



Somerset
Council

Career Break Policy



Organisation	Somerset Council
Title	Career Break Policy
Owner	HR Policy Team
Primary Legislation	

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Somerset Council offers a career break scheme which enables employees to take a voluntary unpaid break from their employment contract of between six months and five years. The break may be taken as one continuous period or as a series of shorter breaks. The Council undertakes to support the individual in identifying suitable re-employment opportunities at the end of the break.
- 1.2 Where an employee wishes to apply for a shorter break from work (less than six months), this should be done via the Special Leave policy as a request for unpaid leave [\(add link\)](#).
- 1.3 A career break may be used for a variety of reasons where a period of extended leave is required but cannot be met through another policy.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of the Somerset Council Terms and Conditions and may be subject to change. This policy applies to all employees excluding school based staff.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 To be eligible to apply for a career break employees must have two years continuous service.

3. Career Break Request

- 3.1 The employee should contact their line manager in writing asking to discuss their request to enter into a Career Break Agreement including details of the time period sought.
- 3.2 Line managers have discretion to consider any request based against the needs of the service area. Line managers should discuss any concerns regarding the approval of a career break with the employee and where appropriate seek alternative timescales which may enable the request to be agreed. Approval or refusal of a career break request must be provided to the

employee in writing. When considering a career break request, the line manager may contact HR Advisory for assistance.

- 3.3 Employees approved for a career break are required to document this with their line manager using the Career Break Agreement Form ([add link](#)), and then resign from their contract of employment providing the required notice. The only exception to this is when a career break immediately follows maternity leave. Please see the Maternity Policy for further details ([add link](#)).
- 3.4 Where it is not possible to arrange a career break and no other mutually agreeable arrangement can be found, should the employee still wish to take time away from work they will be required to give notice and resign in the normal way.

4. During a Career Break

- 4.1 The Career Break Agreement signed by both parties, will define the arrangements as follows:
- Confirmation that the original contract of employment will be terminated with effect from the start of the career break.
 - The support the Council will provide to the individual in seeking re-employment with the Council at the end of the break.
- 4.2 Employees embarking on a career break will be allocated a nominated manager to act as a point of contact during the break.

Contractual Issues

- 4.3 Re-employment at the end of the career break will be the subject of a new, mutually acceptable contract.
- 4.4 Whilst the break itself will not count as a period of employment, the period of continuous service immediately before the break will be aggregated with continuous service after the break, for the purpose of calculating the following contractual entitlements only; annual leave, sick pay, and contractual maternity/adoption pay.
- 4.5 For statutory entitlements such as redundancy pay and the right not to be unfairly dismissed, the period of continuous service will be calculated from the date of the new contract of employment (after the career break). Notice periods for either party to terminate employment will also be based upon the actual date of return.

Pension

- 4.6 Those who resign to take a career break will be classed as a scheme leaver and their pension record will be closed. They can choose to make voluntary

additional contributions to top up their pension, however in this instance there will not be any employer contributions as no employment relationship is in place.

- 4.7 In the event of successful re-employment Auto Enrolment rules will apply and the employee will be re-admitted to the pension scheme as a new entrant. Further information can be found by contacting Peninsula Pensions directly ([add link](#)).

National Insurance

- 4.8 If an individual wishes to maintain payments during a career break or to step up payments on return to work, they are advised to make arrangements directly with the DWP ([add link](#)).

Salary Sacrifice Schemes

- 4.9 Any existing salary sacrifice arrangements will end when employment is terminated, and any termination costs of the arrangements will apply. Please contact [HR Admin and Payroll](#) for more information.

5. Re-employment

- 5.1 There is no guarantee of re-employment at the end of a career break. However, for a period of up to six months (three months before the agreed end of the career break and three months thereafter) the individual will be given access to the internal vacancy website and is encouraged to apply for suitable vacancies both within and outside their original service area.
- 5.2 If the individual has been unable to find a suitable position prior to the end of the career break, they may register with Somerset Council's Temporary Employment Supplier and be assigned to roles within the Council. This facility offers a means of gaining work experience with the Council, building confidence, and providing a sound base from which to apply for roles.

6. Terminating an Agreement

- 6.1 The Council reserves the right to terminate the career break agreement if the individual:
- On expiry of the agreement does not confirm their wish to return to work
 - Where suitable re-employment has not been found after the 6-month period.

Version History

Revision Date	Author	Version	Description of Revision
		1	New Somerset Policy