# NHSBSA logoNHS Pensions – Authorised leave/career breaks

**NHS Pensions**

**Member factsheet**

Prior to 1 April 2008 periods of authorised leave were fully pensionable. However, it was generally anticipated that these would be fairly short periods (for example periods of leave that had been authorised because of a domestic emergency or bereavement).

Where a period of authorised leave was granted and pensionable pay was reduced or suspended during that period, employee and employer pension contributions were based on the member’s pensionable pay immediately prior to the leave of absence.

For information about parental leave you should read our ‘Maternity leave, paternity leave and adoption leave factsheet’ on our [Membership of the NHS Pension Scheme](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/member-hub/membership-nhs-pension-scheme) webpage. You can also read our Knowledge Base article [Can I pay pension contributions when on parental leave?](https://faq.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/knowledgebase/article/KA-04487/en-us)

From 1 April 2008 the NHS Pension Scheme Regulations changed to allow a member who commenced a period of authorised leave on or after this date (including a career break where the contract of employment is retained), to choose to remain pensionable for a period of up to six months.

Where the authorised leave is to be pensionable, your employer must treat you as an active member of the Scheme and ensure that both member and employer contributions are paid continuously throughout the six month period.

Before the leave begins, you and your employer must make arrangements to collect your member contributions throughout the break. Arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate and paid upon your return to work.

Where pensionable pay is reduced or suspended, your contributions will be based on your pensionable pay immediately prior to the break starting.

It is not compulsory to pay pension contributions during a period of authorised leave or a career break. If you decide not to pay pension contributions, your last day of Scheme membership will be recorded as the day before the leave commences

From 1 October 2008, the Scheme Regulations again changed to allow a member who is on a leave of absence for reasons other than sick, maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave, and who has already paid contributions continuously during the first six months, to continue to pension the leave for a further period of up to 18 months.

Should a member wish to take up the option to contribute for a period up to 18 months, the member is responsible for paying boththe member and employer pension contributions. This is because employers do not have to pay any pension contributions when an authorised leave of absence exceeds six months.

If pension contributions are not paid for the first six months, a member will not have the option to be pensionable for the further period of up to 18 months.

The facility to pension authorised leave does not apply to Locum GPs or bank staff.

## Granting an authorised leave of absence

The decision on whether to agree an application for a career break is a contractual issue and therefore rests with the employer. The employer should refer to the employee’s relevant terms and conditions.

## Leave of absence exceeding two years

Although under Agenda for Change terms and conditions you can be granted an employment break of up to five years, the NHS Pension Scheme Regulations only allow authorised leave periods (which includes career breaks where the contract of employment is retained) to be pensionable for the first two years. After this time your Scheme membership would end.

## For members who hold Mental Health Officer or Special Class status

If a member decides not to pay pension contributions during any period of authorised leave/career break the normal rules surrounding membership of the Scheme and entitlement to Mental Health Officer/Special Class status will apply. You must return to pensionable NHS employment within five years to be eligible to be considered for Mental Health Officer /Special Class status on your return.

## Life assurance and family benefit entitlements during an authorised leave of absence

You will be entitled to death in service benefits during the pensionable authorised leave of absence providing that you continue to contribute to the Scheme. For more information about life assurance and family benefits you can read our Knowledge Base article: [When is a lump sum on death benefit payable?](https://faq.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/knowledgebase/article/KA-28612/en-us)

## Added Years, Additional Pension and Early Retirement Reduction Buy Out (ERRBO) contracts

You can choose to pay your normal tiered contributions plus the additional contributions for two years during the authorised leave of absence, or you can choose to only pay your normal tiered contributions.

If you decide not to pay contributions, or remain on leave for longer than two years having paid contributions and want to restart your contract, you must return to the Scheme within 12 months of the last day of contributing membership to enable the original Added Years, Additional Pension or ERRBO contract to continue.

If you do not return to the Scheme within 12 months the contract will end and an appropriate credit based on the contributions paid will be given.

When you return to the NHS Pension Scheme you should reconsider your position and if there will be any shortfall in the intended purchase.

**How we use your information**

For more information about how the NHSBSA processes your personal data, please see our Privacy Notice -   
[www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/our-policies/privacy/nhs-pensions-privacy-notice](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/our-policies/privacy/nhs-pensions-privacy-notice)

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