

Career Break Policy

We will provide this policy on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in another non written format.

CAREER BREAK POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

Cube Housing Association is committed to attracting and retaining the most talented and experienced staff available to work within the Association. Cube recognises that the workforce within the UK is changing and that many people at some stage in their working life may wish to take unpaid time off work for a number of reasons. A career break is when an employee is given a leave of absence under the career break scheme and is guaranteed re-employment with the Association at the end of the break, provided that a redundancy situation does not apply during the period of the career break (see section 5.3 – Redundancy) and that the employee has adhered to the terms and conditions of the career break scheme. However, the employee is not necessarily guaranteed a return to the same post but to a post equal to the same spinal range with similar responsibilities.

Whilst there is no legislation governing career breaks, the Association recognises that having a Career Break Policy will complement the Family Friendly Policy and Procedures which are covered under the Employment Act 2002 and the Work and Families Act 2006.

Cube wishes to ensure that those employees that are eligible to request a career break will have their request dealt with in a fair and consistent process.

2 AIMS OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 To help retain trained, experienced staff members, many of whom have potential for further development
- 2.2 To enable staff to achieve a better work/life balance with an opportunity to take a break from work for a defined period for personal reasons.
- 2.3 To demonstrate Cube's commitment to provide a good place to work through adapting to changes in society and responding positively to employee requests.

3. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for a Career Break, the employee must:

- have completed at least 5 years' continuous service
- have at least 3 years' potential service prior to normal retirement age on return
- have a satisfactory performance record
- have a satisfactory health and attendance record
- indicate a firm intention to return to work

Each case will be considered on its own merits in light of personal circumstances and the Association's operational needs, and approval given by the Chief Executive. The commencement and time allowed for each career break will be at the discretion of the Chief Executive. An employee who is dissatisfied with this decision has a right to appeal the decision in line with the Association's Grievance & Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures.

4. LENGTH OF CAREER BREAK

A career break is available for a minimum of 3 months to a maximum period of 12 months. No more than two career breaks may normally be taken by any staff member. Anyone who takes a career break must return to work for at least 2 years between each break.

5 EFFECTS ON TERMS & CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT

5.1 Benefits

During the career break period, the employee will have no entitlement to payment of salary, including employer's pension contributions, holiday or sick leave or any other accrued benefits except as in 5.2 below and an amendment to the permanent contract will be made with these conditions. On the employee's return from a career break, the permanent contract of employment will be reinstated and the amendment removed. Continuity of employment will be recognised for the purposes of continuous service for the calculation of service-related contractual benefits only, including the period of absence.

Staff returning from a Career Break will not be entitled to an incremental salary increase in the financial year they return unless they have been back at work for 6 months or more prior to 1st April. However, the employee will be eligible to receive any other pay award agreed by the Association at the time of their return to work.

5.2 Pension Notification

It is the responsibility of the employee to notify the Pensions Trust of the career break if the employee is a member of the Association's pension scheme. The period of unpaid leave will not be considered by the Association's pension scheme as reckonable service for pension purposes unless the employee makes full pension contributions for the duration of the career break. If the employee opts to make full payment, the Association shall also pay the contributions it would have been liable to pay as the employer during the leave of absence.

5.3 Redundancy

If the Association is considering redundancy in relation to the employee's job whilst they are on a Career Break, the employee will be contacted, in writing, and will benefit from the Association's Redundancy Policy and Procedures, as would any other member of staff.

6. RETURNING TO WORK

Staff must return to their original contracted hours after the end of the career break but no later than the end of 12 months.

Staff must give 8-weeks written notice to the Chief Executive of their intention to return to work if return is earlier than previously agreed or if a request to change the contractual hours is made.

If the employee fails to return to work after 12 months, they will lose their right to return to work unless a postponement as outlined in Section 7 below has been agreed with the Chief Executive. If a postponement has not been agreed, the Association will treat this as a resignation by the employee, effective from the date previously agreed for return to work. As the employee has resigned his/her position, the employee will have no entitlement to notice payment from the Association. In addition, the Association reserves the right to reclaim the full recruitment and selection costs from the employee for employing a replacement employee.

7. POSTPONING THE DATE OF RETURN

7.1 By the Association:

If there are no suitable vacancies the Association may postpone the date of return for up to **28 days**. The employee will be informed of the revised date in writing. If the Association postpones the date of return, this will not affect the date of continuous service and salary and other benefits will be reinstated.

7.2 By the Employee on Medical Grounds:

The date of return may be postponed by the employee on medical grounds only which must be supported by a medical certificate. The maximum period of postponement allowed is **28 days**. If an employee is unable to return to work after this period, the Association will review the right to return to work. In all such instances, the Chief Executive and the employee will liaise with the Association's Occupational Health Adviser through the application of the Attendance & Absence Management Policy.

8. PROCEDURES

- The procedures for implementing this policy have been developed in consultation with the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).
- The procedures are included as an appendix in the Staff Handbook, which new employees will receive as part of their induction programme.

9. POLICY REVIEW

The Association's Management Board will review the Career Break Policy every 5 years, but reserve the right to make any additions or alterations considered necessary in the intervening period as a result of changes in legislation or best practice. The procedures will be reviewed by management and the JCC on a regular basis to ensure their effectiveness.