



Volunteering Policy

Organisation	Somerset Council
Title	Volunteering Policy
Owner	HR Policy Team
Primary Legislation	

1. Policy Statement

1.1 Somerset Council is keen to encourage and support employees to undertake volunteering opportunities, recognising the benefits that this can bring to both employees and the wider community. As such all employees (apart from those employed by schools who are employed under a Governing Body's delegated powers) are offered 2 days paid volunteering leave per year on a pro rata basis. This can be increased by a further 3 days to a maximum of 5 days at the manager's discretion.

1.2 To receive paid volunteering leave employees must be taking part in activities which benefit at least one of the following:

- the environment
- individuals and residents of Somerset*
- charities and community groups
- the Chairperson's Charities
- organisations which are 'not for profit'

* To benefit Somerset communities the volunteering should take place in Somerset, with flexibility for employees who live further afield to volunteer closer to home. This policy does not apply to volunteering outside of the UK.

1.3 If an employee or manager is unsure whether the volunteering activity or organisation involved is covered by this policy, please contact the Central Volunteering Team (Volunteer@Somerset.gov.uk).

1.4 This policy does not form part of the Somerset Council Terms and Conditions and may be subject to change.

2. Principles

2.1 All employees have the right to request time off during work hours to volunteer but there is no automatic right to time off work to undertake volunteering. The needs of the service must be treated as a priority and the employee must obtain agreement to take volunteering leave before making any commitments

to a voluntary organisation.

- 2.2 Time taken to volunteer should not disrupt or adversely affect individual or team activity. Volunteering should not involve a visible financial cost to 'back-fill' staff cover. If it does, then a manager can make the decision not to approve a volunteering request.
- 2.3 If an employee believes that their request(s) for volunteering leave are being unfairly rejected by their line manager they are asked to raise this with a higher manager or HR Advisory.
- 2.4 The volunteering activity must not bring the Council into disrepute and must not create a conflict of interest with the employee's substantive role. The employee must make known to their line manager anything that they think may constitute a conflict of interest prior to entering into the agreement or (if it becomes apparent later), at any time during the agreement. Guidance on what constitutes a conflict of interest can be found in the Standards of Conduct policy ([add link](#)) and the Financial Regulations ([add link](#)).
- 2.5 Managers need to consider what personal gain the employee will get from the volunteering activity and whether they will receive a significant financial benefit in return for the volunteering activity and how this may be viewed by the public. If the employee is set to gain a significant financial benefit it may not be appropriate to provide paid time off work.
- 2.6 Requests for time off to volunteer must be sent to the line manager at least two weeks in advance of the volunteering activity taking place. Once an agreement has been entered into, the Council undertakes to release the employee as per that agreement. Only in very exceptional circumstances will the Council seek to alter or withdraw from the agreement.
- 2.7 Volunteering time can be used flexibly subject to needs of the service, one day at a time, two together, or broken down into hours to fit the needs of the activity and the type of volunteering. Paid time for volunteering only applies to volunteering which is performed within normal working hours.
- 2.8 Any abuse of the Employee Volunteering Policy may lead to disciplinary action.

3. Exceptions to this policy

- 3.1 This policy does not apply to volunteering that involves campaigning on behalf of, or promotion of any of the following types of groups:
 - Political parties or groups involved in activities of a political nature
 - Religious groups

- Groups involved in illegal activities.
- 3.2 If there is any doubt as to whether a proposed volunteering opportunity falls into any of the above categories **HR Advisory** should be consulted.
- 3.3 This policy does not cover the activities listed below as there are specific arrangements for volunteering associated with public duties which can be found in the Special Leave Policy or Reservist Policy (**add links**).
- Public Bodies' Activities (governors/magistrates)
 - Election Duties
 - Census Duties
 - Candidates for Election to Parliament
 - Candidates for Election to Local Authorities
 - Retained Fire-fighters
 - Armed Service Reservists
 - Scout and Guide Group Leader
 - Participation in and delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (except for the volunteering element which may be taken under this policy)
 - Route1 Advocacy

4. Application for & Recording of Volunteer Time

- 4.1 Following discussion with their line manager, the employee should request the time off via ESS, choosing the 'Volunteer (paid) Leave' option. If the employee does not have access to ESS they will need to complete the Volunteering Request Form (**add link**).
- 4.2 Once the line manager has authorised the time off via SAP or after receiving the form, all employees should record their volunteering on the online Volunteer Monitoring Form (**add link**).

5. Use of Council Property & Expenses Claims

- 5.1 The Council will not offer the use of any of its property for volunteering reasons and therefore expects the organisation with which the employee is volunteering to provide any necessary items. Likewise, the Council will not cover any expenses incurred through volunteering for other organisations. Any expenses should be claimed through the organisation with which the employee is volunteering.

6. Liability

- 6.1 The Council will not be liable for damages or injuries that occur through

volunteering for other organisations. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure the organisation they are volunteering with has their own health and safety policy and the appropriate insurance policy. The Standards of Conduct ([add link](#)) continue to apply to employees when volunteering. The code contains provisions that encourage the highest standards of integrity and personal conduct on the part of all employees.

Version History

Revision Date	Author	Version	Description of Revision
		1	New Somerset Policy