

**Ref: WF31**

## **SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY FOR CONSULTANT MEDICAL STAFF**

<b>Executive Sponsor &amp; Function</b>	Executive Director of Organisational Development and Workforce
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## Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. Policy Statement .....	3
3. Scope .....	3
4. Roles and Responsibilities.....	3
5. General.....	3
6. Applying for Sabbatical Leave .....	4
7. Arrangements during the period of sabbatical leave.....	6
8. Returning to work at the end of the sabbatical leave period 6	
9. Equality .....	7
10. Training .....	7
11. Resources .....	7
12. Implementation.....	7
13. Audit and Monitoring .....	7
14. Distribution .....	8
15. Review.....	8
16. Legislation .....	8
17. Further Information .....	8
Appendix 1 – Amendment to the National Consultant Contract in Wales.....	9
Appendix 2 – Sabbatical Leave Application Form.....	10

## **1. Introduction**

Velindre NHS Trust recognises the benefits that an individual and the Trust may derive from a period of sabbatical leave. The Consultant Contract in Wales provides each consultant with the opportunity to seek a paid sabbatical for a period of up to three months (Appendix 1). The amended Consultant Contract explicitly states that the essential aim is to allow the consultant to undertake activities away from their normal duties that will subsequently benefit their work.

## **2. Policy Statement**

The purpose of the policy is to set out the local mechanism by which sabbatical leave will be awarded, in line with service requirements.

Sabbatical leave is defined as a period of leave during which time a member of staff completes an agreed programme of work, as part of their personal professional development. This may include participation in approved research projects or completion of an approved academic project.

The process of determining the awarding of sabbaticals will be agreed locally in line with the principles of openness and equal opportunities. This policy and the associated processes have been agreed with local BMA members.

## **3. Scope**

The policy applies to all Consultants employed substantively by Velindre NHS Trust.

## **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

Funding for sabbaticals will be held centrally by the Welsh Government. The Trust has a notional annual allocation, based on the total number of consultants' employed. The Welsh Government has assumed that the cost of each sabbatical will be no more than £25,000.

The Medical Director of Velindre NHS Trust (working in conjunction with the Medical Director - Welsh Blood Service, as appropriate) or the Chief Executive will be the authorising officer responsible for signing off an agreeing a period of sabbatical leave.

## **5. General**

Sabbatical leave is intended for the following:

- Consultants who wish to enrich and refresh their practice, improve their skills or are looking to undertake a service development.

- Educational sabbatical leave which would strengthen the individual's clinical practice, or which could lead to, or contribute to service improvement or development e.g. International Health Partnership related activity. It is assumed that sabbatical leave is required because the provisions of study leave are inadequate. Documentation to support this assertion must be submitted with the application.
- Some Consultants may wish to use this time to give their full attention to a piece of, for example academic work or research which they would otherwise be unable to complete within the sessional time allotted.

Consultants (usually later in their career), may wish to have a complete break from their regular clinical work and do something different. In these circumstances there is also the option of them taking an employment break (see the Trust's Employment Break Policy).

The Trust will consider alternative proposals for taking a sabbatical break, including splitting leave over shorter time periods with the proviso that the combined amount of time and costs involved are no higher than those previously set out i.e. a maximum of three months leave and a maximum funding of £25,000.

Consultants will not usually be expected to apply for sabbatical leave until they have completed five years' service with the Trust (or another NHS Organisation) as a substantive consultant. Sabbatical leave is usually planned well in advance. The Trust expects that individual consultants will raise this issue in their annual appraisal and job planning meetings and this will be included in the consultant's personal development plan, prior to submitting a formal application.

Educational sabbatical leave should always be included in the consultant's personal development plan.

## 6. Applying for Sabbatical Leave

Applications for sabbatical leave will only be considered if they are supported by the following:

- Within the application there should be some measurable criteria established for the potential benefits to the individual and the Trust. The measurable criteria may be reviewed after the consultant's return to work and as part of the next round of appraisal and job planning meetings.
- All applications for sabbatical leave must be in writing using the attached application form (**Appendix 2**) and should be submitted to the appropriate Director (as indicated) for authorisation, prior to it being submitted to the Medical Director of Velindre NHS Trust or the Chief Executive for approval.

