

Career Break Policy

This policy sets out the rights and responsibilities of Suffolk Artlink employees who wish to take an extended period of unpaid leave (career break) from the workplace.

This policy is not part of employees' contract, terms and conditions of employment.

This policy aims to facilitate employees of Suffolk Artlink who wish to take an extended period of unpaid leave from the workplace to study, spend time with family or dependants, carry out voluntary work or perhaps travel abroad. A career break can be used as an opportunity for personal development.

The aim of the Career Break Policy is to motivate and reward long standing employees for their loyalty and experience by allowing time away from work to pursue personal development or time with their family, while retaining the employee's skills and expertise. It is hoped that new ideas, skills, motivation and enthusiasm may result from the employee's period of time away from the workplace.

Applications

Eligible candidates should make applications for a Career Break in writing to a Co-Director. A Co-Director requesting a career break should contact the Chair of Trustees. Applications must be made four months in advance of the start date of a proposed career break.

Obligations on the employee

An employee on a career break will be required to fulfil certain reasonable conditions intended to enable the employee to keep up to date on work issues and to facilitate the cover for their role. These will be specified in the career break agreement.

An employee on a break will notify Suffolk Artlink of changes in address or name as soon as possible.

Obligations on Suffolk Artlink

Suffolk Artlink will consult and involve the employee in any proposed restructuring or reorganisation which will affect the post or job content during the course of the break if practicable. Where the original post no longer exists, Suffolk Artlink will make all reasonable efforts to redeploy the individual on their return. If it is not possible to place the employee, redundancy will apply on the basis of the employee's previous employment.

Restrictions

The granting of a career break is a discretionary matter and not an entitlement. Each application will be considered on its own individual merits and in light of the circumstances which prevail at the time of application. Career breaks may, therefore, have to be refused or delayed where there are overriding business considerations. Reasons for a refusal will be given.

Examples of when a request may be refused include:

- poor performance and attendance
- Suffolk Artlink is unable to cover the role of the employee
- the needs of vulnerable participants
- the employee is subject to disciplinary proceedings
- other staff absence

A career break will only be agreed if adequate cover arrangements can be made.

A career break will not be granted for the purpose of taking up alternative salaried or wage earning employment elsewhere unless the prior written approval of Suffolk Artlink has been obtained. Breach of this condition will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

A member of staff granted a career break for the purpose of further education will be permitted to take up salaried or wage earning employment on a casual basis during holidays, etc, or to work during a student placement.

Eligibility

To be eligible to be considered for a career break staff must:

- be a permanent Suffolk Artlink employee
- have at least eight years' continuous service
- have a satisfactory record of attendance, performance and conduct. A member of staff who is subject to disciplinary or inefficiency procedures will not normally be permitted to take a career break until his/her/their standard of service reaches a satisfactory level

Duration and number of career breaks

Special leave without pay may be granted for a period of not less than three months, and for any period in excess of three months, up to a maximum of nine months.

A career break may be considered for an extension, provided the total period does not exceed one year in total.

On returning from a career break, regardless of its duration, staff must complete a further five years' continuous service before becoming eligible to apply for a further career break.

Benefits and continuity of employment

Although the career break will not count towards, it will not break continuity of employment.

During the period of the break there will be no pension or National Insurance Contribution. The period of the break will count as leave of absence and an employee's service prior to the break will be protected. Annual leave will not accrue during the period of absence

covered by the career break. Accrued annual leave should be taken in full prior to commencement of a career break. There will be no entitlement to sick pay.

Redundancy entitlement does not accrue during a career break.

Conduct during career break

Staff on a career break will be subject to all Suffolk Artlink policies and procedures, and disciplinary action, where appropriate, may be taken.

Return to duty

A request for return from a career break before the due date will be given consideration if the circumstances giving rise to the request did not exist or could not have been known at the time of the original application. Furthermore, an early request to return will require consideration in the context of its potential effect on the position of employees who are providing cover for the career break.

Staff returning from a career break will normally be assigned to their former post; however there is no guarantee that this will always be possible. If it is not possible to place the employee, redundancy will apply on the basis of the employee’s previous employment.

Staff on a career break must contact the General Manager or a Co-Director, in writing, one month before they are due to return, to:

- confirm that they intend to return on the due date; or
- apply for an extension to the career break.

Staff on a career break wishing to resign should give notice as per the requirement for notice period as stated in their employment contract, in writing, to the General Manager.

Those unable to resume work on the due date because of illness will be required to produce the relevant medical evidence.

Staff who fail to comply with the above requirements and who fail to respond to approaches from Suffolk Artlink about recommencing employment, will be deemed to have resigned on the day following the end of the career break.

Policy Verification

This policy and related guidance will be monitored by the Co-Directors on a regular basis for compliance and will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees triennially.

Date Adopted / readopted	Dates amended
02/11/2020	
08/04/2025	