

**August 2016**

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

# **Career Break Scheme**



## **I. DEFINITION OF A CAREER BREAK**

A career break is a period of unpaid time out of the workplace and occurs when an employee, out of necessity, has to leave their job to cover domestic responsibilities or to pursue further education and then returns to work at a later date. Royal Greenwich's Career Break Scheme provides for employees to take a break from 6 months up to two years. The length of the break should balance the needs of the employee with the needs of the service

## **2. ROYAL GREENWICH'S CAREER BREAK SCHEME**

The Career Break Scheme enables any employee with at least one year's continuous service with Royal Greenwich to take a break from work in order to raise a family, or care for an elderly or disabled person. Employees that wish to apply need to complete an Application for Joining the Career Break Scheme. Follow by signing the declaration form if the Career Break Scheme has been agreed. The Scheme offers a greater opportunity for returning to work compared to a completely new recruitment application. Whilst it cannot guarantee a job for those who wish to return to work after a career break, it will assist and prepare them to return to a job.

## **3. AIM OF THE SCHEME**

The aim of the Career Break Scheme is to make it easier for all employees who need to take a break from work, to be able to prepare them self to return to a career with Royal Greenwich. This will be achieved by a programme of "keeping in touch" with Royal Greenwich and updating their skills through 2 weeks unpaid work placements and the opportunity to attend in-service training courses. This will be dependant on identified training needs and availability of courses.

In the past, it has been found that individual who have left work to raise children or cover domestic responsibilities have experienced considerable difficulties in re-establishing their careers. The scheme will directly assist these people to resume their careers.

## **4. BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME**

### **4.1 Benefits to Royal Greenwich**

There are advantages and economies for Royal Greenwich in implementing a Career Break Scheme.

4.1.1 Royal Greenwich invests considerable amounts of money in recruiting and training employees.

4.1.2 In the future it is likely that Royal Greenwich would be facing a national skills shortage combined with a declining pool of school leavers. The Career Break Scheme improves Royal Greenwich's chances of re-employing trained and skilled employees.

4.1.3 When an employee takes a career break to pursue further education there will be benefits to both the employee and RBG. This type of career break will provide an opportunity for employees to widen their experience, and enhance the skills and knowledge they could bring to their profession on return to RBG.

#### 4.2 Benefits to the Employee

There are obvious advantages to the employee:

4.2.1 The employee will be kept up-to-date with relevant information about Royal Greenwich.

4.2.2 "Keeping in Touch" with Royal Greenwich will help the employee to:

- maintain contact with colleagues
- brush up on their skills during unpaid work experience
- pursue in-service training where available
- and gain confidence about returning to work.

### 5. **CONDITIONS FOR ELIGIBILITY**

The Scheme is available to any permanent Royal Greenwich employee (full-time, part-time, or job share) who meets the following criteria.

5.1 The employee must have at least one year's continuous service with Royal Greenwich prior to the date of termination of employment.

5.1.2 The request should be for:

- (i) the care and/or rearing of children, or
- (ii) the care of somebody who is aged, or
- (iii) the care of someone who has a disability or serious illness
- (iv) educational purposes

5.1.3 Similar requests may be considered subject to service need considerations for releasing an employee on the career break scheme.

### 6. **CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION**

6.1 The period from the date of termination of employment to seeking re-employment must not exceed two years.

6.2 The Career Break Scheme seeks to preserve the right of continuity of service for certain benefits for ex-employees who re-join Royal Greenwich's service. However, continuity of service will only be preserved if the ex-employee on the career break does not enter paid employment with another employer. Participants will be required to sign the declaration form stating that they understand and will abide by the conditions for participation. For further clarification see "Continuity of Service" section.

### 7. **CLARIFICATION OF MATERNITY LEAVE AND CAREER BREAK**

Although maternity leave is a break in an employee's career, the differences are as follows:

7.1 Maternity Leave

Women who qualify for maternity leave are entitled to take a break as part of their employment rights. They do not have to terminate their employment, unless they wish to do so. Whilst on maternity leave, women are considered employees of Royal Greenwich under the terms of its maternity provisions.

7.2 Career Break

All employees may take advantage of Royal Greenwich's Career Break Scheme. To do so employees resign from their jobs and give contractual notice and they are not guaranteed a job when they are ready to return to work. However, the Career Break Scheme provides participants with maximum preparation to apply for a similar job on the same grade.

7.2.1 Employees on maternity leave may choose to join the Career Break Scheme after their maternity leave has expired. However, it must be pointed out that employees who do not return to work for a minimum period of 13 weeks will be entitled to keep their SMP plus their first six weeks Royal Greenwich maternity pay but will be required to refund the remainder to Royal Greenwich.

**8. CONTINUITY OF SERVICE**

8.1 Continuity of service can be defined as unbroken service for the purpose of preserving certain entitlements. Employees Terms and Conditions of Service generally recognise and preserve the continuity of service of people transferring from one Local Authority to another, providing they have not entered other paid employment.

8.2 The Royal Greenwich Career Break Scheme is a local agreement which seeks to preserve the entitlements for its employees who return to work for Royal Greenwich. The Scheme provides for participants to link their year's service before and after the break when they return to Royal Greenwich (the years during the break are not included).

8.3 The preservation of entitlements is only applicable if the participant has not entered any paid employment. Participants will be reminded of having signed a declaration to comply with the requirements of the scheme.

