

NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY – SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION



UK Government

Time off for public duties consultation

12 June 2026

Closing Date: 4 September 2026

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Foreword

People across the country make important contributions to civic life by taking on public duties alongside their job. Magistrates, school governors, local councillors, and other public duties play a vital role in supporting communities and delivering public services.

The right to reasonable time off work has long helped individuals from a range of backgrounds to take on these roles, widening access to civic participation and helping ensure the people carrying out these duties are representative of the communities they serve.

Both the world of work and the public service landscape have changed significantly since this entitlement was first introduced. Roles have evolved, new responsibilities have emerged, and the expectations placed on individuals and employers are different from those of the past. It is right that this long-standing entitlement continues to reflect modern roles, responsibilities and expectations.

That is why the government committed to a comprehensive review of the statutory entitlement to time off for public duties under section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, and to publish a report on its findings. The findings are set out in the [Time off for public duties review report](#), delivering on that commitment and marking the next step in the process.

Our aim is straightforward: to ensure the entitlement remains fair, effective and fit for purpose. We want it to continue to support civic participation and access to public duties, while providing clarity and certainty for employers. The government must strike the right balance between enabling individuals to undertake important public duties and recognising the practical realities businesses face in managing employee absence.

This consultation seeks views on our proposed changes to the list of public duties eligible for statutory time off. These proposals are grounded in evidence and guided by clear principles, including consistency across comparable duties, responsiveness to the modern public service context, and proportionate impact on employers.

The government believes that participation in public life should be open to all. By ensuring this entitlement is properly targeted and up to date, we can help widen participation in public life, strengthen public institutions, and support the delivery of high-quality public services.

We encourage you to engage with this consultation and share your views. We are particularly keen to hear from those with direct experience of undertaking public duties, as well as employers, representative organisations and other interested stakeholders. Your insights will help shape the future of this important entitlement and ensure it continues to serve the public interest.

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The Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP

Secretary of State for Business and Trade
and President of the Board of Trade

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter J. Kyle".



Kate Dearden MP

Minister for Employment Rights and
Consumer Protection

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate Dearden.".

Introduction

Individuals who undertake public duties make valuable contributions to their communities and play an essential role in the delivery of public services. Employees carrying out certain public duties, such as school governors, magistrates, and local councillors, are entitled to reasonable time off work, enabling them to better balance their employment and public service responsibilities. This entitlement reflects the importance of these roles and the need to support individuals to undertake them alongside paid employment.

The right to reasonable time off work for certain public duties was introduced under the Employment Protection Act 1975 and is now set out in section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996. From its inception, this right was intended to enable working people to participate meaningfully in civic life. Previously, such roles were typically only accessible to those who did not need to work to earn a living.

The government recently undertook a comprehensive internal review of the list of public duties for which individuals are entitled to time off work to ensure the legislation remains fit for purpose and continues to support the effective functioning of modern public services. The findings of this review and the government's proposed changes to the list of duties eligible for time off are set out in the [Time off for public duties review report](#). A summary is provided in the 'Time off for public duties review – summary of findings and proposals' section of this consultation.

Current situation

In 2026, the entitlement to time off work continues to support the good functioning of public services by enabling individuals to balance paid employment with public duties. These duties are essential to the running and effective governance of public services, and many are carried out on a voluntary basis at no expense to the taxpayer. It is important that the individuals carrying out these roles are representative of the diverse communities they serve. Without time off, working individuals may struggle to undertake their duties alongside paid employment, limiting their ability to participate.

For the purposes of this consultation and the legislation, a public duty must relate to a statutory body or public office that is formally recognised in legislation and typically involves carrying out specified functions in the public interest.

Individuals carrying out public duties offer considerable benefits to their community, the state and their employers. Participation in such roles can help people develop transferable skills including leadership, communication and strategic thinking, which can contribute to their performance and effectiveness in the workplace.

What being a magistrate means to Jacqueline MacDonald-Davis, OBE, J.P.

“Being a magistrate is both an honour and a responsibility that I carry with deep respect and humility. Each time I sit on the bench, I am conscious of the trust placed in me – not only by the court, but by the individuals who appear before it, often at difficult moments in their lives.

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It matters to me that people leave the courtroom feeling that they have been treated with dignity, listened to carefully, and judged impartially. This sense of fairness and integrity underpins everything I seek to do as a magistrate.

