

Sabbatical Leave Policy

Version:	Owner:	Created:
1.0	People Board	05/02/2025
Published:	Approving Director:	Next Review
07/02/2025	Mike Duncan (Director of people and OD)	05/02/2028

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Policy Details	3
Eligibility.....	3
Requests	3
Notice Periods.....	3
Duration & Frequency	4
Combining Sabbatical with Other Types of Leave.....	4
Approval	5
Employment Status	6
Pay, & Pensions.....	6
Annual Leave	6
Bonuses & Benefits.....	6
Company Property.....	7
Work & Volunteering	7
Breaching confidentiality agreements.....	7
Returning to Work	7
Failure to Return from Sabbatical:	7
Version Control.....	9

Sabbatical Leave V1.0

Introduction

The Sabbatical Policy provides a structured framework for co-owners to take extended periods of unpaid leave while maintaining their employment status. It establishes clear guidelines on eligibility, duration, and approval processes to ensure consistency and fairness across the organisation.

The policy aims to balance co-owner needs with business continuity, offering a transparent process that supports both individual circumstances and operational requirements.

All requests for sabbatical leave will be handled fairly and consistently in line with BrisDoc's Equity & Diversity Policy. An Equity Impact Assessment (EQIA) is shown in Appendix 1.

Policy Details

Eligibility

Co-owners must have at least five years of continuous BrisDoc service to qualify for a sabbatical. This policy applies to all co-owners employed on a BrisDoc salaried contract or BrisDoc bank/casual worker contract with five years of continuous service. It does not apply to self-employed staff.

This policy applies equally to part-time and flexible contract co-owners who meet the continuous service requirement.

Breaks in service due to statutory leave (e.g., maternity, adoption) do not affect eligibility for sabbatical leave.

Requests

A request must be made to the line manager and must include:

- Requested start and end dates
- Total duration
- Reason for the sabbatical
- Any planned annual leave

Notice Periods

Notice to request a sabbatical should be at least twice the length of the requested leave. For example, a one-month sabbatical requires two months' notice, while a six-month sabbatical requires twelve months' notice.

Shorter notice periods may be approved in exceptional circumstances, such as urgent personal matters, subject to Director approval.

Sabbatical Leave V1.0

If a co-owner wishes to cancel or shorten an approved sabbatical leave, they must notify their manager as soon as possible. Efforts will be made to reinstate their role, but this cannot be guaranteed as managers may have already reallocated shifts and hours to other co-owners or temporary cover may have been put in place.

Duration & Frequency

Sabbaticals must be a minimum of one month and can last up to six months. Co-owners are eligible for one sabbatical every five years from the date of BrisDoc employment and from any previous sabbatical return date.

Sabbaticals cannot be split into multiple shorter periods within the five-year timeframe.

Combining Sabbatical with Other Types of Leave

Combining sabbaticals with statutory leave (e.g., maternity, parental leave) will be managed in line with the Employment Rights Act 1996 to protect return-to-work rights.

Sabbaticals may be taken in conjunction with other forms of leave, such as maternity leave, adoption leave, unpaid parental leave, or other statutory entitlements. However, combining different types of leave may affect the co-owner's right to return to the same role.

For statutory maternity and adoption leave, co-owners are entitled to return to the same job if they return within 26 weeks. If the leave exceeds 26 weeks (including any additional sabbatical or unpaid leave), the right extends to a similar role with equivalent terms and conditions if it is not reasonably practicable to return to the same role.

Approval for combining leave types will be subject to operational requirements and the potential impact on service delivery.

Co-owners are encouraged to discuss plans with their line manager and the People Team to understand the implications for their role and employment rights.

Sabbatical Leave V1.0

Approval

Managers assess requests based on operational needs and must respond within one month of the request being made. Managers should consult with the People Team when assessing requests to ensure consistency.

If a request is denied, co-owners may appeal to their Director or Deputy Director within 14 days of receiving the decision. The Director will provide a final decision within 28 days of receiving the appeal.

Appeals may be submitted if the co-owner believes the decision was unfair, inconsistent with policy, or lacking in reasonable justification. Managers must provide written reasons for declining requests to ensure transparency.

Circumstances for Declining a Sabbatical Request

While BrisDoc aims to support sabbatical requests wherever possible, there may be situations where approval is not feasible due to operational or business needs. Before declining, managers should consider alternative arrangements, such as temporary cover or role adjustments, to support operational needs. Decisions should be reviewed with the People Team to ensure fairness and consistency.

Common reasons for declining a sabbatical request include:

- **Operational Impact:** If granting the sabbatical would significantly affect service delivery, such as during peak periods or when the team is already understaffed.
Example: A sabbatical request during the winter flu season when healthcare demand is highest.
- **Critical Role Dependency:** If the co-owner holds a specialist role that is difficult to cover without impacting key operations.
Example: A unique clinical specialist with skills not easily covered by other team members.
- **Multiple Concurrent Leaves:** If several team members are already on leave (e.g., maternity, long-term sick leave), making it challenging to manage workloads.
Example: Overlapping with colleagues planned parental or unpaid leave.
- **Inadequate Notice:** If insufficient notice is provided, making it difficult to plan for appropriate cover.
Example: A request for a three-month sabbatical with only one month's notice.
- **Performance Concerns:** If the co-owner is subject to ongoing performance management or disciplinary processes.
Example: A co-owner on a formal performance improvement plan.
- **Conflict of Interest:** If the sabbatical activities pose a conflict with BrisDoc's values or business concerns.
Example: Paid work with a direct competitor or an organisation that conflicts with BrisDoc's mission or values.

