CAREER BREAK POLICY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENT CONTROL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owner:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document Control:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date Live From:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review/Approval Group:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Reviewed:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review Due/Cycle:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 INTRODUCTION

NHS 24 is committed to a Career Break Policy to allow staff members an opportunity to leave their employment on a medium to long-term basis (up to 5 years), to fulfil domestic or other commitments. The policy will enable staff members to keep up to date during their career break and help them return to work at the end of the break.

The maximum period of the career break is 5 years and the minimum is for 6 months. A staff member may however take a number of breaks throughout their employment provided that the total periods of absence do not exceed 5 years. A new application must be made for each requested break.

This policy demonstrates commitment to long-term career development and continued promotion of Equal Opportunities. NHS 24 believes that the scheme will help to recruit, retain and encourage the return to work of skilled employees.

Arrangements for those participating in Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) or equivalent are different, and separate policy should be applied for those taking a career break for this reason.

2. DEFINITION

2.1 A career break is special leave without pay for a specified period of time.

2.2 A career break is an extended period of leave from work that begins with an intention to resume working at an agreed date in the future. The leave is unpaid

3. AIM

3.1 The policy is designed for staff who are currently prevented from remaining in full or part time work but who would like to restart work when circumstances make this possible for example after a course of further education, bringing up children, having cared for a dependant relative or after a life experience. A career break will not be allowed for the purpose of taking up alternative employment.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 All staff members must have a least 12 months’ service with the NHS.
4.2 Staff who wish to be considered for the scheme will discuss the matter initially with their line manager.

4.3 Applications should be made on the application form (Appendix 1). Applications should be made at least 3 months prior to commencement of the proposed break though in exceptional circumstances this may be waived by management.

4.4 Each application will be considered by your Director or Director of your directorate on the merits of the individual case and a decision made normally within 10 calendar days following receipt of an application. Full details should be provided, in writing, to the staff member if an application has been rejected, clearly explaining the reasons for so doing.

4.5 If approved the staff member will be issued with appropriate documentation by the Human Resources department, which requires an agreement to abide by the conditions of the career break.

4.6 The applicant has a right to appeal to the Director of HR where a request has been refused.

4.7 Managers will be reminded by the HR department, at the end of each financial year, of their need to ensure that employees who are on career breaks have complied with the minimum 10 days work requirement. There may be exceptions to this requirement e.g. employee living abroad.

4.8 All documentation in relation to the scheme is available from the human resources department/intranet.

4.9 The staff member should be aware that, in some circumstances, the post which they left could be subject to organisational change. As such NHS 24’s policies on Organisational Change and Redeployment will apply. Whilst there will be no guarantee of return to a particular post, every effort will be made to place individuals in posts of similar grade and responsibility to that held prior to the break, and will take into account the staff member’s experience, achievements and qualifications.

4.10 3 months notice of intention to return to work must be given to the line manager concerned. During this period copies of the internal vacancies bulletin will be sent to participants in the scheme by the human resources department.

4.11 To ease the transition back to work the staff member may be allowed to work on a part-time basis for up to three months before returning to full duties. This must be discussed with the manager at the time of the staff member notifying a wish to return to work.
5. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

General Conditions

5.1 A period of absence on a career break shall not be regarded as a break in service although the break will not itself count as reckonable service.

5.2 Periods of paid employment during the break will count as reckonable service.

5.3 As a staff member has continuous employment whilst on a career break, any entitlements accrued prior to the break will not be lost.

6. SUPERANNUATION

Default Position:

6.1 Staff on a career break will remain as members of the Superannuation scheme. The default position will ultimately affect the amount of Service Credited during a career break, and therefore, will affect the staff members final Pension as Superannuation contributions will only be paid for actual hours worked (minimum 15 hours per annum) during the career break. This is the default position within NHS 24. For further information, please refer to the SPPA website: http://www.sppa.gov.uk/

However, under current Scottish Public Pension Agency (SPPA) legislation, additional Superannuation contributions, with associated service credit, can be made during a career break as detailed in the following options:

6.2 Option 1:
6 months only: Staff member responsible for their contributions only, with NHS 24 responsible for employer contributions. After the 6-month period, the staff member will revert to the default position.

Option 2
6 months: Staff member responsible for their contributions only, with NHS 24 responsible for employer contributions. In addition, a further 18 months is possible where the staff member will be responsible for both their contributions and those of NHS 24.

Maintenance of superannuation contributions while on a career break is only available for the first 2 years.
Staff who elect to progress with Option 1 or 2 above must notify NHS 24 at least 4 weeks in advance of their proposed career break start date. Failure to meet this timeframe may result in the default position being applied.

