

Break in learning policy

The aim of the policy is to ensure retention of learners in learning where possible and to only agree a break in learning (BIL) for a valid reason and for an agreed length of time. A BIL increases the risk of learners not completing their programme. This does not give employers a good return on their investment and impacts on outcomes and achievements for learners.

The policy covers the procedure for requesting a BIL and for monitoring learners on BIL.

Learners on funded programmes can request a BIL. BIL are usually required if learners are going to be out of the workplace and out of learning for 1 month or more. Breaks may be planned but often are unplanned due to unexpected changes in a learner's circumstances.

Acceptable reasons for a break in learning may include;

- The learner is not in work due to sickness, maternity/ paternity leave, bereavement.
- In exceptional circumstances learners in work can have a BIL, returning to work on staged process, personal stress, family/ domestic issues.

Learners must have been actively in learning past their 6-week date to qualify as an apprenticeship start. BIL should not be considered for learners that are less than 2 months in learning particularly for lengthy BIL. In this instance non-starting is the advised option. The learner can start their apprenticeship again upon their return. Exceptions may be considered with strict short term return date, less than 2 months.

Learners changing employers must be referred to DHA Business Development Team using the Change of Employer Form. BIL may have to be agreed whilst BDT are reaching agreements with the new employer. Change of employer learners will be reviewed at weekly BDT & MI meeting. Team Managers will be informed by BDT if learner can be transferred or if learner needs to be withdrawn as agreement has not been reached with new employer.

BIL must be agreed with the learner and employer. Often learners and employers may not realise the impact of BIL and that there are other options. Alternatives should be explored such as shorter meetings, more frequent meetings, delivery of learning with less assessed work from learner, observations.

Learners must have a planned date for returning to learning agreed, usually a maximum of 3 months. Longer periods can be agreed for long term sickness and maternity. Extensions must be formally agreed with learner and employer.

Learners may return from BIL or be withdrawn. Team Managers will decide on withdrawal and follow withdrawal process ensuring learner and employer are informed of potential withdrawal and given timeframe to respond if disagree.

For monitoring purposes, a spreadsheet for all BIL is stored on share point. This has relevant fields covering key data. MI will use information on BIL form to fill in fields.

Procedure for break in learning

- Trainer, BDT or employer informs team manager of request for break in learning.
- Team manager will consider request for break in learning based on reason for request and length of absence. Evidence should be collected verbally or by email from learner and their manager identifying the reason for a break in learning and planned date of return.
- Team Manager will present request at weekly BD/Operational Meeting. Request will be reviewed, and decision made to sanction BIL.
- Team Manager will inform the employer and learner of outcome of request following meeting.
- Team Manager will ensure the reasons for declining are discussed with learner and employer. For example, learner is in work but not being given time to meet with trainer due to demands of work role. Agreement should be reached to release learner and employer engaged in supporting learner in workplace.
- Team Manager will confirm BIL with learner and employer by e mail with agreed return/review date.
- Team Manager will complete BIL form and send with evidence to MI team.
- Start of BIL is last day learner was engaged in direct learning with trainer. Evidence of last date in learning must be referenced by team manager.
- MI staff record BIL learners on PICs and BIL spreadsheet learner list
- Team managers review BIL learners each month during RAG with trainers and update spreadsheet
- Team Managers will make decisions on learners being withdrawn and follow withdrawn learner process ensuring learner and employer have written confirmation of intention to or decision to withdraw and timescale to respond
- Trainer must inform MI staff when the learner has re-started to enable funding to be claimed.
- Trainer must do a review with learner on return from BIL to reset targets and next steps.
- MI staff will remove learners returned from BIL from spreadsheet
- MI staff will issue Trainer with new end date for the apprenticeship and Trainer will amend ILP.