

# Sabbatical Policy

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## Sabbatical Policy

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council is committed to supporting a healthy and inclusive working environment. As part of this commitment, the Council recognises that employees may benefit from taking a planned unpaid break from work for personal, caring, health, wellbeing or development needs.
- 1.2 A sabbatical, also known as a career break, provides employees with the opportunity to take an agreed period of extended unpaid leave while maintaining employment with the Council. This policy aims to balance flexibility for employees with the need to maintain service delivery.
- 1.3 Requests for sabbatical leave will be considered fairly, consistently and with transparency, whilst taking into account service delivery requirements and organisational needs. Sabbaticals are not a statutory entitlement and are granted at the discretion of the Council.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all permanent employees, except teachers directly employed by the Council. Teachers and employees working in schools have their own local management and policies to follow.

## **2 Principles**

- 2.1 This policy supports work–life balance and long-term employment with the Council by setting out arrangements for employees to take extended leave and return to work without career disadvantage.
- 2.2 The principles below apply to the management and consideration of all sabbatical requests:
  - Sabbatical arrangements must support the Council’s ability to deliver effective and high quality services to residents.
  - All sabbatical requests will be considered fairly and objectively ensuring that decisions are based on eligibility criteria and operational needs.
  - Decisions to approve or refuse sabbatical requests rest with the Head of Service and must be capable of being explained and evidenced.
  - The terms of any approved sabbatical will be clearly set out in writing, outlining the impact on pay, continuity of employment and return to work arrangements.
  - A sabbatical is a joint arrangement, which requires open communication, planning and cooperation from both the employee and manager.

## **3 Definition of Sabbatical**

- 3.1 A sabbatical, also known as a career break, is an approved period of unpaid extended leave from work, during which the employee remains employed by the Council but is released from their normal duties.

## 4 Eligibility

- 4.1 An employee may be eligible for a sabbatical where they meet the following criteria:
- Two (2) years' continuous service with Haringey Council at the proposed start date of the sabbatical.
  - No live disciplinary warnings or ongoing employee relations cases.
  - No concerns regarding performance.
  - Satisfactory attendance record, with no absence triggers in the twelve (12) months prior to applying for a sabbatical. Exceptions may be agreed by the Head of Service based on exceptional circumstances.
  - Hold a permanent contract of employment with the Council.
  - A minimum of three years must have elapsed since an employee's last sabbatical.
- 4.2 All applicants are subject to Head of Service approval and subject to service needs, regardless of whether an employee meets the above criteria.

## 5 Reasons for a Sabbatical

- 5.1 Sabbaticals may be requested for various reasons, including but not limited to:
- Caring responsibilities
  - Volunteering
  - Study or personal development
  - Travel
  - Personal projects
  - Health or wellbeing

## 6 Duration of Sabbatical

- 6.1 A sabbatical may be granted for a minimum of three (3) months and a maximum of twelve (12) months.
- 6.2 An employee can apply and take one sabbatical every three (3) years. The first sabbatical can be applied for once two (2) years of continuous employment has been completed.
- 6.3 Requests for extensions will be considered only in exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the Head of Service before the agreed end date.
- 6.4 An employee wishing to take a break of less than three (3) months should refer to the [Annual Leave and Time Off policy](#) , as such period does not qualify for a sabbatical.

## 7 Changes to Terms and Conditions During Sabbatical

- 7.1 During a sabbatical, the employee will not be entitled to the following:
- Occupational annual leave accrual

- Occupational sick pay
- Occupational parental pay (statutory entitlements will still apply where applicable)
- Employer pension contributions
- Any outstanding loans (e.g. season ticket loans), which must be repaid in full before the sabbatical begins
- Use or retention of Council property, all of which must be returned before the sabbatical commences

7.2 An employee on sabbatical will retain the following entitlements:

- The right to return to their substantive post, or to be considered for suitable alternative employment or redeployment if their post is affected by organisational change. Further information can be found in the [Organisational Change policy](#).
- The right to maintain continuous service and to continue accruing statutory annual leave.

## 8 Pension

8.1 During a sabbatical (or other period of authorised unpaid leave), pension treatment will depend on the length of the unpaid period, see below.

### 8.2 Unpaid leave of 15 days or more:

8.2.1 Where unpaid leave lasts 15 days or more, the period will not automatically count for pension purposes.

8.2.2 However, employees may elect to buy back the pension lost during the unpaid period through a Qualifying Additional Pension Arrangement (QAPA), where the unpaid leave commenced on or after 1 April 2026.

### 8.3 Under Qualifying Additional Pension Arrangement (QAPA):

8.3.1 Contributions are based on the employee's normal contribution rate and the pay they would have received had they been at work.

