



## Creative Lives Career Break Policy

### Introduction

Creative Lives is committed to developing work practices and policies which support work-life balance. Creative Lives recognises that some employees may wish or need to take an extended break from work for a variety of personal reasons, during their employment.

Employees are not entitled to take a career break, but Creative Lives recognises that there may be circumstances where it may be beneficial to the employee, and to the organisation, to allow an unpaid period of time away from work.

This policy sets out Creative Lives' approach to career breaks and the basis on which they may be taken.

### Scope

Reasons for a career break may include:

- Care and/or responsibility for children or other dependents
- Personal study, training, or development
- Any other purpose agreed with Creative Lives, e.g., overseas travel or voluntary work.

The terms of this policy do not apply to maternity leave, paternity leave, or adoption leave which are covered by the Creative Lives Family Friendly Policy or flexible working which is covered by the Creative Lives Flexible Work Policy.

All staff with at least 5 years' service have the right to request an unpaid career break. Career breaks are not normally available to staff with less than 5 years' service.

The maximum term for a career break is 12 months, with an accrued maximum of 2 years in total throughout a staff member's employment with Creative Lives. Although there is no minimum career break it is suggested that they are no less than 2 months.

### Procedure

1. Staff considering a career break request should have an initial discussion with their line manager.
2. Requests for a career break should be made in writing to the Chief Executive.
3. The decision about whether to grant a career break request will be taken by the Chief Executive and the relevant Line Manager, based on the following criteria:
  - a. the purpose of, or reasons for, the career break
  - b. the period of absence requested
  - c. the employee's length of service
  - d. whether the employee has taken a career break on a previous occasion
  - e. the operational needs of the relevant team
  - f. the potential for mutual benefits to the individual and to Creative Lives
  - g. evidence of a link to previous discussions about the individual's career development in annual appraisals
  - h. the support of the relevant line manager
  - i. timing that would be compatible with business needs
  - j. that suitable cover can be secured.



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This list is non-exhaustive therefore other factors may influence the decision.

### **Contractual position during a career break**

1. All career breaks will be unpaid, apart from any agreed keep in touch days.
2. A career break will not be regarded as a break in service for the purposes of statutory employment provisions.
3. There will be no entitlement to holiday pay whilst on a career break and the employee will not accrue annual leave. Any annual leave owing must be taken before commencement of the career break. There will be no payment in lieu of any leave outstanding.
4. There will be no entitlement to sick pay whilst on a career break.
5. Employees on a career break should be advised that entitlement to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) may be affected since SMP is calculated based on the employee's salary 15 weeks before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC).
6. Cost of Living Increases will be applied to the salary of employees on a career break should an award be made to all staff during the period in question.
7. Employer pension contributions will cease during a career break, but employees on a career break will be able to continue to make employee contributions if they choose to do so. On returning to work, all pension contributions will restart immediately.
8. Access to the employee support scheme will still be available.

### **Keeping in touch**

Employees on a career break and the relevant line manager should maintain reasonable contact during the career break period to make the return to work easier for both parties. It is recommended that the employee and the line manager discuss what kind of contact there will be in advance of the career break commencing.

With mutual agreement an employee on a career break may occasionally be requested to attend work to update skills and/or familiarise themselves with changes in the workplace.

Employees will be informed of any organisational HR changes during their career break by the HR Director.

**Approved by the Creative Lives Board of Directors Review by July 2025**