



Cabinet Office

**Policy Guidance for organisations involved in the Industry
Partnering Voluntary Scheme**

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Introduction

There are over 400,000 civil servants across the country, however due to Covid-19, a proportion are unable to carry out their duties. This, alongside the extensive additional demand on public services, means that at this time of national crisis there are some important Civil Service resourcing gaps.

Working with Industry Partners, there is strong support for this new scheme. Businesses are keen to demonstrate corporate social responsibility by supporting the Government at this time by enabling their furloughed employees to volunteer in the Civil Service for a short period.

There is also a desire from many furloughed employees to play their part during this time of national and global crisis. This collaborative approach will enable a robust response to the challenges the country faces. This scheme offers a very practical way to harness this wish to help.

We are also engaging with other public sector bodies on our approach, as we use the insights from the Scheme to inform the wider public sector drive to enable individuals to contribute towards the country's response to Covid-19.

Principles

Private sector organisations have shown an interest in being involved in the scheme to enable their furloughed employees to volunteer. The arrangement for volunteering in the Civil Service will be underpinned by a tri-party written agreement between the Civil Service and the private sector organisation and the furloughed employee.

This sets out that volunteers remain on their existing terms and conditions, and salaries, and are matched to volunteer in key roles within the Civil Service for an agreed timeframe.

Furloughed staff volunteering in the Civil Service will receive support, induction, strong leadership, and development and training.

Although entry and exit arrangements may differ between departments they will as standard include induction, access to equipment where required, information on the protection of mental health and wellbeing in the Civil Service.

Industry partners

This scheme is about working with a number of industry partners and is one part of the co-ordinated resourcing response to ensure public services are maintained to a high standard. Schemes such as NHS Volunteer Responders operate alongside this.

Demand levels are currently building. As this happens we will consider the need for additional organisations to join the scheme, this will be kept under review.

Voluntary roles

The type of voluntary work will typically include but is not restricted to operational delivery, analytical, project delivery and digital, and individuals can offer the hours they wish to volunteer for on a voluntary basis.

Assignment lengths will be flexible and will vary depending upon the volunteer's preference; department need and the timescales for the furloughed arrangements under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and also to respond to the fast-changing landscape.

Most voluntary roles are expected to be carried out from home.

Timeframes

It is anticipated to be a short term scheme which commenced in early April 2020 and will continue as long as there is departmental demand and volunteers identified through Industry Partners to assist in the delivery of critical public sector services.

Due to the uncertainty around Covid-19 and its impact upon the UK, the process of working with industry partners through to matching volunteers is intended to be relatively swift.

Salaries, expenses and hours

Furloughed staff continue to receive their agreed salary/furlough payment from their existing employer and they remain on their existing terms and conditions.

Any expenses incurred by volunteers will be covered in line with the department's own expenses reimbursement policy. This will be set out for individuals during induction.

Individuals can specify the number of hours they wish to work for the department.

Processes

A process is in place which collates departmental resourcing needs and matches those with skilled people who have been furloughed from Industry Partner organisations and want to undertake voluntary work in the Civil Service.

In line with the tri-party secondment agreement, departments will apply the appropriate existing HR policies.

Due to the varying skills requirements, activities and timeframes, departments will seek to match volunteers based on business needs.

Cabinet Office will have the oversight of the scheme and can support employers and departments as needed, with the detail of the secondment and arrangements being for employers and departments to agree with the volunteer.

Data handling and protection

Basic security vetting is likely to be appropriate for the type of activities involved in this scheme and will be undertaken where required. Where enhanced checking is required, this also will be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

In addition, all existing protection of information and data within the Civil Service continues to apply to protect confidential and personal data.

Volunteers' health, safety and wellbeing

A main contact will be allocated to each volunteer and they will have ongoing responsibility for applying the relevant people management policies and practices of that government department in light of the agreement in place. Volunteers will be treated with respect, and workload and performance will be discussed, through regular conversations with their point of contact.

Departments will also have a duty under the Equality Act to make 'reasonable adjustments' for people with a disability if there are any aspects of the voluntary work where those adjustments are required.

In the same way as civil servants, volunteers are expected to follow government guidance, act appropriately and report any symptoms of the virus to their employer.

Where a volunteer is asked to attend an office, they will be expected to take necessary precautions, for example maintaining the two metre social distancing guidelines and agreeing the arrangements with their employer on a case by case basis.

Civil servants are responsible for reporting symptoms to the NHS and following through with the advice given. These same protective measures will be applied to any furloughed employees who are willing to undertake voluntary work in the Civil Service.

Induction and training

Individuals volunteering will gain skills and government experience, while the Civil Service will benefit from a breadth of skills from a range of businesses.

Volunteers will receive a tailored induction and any necessary training to deliver the tasks while in post.

End of volunteering arrangements

At the point of return to their employer, individuals will be debriefed, arrangements made for the return of any government equipment. There will be a handover of activity if needed and they will be thanked for their voluntary service.

Contact point

A dedicated mailbox is in place for private sector organisations who have scheme enquiries:
IPSchemeGeneralEnquiries@cabinetoffice.gov.uk