Over time, I have developed and strengthened a wide range of transferable skills, including active listening, balanced decision making, leadership, and the ability to remain calm and focused under pressure. These skills have directly enhanced my work within NHS England, particularly in facilitating discussions, managing complex initiatives, and offering and receiving constructive feedback with confidence and care.

I have always approached my magistrate commitments with openness and responsibility, ensuring that time away from work is planned transparently and well in advance. This balance has enabled me to take on additional judicial responsibilities over the years, including acting as an appraiser, mentoring new magistrates, and serving as Deputy Bench Chair. Each of these roles has deepened my understanding of the judiciary and reinforced the importance of support, learning and shared leadership.

Serving as a magistrate has also enabled me to give back – through volunteering in my neighbourhood, coaching and leadership – in ways that continue to inform and enrich my professional life. It remains a role I value deeply, one that challenges me, grounds me, and reminds me of the responsibility and privilege of public service.”

We recognise the importance of balancing civic participation with the practical demands placed on employers. Any reforms to these provisions will align with the government’s wider commitment to supporting growth. This legislation does not specify whether time off must be paid by one’s employer. Furthermore, employees are entitled only to a reasonable amount of time off for the purposes of performing their public duties. Therefore, employers may be able to decline a request for time off, for example, where absence would cause disruption or where it may be particularly difficult to arrange appropriate cover.

This consultation seeks views on proposed changes to the list of public duties that are eligible for time off work, as well as broader insights into how this entitlement operates in practice. The time off for public duties review identified a few roles that can be removed because the public bodies or duties linked to them either no longer exist, or their former responsibilities have been taken on by another public body or duty that is eligible for time off under these provisions. This consultation is not asking for views on removing the entitlement for those defunct roles.

By responding to this consultation, you will help ensure the entitlement to time off work for public duties is updated in a way that accurately reflects public service needs and the contemporary legislative landscape, while balancing employer and employee needs.

Time off for public duties review – summary of findings and proposals

The list of public duties eligible for time off under section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 had not been comprehensively reviewed since its introduction over 50 years ago, despite significant changes across many sectors in which individuals carry out public

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duties. Consequently, the list needs to be updated to ensure it reflects contemporary legislative frameworks and addresses current public service needs.

Under this legislation, an employee has a right to time off only where they hold an office (e.g. a magistrate holds the office of Justice of the Peace) or are a member of a public body (e.g. a local councillor is a member of a local authority). The review therefore focused primarily on public duties that meet this eligibility requirement and did not extend to a broader consideration of volunteering leave. The government encourages employers to consider offering volunteering leave as part of their wider employment offer. Furthermore, improved access to flexible working can support individuals to balance their professional responsibilities with personal commitments, including volunteering.

The review employed an evidence-based, proportionate approach that supports public participation, promotes fairness and consistency, and minimises unnecessary impacts on employers. It found some changes to the legislation are necessary to provide for modern needs and restore the legislation to its primary objective, which is to enable working people to balance employment with community-focused public duties, supporting broader and more inclusive participation.

This consultation is seeking views on the government's proposals that:

- special constables should be entitled to time off under these provisions
- people carrying out eligible public duties with a clear local focus should gain the right to reasonable time off
- people carrying out public duties for national public sector organisations should no longer be entitled to time off work as those roles do not align with the original, locally focused intent of the legislation

See the [Time off for public duties review report](#) for further information about the review's findings and proposals.

Consultation details

Issued: 12 June 2026

Respond by: 4 September 2026 at 11:59pm

Enquiries and responses to: publicduties@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Write to:

Time off for public duties policy – Participation Strategy Team, Employment Rights Directorate
Department for Business and Trade
Old Admiralty Building
Admiralty Place
London
SW1A 2DY

Consultation reference: Time off for public duties

Audiences:

- members of public bodies or offices related to public duties
- members of representative bodies related to public duties
- businesses
- employers
- trade unions
- business groups or representatives
- employees
- non-governmental organisations
- members of the public
- all other interested parties

Territorial extent

The measures in this consultation apply to Great Britain. The public bodies, offices and roles captured in this consultation relate to devolved matters for Scotland and Wales, except for justice-related public bodies, offices and roles which are reserved in relation to Wales. Employment rights, including the entitlement to time off for public duties, are transferred to Northern Ireland.

