

# Employee Volunteering Policy

Human Resources  
July 2023

# SBC Employee Volunteering Policy

## Introduction

The Council actively encourages and supports our employees who wish to undertake voluntary work within our borough. Volunteering is a great way for you to gain or share your skills and experiences, meet new people and give something back to our community. We believe that the borough would benefit from an increase in the number of people who are able to share their skills and talents through volunteering, which is why we have created this policy to outline our support to employees undertaking voluntary work in working time.

According to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) the most widely reported benefits to volunteering are enjoyment and a sense of personal achievement, and a feeling of making a difference. Also, widely reported is the value to a volunteers' mental and physical health and how it can help reduce isolation.

For the host organisations that engage volunteers there are also many reported benefits ranging from increased capacity to gaining additional skills, ideas and experiences and benefiting from practical support.

This policy sets out our commitment to support employees who want to volunteer, and how it can be used to support Team Development. It also forms part of our overall vision and approach to Stockton Futures, empowering and collaborating with our communities and developing a shared understanding of what we can do together to have the biggest impact.

## What is Volunteering

Volunteering is where you donate your time, knowledge and/or skills to undertake an activity that benefits others, free of charge.

Work experience placements are different to volunteering, although undertaking volunteering activities can help develop skills to support your development and access employment.

Employer Supported Volunteering, is where an employer allows employees to take time off work in normal working time – paid or unpaid (see below) to support work in the community.

For the purpose of this policy, helping your close friends or relatives is not considered volunteering.

## Volunteer Leave of Absence

### Paid & Unpaid Leave

All employees are entitled to 1 day paid leave within a rolling 12-months, or pro rata equivalent if you work part-time to undertake volunteering activities **within** the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. It must be taken in your normal working time – time off in lieu for volunteering outside your normal working hours will not be given.

If you wish to undertake additional volunteering activities, or volunteer outside of the borough, unpaid leave can be requested, or use of annual leave or flexitime approved in line with normal arrangements.

The paid or unpaid leave of absence may be taken as a full day, half day or blocks of at least one hour.

### Finding volunteering

You can use your volunteer leave to pursue volunteering activities of your own choice within the borough of Stockton on Tees – we want you to be involved in something that you genuinely care about. You may want to consider one of the examples below:

- See section below "SBC Organised Volunteering Opportunities
- Stockton Volunteering Website – many organisations post their opportunities on Stockton Volunteering's website where you can apply online. <https://www.stocktonvolunteers.co.uk/>
- Work for a local charity / foodbank
- Provide your skills to a VCSE (Voluntary Community Social Enterprise) organisations – e.g., website design, bid writing, administration support
- Carry out fund raising or support events
- Help out in a local School or Library
- Litter Picking or groundwork in a local park
- Support NHS services

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### Requesting Volunteer Leave

All volunteer leave must be approved by your Line Manager in advance, giving as much notice as possible.

You must provide details of the volunteering programme that you wish to undertake (who the volunteering is with and what activity) and each day / number of hours that you are requesting as volunteer leave (paid or unpaid).

Every effort will be made to support your request. However, there may be circumstances where your line manager may turn down your request due to operational needs, where there is insufficient capacity within the team to accommodate high levels of leave or they consider that a conflict of interest may arise. If your request is turned down, you may request to take your volunteer leave at a different time or with an alternative organisation.

### Recording Volunteer Leave

It is important that all volunteer leave is recorded on MyHR by the Line Manager under paid or unpaid leave – recorded in the same way as sickness absence.

Details of the volunteering which is being undertaken by the employee should be recorded in the “Comments” section.

## Volunteering as a Team

Volunteering as a team is a great way for your team to connect with your colleagues.

Perhaps your team has some specialised skill or knowledge that could benefit a charity, or maybe the volunteering provides an opportunity to learn something new together.

Volunteering as a team can help develop your communication skills, creativity, collaboration and ability to work together as a group. Why not seek out a volunteering opportunity for your next Team Development Day?

### Identifying Team Opportunities

Teams are encouraged to identify their own volunteering opportunities or apply for the SBC Organised Volunteering Opportunities (see below) as a Team. Perhaps you have a partner organisation you work with who may mutually benefit from your team’s time?

If you would like some support in identifying a Team Volunteering activity, contact Community Engagement

### Recording Team Volunteering

We would ask that managers record Team Volunteering on MyHR in the same way as individual volunteering. This is so we can monitor the amount of volunteering being undertaken by our employees within our borough.

## SBC Organised Volunteering Opportunities

The Council will work with Catalyst to identify volunteering projects or pieces of work within the VCSE sector on a time-limited basis to enable you or your Team to share your time, skills and experience with.

These opportunities will be promoted in KYIT for individual employees or teams to apply for and may where appropriate to the project grant more than 1 day paid leave.

Before applying to take part in organised opportunities, you should confirm with your Line Manager that time off work can be given. If the activity is on a non-working day, time of in lieu will not be provided.

Keep a look out in KYIT for future opportunities.

## Related Documents

- [Work / Life Balance & Attendance Policy – Appendix 4 A-Z Guidance on Leave](#)
- A Volunteering Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees 2021-2026
- Stockton Volunteers Website - <https://www.stocktonvolunteers.co.uk/>