

Human Resources

Career Breaks Policy

Updated: February 2014

Contents

Purpose	1
Application	1
Principles	2

Purpose

1.1. Defra is committed to helping its employees maintain a healthy work-life balance and having the right policies and processes in place to support working families and our colleagues who are carers.

1.2. The purpose of the Career Break Policy and Procedure is to provide a way:

- a) for employees to maintain a balance between their domestic responsibilities and career; and
- b) for Defra to retain skilled and experienced employees.

Application

2.1. This policy and its procedure take effect from 19 June 2009 and will replace the Career Breaks policies in the Interim Defra Staff Handbook and the DETR handbook.

2.2 This policy applies to all employees, including those on a Fixed Term Appointment (FTA) in the following Defra network organisations:

- a) Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA)
- b) Core Defra
- c) Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

2.3 This policy applies to all members of the Senior Civil Service (SCS) whether they work in core Defra or any of its Agencies.

2.4. The policy does not apply to:

- a) temporary employees (such as short term contracts and some fixed term contracts);
- b) agency workers; or
- c) contractors.

Principles

3.1. Career breaks are unpaid extended breaks from work and are granted at the discretion of the Department.

3.2. Applications for career breaks will be considered by managers, both against operational need and the applicant's circumstances.

3.3. Career breaks of over 12 months will be reviewed on an annual basis with the employee.

3.4. Employees must keep in touch with Defra during their career break and must notify any relevant changes in their contact details or circumstances.

3.5. Employees on career breaks of over 12 months are strongly encouraged to access Defra for skills update work or training in the six month period before they return to work.

3.6. Employees on a career break have a right to return to Defra subject to this policy, its procedure and requirements being fulfilled.

3.7. Employees have the right to return to a post at their current grade in a location within a reasonable travelling distance of their home at the time the career break was granted.

3.8. Employees who fail to comply with the terms of this policy and the conditions of their career break, for example by failing to return from the career break, may be subject to disciplinary action which could ultimately lead to disciplinary sanctions including the termination of their employment.

3.9. Employees who submit false applications, for example by applying for a career break to care for someone when this is not the real intention, may be subject to disciplinary action which could ultimately lead to disciplinary sanctions including the termination of their employment and/or their career break being terminated.

3.10. This policy and its procedure will be applied objectively regardless of the individual's sex or gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, race, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, disability, age, trade union activities, working hours or caring responsibilities.