8.3.2 The employer will also pay the pension contributions they would have paid during the period of absence.

8.3.3 The pension purchased will reflect the benefits that would have built up during the period of absence, including full survivor benefits.

8.3.4 No medical evidence is required to enter into a QAPA.

8.3.5 Employees have up to one year from returning to work, or the date they leave the relevant employment (if earlier), to elect to buy back lost pension. The employer may allow a longer period at its discretion.

8.3.6 The contributions can be paid by lump sum or regular deductions from your pay. The Haringey Pensions Team will inform you of the cost and your payment options.

### 8.4 Death in service

8.4.1 In the event of an employee's death whilst on sabbatical leave, LGPS death benefits will be calculated in accordance with the LGPS Regulations and would be equal to the death benefits due before the sabbatical began.

8.4 Employees are strongly advised to contact the Haringey Pensions Team before commencing a period of unpaid leave to understand the implications for their pension benefits.

## **9 Application Process**

9.1 An employee must submit a request via [HALO](#) for a sabbatical. Employees who do not have access to HALO should ask their manager to submit the request on their behalf.

9.2 Applications must be submitted at least three (3) months before the proposed start date of the sabbatical.

9.3 The manager will review the application and make a recommendation to the Head of Service, who will then make the final decision to approve or reject the application.

9.4 If the application is declined, the reasons must clearly be provided to the employee in writing by their manager within 28 days of the application.

9.5 Once approved, the HR Operations team will record the sabbatical on the employee record and confirm the agreed arrangements in writing. Any outstanding accrued annual leave not taken must be used before the employee begins their sabbatical.

## **10 Appeal Process**

10.1 In the event the request for sabbatical is rejected the employee may appeal the decision via HALO within ten (10) working days of receiving the outcome. Employees who do not have access to HALO should ask their manager to submit the appeal on their behalf.

10.2 As part of the appeal process the Employee Relations Team will advise the Director on the appeal.

10.3 The Director and Employee Relations team will review the written response given to the employee, the original application and the appeal. The Director may also wish to speak with the employee and/or Head of Service.

10.4 Following the review, the Director's decision is final and there is no further right of appeal.

## **11 During Sabbatical**

11.1 The employee must maintain reasonable contact with the Council.

11.2 The manager is responsible for keeping the employee informed if their post is subject to any organisational change while they are absent. The employee will be treated in

the same way as other affected employees and will be entitled to the normal period of redundancy notice if no suitable alternative post is available.

- 11.3 The employee must not undertake paid work that could create a conflict of interest or damage the Council's reputation. Any proposed work during the sabbatical must be declared and approved in advance.
- 11.4 Employees are responsible for notifying their manager of any changes to their contact details, who will then notify the HR Operations team.
- 11.5 If an employee secures alternative employment, they must submit a formal resignation in line with their contractual notice period.
- 11.6 Statutory rights accrued prior to the sabbatical are maintained in line with legislation, including continuity of employment for statutory purposes and eligibility for statutory sick pay.

## **12 Return to Work**

- 12.1 The employee is expected to return to work on the agreed date. Human Resources must be informed immediately of any changes to the originally agreed return to work date.
- 12.2 Before the employee returns, the manager must confirm the return date, ensure the employee's IT account is reactivated and arrange for a laptop to be available. The manager should also hold a return-to-work meeting on the employee's first day and consider whether any re-induction or refresher training is needed to support a smooth transition back to work
- 12.3 The employee has the right to return to their substantive post or to a suitable alternative on no less favourable terms.
- 12.4 In the event an employee wishes to return from sabbatical earlier than initially agreed, requests must be agreed in advance. The manager may delay the return by up to eight (8) weeks where required for business reasons or to manage existing cover arrangements.
- 12.5 An employee will continue to accrue statutory annual leave, including bank holidays, but not contractual annual leave, during the sabbatical. Ideally this accrued leave will be taken at the end of the sabbatical.

