



# Career Break Policy

## For

# The First Federation Trust

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<b>Review cycle:</b>	Three years
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## **1. Policy statement**

- 1.1 We recognise that there are times when employees may want or need to take a period of time away from work. We are committed to long-term career development and to retaining staff wherever possible and so permit employees to apply for an unpaid career break under this policy.
- 1.2 A career break can provide staff with an opportunity for personal development (such as extended periods of travel, voluntary service overseas or to pursue further education) or to fulfil personal or domestic commitments. However, a career break may not be the most appropriate way of meeting your needs and, in some cases, we may suggest a more appropriate alternative.
- 1.3 All requests for a career break will be considered fairly and consistently in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time following consultation with the recognised trade unions.

## **2. Who is covered by the policy?**

- 2.1 This policy applies to employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors.

## **3. Scope and purpose of the policy**

- 3.1 This policy sets out how we will deal with requests for career breaks from employees.

## **4. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy**

- 4.1 The Governing Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the CEO. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with the CEO.

## **5. ELIGIBILITY**

To be considered for a career break, you must have:

- (a) at least two years' continuous employment; and
  - (b) Satisfactory performance: a good record of performance in your last two annual appraisals.
  - (c) A limit of one career break every 2 years
- 5.2 Where employees have not received appraisals due to maternity leave, sickness absence or other protected reasons, the Trust will consider alternative evidence of satisfactory performance.

## 6. APPLICATION PROCESS

- 6.1 You should first discuss the career break you wish to take informally with your line manager to outline the reason for your request, the proposed length of your absence and consider how your workload might be managed while you are away.
- 6.2 You should then submit a written application for a career break to your line manager at least three months before the anticipated start date. In exceptional circumstances we may waive this time limit. Your application should set out:
- (a) the reason for your proposed career break;
  - (b) the dates between which you wish to take your career break;
  - (c) whether you have previously taken any career breaks and, if so, the dates between which you have taken them;
  - (d) the benefits to the Trust, if any, of your proposed career break; and
  - (e) how you consider your work can be covered in your absence.

## 7. RESPONDING TO YOUR APPLICATION

- 7.1 Each application will be considered on its own merits. You should not commit yourself to plans before your application for a career break has been agreed by us in writing.
- 7.2 When considering your application, the following are examples of the factors that will be taken into account:
- (a) The purpose of, or reasons for, the career break.
  - (b) The period of absence requested.
  - (c) Your performance record.
  - (d) The number and length of any previous career breaks taken.
  - (e) The operational needs of the Trust.
  - (f) The need to retain your skills, knowledge and experience.
  - (g) Our ability to cover your duties on a temporary basis.
  - (h) The potential benefits of the proposed career break.
- 7.3 We will try to respond to your request in writing within 15 school days of receipt of your written application.
- 7.4 We may hold a meeting to discuss your request if we think this will be helpful.
- 7.5 If your request for a career break is refused, we will explain the reasons for our decision. Employees may appeal the decision within 10 workings of receiving a refusal letter. Your written grounds of appeal should be submitted to Director of Operations"

- 7.6 If we accept your request, we will write to confirm the start and return dates for your career break and will set out the changes to your terms of employment. You must sign and return a copy of the letter to accept the changes and until this is received your career break will not have been agreed.

## 8. CONDITIONS FOR TAKING A CAREER BREAK

- 8.1 Career breaks can normally be granted for between a minimum of one term and a maximum of 24 months. Normally, requests will align with school terms or academic years to minimise disruption to pupils.
- 8.2 A career break will normally be treated as an agreed period of unpaid leave during which the contract of employment remains in place but is suspended. Continuity of employment will normally be preserved, although the period of career break will not count towards contractual benefits unless expressly stated.
- 8.3 Where practicable we will return you to the job in which you were employed before your career break, although this cannot be guaranteed. If we cannot return you to the same job, we will take reasonable steps to find you a similar job to that in which you worked before your break.
- 8.4 Pension contributions will not normally be payable during a career break, and the period will not count towards pensionable service unless permitted under the relevant scheme rules.

## 9. DURING A CAREER BREAK

- 9.1 Where possible, you will be given at least three weeks' notice of any requirement to attend work **and / or** any keeping-in-touch days during your career break. These will be paid at the rate of pay applicable before the start of your career break and any period of work during a career break will count towards your service-related benefits.
- 9.2 Unless specifically agreed at the time your career break is approved, you will not be obliged to do any work or attend any events during a career break and will not be penalised for declining to do so; nor is your line manager obliged to offer you work while you are on a career break. Any arrangements for working during the career break must be agreed with your line manager **OR** a member of the Trust SLT including the work to be done and arrangements for payment. Work could include any activity done under the contract of employment but may also include training or other events.
- 9.3 You will share in the responsibility for keeping in touch with us during your career break. Your line manager will keep you up to date with changes in policy, personnel, developments and news by sending updates to you on a regular basis. You should make arrangements to be kept up to date with developments with your line manager.

You are expected to maintain any professional links and to keep up to date with any significant developments in your area of work.

- 9.4 You must tell your line manager about any change of address or other contact or personal details during your career break.
- 9.5 In the event that during your absence the role from which you are taking a career break is affected by reorganisation, restructuring or redundancy, every effort will be made to consult with you as appropriate.
- 9.6 Employees must not undertake paid work which conflicts with the interests of the Trust or prevents their return to work unless prior written approval is obtained from the Trust's SLT.

## **10. RETURNING FROM A CAREER BREAK**

- 10.1 We are committed, as far as is reasonably practicable, to offering you the opportunity to return to the post you held before your career break or priority consideration for any post within the same undertaking doing the same type of work at the same grade as you carried out before your career break.
- 10.2 When approving your request for a career break, we will agree when you will need to contact us before your return date to confirm arrangements. It is likely to be 6 weeks before your return date depending on the length of our career break.
- 10.3 Consideration will be given to a request to return earlier than an agreed date although it may not be possible to accommodate such a request.
- 10.4 If you are prevented from returning to work on your return date due to ill-health, you must contact your line manager as soon as possible in accordance with our Sickness Absence Policy.
- 10.5 If you are unable to return to work in accordance with previously agreed arrangements for any reason other than ill-health you must immediately contact your line manager. In exceptional cases, consideration might be given to extending the period of your career break, providing that your overall period of absence does not exceed 24 months.
- 10.6 If you wish to terminate your employment while on a career break, unless the amount of notice required from you to do so has been varied by agreement with us, you will be required to give notice in accordance with the terms of your contract.
- 10.7 Where a career break exceeds 3 months, the Trust may require additional safeguarding checks or refresher safeguarding training before a return.
- 10.8 On your return your line manager will organise for you to attend a re-induction process. This will include training on any new systems or procedures that have been

introduced during your absence and briefing on any changes that have taken place that will affect you.

**11. Review of policy**

- 11.1 This policy is reviewed at least every three years by the First Federation Trust in consultation with the recognised trade unions. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.