- Consultants Velindre Cancer Services – Clinical Director;
  - Consultants Welsh Blood Service – Medical Director (WBS); and
  - Trust Medical Director and other Medical/Clinical Directors – Chief Executive.
- All applications should be submitted to the relevant Clinical Director / Medical Director / Chief Executive (see above) by the 15<sup>th</sup> March each year. It is the responsibility of the applying consultant to ensure all sections of the application form are completed. Incomplete forms will not be considered. Applicants should attach a copy of their last agreed personal development plan.
  - Applications will include the following information / details:
    - period of leave requested;
    - clear description of the project or work to be undertaken;
    - evidence of a measurable end product;
    - potential outcomes arising from the project or work undertaken during the period of leave; and
    - relevance and tangible benefits to the Trust and to the individual's professional development; and
    - Details of any assistance required from the Trust, to support their registration and revalidation requirements during the period of the leave requested.
  - The Clinical Director / Medical Director / Chief Executive or their nominated representative will consider all fully completed application forms submitted by the 15<sup>th</sup> March deadline.
  - All authorised applications will be prioritised by the Velindre NHS Trust Medical Director, in consultation with the Medical Director of Welsh Blood Service, as appropriate. Any consideration of applications received from the Trust or WBS Medical Directors will be prioritised by the Chief Executive.
  - All approved and rejected applications will be submitted to the Executive Director of Organisational Development and Workforce by the 1<sup>st</sup> April each year. The Executive Director of Organisational Development and Workforce will then be responsible for informing all applicants of the outcome of their application.
  - Applicants should note that whilst every reasonable effort will be made to support applications, approval is discretionary and subject to the exigencies of the service.
  - Approved sabbatical leave may only be taken upon the appointment of a suitable locum consultant or other agreed cover arrangements are in place, to maintain clinical services.

- Sabbatical leave may only be taken when permission, detailing all conditions of the leave have been confirmed in writing by the Workforce and OD Department. Employees must formally agree to be bound by the terms of the sabbatical agreement.
- Where applicable, study leave expenses may be claimed during the period of sabbatical leave, in accordance with the Trust's guidelines.
- Consultants who feel their sabbatical leave application is not being appropriately supported by their Clinical Director / Medical Director / Chief Executive should approach their local BMA representative for advice and support.

## **7. Arrangements during the period of sabbatical leave**

The period of granted paid sabbatical leave shall not be regarded as a break in service, upon the employee's return to work.

The employee's pension contributions will continue from the start date of the approved sabbatical leave. It is important that the employee consults with the Trust's Pensions Officer before commencing their sabbatical leave, to ensure that they are fully aware of the possible implications of taking this leave on their pension.

The onus is on the employee to keep up to date with their relevant professional registration requirements, including attendance at specified training courses, conferences etc. during the period of the approved sabbatical leave. Sabbatical leave applications should detail the assistance required by the employee from the Trust, to support their GMC registration and revalidation requirements.

Employees who have been granted a period of sabbatical leave will be expected to give an undertaking that they will return to work for Velindre NHS Trust for a minimum period of one year following the end of the period of sabbatical leave.

During the period of approved sabbatical leave the employee should continue, if practicable, to maintain regular contact with their Director / Chief Executive.

The employee must notify their Director / Chief Executive of any relevant changes to their personal circumstances, for example, name, address, telephone number etc. They must also inform their director / Chief Executive if they are subject to any criminal charges or cautions or are convicted or found guilty of a criminal offence, during the period of the sabbatical leave, in accordance with the terms contained in their contract of employment.

## **8. Returning to work at the end of the sabbatical leave period**

The date of the employee's return to work will be agreed with the appropriate / Chief Executive prior to the commencement of the approved sabbatical leave period.

Should an employee wish to return earlier than the agreed return to work date, they should notify their Director / Chief Executive in writing as soon as possible and preferably at least one month before they wish to return. Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate such requests, however agreement will be subject to the needs of the service and the contractual arrangements relating to the cover arrangements.

## **9. Equality**

The Trust is committed to ensuring that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the way it provides services to the public and the way it treats its employees reflects their individual needs and does not discriminate against individuals or groups.

The Trust has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment and received feedback on this policy and the way it operates. The Trust wanted to know of any possible or actual impact that this policy may have on any groups in respect of gender (including maternity and pregnancy as well as marriage or civil partnership issues) race, disability, sexual orientation, Welsh language, religion or belief, transgender, age or other protected characteristics.

The assessment found that there was no impact to the equality groups mentioned. Where appropriate the Trust will make plans for the necessary actions required to minimise any stated impact to ensure that it meets its responsibilities under the equalities and human rights legislation.

