

Livewell Southwest

## **Career Break Policy**

Version No. 4

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### **Notice to staff using a paper copy of this guidance**

**The policies and procedures page of the LSW Sharepoint holds the most recent version of this guidance. Staff must ensure they are using the most recent guidance.**

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**Asset Number: 930**

## Reader Information

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<b>Author</b>	People and Professionalism
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## Document review history

Version no.	Type of change	Date	Originator of change	Description of change
-	-	-	HR Manager	Replaces all previous Manager Guidelines documents.
2	Full Policy Review	August 2016	HR Policy Group	New Policy Document
2.1	Extended	July 2018	Head of HR & Staff Wellbeing	Extended
2.2	Minor amendment	December 2018	HR Advisor	DOB removed from application form
2.3	Minor amendment	January 2021	HR Admin	Extension
2.4	Extended	April 2021	HR Admin	Extension
2.5	Extended	November 2021	Associate Director of HR & Engagement	Extension
2.6	Minor amendment	November 2022	HR Business Partner	Removal of 2.2 reference to SHWD policy and changes to job titles and registered offices
3	Reviewed	October 2022	Virtual Policy Ratification Group.	Minor changes
4	Reviewed	September 2025	HR People Team	Reviewed, minor changes

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## **Career Break Policy**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Livewell Southwest is committed to fairness and equity and values diversity in all aspects of its work as a provider of health and social care services and as an employer of people. We constantly strive to build a workforce that is representative of the community it serves.
- 1.2 Livewell Southwest is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation in the provision of our services and in recruitment and employment. This enables an environment that is characterised by dignity and respect which is free from harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- 1.3 The organisation recognises that employees may have a variety of reasons for exploring opportunities for a career break to support work/life balances.

### **2 Purpose**

- 2.1 This policy sets out the arrangements for application and approval of career break absences. This policy shall operate alongside additional policy arrangements for other forms of Leave.
- 2.2 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and Livewell Southwest may amend it at any time.

### **3 Definitions**

- 3.1 A career break is a period of absence from the workplace which is between 3 months to 5 years and is unpaid. A career break is an agreement between the employer and employee rather than a statutory requirement.

### **4 Duties & Responsibilities**

The **Chief Executive** is ultimately responsible for the content of all policies, implementation and review.

- 4.1 Line Managers are responsible for:
  - Ensuring that this policy is adhered to within their specified area, and should take consideration of it when undertaking relevant processes.
  - Ensuring that employees are made aware of this policy and understand the potential implications of processes in relation to it.
- 4.2 Employees must:
  - Ensure that they participate and engage in any processes and in line with this policy.
  - Make their line manager aware if they require any additional support to

participate in processes within this policy.

## **5 Career Break Procedure**

- 5.1 Employees who are seeking a career break should submit their application (Appendix 1) to their line manager in advance. Applications for career break should be made at least 2 months' in advance of the intended start date.
- 5.2 All employees are entitled to apply for a career break however they must have a qualifying period of continuous service within Livewell Southwest of 12 months. Applications must specify the intended start date of the career break, the duration of the break, and any other key information. Employees can make one application for career break per rolling 12 month period.
- 5.3 The line manager will consider the application and seek approval/authorisation from the relevant Assistant Director/Deputy/or equivalent. Applications for a career break will be considered in light of the service needs, thus they cannot be guaranteed.
- 5.4 There may be a requirement to arrange a meeting to discuss and explore the application in more detail; in particular where the career break request is not approved but alternative compromises could be explored and agreed.
- 5.5 Once approved the line manager shall be responsible for preparing a change form along with a written letter to the employee confirming the career break arrangements (Appendix 2).
- 5.6 The period of the break will not count towards continuous service however the employee is still employed by Livewell Southwest under their existing terms and conditions. Other provisions dependent on length of service, i.e. contractual redundancy payments, leave entitlements etc., should be suspended for the period of the break.
- 5.7 There is no entitlement to salary or any other payments of leave (including annual, occupational or statutory sick, maternity, paternity, adoption, etc.) or any other benefits. Any regular deductions from salary will cease.
- 5.8 If the employee is participating in the lease car scheme they should make arrangements for this to be concluded and the car returned prior to the commencement of a career break. Any early termination costs will be met by the employee. In exceptional circumstances this may be amended with agreement of the Assistant Director and a People Business Partner.
- 5.9 Employees may choose to continue pension contributions or they may be able to buy back pension units during the career break period however this is specific to the type of pension programme (NHS Pension, Scottish Widow, or Local Government) and the employee should discuss arrangements directly with their pension provider.
  - 5.9.1 Entitlement for payment to pension schemes should be agreed with the relevant provider and the employee is responsible for informing the Livewell Southwest Payroll & Pensions Advisor to ensure appropriate

payment arrangements are in place prior to the career break period.

