreed by your line management they will aim to provide you with confirmation of the decision within 10 working days.

Q. Can I return to work earlier than my agreed date?

A. You can apply for a post to return to at any time during your Career Break by applying for posts under the recruitment/promotion system in place at that time. An **actual** date of return cannot be guaranteed and will depend upon you securing a post. You should look regularly at any potential job matches the Appoint system sends you. It is very important that you ensure your contact details, including address, telephone number and email address, are up to date throughout your Career Break.

Before you leave the organisation for your career break you may wish to take the following steps to keep in touch:

- Set up job alerts so that you can be kept informed in real time of the vacancies we have. You can do this by clicking on the below link:
<https://cymru-wales.tal.net/vx/lang-en-GB/mobile-0/appcentre-2/brand-2/candidate/jobboard/vacancy/6/adv/>

At the bottom of the page is a button called 'Create Job Alert'. Once you have selected this, you will have the opportunity to create alerts for specific job roles and locations that are within your interests.

- You can find out the information and news affecting the Welsh Government by looking at the newsroom section on the Welsh Government external website:
[Announcements | GOV.WALES](#)

Q. Will I be able to continue to contribute to my pension while away from the Welsh Government?

A. Unpaid leave does not add to your reckonable service for pension benefits. If you are a member of the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (PCSPS) reckonable service will recommence and deductions will be restarted on return to the payroll after your Career Break. However a member of PCSPS who has an Added Years contract in place can opt to continue to pay their Added Years contributions by arrangement whilst on their Career Break.

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Staff who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) should note that scheme rules allow for an individual who takes special leave without pay/Career Break of more than 30 days duration to opt to make up their pension contributions on return to work. This applies for a maximum of 36 months so would not apply to the balance of a Career Break lasting over 36 months. Where an individual opts to make up their pension contributions on return to work following a Career Break, employer's contributions must also be paid and these must be met by your new Division. Should you require further information on your pension, please contact your pension scheme administrator

Q. Will I be able to keep in touch with the office?

A. You may be able to undertake up to 10 days in house training in the office each year subject to the agreement to meet costs by your last Division (or Group).

Q. What about my annual leave?

A. You must attach your annual leave sheet to your Career Break Application Form. The Shared Service Centre will adjust it to show your revised entitlement up to your last day at work prior to starting the Career Break. Annual leave must be taken before the commencement of the Career Break. Only in very exceptional circumstances will a payment be made for annual leave. As you will cease to be working for WG at all during the career break, you will not be entitled to accrue or be paid for any annual leave.

Q. Would I still be eligible for Promotion?

A. Yes, you will be entitled to apply for posts at a higher grade. If you apply for a post (at any grade) during your Career Break and are successful, depending on timing, the Career Break may have to end sooner than originally planned.

Q. What if I become pregnant whilst on a Career Break?

A. You will not be eligible for the Welsh Government's occupational maternity scheme or statutory maternity pay if you become pregnant while on a career break. The Shared Service Centre can extend the period of unpaid leave if a member of staff has a child during their Career Break, up to a maximum of 5 years (if 5 years had not originally been agreed). You will need to inform the Shared Service Centre of such changes to your circumstances

Q. What happens if I have failed to secure a post to return to by my 5 year date?

A. We recognise the ability to secure a role will depend on a number of factors that can sometimes be outside the control of the individual. These include the availability of roles at their grade and location. In light of this, there can be some flexibility around the return date, but you should continue to make every effort to secure a post through Appoint by applying for roles as they become available. Employees looking to return should consider contacting their former HR Business Partner team to make them aware of their availability and to access their support in the search for a suitable role. However, responsibility for finding a role remains with the employee.

If, however, you have failed to make contact with SSC, not replied to any correspondence, or failed to update the SSC of change of contact details for yourself or your designated contact, during your Career Break it is possible that your employment with the Welsh Government will

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be terminated. In this event you will be given the opportunity to appeal the decision. You will be contacted and the overall situation discussed with you (if you have provided updated contact details) before such a step will be taken.

Q Can I take up part time or other employment during the period of my Career Break?

A Although a Career Break will not be granted to an employee purely to undertake alternative employment with another employer (with one exception – see 2.1. 4 above), or to become self-employed, it is acceptable that during a Career Break or pending securing a post to return to, you may become employed. You will be required to contact the SSC and request a Business or other Potential Conflict of Interest Form which you will need to complete and return. A P45 will not issue from the Welsh Government unless you resign. In addition, you should be aware of the rules which continue to apply to you as a Civil Servant outside the workplace, including the Civil Service Code. You can find out more information about this on the Outside the workplace intranet page.

Q If the only posts available are at a lower grade, can I apply and what would happen to my pay and pension?

A. You may apply for posts at a lower or higher grade than your substantive grade. An application for and acceptance of a post at a lower grade is on a purely voluntary basis. Normal pay on promotion rules would apply if a post at a higher grade is secured.

If you successfully apply for a post at a lower grade you will be placed on the pay point you would have reached had you originally been in that grade. If at a later date you successfully apply for a post at your original grade or are re-instated to the original grade you will return to the pay point you would have reached if you had never left that grade. Advice on the affects on pension of moving to a lower grade can be obtained through your pension administrator.

Q If I do not find a post by my intended return to work date will the Welsh Government allocate me to a role?

A. No, the date of return cannot be guaranteed and it will depend on an individual securing a post for themselves, by whatever recruitment arrangements are in place at the time of return.

Q What's the difference between a career break and unpaid special leave?

A The unpaid special leave can be granted for any purpose except participation in elections or other political activity, where central consultation with the SSC is required. Heads of Branch can allow up to 3 months unpaid special leave in any 12 month period. At the end of your unpaid period of special leave, you will normally return to your existing role. Following a Career Break, there is no guarantee that you will return to the role you were undertaking before the career break.

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Q) Can I apply for more than one career break during my employment with Welsh Government?

A) Yes. So long you have completed at least one year's 'satisfactory' service (see section 1.2.1 of this guidance) then you could apply for another career break at any time after the previous one has ended. However, the Career Break scheme is a discretionary provision and not a right of your employment so there is no guarantee that your request will be approved.