

Staff volunteering guidance

Scottish Borders Council recognises the valuable input charities and organisations get from their volunteers as well as the personal rewards it brings those who volunteer.

Volunteering has huge benefits both for you and for the community. Volunteering can:

- Help you be part of the community
- Help you learn new skills and experiences
- Help you gain confidence and provide an opportunity to try something new
- Have a real and valuable impact on people, communities and society in general
- Give opportunities for you to meet different types of people
- Improve your morale, physical health and work-life balance
- Be fun!

The Special Leave policy has therefore been updated to allow employees to take paid leave for volunteering.

Who can get involved?

Employees who have a permanent or temporary post can apply for up to 2 days per calendar year to volunteer. Managers can take into account attendance records in the previous year – an acceptable level of attendance is required before your volunteering time off will be agreed. Managers can also consider contract duration for temporary contracts – usually 12 months or longer would be required to obtain the full entitlement, although managers can be flexible depending on the circumstances.

What organisations/projects can I support?

You can support any charity or Scottish Borders Council Service that operates within the Scottish Borders area. For example, care homes, day centres, schools, animal rescue centres, Samaritans or any other locally focussed activity.

Any activities which cannot be shown to be of benefit to the local community, such as organisations who look to make profit or volunteering to support a friend or family member, will not qualify under this scheme.

You should not participate in any activities that could be in conflict with your SBC role or one which may impact on your health and wellbeing.

Time Off

Once authorised, employees will be granted paid time off to attend volunteering activity up to 2 days per calendar year (pro rata for part time staff).

Expenses/Equipment

Other than paid time off to attend the volunteering activity, no additional expenses will be paid. You should discuss this with the organisation that you are volunteering with as they may offer to pay reasonable expenses relating to travel or equipment.

Health and Safety

It is your responsibility to ensure you are meeting all health and safety standards, no matter the type of volunteering activity you choose to do. You should ensure that the organisation that you are volunteering with has sufficient insurance cover for the role that you undertake

Employee requests to undertake volunteering

If you wish to take part in volunteering, you should discuss with your line manager to seek approval.

If the request is approved, you must then record the date as leave within Business world using the Absence task available under Your Employment and selecting VOLUNTEER as the Absence Code. (Please see guidance note on recording planned absences in Business World if you are unsure).

If you do not have access to Business World you should request time off in the usual way.

Approval of time off will be subject to the needs of the Service. SBC will support as many requests as possible however there may be times that this cannot be accommodated for example -

- If it has a negative impact on the business and service needs
- Work within the service cannot be re-arranged to accommodate the employees varied hours
- The cost of cover would be too great

Only 2 applications per year should be submitted for up to the maximum of 2 days per year for a full time employee (pro-rata for part time).

Refused volunteering

Where a request is declined, your manager will advise you of the reason.

Receiving a refusal does not prevent you from requesting time off to volunteer in the future.

Review and raising awareness

In advance of and after any volunteering work, employees are encouraged to raise awareness using Yammer. Where appropriate, photos of volunteering activities can be shared. Employees should also be encouraged to share information about their volunteering experience at their team meeting.