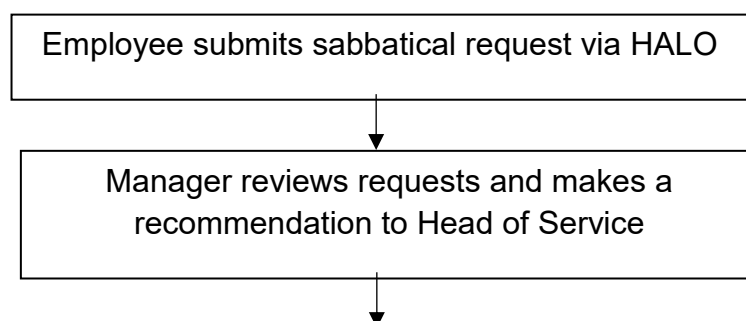
## **13 Failure to Return**

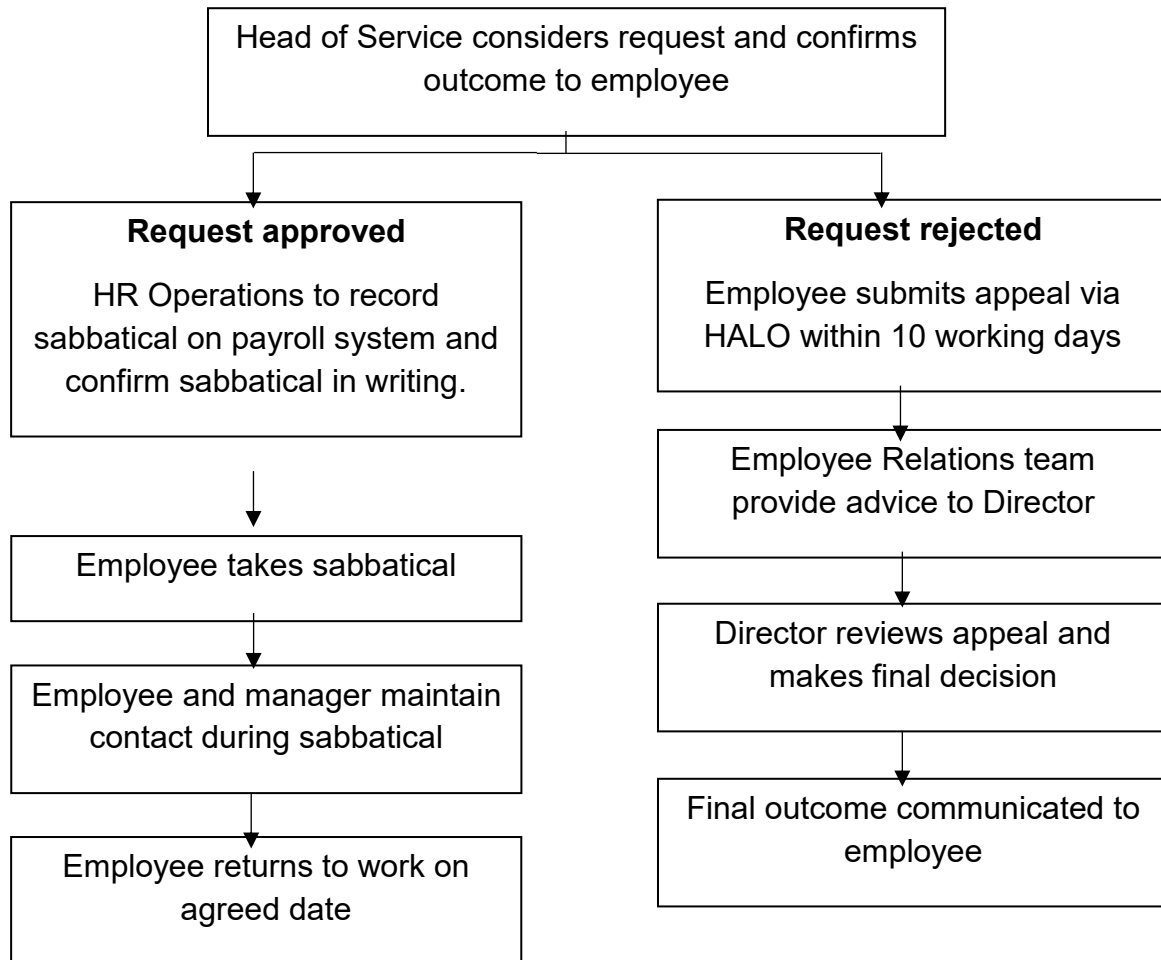
- 13.1 Failure to return on the agreed date without approval may be treated as unauthorised absence and managed under the Council's disciplinary procedure.
- 13.2 Human Resources must be informed immediately if an employee fails to return to work on the agreed date.

## 14 Further References

Organisational Change Policy  
Annual Leave and Time Off Policy

## Appendix A - Sabbatical Overview





## Document Control

Key Information	
<b>Title</b>	Sabbatical Policy
<b>Document Type</b>	Policy
<b>Document Status</b>	New
<b>Author</b>	Employment Practice Manager
<b>Owner</b>	Head of Employee Relations, Business Partners & Reward

<b>Contact</b>	Employment Practice Manager
<b>Approval Body</b>	General Purpose Committee
<b>Approval Date</b>	
<b>Date of Publication</b>	
<b>Date for review</b>	

<b>Revision History</b>			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>	<b>Name</b>
V1	June 2026	New policy, using agreed process for policy revision.	YN