

CAREER BREAK

Executive Summary

At West Midlands Police (WMP), we recognise there may be times in your life when you would value time away from work to focus on other aspects of your life that are important to you. Our career break scheme provides you with the opportunity to take an extended period of unpaid leave from our Force, so that you can prioritise family life, manage challenging personal circumstances or fulfil personal ambitions.

We have set out this policy to explain our career break scheme and provide guidance on the process we will follow.

Authorised Professional Practice (APP):

- This policy has been checked against APP and there is none in relation to the subject matter of this policy.

Policy Statements:

- This policy applies to all WMP officers and police staff, regardless of rank or seniority.

WMP CAREER BREAK SCHEME

- Our career break scheme allows you to take extended unpaid time off work, usually between six months and five years.
- Career breaks are subject to our prior approval.
- You can take one or two career breaks from our Force but the combined total of both career breaks cannot exceed 5 years.
- At our Chief Constable's discretion, your break can be extended beyond this limit, but only in the most exceptional circumstances.
- You can apply for a career break for one of the following reasons:
 - To care for another person, such as a child, elderly relative or someone with a serious illness
 - To pursue educational or study opportunities, usually leading to a further qualification (NB: this would require approval of the Chief Officer)
 - To engage in personal development opportunities
 - To take extended travel abroad.
- Although we may consider other reasons, you cannot apply for a career break to:
 - Take up alternative paid employment
 - Take up a different career
 - Start up your own business.
- However, you can continue to operate an existing business interest, providing you have previously notified us about it and we have already sanctioned it.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

POLICE OFFICER

- Your Police Officer rank and rate of pay will be protected for the duration of your career break.
- You will have the right to return to the Force on the same hours and work pattern that you were working prior to your career break.
- Where possible, we will try to find you a post in the same unit or department. However, we cannot guarantee this and it will depend on our available vacancies at the time you are returning to work.
- Any entitlements and allowances you received prior to your career break will be reinstated on your return, subject to any relevant local or national changes to Police Regulations, agreements or other requirements.
- During your career break you will not:
 - Accrue length of service towards the qualifying service for the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.
 - Continue to accrue your annual leave entitlement whilst on a Career Break.
 - Be entitled to receive or accrue any pay or benefits, including pension contributions.
- Your entitlements, including death benefits, enhanced ill-health pension and injury benefits, will be protected at the point your career break starts.
- You will not be able to buy additional service and the period of your career break will not count towards your pension; your length of service will be calculated on your service both before and after your career break.
- It is important to note that any pension entitlements for the 1987 or 2006 schemes are based on length of service, however the CARE scheme is not based on length of service and therefore the impact may differ.
- If you need further guidance on the impact of your career break on your pension, please contact [Pensions Department](#).
- For pension purposes, the maximum period for a career break is 5 years for **both officers and staff**. This is a period of unpaid leave which will not count towards your future pension and there is no provision to repay your missing contributions upon your return.

POLICE STAFF

- The terms and conditions of a career break mean that you will be forfeiting your right to return to your current post when your career break ends.
- Your employment with WMP during this time will be suspended. Therefore, the time that you are away from work does not count towards your continuous service for the purposes of contractual entitlements and benefits:
 - Pay progression
 - Annual leave entitlement
 - Redundancy
 - Service related benefits

- Occupational maternity, maternity/adoption support or adoption pay
- Pension benefits/contributions

- On your return, we will combine the period of time before your career break with the period of time on your return for contractual purposes.
- Your pension will be frozen at the start of your career break and contributions may resume on your return, subject to the rules of the pension scheme that are in force at that time.
- The period of your career break will not count towards your pension; your length of service will be calculated on your service both before and after your career break.
- If you need further guidance on the impact of your career break on your pension, please contact [LGPS](#).
- Since 1 April 2014 the Local Government Pension Scheme changed to a [CARE \(Career Average Revalued Earnings\)](#) therefore the benefits accrued are not based on length of membership.
- You will remain subject to your terms and conditions of employment, with the exception of all remuneration including, but not restricted to, annual leave, salary, bonus payments, allowances, and sickness pay.
- For pension purposes, the maximum period for a career break is 5 years for **both officers and staff**. This is a period of unpaid leave which will not count towards your future pension and there is no provision to repay your missing contributions upon your return.

ELIGIBILITY

- You can apply for a career break if:
 - You are a member of police staff who has a minimum of two years satisfactory service with us
 - You are a police officer who has satisfactorily completed your probationary period.
- In the majority of cases, a Career Break will not be authorised if you have a current disciplinary sanction or are subject to a formal capability improvement process. However, exceptional circumstances will be considered.