Managers will provide clear reasons for any decision to decline a sabbatical request, and co-owners retain the right to appeal the decision to the Service Director.

Sabbatical Leave V1.0

Employment Status

While on sabbatical, the employment contract remains in force but is considered inactive, meaning they retain employment rights but are not entitled to pay or active benefits.

Continuity of service is maintained for statutory purposes, including redundancy rights and other employment-related entitlements. Co-owners will return to their role under the same terms unless changes have occurred, in which case they will be consulted.

Statutory rights, including redundancy entitlement, are not affected during the sabbatical period.

Pay, & Pensions

Sabbaticals are taken as unpaid leave. Any pay increases awarded during the sabbatical will still apply upon return to work. Co-owners may choose to continue their NHS Pension contributions, with BrisDoc maintaining employer contributions if they do so.

Co-owners opting out of NHS pension contributions during a sabbatical should consult with the Payroll Team regarding re-enrolment procedures upon return.

Annual Leave

Statutory annual leave (as per the Working Time Regulations 1998) and any contractual leave entitlement do not accrue during a sabbatical, as the employment contract is suspended for the duration of the leave. Any existing leave entitlement will be recalculated accordingly.

If a sabbatical spans two holiday years, annual leave entitlement will be recalculated accordingly.

Bonuses & Benefits

Discretionary bonuses will be pro-rated to reflect the period of inactive employment during the bonus calculation period. No bonus will be paid for the duration of the sabbatical, as co-owners are not actively contributing during this time.

All benefits will be suspended, except for continuity of service and eligibility for the Employee Assistance Programme. Statutory parental leave rights remain, but occupational maternity, paternity, or adoption pay will not apply during the sabbatical.

Suspended benefits will be reinstated automatically upon the co-owner's return to active employment.

Sabbatical Leave V1.0

Company Property

All company property, including IT equipment, security passes, and sensitive materials, must be returned before the sabbatical starts to maintain data security.

Work & Volunteering

Co-owners may undertake paid or unpaid work during their sabbatical, provided there is no conflict of interest with BrisDoc. Examples of conflicts include:

- Employment with a direct competitor
- Undertaking work that would create a financial or reputational risk to BrisDoc

Breaching confidentiality agreements

If a conflict of interest arises from paid or unpaid activities during the sabbatical, the leave may be revoked.

Returning to Work

The return date must be agreed upon when the sabbatical is approved. Co-owners will be reinstated to their role under the same terms and conditions unless changes have occurred, in which case they will be consulted. If it is not reasonably practicable to return to the same role, particularly following combined periods of leave exceeding 26 weeks, the co-owner will be offered a similar role if one exists with equivalent terms and conditions.

If a co-owner wishes to return earlier than planned, they must provide at least four weeks' notice, and return will be subject to operational feasibility.

Failure to Return from Sabbatical:

If a co-owner does not return to work on the agreed date without prior agreement, this may be treated as an unauthorised absence, and disciplinary procedures may apply. Failure to comply with return-to-work requirements may impact eligibility for future sabbatical requests.

If a co-owner decides not to return from sabbatical, they must provide written notice in accordance with their contractual notice period.

If a co-owner submits their resignation while on sabbatical, their notice period will commence from the date the resignation is received, unless otherwise agreed. The co-owner will not be required to return to work to serve their notice unless specified by management.

- If a co-owner submits their resignation while on sabbatical:
- Their notice period will commence from the date the resignation is received, unless otherwise agreed.

Sabbatical Leave V1.0

- If the notice period extends beyond the agreed sabbatical, the co-owner will be required to return to work to serve the remainder of their notice unless otherwise agreed by management.

If the notice period falls entirely within the sabbatical period, the notice will be treated as unpaid, consistent with the terms of the sabbatical.

Appendix 1: Equity Impact Assessment (EQIA)

The purpose of this EQIA is to assess the potential impact of the Sabbatical Policy on co-owners with different protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that the policy promotes equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

How the Policy Meets EDI Requirements

This policy is designed to align with BrisDoc's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion by ensuring equitable access to sabbatical leave for all eligible co-owners, regardless of their protected characteristics.

Age – The policy is accessible to co-owners of all ages, ensuring that those approaching retirement or early in their careers have equal access to sabbaticals.

Disability – The policy provides reasonable adjustments to support co-owners with disabilities in taking sabbaticals without disadvantage.

Gender Reassignment – The policy respects confidentiality and supports co-owners undergoing gender reassignment by offering flexible leave options.

Marriage and Civil Partnership – The policy is applied equitably to all co-owners regardless of marital or civil partnership status, ensuring fairness in eligibility and access.

Pregnancy and Maternity – Co-owners on maternity leave remain eligible for sabbaticals, with clear guidelines ensuring they are not disadvantaged.

Race – The policy ensures inclusivity by being culturally sensitive and accessible to co-owners of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Religion or Belief – Flexible application of the policy allows for religious and cultural observances to be accommodated where relevant.

Sex – The policy ensures equitable access for all genders, avoiding gender-based disparities in sabbatical leave applications and approvals.

Sexual Orientation – The policy promotes an inclusive culture, ensuring that co-owners of all sexual orientations have equal access to sabbaticals.

Intersectionality – The policy acknowledges and accommodates the complex ways in which multiple characteristics can intersect, ensuring that no individual faces compounded disadvantage*****

Sabbatical Leave V1.0

Version Control

Date	Version	Author	Change Details
05/2/25	1.0	People Board	New policy created