



Career Break Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (173/2025)

Abstract

This policy details the process to be followed and the criteria that applies to police officers and police staff who wish to take a career break. It includes the exemptions to the scheme and the appeal process for career breaks that are not approved.

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy is required to assist police officers and police staff who wish to take an unpaid break in their career to develop themselves or to fulfil outside commitments, such as caring for family or other dependents. The policy enables Surrey Police and Sussex Police to retain the services of valued, trained, and experienced police officers and police staff. It should be read in conjunction with the career break guidance.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy and supporting documents cover:

- The career break process.
- The exemption criteria and appeal process.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 Career breaks are an important factor in retaining skilled police officers and police staff who have stated their intention to continue a career with Surrey Police and Sussex Police. This policy demonstrates the commitment of the Forces to developing a diverse workforce who are able to achieve a work / life balance whilst meeting operational delivery demands.

3.2 Policies and associated guidance should inform decision making which should consider organisational values, professional judgement (on the context and circumstances of each situation) and 'policing principles'. Decisions and subsequent action taken should be proportionate, legitimate and ethical as informed by the National Decision Model (NDM).

Procedure

1. Career Break Scheme

1.1 Surrey Police and Sussex Police recognises that police officers and police staff may wish to take an extended period of unpaid absence away from work during their career with the employing Force.

1.2 Allowing police officers and police staff to take a career break means that we the Forces retain a trained and experienced workforce who have the right skills, knowledge, and ability to serve the public.

1.3 It offers a method of re-employment, which reduces the cost of losing valuable resource and knowledge and provides the opportunity for members of the workforce to take a break in their career to:

- Pursue education - personal development such as full time study.
- Travel - for self-development e.g. to explore heritage / learn from other cultures.
- Fulfil caring responsibilities.

1.4 The scheme allows police officers and police staff an extended period of unpaid leave for a period of not less than 3 months and up to a maximum of 5 years. (See 3.2 below).

2. Before Applying for a Career Break

2.1 Police officers and police staff should seek advice on any of the following aspects which may affect them before applying for a career break:

- Pensions.
- Welfare loans.
- Federation and Unison.
- Transitional rent allowance and housing allowance.
- Contact details - police officers and police staff will need to complete the Career Break Contact Agreement form before they commence their career break.
- Recall and attendance at court.
- PIP accreditation rules.
- For career breaks up to 12 months, discussions should be held between the line manager and the individual regarding potential plans to cover the career break.
- Pregnancy and maternity whilst on career break.
- Maternity rights on career break.
- Childcare vouchers – rules of salary sacrifice schemes do not allow individuals to remain part of the scheme if taking an unpaid career break of longer than a year.

For further information, please refer to the career break guidance.

3. Applying for a Career Break

3.1 Police officers and police staff with more than 2 years continuous service and who have passed their probation with Surrey Police and Sussex Police can apply for a career break. For an application form please refer to the career break application form.

3.2 Career breaks will be approved for up to 2 years and consideration can be given to extending the career break up to a maximum of 5 years in total; for career breaks that are approved for up to 5 years, a review of this term may be required after 2 years to ensure the criteria of the policy is still applicable to the personal circumstances of the individual and can be overturned. All career break requests must be submitted with a reasoned argument supporting the request.

3.3 A career break Contact Agreement and Contract must be signed by both parties before the career break commencement date. Please refer to the Contact Agreement form, Police Officer Contract and the Police Staff Contract.

4. Exemptions to Granting a Career Break

4.1 Police officers and police staff who are subject of a disciplinary sanction or formal stage of the Attendance Management Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (950) or Performance and Gross Incompetence Management Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (1228) will not be eligible to apply for a career break until such time as the procedure is satisfactorily completed. However, Force consideration will be made on a case by case basis.

4.2 Surrey Police and Sussex Police will not support a career break where an individual intends to start up their own business which has not already been considered authorised as a Business Interest through the Joint Force Vetting Unit (this does not include individuals who receive payments for caring responsibilities or wishes to maintain any existing business interests).

4.3 The Chief Constable and/or the Deputy Chief Constable of the respective Force retain the right to refuse any career break request due to the operational needs of the police service.

4.4 Any individual whose application for a career break has been rejected has the right of appeal to the Head of Resourcing ,Talent and Performance, People Services, who will provide a summary and the appeal for the Chief Constable to review and decide the appeal outcome. Appeals should be submitted in writing within 7 days of notification of a decision.

5. Monitoring a Career Break

5.1 Career breaks up to 12 months will be monitored and managed by the individuals Division / Department.

5.2 Career breaks of 12 months and over will be monitored and managed through resource meetings.

6. Applicable Conditions during a Career Break

6.1 For the duration of the career break the following conditions will continue to apply:

- Police officers - Police Regulations.

- Police staff - Terms and conditions of their contract except for those expressly stated not to apply.
- Individuals on a career break will continue to abide by the Official Secrets Act, therefore, any breaches of this Act whilst on career break will be dealt with appropriately.

6.2 During the career break both the individual's pay, and pension will be suspended.

7. Personal Responsibility

7.1 Police officers and police staff on a career break have a personal responsibility to inform Surrey Police and Sussex Police of the following at the earliest opportunity:

- If they are a victim or suspect of crime.
- Any changes in circumstances which may affect the career break arrangements, allowances (e.g. transitional rent and housing allowance) and/or proposed return to work.

7.2 Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the career break policy and guidance notes may constitute a disciplinary offence for both police officers and police staff.

8. Return from Career Break

8.1 Prior to returning to work from a career break, police officers and police staff will be required to complete the following:

- Pass vetting in accordance with the Joint Force Vetting Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (592).
- Pass a medical (where appropriate).
- Undertake and successfully complete a Job Related Fitness Test (JRFT) (police officers, Special Constables and Police Community Support Officers only) in accordance with the Job Related Fitness Test Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (1140).

9. Employment Data

9.1 Surrey Police and Sussex Police collect and process personal data relating to police officers and police staff to manage the employment relationship. It is important that employees understand how that data is collected and used in order to meet the Force's data protection obligations. Further details can be located on the joint intranet by searching for 'Privacy Notice'.

Team: People Services Department