APPLYING FOR A CAREER BREAK

- If you are thinking about applying for a career break, we encourage you to have an initial discussion with your line manager to jointly consider the benefits and implications for you and our Force.
- If you decide to proceed, you must make a formal application as soon as possible and no later than four months before you want your Career Break to start, using our Career Break Application Form.
- We will take various factors into consideration when deciding whether to agree your career break, which may include:
 - Attendance
 - Performance
 - Operational requirements
 - Impact of your extended absence on WMP
 - Whether you are in a critical role.



- We will notify you of the outcome of your application in writing, with the reasons for refusal, within 28 days of receiving your application.
- If we decline your request you can appeal.
- You must clearly explain the 'grounds for your appeal', in writing, within 28 calendar days of the date that you receive the original decision.
- Appeals must be sent to the HR inbox [REDACTED]
 - For Police Staff, the grounds of appeal must be addressed to the Head of Employee Relations
 - For Police Officers, the grounds of appeal must be addressed to the Deputy Chief Constable.
- We will consider your appeal and notify you of the outcome in writing with the reasons for the decision without unnecessary delay and within 7 calendar days. Our appeal decision is final.

BEFORE YOUR CAREER BREAK

- Before your career break starts you must take any annual leave that is owing to you, including TOIL and Re-rostered Rest Days.
- We will not make any payment in lieu of untaken leave.
- You must return all uniform and other WMP equipment with the exception of your warrant card for police officers.
- Any staff association membership you hold will be suspended during your break.
- Before your career break starts, you must discuss any requests to continue payments directly with the Police Federation/Superintendents Association for Police Officers or the relevant Trade Unions for Police Staff.
- If you are a Police Officer who is living in police accommodation, you will have to vacate this before your career break starts (co-habiting police officers will be assessed on the basis of the accommodation agreement).

DURING YOUR CAREER BREAK

POLICE OFFICERS

- As a police officer, you will remain a member of our Force during your career break and will remain subject to all requirements and restrictions imposed upon you by Police Regulations (with the exception of pay, leave and expenses).
- You will be required to maintain your Recruitment Vetting (RV) during the career break period. If your vetting is due to expire during your career break period, you will be required to complete a vetting aftercare application within the timeframe specified.
- Failure to complete and/or maintain your vetting will be managed in line with Vetting APP and if withdrawn, could result in action being taken via the Police (Performance) Regulations 2020.

- If you hold Management Vetting (MV) prior to your career break, this will be suspended and you will be required to complete the relevant vetting application, if applicable, prior to your return.
- You will retain your Warrant card which you must keep in a secure location and not take outside of the United Kingdom.

POLICE STAFF

- If you are a member of police staff, your contract of employment will be suspended and preserved during your career break.
- You will be required to maintain your Recruitment Vetting (RV) during the career break period. If your vetting is due to expire during your career break period, you will be required to complete a vetting aftercare application within the timeframe specified.
- Failure to complete and/or maintain your vetting will be managed in line with Vetting APP and if withdrawn, could result in action your employment being terminated.
- If you hold Management Vetting (MV) prior to your career break, this will be suspended and you will be required to complete the relevant vetting application, if applicable, prior to your return.
- You will remain subject to your terms and conditions of service, as applicable in respect of standards of behaviour.

ONGOING CONTACT

- You are expected to keep in relevant and reasonable contact with us during your career break.
- If your personal circumstances change at any time whilst you are on your career break (for example your address, marital status or medical health), you must notify us immediately.
- If you notify us of a change relating to a conviction or caution, we will notify Professional Standards.
- For career breaks exceeding one year, we will send an annual declaration to you.
- You will be required to complete and return the declaration to confirm any change in circumstances, including contact details, change in circumstances and intended return date.
- The method of this return will be agreed with you prior to your Career Break.
- You may need to attend work for training purposes or for other essential operational requirements, including court attendance, during your career break.
- We will provide you with as much reasonable notice as possible.
- You will receive your normal pay, including expenses where applicable, for the time you are required to return to work.
- In addition, during your career break we will invite you to voluntarily attend force events such as roadshows etc. to keep in touch with colleagues and keep abreast of changes.

