

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust

CAREER BREAK POLICY

1. WHAT IS A CAREER BREAK?

A career break takes place when an individual has a long term unpaid break from work.

Career breaks are taken most commonly by women or men who need to spend time away from paid employment whilst their children are young.

Career breaks can however be taken for reasons other than caring for a child. These reasons include - further education/training, care of an elderly dependent, working in the family business, or other similar substantial reasons.

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust Career Break Scheme helps you and the Trust to keep in touch with each other while you are not at work. It also gives you the opportunity to keep your skills up-to-date so that when you are ready to return to work you have the skills and confidence to do so.

You may already have heard about Career Break Schemes. The aim of this scheme is to put taking a break on to a more formal basis and to offer any member of staff the chance to take a career break, provided that they meet the eligibility criteria of two year's continuous service with the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust

2. WHO CAN APPLY FOR THE CAREER BREAK SCHEME?

Anyone with two years' continuous service with the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust can apply for a Career Break.

3. HOW DOES THE CAREER BREAK SCHEME WORK?

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust offers all individuals with two years' continuous service the opportunity to take a career break of up to 3 years or 2 years following full maternity leave. If a Career Break is taken following maternity leave, the employee must complete three months service otherwise the whole of the maternity leave pay, less S.M.P. (Statutory Maternity Pay) will be reclaimed by the Trust. The break can be taken for any reason except that of working for another organisation (including another Trust), in a similar professional capacity.

It is recognised however, that even though an employee might satisfy all the criteria for applying for a Career Break, the nature of the applicants post might mean that an inability to provide cover for the duration of the career break would affect the level of service provision to such an extent that a career break could not be granted.

In this event, before a career break application is refused, the Trust will attempt to recruit a temporary* replacement for the period of the requested career break. If appropriate temporary cover in successfully acquired the career break will normally be granted.

*A temporary contract only will be offered to allow the career break employee to return to post. If the temporary employee leaves before the end of the career break period the Trust will recruit again on the same basis.

The main requirement of the scheme is that during the career break period you work for Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust for a minimum number of days per year paid at the grade on which you left the organisation. The minimum number of days that you will be asked to work will be no more than 10 per year. This annual work period should be agreed between you and the manager before you go on your career break. The work period is intended to give you the opportunity to keep your skills up-to-date so it should combine practical experience with education/training.

The Trust may agree to pay your course fees and travelling expenses for any additional training/education that you may need outside the minimum work period.

When you are ready to resume work the scheme does not guarantee you will necessarily return to the job previously held. You will, however, be offered a suitable post of similar status on the same grade. However, due to unforeseen circumstances such as organizational change occurring during a lengthy absence, no absolute guarantee of security may be given and in such a case a scheme participant will be treated no differently or less favourably than would have been the case had the break not been taken.

Once you have returned to work, you may be expected to undergo a period of refresher training. The type and length of training that you will need to undertake will depend upon you and upon your occupation. On your return to work your manager will discuss your training needs with you.

4. HOW TO APPLY TO JOIN THE CAREER BREAK SCHEME

When you have decided that you would like to take a career break, you should first of all go and talk to your manager.

When you and your manager have fully discussed the option of you taking a career break and you have decided that this is what you want to do, she/he will ask you to sign a form saying that you are joining the Career Break Scheme of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust (form attached).

You are free to leave the scheme at anytime to recommence permanent work with the Trust. You must inform your line manager of your actual date of return by at least three months notice in writing.

5. SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED ABOUT TAKING A CAREER BREAK

5.1. Planning a Career Break

Q What do I have to do to apply to join the Career Break Scheme?

A First of all you should talk to your manager who will, provided you are eligible to join the scheme, ask you to sign the form stating that you are joining the Career Break Scheme and resigning from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust.

Q What is the advantage to me of taking a Career Break, rather than leaving the organisation and rejoining it at a later date?

A On the Career Break Scheme you will be able to keep your skills up-to-date on the grade at which you left the organization and when you come back to work you will receive the appropriate refresher training.

Q If I have two years continuous service and meet the other requirements of the scheme will be granted a career break automatically?

A Not necessarily. If you are employed in a small department or in a specialist post which could prove difficult to recruit to the Trust would need to recruit someone to fill your post on a temporary basis before your application could be approved.

5.2 During the Career Break

Q Do I have to work the yearly work period in one continuous block?

A No, provided that you and your manager agree beforehand, the work period can be split in whichever way is most suitable.

Q Will I get paid for the days that I work?

A Yes, you will be paid for them at the grade at which you left the Trust.

Q Am I limited to working only the agreed work period?

A No, provided that you and your manager agree, you can work additional days.

Q If I want to attend educational/training events outside the agreed work period will I be paid for this?

A No, but your course fees and training expenses can be paid at the discretion of the Trust.

Annual Leave

Q Will I be entitled to annual leave while I am on a Career Break?

A No, once you join the Career Break Scheme you have terminated your employment with the Trust, so you are no longer entitled to annual leave.

Sick Pay

Q Will I be entitled to sick pay while I am on a Career Break?

A No, you will not be entitled to sick pay; maternity benefit; temporary or permanent injury allowance; enhanced payments due to permanent incapacity; death in service payment since you will no longer be employed by the Trust.

Superannuation

Q Will my superannuation continue during my Career Break?

A No, but when you return to work you will be able to rejoin the scheme. No superannuation contribution may be made during a career break since there is no contract of employment during this period. However, you may purchase added years on return to work following a Career Break subject to the arrangements and conditions of the NHS Superannuation Scheme.

National Insurance contributions

Q Will my N.I.C. be paid by the Trust during my Career Break?

A No. It is recommended that enquiries should be made via your area D.S.S. Department.

5.3 Returning to Work

Q Will the Trust guarantee me a job at the end of my Career Break?

A When you are ready to return to work the scheme does not guarantee you will resume to the job previously held. Alternatively, you will be offered a suitable post of similar status on the same grade. Where changes from the previous post result, any protection will apply which would have resulted had the career break not intervened.

Q When I am ready to return to permanent work will I be expected to apply for jobs at a lower level than the one at which I left?

A No, not unless you wish to do so. You will have kept your skills up-to-date throughout your Career Break. After undertaking the necessary refresher training, there is no reason why you should not apply for a job on your old grade.

Q What happens if I decide not to return to the Trust after my Career Break?

A There is no legal obligation on you to return to the Trust but we hope that you will want to do so.

Q Can I extend my Career Break for more than 3 years?

A No.

Q If I wanted to return to work in less than 3 years could I do so?

A Yes, you can return to work at anytime, providing three months notice is given.

Q When I return to work will I have to take a full time post?

A No, not necessarily - if you wish to work part time/job share you should discuss this with your manager.

Q When I return to work, will I retain my previous terms and conditions regarding annual leave and sick pay?

A Yes.

N.B.

- If you have a problem while on the Career Break you should in the first instance discuss it with your manager.
- Any appeal arising from the scheme will be dealt with through the Trust's grievance procedure.

Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust

CAREER BREAK SCHEME

APPLICATION

Name.....

Job Title.....

Grade.....

Clinic /Department.....

- I wish to apply for a career break from.....to.....
- I have read the enclosed career break policy, and fully understand the terms and conditions of the career break.

Signed.....(Applicant)

Signed.....(Manager)

Date.....