## **10. Training**

Whilst there are no formal training programmes in place to support the implementation of this policy, the Medical Director and Clinical Directors must ensure that all consultant staff are made aware of this policy and adhere to the provisions contained herein at all times.

## **11. Resources**

The implementation and management arrangements associated with this policy do not present any significant resource implications to the Trust.

## **12. Implementation**

This policy will be maintained and updated by the Workforce and OD Department.

## **13. Audit and Monitoring**

The Workforce and OD Department will review the operation of the policy as necessary. At a minimum the policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years.

#### **14. Distribution**

The policy will be available to staff via the Trust Intranet Site. Where staff do not have access to the intranet their line manager must ensure that they have access to a copy of this policy.

#### **15. Review**

Review of this policy must be undertaken no later than three years after the date of approval.

#### **16. Legislation**

This policy complies fully with the requirements set out in the National Consultant Contract in Wales.

#### **17. Further Information**

Further information and support is available from the Workforce and Organisational Development Department.

#### **18. Relevant Trust Policies**

- Policy and Procedure for International Health Partnership Related Activity.

## Appendix 1 – Amendment to the National Consultant Contract in Wales

### Sections 14.5 – 14.8

#### Sabbaticals

- 14.5 During their career as a Consultant within NHS Wales each Consultant will be entitled to seek a paid sabbatical for a period of up to three months to undertake activities away from their normal duties that will subsequently benefit their patient care work.
- 14.6 The basis for any proposed sabbatical will arise out of regular job plan reviews and/or appraisals and be subject to the agreement of the employer. The exigencies of the service and spreading the taking of sabbaticals across the Consultant body within the organisation must be factors on when and how a sabbatical is undertaken. However its timing and nature must also reflect the appropriate stage in the career, and the particular interests of the Consultant.
- 14.7 A reasonable level of financial support for the necessary additional costs involved in undertaking such a sabbatical will be granted by the employer, and during the period of the sabbatical, appropriate locum cover will be provided.
- 14.8 Proposed alternative ways of taking such a sabbatical break, e.g. over two separate but shorter periods of time can also be considered by the employer provided the combined amount of time and costs involved in total are no higher than those set out above.

**Medical Consultant Sabbatical Leave Application Form**

Incomplete applications will not be considered. This will include those that do not include a copy of the employee's personal development plan, including the proposal for the sabbatical.

Applications not supported by the appropriate Medical Director will also not be considered.

**Section A – To be completed by the Applicant**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Contracted Sessions: *DCCs* \_\_\_\_\_ *SPAs* \_\_\_\_\_

Speciality: \_\_\_\_\_

Workplace Base: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of service as a Consultant with Velindre NHS Trust (or other NHS organisation(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Years

Date of last Appraisal Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed start date of sabbatical leave: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Period of sabbatical leave requested: \_\_\_\_\_ *Weeks/Months\**

\* delete as appropriate

Proposed date of return to work following any approved sabbatical leave:

\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Have you had any previous approved sabbatical leave: *Yes / No\**

\* delete as appropriate

**APPLICANTS ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:**

1. Nature of the project or work to be undertaken:

**2. Evidence of a measurable end product:**

**3. Expected outcomes arising from the period of leave:**

**4. Expected benefits to the Trust:**

**5. Expected benefits to your professional development:**

**6. Details of the financial support sought:**

**7. Details of any assistance required from the Trust to support your GMC registration / revalidation, during the period of the requested sabbatical leave:**

**8. Any other relevant information which you wish to provide in support of your application:**

**9. Photocopy of my last approved personal development plan:**

*Please tick the following box if this document is attached*

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Applicant)**      **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

***Please ensure a copy of your last approved personal development plan is attached to your completed and signed application.***

**Section B: To be completed by the Clinical Director / Medical Director / Chief Executive**

1. Details of cover arrangements:

2. Service implications:

3. Financial Implications:

**I am recommending that the Trust:**

*Please tick the following box if this document is attached*

- Authorises the above application for sabbatical leave
- Does not authorise the above application for sabbatical leave

**Reason(s) for the recommendation:**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Job Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Section C: To be Authorised by the Medical Director / Chief Executive**

**Having considered the details contained in this application I am:**

*Please tick the following box if this document is attached*

- Authorising the above sabbatical leave application
- Not authorising the above sabbatical leave application

**Reason for the decision:**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Job Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Once Section C of this form has been signed and completed it must be forwarded to the Executive Director of Workforce and OD who will communicate the decision to the applicant and the applicant's line managers in accordance with the relevant procedure.**