8.4 The entitlements which will be preserved are:-

- (i) Annual leave/
- (ii) Period of notice
- (iii) Sick pay
- (iv) Maternity leave/provisions

8.5 All other terms and conditions of employment will be frozen from the last day of service. Therefore the period of career break will not count as reckonable service when calculating contractual redundancy payments and for incremental pay progression purposes.

## **9. PENSION CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 Pension service accrues only during the time an employee contributes to the Scheme. A break in service will not affect any past contribution towards a pension fund.
- 9.2 When employees return to work, they may be able to purchase scheme added years or pay Additional Voluntary Contributions to enhance pension benefits. These additional contributions can be made temporarily or permanently. Employees are advised to clarify their particular position with the Pension team.

## **10. APPLICATION TO EXTEND THE CAREER BREAK**

- 10.1 Where employees on career break and would like to extend their career break (e.g. a change from family reasons) s/he must write to HR Professional Services and state the length of period they would like to extend. All information regarding Career Break e.g. the application form and the acceptance letter must be sent to HR within 2 days of the agreement.

## **11. RETURNING TO WORK**

- 11.1 Employees who decide to return to work should contact the HR Assistants from HR Professional Services at least 3 months in advance of the date they wish to return to permanent employment and declare that they have not entered any paid work during their break. Failure to notify the HR Professional service of the intended return will be deemed to have resigned from their post with Royal Borough and will forfeit all rights of return.
- 11.3 Every effort from the HR caseworker (HR Assistants ) will be made to arrange advice and support to ex-employees prior to their return. Attendance on training courses will be subject to availability
- 11.4 Participants of the Scheme who decide to re-apply for jobs earlier than anticipated and also to work on a job-share or part-time basis may do so.

## **12. ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHEME**

- 12.1 Where employees have expressed a wish to take a career break, they should be offered an interview to ascertain if the employee satisfies the criteria for participation in the Scheme.
- 11.2 Manager should establish the reasons why the employee is leaving and:
- (i) check they match the reasons specified in the scheme
  - (ii) confirm they are eligible under the length of service requirement i.e. one years continuous service with Royal Greenwich
- 12.3 Draft Reference

Employees who take a career break may find it difficult to return to work and the manager

may move on in the period they are off. It is therefore recommended that anyone leaving under the scheme request a draft reference from their manager to be put on their personnel file which records their abilities and achievements at work and can then be used at a later date when seeking re-employment.

#### 12.4 Career Break Register

Details of leavers who wish to participate in the Scheme will be entered on the Career Break Register and sent to HR.

#### 12.5 Exit Interview

Employees will be encouraged to participate in exit interview - facilitated by HR when they leave the Royal Borough.

### 13. **PROVISIONS OF THE SCHEME**

#### 13.1 Dispatch of Relevant Publications

The HR caseworker (HR Assistants ) will arrange for the following information to be sent to ex-employees on the Career Breaks:

- (i) The website to apply for external job vacancies will be provided to the ex-employees. .
- (ii) Information on relevant in-service training courses.
- (iii) Any other relevant general information.

#### 13.2 Internal Job Vacancy

Employees under the Career Break Scheme may apply for internal job vacancy advertised in Royal Greenwich. Individual will be on the internal job vacancy for 12 weeks. Once this period has concluded and if they have not successfully secured employment they will be removed from the register but will still be able to apply for any positions in the same way as any other external applicant. If employees have been successfully appointed to a role via the external vacancies within the 2 years, from the start date of the Career Break, protection under the Career Break Scheme will apply.

#### 13.3 Attendance on In-service Training

Where the manager believes that available training will provide knowledge and skills relevant to a post holder, the career break participant should be notified and invited to attend.

#### 13.4 Two weeks unpaid work experience

The previous manager will arrange a one off, two weeks unpaid work experience appropriate to the level of work carried out by the employee before they left Royal Greenwich. If work is not available then the Chief Officer will seek to find a placement in another department. Assistance may be available from HR where appropriate.. Work experience can be arranged on a flexible basis for example part-time hours or in a job share. The manager will need to complete a starter and leavers form and post this to HR

Admin to process the unpaid work experience.

#### **14. EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE**

- 14.1 Employees who have left the Royal Borough in order to undertake study linked to the profession/role they undertook while employed by RBG will have the right to join the redeployment register at the end of their studies.
- 14.2 To be placed on the redeployment register:
- The study/training will have to be linked to the profession they were undertaking while employed by RBG. Evidence of the course/study will be required such as the accepting offer to start the course. Manager must agree that the course is linked to their profession.
  - Employees must have successfully completed the study.
  - Employees must have one year or more continuous service with RBG to qualify.
- 14.3 Employees will **only** be entitled to remain on the register for a period of 12 weeks. Once this period has concluded and if they have not successfully secured employment they will be removed from the register but will still be able to apply for any positions in the same way as any other external applicant.
- 14.4 Employees accessing this scheme will have no right to return to their previous post once they have finish their studies but can apply for jobs under the redeployment scheme.
- 14.5 Employees should follow the redeployment process under the redeployment procedure.
- 14.6 Employees taken career break for educational propose are allow to have secondary jobs to cover subsistence while in studying. Therefore employees can take employment with the permission from the Head of HR.