



Volunteering by Staff Policy and Procedure

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Alternative Formats

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1. Policy Application

1.1 Definition: -

Employee - An employee is any person under a current contract of employment with PBNI, including temporary and fixed term contracts.

1.2 Application of this policy:-

This policy only applies to PBNI employees.

2. Introduction

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), in recognition of its corporate social responsibility, is committed to encouraging and supporting staff to make a positive impact on the wider community through volunteering. PBNI recognises the significant enthusiasm, expertise and energies that exist at all levels among their staff.

3. Scope

The Volunteering by Staff Policy supports the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of the community or the environment by individuals or groups of staff, with the help and encouragement of the Board as their employer.

PBNI recognises the benefits of volunteering both to individual staff in terms of development and to a community or the environment.

This document sets out PBNI's policy and procedure on promoting and supporting involvement in voluntary activity by its staff. It provides general guidance on special paid leave for volunteering.

4. Aim

The aim of this policy is to encourage and support staff to work voluntarily in the local community and to maximise the impact of staff efforts.

5. Activities which will be supported

Special paid leave will be granted to enable staff to participate in the activities of voluntary bodies.

Volunteering opportunities should provide a benefit to the community, the environment or individuals outside one's immediate family circle.

Special leave will not be granted in respect of volunteering on behalf of political groups or in relation to issues which might be considered politically sensitive or involve a conflict of interest with the work of PBNI. This includes organisations currently funded by PBNI or those bodies/branches currently providing Community Service placements.

Volunteering must be undertaken freely and without concern for financial gain.

Opportunities to volunteer through Business in the Community will be publicised to all PBNI staff as they become available. Staff may also source their own volunteering opportunities.

6. Eligibility

Management will grant special leave, **on the condition that individuals contribute an equal amount of their own annual leave, TOIL or flexi to the same activity.** For example, if a member of staff wishes to participate in a full day's activity, he/she must match a half day special leave with a half day of their own leave, in whatever form (annual, TOIL or flexi) and as approved and authorised by their line manager. Weekends, statutory holidays and (in the case of part time staff) other non-working days will not qualify as normal working time.

Any member of staff may apply for special leave for volunteering, provided their attendance, conduct and performance is satisfactory.

Employees subject to live disciplinary warnings, performance improvement plans or sanctions under sickness absence procedures are NOT eligible to apply.

Special leave will be granted, only when the line and senior manager is satisfied that official business will not be adversely affected and where there is no conflict of interest.

Staff may be granted up to five days paid leave, to participate in voluntary activity as approved by PBNI within any 24-month period.

Applications will be considered on their individual merits taking account of the individual team or department's business needs.

7. Applications

Applicants should use the form 'Application for Staff Volunteering Special Leave' (Appendix 1), which can also be found in the HR section of the PBNI intranet.

An application to participate in an activity should be submitted to your line manager for consideration **at least 4 weeks prior to the date of the activity. The final approval for this special leave will then be provided by the relevant Assistant Director or Head of Department.**

If an application is not approved, management will advise the member of staff of the decision and the reason for refusal. This may include business need, live disciplinary warnings, performance improvement plans and sanctions under sickness absence procedures.

If circumstances change, previously agreed special leave for volunteering may be postponed or cancelled, as appropriate. Managers should ensure staff are informed of any such decision and the reasons as early as possible.

8. Insurance and Health and Safety

Whilst PBNI may support the volunteering activities of staff, it cannot accept responsibility for insuring staff engaged on activities outside its premises. It is the responsibility of the individual volunteering to ensure that the host body has appropriate insurance in place for the activity.

Health and Safety is also the responsibility of the individual and they must ensure that the host body has appropriate Health and Safety guidelines and that all appropriate safety guidelines and instructions are followed.

9. Policy Linkages

This policy is linked to the following existing Board policies:

- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Complaints Policy

10. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Scheme

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that volunteering and the own leave element is accurately recorded on weekly attendance sheet returns to HR.

Staff who have been granted special leave under these arrangements must, on their return to work and **within seven days of the event**, produce to their line manager a formal written communication, either a letter or an email from the voluntary organisation. This should confirm their participation, identify the location and nature of the activity and confirm the dates and times attended. This must cover the period of special leave granted and the “own time” equivalent.

Failure to provide these details will result in the individual being required to use annual or TOIL/flexi leave to cover the period of absence. If necessary, this may involve anticipating annual leave from the following leave year.

PBNI may seek further information from individuals and their line management to assist in the monitoring and evaluation of this policy.

11. Management of Information

There may be a need to provide a response to external queries regarding volunteering. Information provided in response to any such queries will be limited to statistical information and details of the organisations assisted. Information that would allow individuals to be identified, either directly or indirectly, will not be disclosed without the express written permission of the individual(s) involved. This includes, but is not limited to, articles in Probation News or any other in-house document.

12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed three years from the date of approval. Interim reviews may also be prompted by feedback, challenge or identified best practice.

13. Complaints

External complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the Board's Complaints Policy, Guidance and Procedures.

Internal complaints may be raised through normal management or supervision arrangements or under the Board's Grievance Policy and Procedures.

14. Breach of policy provision

If a volunteer's leave is requested dishonestly, the PBNI Disciplinary Policy will apply.



**Appendix I
APPLICATION FOR STAFF VOLUNTEERING SPECIAL
LEAVE**

Personal Details

Name: _____
Grade: _____
Team: _____

Details of Staff Volunteering Project

1. Name and Nature of Voluntary Organisation:

2. I wish to apply for _____ day(s) Staff Volunteering Special Leave (max 5 days within 24 month period)

Individual's own leave/TOIL/flexi:	From	_____	To	_____
Staff Volunteering Special Leave:	From	_____	To	_____

3. What is the nature of project you will be involved in?

4. What is your role in the project?

5. Where will the volunteering activity be held?

6. I confirm that I have read and fully understand the terms of PBNI's Volunteering by Staff Policy

I confirm that the host organisation has appropriate insurance and Health and Safety guidelines in place for the activity

I confirm that there is no conflict of interest with the work of PBNI

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

To Be Completed by Line Manager

I confirm that attendance, conduct and performance are satisfactory (please tick which is applicable)

Yes No

Line Manager Name (print) _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

To Be Completed by the relevant Assistant Director/Head of Department

I approve this application (please tick which is applicable)

Yes No

If No, please state reasons:

Senior Manager Name (print) _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

**Please forward the completed form to:
Human Resources Centre
Unit 5 Antrim Technology Park
Belfast Road
Antrim BT41 1QS
Email: hr@pbni.gsi.gov.uk**