RETURNING FROM YOUR CAREER BREAK

- We will contact you six months before your career break ends to start discussing plans for your return to work.
- If you wish to return to work you will be required to complete the appropriate notification process in place at the relevant time, we will advise of this process when we contact you.
- We will remain in regular contact with you in the following months so we can continue to discuss available options for your return.
- For career breaks of less than one year, where there is existing vetting in place (with more than 12 months before expiry), a vetting health check must be undertaken which will include confirmation that there has been no change in your circumstances.
- For career breaks exceeding one year you must complete updated vetting clearance (which may include a medical, where appropriate) before you can return to WMP.
- We will send you the relevant forms to complete no later than four months before your planned return date.
- Once our vetting and any medical checks have been satisfactorily completed and we have agreed your return to work date, we will:
 - Look for suitable postings for you if you are a Police Officer or
 - If you are a member of Police Staff we will place you at risk in accordance with our [Organisational Change Policy](#). We will then work with you to share potentially suitable roles within the Force for which you may apply in line with the Alternative Employment Register (AER) as described in the Organisational Change Policy.
- If you need any new or refresher training following your career break, we will work with you to build an appropriate plan.
- Upon your return to work your continuous service will recommence from the date that you last started for the Force (excluding the duration of your career break for police staff).
- For police staff, your pay will be in keeping with the role that you return to.
- If that role is identical to the role that you fulfilled prior to your career break you will be paid at the SCP applicable when you last worked for WMP.

VARYING YOUR CAREER BREAK

- As a police officer, you can end your career break early by giving us notice, in writing, of your intention to return to work.
- You have the right to return to duty within 1 month if there is a suitable vacancy, or in all other cases, within 3 months of giving notice.

- Once a return from Career Break is agreed, we will then work with you to find suitable roles, in line with the process we would follow if you were returning at the time you had originally planned.
- You can request an extension to your career break, providing it does not exceed the maximum career break limit of 5 years.
- You must submit your request, in writing, as soon as possible and at least three months before your original return date, explaining the reason for extending your break and the revised return to work date you would like.
- We will consider your request, taking into consideration the reason for the extension and the impact on our Force, we cannot guarantee your request will be agreed.
- As a member of Police Staff, there is no right to return from a career break earlier than planned and agreed, however in exceptional circumstances we will consider a request to return to work with sufficient notice.

PREGNANCY/ADOPTION/MATERNITY

PREGNANCY/ADOPTION DURING YOUR CAREER BREAK

- If you become pregnant or adopt a child during your career break, you must notify us as soon as possible, so we can discuss any maternity/adoption and associated entitlements and allowances with you e.g. Shared Parental Leave.
- You may be entitled to the same maternity/adoption benefits and provisions that you would have received if you were still at work.
- You may not qualify for Maternity/Adoption Pay. If this is the case, you may still be entitled to Maternity Allowance, by completing an SMP1 form.
- Please read the Maternity or Adoption policies to ensure that you understand your entitlements. Shared Services can forward these to you by post or email if you make a request. (Visit [My Service Portal](#))
- If appropriate and in agreement with you we may suspend your career break and trigger the relevant maternity/adoption provisions in line with the relevant policy, unless you advise us, in writing, that you wish to remain on your career break.
- You may be able to resume your career break at a later date, if we subsequently agree to it.

CAREER BREAK AFTER MATERNITY OR ADOPTION LEAVE

- You can request a career break if you are on maternity or adoption leave and meet the eligibility criteria.
- You should apply as soon as possible and not later than 4 months before your scheduled return to work date.
- If you are a member of Police Staff, you can either:
 - Return to work for at least one month before you want your career break to start, so you retain your enhanced maternity/adoption pay,

Or

- Start your career break immediately after your maternity or adoption leave but lose your enhanced maternity/adoption pay, which you will have to repay within one month of commencement of the career break.
- If you are a Police Officer, you can start your career break immediately after your maternity or adoption leave without financial implications.
- You should take any outstanding annual leave you have accrued but not taken during your maternity/adoption leave before you start your career break.

BUSINESS INTEREST

- You can continue to operate an existing business interest during your career break, providing you have previously notified us about it and we have sanctioned it and the material circumstances of the authorised business interest have remained the same including the hours worked.
- You cannot apply for a career break to pursue a new business interest, without having received our prior written approval.
- Similarly, if you would like to pursue a new business interest at any point during your career break, you must notify us and receive our confirmed approval before you take any further action. Please note that approval will not be given for any new business interests involving paid, full time permanent employment with similar skill sets to your role within WMP, employment with another organisation in a comparative capacity or any activity that present a conflict of interests.
- If you fail to do this, we may take disciplinary action against you, in line with our [Disciplinary Policy](#) or you could be subject of a referral to Professional Standards Department where the Conduct Appropriate Authority will make and assessment of whether you should be subject of an investigation to disciplinary proceedings which may also affect the terms of your career break.

