

## Employee Volunteering Scheme Policy

This policy can be made available in other languages and formats such as large print and audio on [request](#).

### What is it?

Wiltshire Council supports employees who wish to undertake volunteering activities within the community or for charitable organisations.

Employee volunteering helps Wiltshire Council build strong relationships with the community, enhances social cohesion and develops a 'sense' of belonging whilst creating a more resilient community. It also supports with staff engagement and gives employees the chance to develop skills and to play a more active role in Wiltshire communities.

The scheme allows employees to take one day a year or equivalent paid time off to volunteer, pro-rata for part-time employees. Employees can only use the volunteering allowance to take part in voluntary activities which support Wiltshire communities, including environment and conservation projects for local community projects or charities, community care activities.

### Go straight to the section

- [Who does it apply to?](#)
- [When does it apply?](#)
- [When does it not apply?](#)
- [What are the main points?](#)
- [Employee responsibilities](#)
- [Line manager responsibilities](#)
- [Human Resources responsibilities](#)
- [FAQs](#)

### Who does it apply to?

This policy applies to all Wiltshire Council employees, unless a separate contractual policy applies to a transferred employee to whom separate TUPE terms and conditions of employment apply. This policy does not apply to casual members of staff, teaching and non-teaching staff employed in maintained schools or academies.

### When does it apply?

It applies to employees who undertake or who wish to undertake volunteering opportunities aligned to the business plan priorities. This includes key priority areas such as

- Social Care
- Community Conversations
- Corporate Parenting
- Community Depreciation

- Climate Change

### **When does it not apply?**

This policy does not apply to:

- Volunteering activities that employees are involved in outside of their normal hours of work.
- Volunteering activities that employees are involved in outside of Wiltshire.
- Civic duties such as school governance, magistrate duties and jury service which are covered by the [Time off for Civic Duties policy](#).
- Time off to assist at elections which is covered in the [Time off for Elections policy](#).

### **What are the main points?**

#### **Allowance**

1. Employees are entitled to one paid day off per year or the equivalent of 7.4 hours for full time employees, to volunteer.
2. The allowance will be pro-rata for part-time employees, in the same way as annual leave.
3. The one-day allowance must be taken within the calendar leave year which runs 1 January to 31 December.
4. The allowance can be taken as one full day or two half days, pro rata if you work part time. You will need to discuss this with your manager to ensure it fits with your work commitments and your services needs.
5. If you exceed your normal working hours on the day that the volunteering takes place, you will not be entitled to claim for these.

#### **Carrying over a volunteering day**

6. A volunteering day cannot be carried over from one year to the next.

#### **Scope of volunteering**

7. The activity must benefit the community, environment, individual or groups in Wiltshire in line with the Council's business plan. The framework has been developed and should be used to ensure the volunteering opportunity meets the relevant criteria and ensure no conflict of interest arises e.g., Employees participating in volunteering that directly impacts a close relative. Each opportunity must align with one of Wiltshire Council's Business Plan's Missions or Guiding Themes.

8. Activities undertaken must be with organisations which are “not for profit”. These may include registered charities, religious or faith groups, local schools, community or grassroots groups, village halls, national parks, animal rescue or wildlife centres, environmental projects, food banks, care homes, youth groups, museums and local libraries, scouts’ and other uniform groups, emergency services, etc.
9. Examples of activities may include:
  - Mentoring looked after children and vulnerable people
  - Supporting vulnerable adults and disabled people
  - Reading and listening activities at a school
  - Outdoor activities e.g. environmental clean ups, recycling initiatives, tree planting
  - Supporting of one off events for youth club, scouts, guides or similar group
  - Organising sports activities or events for a charity
  - Decorating or gardening for a community centre
10. There must be no conflicts of interest e.g., political campaigning.
11. The activity must take place within your normal hours of work. If you volunteer outside of your non-working hours, you will not be entitled to claim time off in lieu.
12. The activity must not disrupt or adversely affect service delivery.
13. The activity must not replace council jobs.
14. The activity must not bring Wiltshire Council into disrepute.
15. The activity must not put the employee at risk of harm or injury.

### **Where to find volunteering opportunities**

16. Opportunities identified through Wiltshire Council in line with the business plan will be available to view via HR Direct Employee Volunteering page.

### **Requesting time off and approving requests**

17. All requests for time off must be approved by your line manager at least two weeks in advance of undertaking the volunteering activity. As with annual leave requests, the needs of the service must be considered, and you must obtain agreement for time off before committing to an activity.
18. You must complete and submit the Microsoft application form on the HR Direct Employee Volunteering page to be considered for any pre-approved volunteering opportunities.

- Once received you will be matched against any opportunities suitably available.
  - This will be based on various criteria such as your location, DBS consideration, travel ability etc.
  - Both you and your manager will be notified of any potential match and approval from your manager is required.
19. Where possible, managers are expected to support volunteering activities, but business operations must take precedence and there may be some services where it will not be possible to release employees to volunteer.
20. Managers may refuse your request to take time off if there is a detrimental impact to service delivery or to other team members.

### **Recording time off for volunteering**

21. Once you have agreed the time off for volunteering with your manager, your manager will record it on Oracle using 'Volunteering day' as the absence reason.

### **Travel and subsistence expenses**

22. Wiltshire Council will not pay for any travel or subsistence expenses associated with performing volunteering activities.
23. You will need to discuss out of pocket expenses with the organisation with which you are volunteering.

