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THIS ADVICE NOTE REFLECTS THE AGREED SNCT ARRANGEMENTS. YOUR OWN COUNCIL MAY HAVE AGREED TERMS MORE FAVOURABLE TO YOU

**Q1 What is a career break?**

It is a period of special leave without pay which provides a formal opportunity to obtain an extended break of up to 5 years.

**Q 2 What are the relevant limits?**

Within any 20 year period of local authority service, the maximum single period is 5 years. It is also possible to have up to three separate breaks totalling no more than 5 years. The minimum period for any break is 6 months.

**Q3 What should be considered in selecting the length of period?**

The length of break should be identified at the time of application. Extensions and early returns, subject to 3 months notice, can be requested but the employer is not obliged to grant either variation.

**Q4 Is this my only option for a period of time away from my employment?**

No. You might consider the family leave arrangements, flexible working provisions and special leave for periods of less than 6 months.

**Q5 Can I add a career break onto other periods of leave?**

A Career Break could be taken at the end date of maternity, paternity or adoption leave.

**Q6 Are there any prescribed activities which a career break must involve?**

No. However, a career break should not normally be used to undertake alternative full time employment.

**Q7 What are requirements in order to qualify?**

As a teacher you must have a minimum of 2 years continuous service on a permanent or temporary contract following full registration with the GTCS

**Q8 How does a career break affect continuous employment?**

For statutory and contractual purposes, employment before and after the career break will be treated as continuous.

**Q9 Apart from being without pay, what other changes in conditions of service should I consider?**

You should take detailed advice about these aspects of career breaks.

The following changes are illustrative but are not a full statement on the matter.

- The career break does not count towards incremental progression.
- Teachers who become pregnant during career break have no entitlement to *occupational* (teachers') maternity pay
- Teachers who fall ill have no right to *occupational* sick pay.

**Q10 Are there other issues on which I should seek advice?**

Applicants should be aware of the implications for the occupational pension (teacher's pension) and relating to NI contributions for State benefits. The period will not count towards a teacher's pension. Credit **may** be given with regard to NI contributions (but probably only for certain women).

**Q11 What are the contact arrangements during the break?**

Employees are expected to maintain informal contact whenever possible and to keep in mind the importance of this during the latter months of the break.

**Q12 Do I return to the post I left?**

Only if the break is 2 years or less. If more than 2 years then redeployment within the Council may be necessary and for promoted staff reference may need to be made to conservation arrangements.

**Q13 How long will the application process take?**

You must apply at least 3 months in advance. The employer should respond within 4 weeks and, if refused, state reasons. The initial decision can be appealed using the employer's agreed procedures.

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