Definitions/Acronyms:

WMP – West Midlands Police

HR – Human Resources

Publication Instructions:

- Suitable for publication to public

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Policy Author: [REDACTED], Head of Employee Relations and Wellbeing/ [REDACTED], Employee Relations Manager

Business Area Owner: Business Partnering

Department Responsible: Employee Relations

Any enquiries in relation to this policy should be made directly with the policy author shown above.

Force Executive Approval:

CHIEF CONSTABLE



Policy Name:	Career Break
Author Name:	
Each WMP Policy must evidence due regard for the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Policy authors should consider the following three duties:	
1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act	Put an end to unlawful behaviour including discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Removing disadvantage, taking steps to meet needs, encourage people to take part.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Taking steps to reduce prejudice and increase understanding between groups
Nine Protected Characteristics	
Age	A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30-year olds).
Disability	A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Gender Reassignment	Where a person undergoes, or proposes to undergo, a process for the purpose of reassigning their sex.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Marriage is a legally recognised union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. It does not protect those that are co-habiting, single, divorced or widowed.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
Race	A race is a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnicity or national origins. A racial group can be made up of more than one distinct racial group, such as Black British.
Religion or Belief	Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
Sex	A man or a woman
Sexual Orientation	Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.
Who to consider	
Our People	Colleagues in your own department
Our Partners	Colleagues in other departments & external partners
Our Communities	Members of the public Inc. Victims, callers, suspects, IAG members, WMP social media followers etc



Guidance		
	Evaluation	Mitigation & Changes
	What impact has this policy had on the nine protected characteristics in relation to the three general duties? (If applicable)	How will this updated policy positively impact each of the nine protected characteristics in relation to the three general duties? If not, explain why it will not.
Points to consider		
Our People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many people have been impacted by this policy & is that proportionate? Have there been any complaints, grievances or disputes recorded about the contents of this policy? Have any sections of this policy caused trust or confidence concerns with our staff or communities? Does this policy contain examples of outdated language? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this policy specifically discuss each of the nine protected characteristics? Does this policy demonstrate a clear understanding of key risks associated with the nine protected characteristics? Does this policy suggest interventions to mitigate any risk? Does this policy detail how the contents will be governed?
Our Partners		
Our Communities		
How to use this template		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each box should contain some narrative explaining your thoughts Proportionate research should be undertaken to support with your assessment Feedback from the consultation can be added to this Equality Assessment 		
Equality Assessment		
	What impact has this policy had on the nine protected characteristics in relation to the three general duties? (If applicable)	How will this updated policy positively impact each of the nine protected characteristics in relation to the three general duties? If not, explain why it will not.
Age	No data recorded regarding any historic issues.	This policy applies to all officers and staff who have the requisite service.
Disability	No data recorded regarding any historic issues.	<p>This policy may assist officers and staff with disabilities if they wish to take time an extended period of time away from the workplace.</p> <p>The criteria does stipulate that you must not be on a formal capability or</p>



		attendance plan which could disadvantage those with a disability. Exceptional circumstances are considered and cases will be considered on their own merit.
Gender Reassignment	No data recorded regarding any historic issues.	This policy may assist officers and staff if they wish to take an extended period of time away from the workplace to support transition etc.
Pregnancy & Maternity	No data recorded regarding any historic issues.	This policy may assist officers and staff if they wish to take an extended period of time away from the workplace to spend time with their children. Maternity/Adoption benefits for an officer/staff member who has a baby/adopts a child still apply.
Marriage & Civil Partnership	No impact is identified in relation to this PC.	
Race	No impact is identified in relation to this PC.	
Religion or Belief	No impact is identified in relation to this PC.	
Sex	No data recorded regarding any historic issues.	This policy may assist officers and staff if they wish to take an extended period of time away from the workplace to care for another. Whilst this applies to men and women, proportionally more women undertake caring responsibilities and it therefore may have a positive impact on this group.
Sexual Orientation	No impact is identified in relation to this PC.	

Monitoring and Review

Version	Date Reviewed	No change / Minor Changes / Major Changes (<i>detail</i>)	Amended / Agreed by
V2.1	18/03/2026	Minor - Career break doesn't allow for other paid full time employment	██████████