Staff must note that contributions made during a career break are required to be paid promptly and can not be collected in arrears when a staff member returns to work.

Failure to make prompt payment will result in the staff member self selecting to revert back to the default position.

**Sick Leave**

7.0 While on a career break staff would not be entitled to sick pay as full pay is calculated on the average earnings for an 8 week period ending with the last pay day prior to the period of incapacity for work.

**Annual Leave**

7.1 Staff on a career break will retain accrued entitlement for annual leave. There will be no entitlement to annual leave while on a career break.

**Maternity Leave**

7.2 On return staff members will retain the same entitlement to Maternity Leave as that accrued prior to going on a career break. Only reckonable service while on a career break will count towards additional entitlement.

While on a career break, staff members will not normally be entitled to Maternity Pay as full pay is calculated on the average of the 8 week period from the 22nd week to the 15th week prior to the expected date of confinement, as being entitlement to Maternity Leave.

**8. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The Human Resources Director will have overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy, and will liaise as necessary with the Executive Team and the Board of NHS 24.

This policy will be reviewed in partnership on a 3-yearly basis.
GUIDANCE ON CONDITIONS OF CAREER BREAK POLICY

MANAGEMENT

1.1 NHS 24 is committed to ensuring that, as far as is reasonably practicable, staff returning from a career break will be offered priority consideration for any post at the same grade and undertaking the same type of work as that undertaken prior to the career break. Staff will be entitled to refuse up to three offers after which NHS 24 is under no obligation to make any further offers and the employment relationship will have ended.

1.2 NHS 24 will guarantee to provide career break participants with at least 10 days' paid employment per year (pro rata for shorter breaks or part time staff) in order to keep abreast with changes and developments in the service. This may include training courses and professional updating.

1.3 Relevant information should be considered, by the manager, on a monthly basis and made available to employees on a career break.

EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

2.1 Staff who participate on the scheme will be obliged to advise their manager on any change in circumstances e.g. address, telephone number etc.

2.2 Staff must not take a career break to work for another organisation.

2.3 Staff on a career break must be available for at least 10 days in each year of the scheme (pro rata for shorter breaks) should they be required to work, attend courses or receive professional updating. There may be exceptions to this e.g. employees living abroad.

2.4 If the career break lasts for more than 1 year, staff will notify their line manager of their intention to continue the break at least 3 months prior to the end of each year

2.5 Staff will be asked to make an annual commitment to the scheme and its terms and conditions

2.6 While on a career break, superannuation contributions will be deducted regardless of whether the staff members service is unpaid non reckonable or paid reckonable. When a staff member returns to work following a career break their superannuation contributions for that unpaid period will be deducted from their subsequent pay over a corresponding period. Any tax rebate to which the employee is eligible while on a career break may be used to offset superannuation arrears.
APPLICATION FOR A CAREER BREAK  

APPENDIX 1

To be completed by the applicant in consultation with their manager.

Full Name………………………………………………………………………………

Employee No…………………………………………………………………………

Position …………………………………………………………………………………

Location………………………………………………………………………………

Department……………………………………………………………………………

Home Address…………………………………………………………………………

Home Telephone No………………………………………………………………

Reason for Career Break……………………………………………………………

Date commenced employment……………………………………………………

Start date of Career Break…………………………………………………………

Proposed Return date………………………………………………………………

I wish to remain in the Superannuation Scheme and I agree to repay necessary contributions. Repayment is as follows: (Please tick appropriate box)

First 6 months of career break (employee contributions only) 

Months 7 - 24 of career break (staff AND employer contributions) 

Staff Member

I wish to apply for an extended period of unpaid leave under the Career Break policy. I understand continued acceptance of the scheme will require me not to carry out any other substantive employment during the Career Break. I accept and will abide by the conditions of the policy and undertake to return to work for a minimum of 12 months at the end of the Career Break. I understand that a failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the Career Break will result in termination of employment.

Name .......................  Signed .....................  Date .....................

Line Manager

NHS 24 Career Break Policy
Approved/Rejected (delete as appropriate)

I support this application and confirm that the applicants work performance is satisfactory. I will ensure appropriate arrangements are made to maintain contact with the applicant, including arrangements for temporary work, training and general information for the duration of the break.

Name ...................... Signed ...................... Date ......................

If rejected, give reasons
...........................................................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................................................

Name ...................... Signed ...................... Date ......................

Director

I support/reject (delete as appropriate) this application for a career break on the following grounds:
...........................................................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................................................

Name ...................... Signed ...................... Date ......................

Copy sent to HR Business Support Team for filing and updating HR System.