

Career Break

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DOCUMENT STATEMENT:

All Translink Group Corporate Policies should be consistent in terms of development, approval, implementation, communication, control and review in line with these guidelines.



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Policy correct on version date above.
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Version Control Record

Policy Owner:		HR Services Manager	
Main Contributors/co-authors:		HR Services Manager HR Management team	
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Version Reviewed	Reviewed by / Consultation Sought from	Date of Consultation	Comments
1.0	HR Manager	February 1999	
2.0	HR Services Manager	1 st August 2011 26 th September 2011	Document reformatted to new version – no content change Content change
2.1	HR Services Manager	14 th March 2014	Document re-formatted to new version. Content amended in sections: Section 10: Reference to Inland revenue changed to HMRC. Section 11. Pension – Missed contributions section added. Section 13. Related Policies – Local Government Regulations (NI) 2009 included.
2.2	HR Management Team; HR Systems & Standards Advisor	9 th May 2014	Section 4 amended to include option of employee requesting extension of career break up to the one year period, if initially granted for less than one year.
2.3	HR Services Manager	08.08.15	Section 11 amended to reflect 2015 Pension Regulation changes in relation to APC's; also includes reference to say that employees on career break are 'active' members so death in service benefits now apply (previously seen as 'deferred' so encouraged to take out a Life Insurance Policy) Section 12 included in relation to travel privileges Section 13 – Related Policies section (previously section 13) amended to reflect 2014 Pension Regs
2.4	HR Management team	18.09.15	No changes
3.0	HR Management Team	15.08.17	No changes
3.1	HR Services Manager	24.01.18	Amended section 13 to 'documents' not 'policies'

3.2	HR Management Team	27.01.20	Amended Section 6 to outline when the next career break can start. Amended section 11 to outline that pension contributions are now due to be paid for the first 30 days of the career break
4.0	HR Services Manager	16.11.20	Scope has been amended to include time off to care for relative with disability. Inclusion of additional eligibility for someone who has less than 3 years' service and seeks a career break for a reason related to a disability
4.1	HR Management Team	18.01.21	Scope amended to include time to care for a disabled relative. Eligibility amended to include that less than 3 years' service can be considered for a reason related to a disability. These were outcomes of the equality screening exercise.

This is a controlled document. Whilst this document may be printed, the electronic version is maintained within the Corporate Records Centre within Sharepoint by the Policy Owner.

1. Introduction

Throughout this Policy, the words 'Translink' 'Company' and/or 'the Group' refer to all corporate entities under the ownership of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC). This includes the parent company and each subsidiary either individually or taken together as a group.

Translink recognises the benefits that a career break scheme has in realising the aims of its Equal Opportunities Policy and how it may assist in employee retention and improving the flexibility of employees, to enable them to better manage particular circumstances which arise from time to time, and continue to provide a high quality service to Translink's customers.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees who meet the eligibility as detailed in Section 3 below. The main purpose of a career break is to facilitate employees who for example:

- want to undertake further education or training
- want to travel abroad
- want to undertake voluntary work
- want to set up their own business in a self-employed capacity, provided that the business does not/is not intended to compete with the business of Translink
- have requested it for compassionate grounds
- have requested it for time off to care for a disabled relative

All applications will be considered on their merits and will be determined at the entire discretion of the Company, with business needs being an important determining factor. As a general rule the Company should be satisfied that the career break will be beneficial to the organisation and the individual.

3. Eligibility

Applications will be considered from employees with a minimum of three years in a permanent post (excluding apprentices and graduate trainees/Transport Management Trainees). In exceptional circumstances, an application will be considered from an employee who has less than 3 years' service for a reason related to a disability.

4. Duration & Contractual Arrangements During Career Break

A career break involves special unpaid leave of absence for a period of not less than three months and not more than one year. An employee may request and be granted a career break for a period of less than one year. Should they subsequently wish to have this extended up to but not beyond one year, they

should contact their line manager to discuss the reasons for the extension. The line manager will consider the reasons based on their own merits but are under no obligation to approve the extension.

Employees on a career break are on special unpaid leave which will not count as service for the accrual of contractual benefits or statutory entitlements including pay, sick pay, annual leave, holiday pay, etc. Please refer to section 11 of this policy in relation to pension arrangements. Service before and after the career break will count for these purposes and there will be no break in continuous service.

A temporary appointment will normally be made to provide replacement cover for the temporary vacancy caused by the career break.

Employees are not permitted to undertake other paid employment during a career break except with the prior written permission of Translink.

5. Discipline & Grievances During Career Break

An employee on a career break remains an employee of Translink on special unpaid leave, and therefore during a career break employees will continue to be subject to Translink's disciplinary rules and procedures.

6. Application Process

An employee wishing to take a career break must, in normal circumstances, make written application to their Departmental Manager, giving a minimum of six months' notice and outlining the reasons why they wish to be considered for a career break. The employee must provide dates of when he/she wishes his/her career break to start and end. Failure to do so will mean that the career break application cannot be given due consideration.

An employee may only be granted one career break in a six year period. The eligibility date will be calculated based on the return to work date from the previous career break.

7. Contact During Career Break

It will be the employee's responsibility to promptly notify the Company of any changes of address.

8. Internal Job Applications During a Career Break

An employee will be free to apply for other internal posts during career breaks. However, if offered another post, they would have to accept the offer within the stated time period and commence employment and duties in the new post when required, and which may necessitate an early return from the career break.

9. Return to Work

An employee will normally return to work to their substantive post or at a grade equivalent to that at the time of the commencement of the break.

An employee on a career break must contact their line manager and Human Resources three months before their return date to confirm that they intend to return on their due date or to indicate that they wish to resign from their post.

An employee who is unable to resume duty on their due date for return because of illness will remain on their career break until they return to work. On return to work employees will be deemed to have completed their career break and will be entitled to their normal service benefits.

An employee who wishes to return early from a career break must provide his/her line manager and the HR Department with at least 8 weeks' written notice. The request to return early will be facilitated where possible. If the employee's post is occupied by a temporary employee engaged on a fixed term contract it may not be possible to facilitate an early return. In exceptional circumstances shorter notice may be accepted.

Note for Bus Driving Grades:

Where a driver takes a career break of up to one year and returns into normal service he/she will retain existing seniority.

10. Social Security and HMRC Arrangements

It is the responsibility of an individual employee taking a career break to contact the Department of Health and Social Services through the local Social Security Office to determine whether they are entitled to any benefits and to check the position with regard to National Insurance Contributions.

An employee who takes up alternative employment or is engaged in business during his/her career break should contact his/her local HRMC Office.

11. Pensions

The employee and the company are required to pay pension contributions for the first 30 days of the career break. If the employee wishes to make pension contributions for the duration of their career break, they can do so through an Additional Pension Contribution (APC) contract. If the employee elects to do this within 30 days of returning to work the cost of the APC will be split so 1/3rd is payable by the employee and 2/3rd is payable by the Company. If the employee elects to pay this after 30 days, the cost of the APC contract is fully payable by the employee. The NILGOSC website provides more information about APC contracts.

An employee who takes a career break is now seen to be an 'active' member of

the pension scheme and can therefore avail of death in service benefits.

12. Travel Entitlement

An employee may retain their staff travel pass and those for his/her family (i.e. spouse/partner & dependents) during a career break. However, an employee will not be entitled to avail of any other free or discounted travel privileges during their career break. If an employee does not return at the end of the career break, they must return all staff and family passes.

13. Related Documents

Employees may find it useful to review other related documents in conjunction with the Career Break Policy. These include:

- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Pension Policy Statement
- Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (NI) 2014