### **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks**

24. Certain volunteering activities that involve supporting young people or vulnerable adults may require you to have a DBS check. The organisation that you are volunteering with will indicate if this is necessary.
25. If a DBS check is required, the organisation that you are volunteering with will need to apply for one on your behalf. Wiltshire Council will not be responsible for undertaking DBS checks for employees who volunteer.
26. If you have an existing DBS check, the organisation that you are volunteering with will need to check if it is suitable for the activities you will be undertaking.

### **Training and induction including health and safety**

27. The organisation for which you volunteer is responsible for providing any induction or other training to allow you to perform your volunteering role and remain safe.
28. If an additional day off is required to attend any training or induction, you will need to discuss this with your manager and use annual leave or flexi-time.

## **Code of conduct**

29. When volunteering, you are expected to act in accordance with Our Identity and code of conduct, recognising that your actions may have an impact on your role and the reputation of the council.

## **Absences**

30. Employees will need to comply with the relevant Wiltshire Council policy if they are unable to attend the volunteering activity and it is one of their normal working days e.g. reporting sickness in line with the sickness absence management policy.

## **After volunteering**

31. You may wish to discuss your volunteering activity and share the experience with colleagues. You can also send pictures alongside a brief summary of what you did to [EPIC@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:EPIC@wiltshire.gov.uk) for your experience to be shared on our social media sites.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Employee responsibilities**

32. If you want to request time off from work to volunteer, you should discuss this with your manager before completing the application and consider any impact on your team workload.
33. Any request for time off needs to be approved by your manager before the activity takes place. Your manager may refuse your request as set out in para 19.

### **Line manager responsibilities**

34. Make sure your employees are aware they need to give you advance notice if they intend to request time off as volunteering leave so that you can make sure there is adequate business cover.
35. Maintain records of time off granted, recording this on Oracle and also retain records and the reasons for any requests refused.

### **HR responsibilities**

36. Provide advice to managers on issues raised in connection with this policy via Oracle Helpdesk.

## **Frequently asked questions**

37. **I am a manager and I have had multiple requests from my team to have time off on the same day for one specific activity. I can't approve all the requests because of service cover. What do I do?**

If several of your employees want to volunteer on the same day you will need to handle requests the same as you would annual leave requests and consider the needs of the service first.

If it is not possible to approve multiple requests for time off on the same day, you will need to discuss the requests with the relevant team members to see if any compromise can be made.

Possible courses of action could include:

- deciding on a first come first serve basis.
- picking names out of a hat.
- if you have to refuse an employee's request consider giving that individual priority at another time.

38. **I am a manager. Do I need to keep a record of the time off my team has taken to volunteer?**

Yes. Once you have agreed the time off for an employee to undertake a volunteering activity, you will need to record it on Oracle as 'Volunteering day' under absences, in the same way as you would record sickness absences and annual leave.

39. **I am a manager and my team have suggested that we use our one-day allowance to paint a community hall as a team-building activity. Are we able to do this?**

Yes, as long as there is no detrimental impact to service delivery and there is adequate business cover. You will need to discuss it with your head of service and get their agreement before making any arrangements. You will also need to check that nobody in the team has already used up their allowance for the year. This activity should not be undertaking work that would otherwise be carried out by the council (e.g. refurbishing a council owned building).

40. **I have employees who already volunteer under other schemes, can they also apply for the extra day using the employee volunteering policy?**

Yes, staff can also apply for this extra day to volunteer on top of other instances e.g., Magistrates duties, however service delivery is priority and this request may be rejected by managers on application if there is a negative impact or lack of cover within their team on the chosen dates.

41. **I want to take part in an approved activity which exceeds the hours of my working day, what can I do?**

Any activity where participation exceeds an employee's normal working day hours would need to be covered using employees own time or flexi time. The Council will only cover the hours of each employee normal working day whether full or part time.

42. **I want to take my team for a team building day. Can I use a pool car to transport them to and from the volunteering day?**

Pool cars cannot be used as these would only be in place of being paid mileage expenses which is not covered in the policy. Personal vehicles would need to be used in their place for personal and domestic use rather than business use, drivers would need to ensure they check with their vehicle insurance company just in case there are special conditions. Public transport could also be used.

43. **I have a volunteering opportunity to put forward how can I do this and would it be approved?**

There is a template for proposing potential volunteering opportunities on the HR Direct Employee Volunteering page that would need to be completed to request this. Once submitted ELT/Executive office will check whether it meets framework criteria and advise whether it's a suitable option.

## **Equal Opportunities**

This policy has been [Equality Impact Assessed](#) to identify opportunities to promote equality and mitigate any negative or adverse impacts on particular groups.

Managers will make any necessary adjustments to ensure that all employees are treated fairly. For further information see the [guidance on equal opportunities](#).

## **Relevant legislation**

Equality Act 2010

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

Police Act 1997

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

Working Time Regulations 1998 (SI 1998/1833)

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/3242)

Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2034)

Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 (SI 2000/1551)

Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/233)

General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679 EU)

This policy has been reviewed by our legal team to ensure compliance with the above legislation and our statutory duties.

### **Further information**

There are a number of related policies and procedures that you should be aware of including:

- [Time off for elections](#)
- [Code of conduct policy](#)
- [Politically restricted posts policy and procedure](#)
- [Equality and Diversity policy and procedure](#)
- [Annual leave and bank holiday entitlement policy](#)

For further information please speak to your supervisor, manager, or for further guidance and support visit the Oracle Helpdesk.

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