5.10 No later than 28 days prior to statutory leave ending (maternity, adoption, or shared parental leave), employees can request a career break immediately following their leave. Should employees choose to take longer than 12 months they would be required to repay the difference between their statutory and occupational pay. However should the break be less than 12 months no repayment of pay would be payable provided that the employee returns to work for a minimum of three months after the career break.

5.11 Requirements of the employee during the career break period:

- Keep up requirements of professional registration.
- Make direct contact with line manager at agreed intervals.
- Will not normally be allowed to take up paid employment with another employer, except where, for example, work overseas or charitable work could broaden experience. In such circumstances written authority from LSW would be necessary. Ensure you update the organisation with any changes to your personal details.
- Write to line manager at least 6 weeks before planned return to work with confirmation of intention and arrangements.
- Return to work on the date agreed.
- Inform your line manager if you do not intend to return to work. The contractual notice periods shall apply.

**Employees are expected to comply with the conditions above and the terms of their career break; please note failure to do this may mean your continued employment is reviewed and dismissal considered.**

5.12 Requirements of the line manager during the career break period:

- Agree the terms with the employee prior to the career break starting. This shall include the start / end date of the career break, arrangements for contact during the career break period, and any other relevant details.
- Issue a letter confirming arrangements to the employee and detailing the agreement with regards the pension contributions.
- Raise a change form placing the employee onto their career break with defined start and end dates, also make clear whether the career break is pensionable or not.

5.13 In the event that an employee wishes to change the arrangements for a career break by returning to work earlier or later than the originally agreed date, the employee must provide a further application with at least 28 days' notice of their request. This will be considered by the line manager and relevant Assistant Director/Deputy/or equivalent in light of service need. Written confirmation will be provided to the employee. The decision will be final and any applications for changes cannot be appealed.

5.14 Where the career break is up to 12 months the employee will return to work at the same basic salary and grade with uplifts by any general increases (i.e.

negotiated annual uplift) but there will be no incremental progression. The substantive post will be held where it is reasonably practical. Where it is not possible to return to the original substantive post you will be consulted appropriately in line with Livewell Southwest organisational change protocol.

- 5.15 Where the career break is over 12 months the organisation will initially seek to place the employee in their original post however where this is unavailable the organisation will seek to redeploy the employee to a similar post upon their return. The employee may be required to undergo a period of reintroduction to work and/or re-training. This may result in the employee being employed at a lower grade and basic salary for the minimum required time. This must be agreed with the employee prior to their return.

## **6 Appeal Process**

- 6.1 An employee may appeal against their line manager's decision regarding their initial application to commence a career break. The appeal must:
- Be in writing and dated, sent to the Line Manager's Manager;
  - Set out the grounds on which the employee is appealing; and
  - Be made within 14 days of the date on which the written rejection of the request was made.
- 6.2 Following receipt of the appeal, a meeting will be arranged with the employee. Usually the meeting will be within 28 calendar days.
- 6.3 The employee may be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague.
- 6.4 The employee will be informed in writing of the decision as soon as possible after the appeal meeting.
- 6.5 If the appeal is upheld, the employee will be advised of the career break arrangements and the Line Manager must raise a change form (if appropriate) and ensure that a copy of the change form is recorded on the employee's management file.
- 6.6 If the employee's appeal is rejected, the Line Manager will give the service's reason(s) for the decision and explain why the reason(s) apply in the employee's case. The employee will not be able to make another formal request until 12 months after the date of the original application.
- 6.7 Employees must bear in mind when making a request that line managers have to consider the needs of the service or department as a whole, and may not always be able to accommodate an employee's request, although they will do so whenever practicable.

## **7 Training Implications**

Guidance and advice are available from the HR People Team in the implementation of this policy.

## **8 Monitoring Compliance**

Failure to comply with the contents of this policy may result in disciplinary action. Please refer to the Conduct Policy for further details. The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through the HR People Team.

**All policies are required to be electronically signed by the Lead Director. Proof of the electronic signature is stored in the policies database.**

**The Lead Director approves this document and any attached appendices. For operational policies this will be the relevant Assistant Director.**

**The Executive signature is subject to the understanding that the policy owner has followed the organisation process for policy Ratification.**

**Signed: Director of People and Professionalism**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025**