

Advice on the operation of the SNA Career Break Scheme

The SNA Career Break Scheme was introduced in 2012 and seeks to provide career break opportunities for SNAs to engage in:

- Personal development
- Education (including teacher training)
- Public representation
- Childcare/dependent care
- Self-employment

Eligibility

The scheme is open to all SNAs working in the schools sector provided they have accrued 12 months service with their current employer.

School Policy

Each school is **required** to draw up a policy on how they will operate the scheme. This policy must take into account the size and resources of the school and the limit on the number of career breaks that can be granted to SNAs at any one time.

Duration of Career Break

A career break must be of at least 1 year's duration. This can be extended on an annual basis provided the total duration of the career break does not exceed 5 years.

Applying

The application must be made in writing in accordance with the local school policy and must specify the reason for seeking the career break.

The decision to grant or refuse a career break

The School must consider each application on its merits and must issue a written decision in accordance with any criteria contained within the local policy. There is no right of appeal against a decision not to grant a career break.

Working whilst on career break

From June 2019 SNAs are permitted to carry out the following work when on career break:

- Carry out school placement in a recognised school whilst undergoing a programme of initial teacher training

- Be employed as a teacher in a recognised school where they hold an appropriate registration with the Teaching Council but is subject to post qualification professional practice conditions. In order to fulfil the outstanding professional practice conditions, the SNA is permitted to teach in these limited circumstances.
- Be employed as a substitute SNA in a recognised school subject to a limit of 90 days.
- Work in the private sector
- Engage in self employment

Circulars and deadlines

Department of Education Circulars 22/2012 and 35/2019 give the specific details of career breaks. Attention should be paid to them in relation to deadlines - in particular, the requirement to apply, in writing, for a career break or a career break extension by 1st March and the requirement for a school to respond, in writing, by 1st April in any given year. An SNA can also withdraw their application by 14th April in a given year.

Assistance available to members from Fórsa

There is no absolute right to be granted career break. The decision will depend on school resources and the number of staff already on career break. Whilst there is no internal right of appeal against a refusal, Fórsa can assist members where the school has a blanket policy of refusing all career breaks as each application must be assessed on merit.

