



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

T:  
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
[www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra)

**Your ref:**  
**Our ref:** RFI 6480  
**Date:** 6 May 2014

Dear

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: VOLUNTEERING POLICIES**

Thank you for your request for information about volunteering policies in Defra, which we received on 2 April. We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I enclose a copy of the information you requested:

***1) Documents referring to currently active policy concerning any form of support given to employees to undertake volunteering opportunities outside of their day to day responsibilities.***

Defra's policies on volunteering by staff are set out on Defra's intranet, as follows:

Volunteering is an important way in which skills and competences can be acquired by civil servants, as part of their overall learning and development. Each civil servant is encouraged to take at least one day of volunteering leave each year.

## **Apply for time off to volunteer**

You are entitled to one day's special leave with pay, per year, for volunteering. The day need not be taken as a single day eg a volunteer might take an hour a week over 7 weeks.

You are encouraged to take this opportunity. You can use your skills and experience to help others and you can gain new skills; it can also be part of your learning and development.

Before volunteering, you need to complete the Special Leave Application form to ensure that the time is recorded correctly and is not as an unauthorised absence.

- [Special leave application form](#)

Take the time to discuss opportunities and ideas for volunteering and how it could help with your learning and development, with your manager.



## Ways to volunteer

There is a huge diversity of ways in which you or your teams can volunteer. These can involve using your existing skills, developing new ones, or just having a fun day out which also benefits your local community.

If you would like to find out more about the work of *Volunteering England* or volunteering opportunities in general, visit [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk).

[The Civil Service Learning pages on volunteering](#) feature a national database of over 1 million volunteering opportunities (*you will need to log in to the CSL website to access this*). There are links to a range of organisations particularly interested in volunteers from the Civil Service, as well as case studies, advice and information on the awards offered to volunteers.

***2) A breakdown of what support and/or benefits (be they in reference to salary, remuneration, annual leave, promotion or other forms of benefit connected to employment) is currently given to employees to undertake volunteering opportunities outside of their day to day responsibilities.***

Support given to staff in this category is limited to an entitlement to one day's Special Leave with pay per year. The day need not be taken as a single day eg a volunteer might take an hour a week over 7 weeks.

I attach the form which staff use to apply for Special Leave for volunteering purposes.

***3) A list of organisations that are considered legitimate to volunteer with as part of any policy concerning support given to employees to undertake volunteering opportunities outside of their day to day responsibilities.***

Defra does not maintain such a list.

***4) Specifically, please give details of any policies that reference "The Scout Association" in relation to support given to employees to undertake volunteering opportunities outside of their day to day responsibilities.***

Defra has no such policies.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours

T:  
M:  
F:

## **Annex A**

### **Copyright**

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## **Annex B**

### **Complaints**

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk)) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF