

Career Break Policy

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Issue Control Sheet

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1. Purpose

We are committed to developing our work practice and policies to support work-life balance. We recognise that flexible working can increase morale, reduce absence, and improve the performance and productivity of our colleagues.

This policy applies to everyone employed by Speedy Hire and explains how we will manage any applications for career break leave. Subject to the provisions below, we will consider all requests to amend a colleague's working arrangements and managers are encouraged to facilitate requests unless they cannot be accommodated for business or operational reasons.

2. Who Can Apply

If you have two or more years' continuous service, you are eligible to apply to take an unpaid career break. You may wish to do this if you want to further your education, travel, or take time out to care for a friend or relative. It doesn't matter if you are full time or part time, if you have the appropriate levels of service, you are eligible to make the request.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, you are only usually able to take one career break during your employment - multiple requests are not usually considered.

3. The Application Process

If you are eligible to request a career break, you should complete the appropriate application form and submit this to your manager.

All requests will be reviewed and agreed at our discretion. There is no statutory right for colleagues to be granted this type of leave, and requests will usually only be approved where Speedy Hire will incur no additional costs. Career breaks will be for the minimum of one month and the maximum of one year and are unpaid throughout.

We ask that you allow plenty of time between the date of your application and the date in which you would like your career break to start. Ideally, you should submit your application with at least three months' notice so we can review the application in full. Whilst a decision may be made within four weeks, planning the appropriate levels of cover could take up to three months and in exceptional cases, could take longer.

Your manager may be able to agree to your proposal without the need for a formal meeting. In these circumstances, we will write to you confirming the decision and explain any changes that will be made to your contract of employment. If your manager needs to invite you to a formal meeting to discuss your proposal, we will follow the same process required when reviewing a flexible working arrangement.

4. Impact on Terms & Conditions

- Any accrued and unused annual leave for the current year must be taken prior to commencing a career break. Annual leave does not accrue during any period of unpaid leave, and you will receive a pro rata amount based on completed months worked when you return.
- If you are due to receive a salary increase during your career break, this will be payable on your return to work, providing that your performance before commencing your career break has been satisfactory.

- During your career break, you remain a Speedy Hire colleague on your usual terms and conditions of employment (except from the amendments detailed below or separately in an accompanying letter to your contract of employment). Your continuous service is unaffected.
- If appropriate, the following benefits will cease to apply during your unpaid career break but will resume upon your return to work:
 - **Company Car** – if you have a company car, you will return this for the duration of your career break. Depending on the circumstances, we will consider any requests to retain the use of your company car, but this is at our absolute discretion. The terms of any retained use will be detailed in writing and would be based on personal use only due to insurance reasons. You will need to report that you are taking an unpaid career break to HMRC and any tax payable will likely be settled through a new tax code upon returning to work or through a self-assessment tax return. This process is your responsibility.
 - **Cash Allowance** – your entitlement to the cash alternative allowance will cease and continue upon your return to work (unless any changes have been made across the business where you will be consulted with as appropriate). The unpaid leave period will be excluded from the annual mileage review of essential user allowance and the mileage requirements will be pro rata for completed months worked.
 - **Salary Deductions** - Prior to taking a period of unpaid leave, you will need to make alternative arrangements for any deductions which are usually made from your salary. Examples may include council tax or underpayment of income tax.
 - **Pension** – If you are a member of the Speedy Scheme, both employee and employer contributions will cease for the period of your career break. You should notify our Payroll Department and our external Pension Provider (The Peoples Pension), so they are aware of this - their contact number is 0300 200 0555.
 - **Share Save Scheme** – Payment holidays can be made under the existing scheme for a maximum of twelve months. Maturity of the plan will be delayed by one month for each missed month's payment. If you miss more than twelve payments the account will end, and you will lose your right to buy shares. You should inform Equinity (our Share Save administrator) to advise that you are either taking a payment holiday during your career break so that payroll can cease these payments, or to arrange with them to make payments directly (outside of Speedy payroll) whilst you are on your career break.
 - **Bonus** – You will not be eligible for payment under any bonus scheme where the performance period includes any period of your career break. Where the performance period has ended prior to the career break, any entitlement will be determined in accordance with the rules of the discretionary scheme.
 - **Long Term Incentive Plans** – Eligibility will be determined in accordance with the rules of the relevant plan.

5. Returning to Work

You have the right to return to the same job detailed within your contract of employment and on terms and conditions no less favourable than those which would have been applicable had you not been absent. There are a couple of exceptions detailed below:

- Where it is not practical by reason of redundancy for us to allow you to return to work in your original role, you will be offered a suitable alternative vacancy, where one exists. Any new role must be appropriate for you and the terms and conditions must not be less favourable than if you had been able to return to the job detailed within your contract of employment.

- Suitable alternative employment may also be offered if exceptional circumstances occur (other than redundancy) whilst you are on a career break that would have occurred had you not been absent. This may be in the event of a restructure where it has been necessary to change your role. Any new role must be suitable and appropriate, on terms and conditions no less favourable to your original role.
- If you decide not to return to work following a career break, you must give notice of your resignation as soon as possible and in accordance with the terms and conditions of your contract of employment.
- If you wish to end your career break early, you must request this in writing to your manager, giving at least eight weeks' notice where possible. If you wish
- to return earlier than the eight weeks' notice period, it will be at your managers discretion if they can accommodate the request.

6. Additional Information

You are required to stay connected with your manager whilst you are on your career break. You can agree the communication schedule with your manager before your career break begins, however it is usually monthly.

You are not permitted to take up any alternative employment during a career break without prior written permission from your manager. Any initial request should be included within your application for a career break.

As your continuous service remains unaffected, you continue to be employed by Speedy Hire during your career break and must therefore maintain appropriate levels of conduct and behaviour and adhere to any restrictive covenant details within your contract of employment. All provisions relating to confidential information will continue to apply.