How to respond

[Respond online](#). If you have any queries, please contact publicduties@businessandtrade.gov.uk.

or

Email to: publicduties@businessandtrade.gov.uk

or

Write to:

Time off for public duties policy – Participation Strategy Team, Employment Rights Directorate
Department for Business and Trade
Old Admiralty Building
Admiralty Place
London
SW1A 2DY

We strongly encourage that responses are made via the online platform. Using the online survey will assist our analysis of the responses, enabling more efficient and effective consideration of the issues raised.

If you are responding in writing, please make it clear which question or paragraph number each comment relates to.

Your response will be most useful if it is framed in direct response to the questions posed, though further comments and evidence are also welcome.

When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation.

Confidentiality and data protection

Information you provide in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be disclosed in accordance with UK legislation (the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please tell us, but be aware that we cannot guarantee confidentiality in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not be regarded by us as a confidentiality request.

We are trialling Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions to support the delivery of our functions. Unless made expressly clear to you, we will not solely use AI to either make or inform decisions about you. We will apply effective data minimisation techniques to all such uses of your data.

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Your responses, including any personal data, may be shared with a third-party provider, or other government department or organisation acting on behalf of the Department for Business and Trade under contract or an equivalent agreement, for the purpose of analysis and summarising responses for us and they may use technology, such as artificial intelligence. Further detail on how AI is used, including its scope and safeguards and third-party sharing is available in our Privacy Notice.

An anonymised version of responses in a list or summary of responses received, and in any subsequent review reports may be published. We may also share your personal data where required to by law. You can leave out personal information from your response entirely if you would prefer to do so.

Wherever possible avoid including any additional personal data in free-text responses beyond that which has been requested or which you consider it necessary for the Department for Business and Trade to be aware of.

We will process your personal data in accordance with all applicable data protection laws. See our [privacy policy](#).

We will publish a government response on GOV.UK.

Quality assurance

This consultation has been carried out in accordance with the government's [consultation principles](#). If you have any complaints about the way this consultation has been conducted, please email: enquiries@businessandtrade.gov.uk.

Chapter 1: about you

Please provide the following information to help us understand the context of your response.

Question 1: Please indicate whether you are responding as:

- An employer
- An individual
- An academic, or on behalf of an academic or research organisation
- A legal representative
- A business representative organisation (please specify)
- A trade union or staff association (please specify)
- A charity or interest group
- Other – please specify

Question 2: If responding as an employer, business, business owner or business representative, approximately what is the size of your business? If responding as an individual or worker, what size workplace are you employed in?

- Micro (1 to 9 employees)
- Small (10 to 49 employees)
- Medium (50 to 249 employees)
- Large (250+ employees)
- Don't know
- Not Applicable

Question 3: Which region are you located in?

- North-East
- North-West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South-East

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- South-West
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

Question 4: What sector are you based in?

- Accommodation and food service activities
- Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services – producing activities of households for own use
- Administrative and support service activities
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Construction
- Education
- Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- Financial and insurance activities
- Human health and social work activities
- Information and communication
- Manufacturing
- Mining and quarrying
- Production
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
- Real estate activities
- Services sector
- Transportation and storage
- Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- Other service activities

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Question 5: Have you, at any time, carried out any of the public duties for which there is a right to time off work, or facilitated another person undertaking a public duty? (If yes, select all that apply)

- Yes – I currently carry out one or more of these public duties
- Yes – I have carried out one or more of these public duties in the past
- Yes – I employ or manage someone who carries out a public duty
- Yes – I represent or work with organisations linked to a public duty
- No – however, I carry out a role proposed to be added in this consultation
- No (proceed to question 7 if selected)
- Not sure / prefer not to say (proceed to question 7 if selected)

Question 6: What type(s) of public duties or roles have you been involved with? (Select all that apply). If you responded 'No' or 'Not sure / prefer not to say' to question 5, proceed to question 7.

- Educational institution governance, e.g. a school governor or member of a school council
- Health, e.g. a member of an NHS foundation trust or health board
- Justice and prison or detention monitoring (excluding policing), e.g. a magistrate, independent prison monitor or member of a visiting committee
- Local government, e.g. a local councillor or member of a National Park Authority
- Special constabulary
- Other

Chapter 2: understanding of the current entitlements

This chapter provides an opportunity for you to share your views on how the existing entitlement to time off works in practice. We are particularly interested in understanding levels of awareness regarding the right to time off for public duties, how the entitlement is or is not used by employees, and whether current arrangements provide sufficient clarity for both employees and employers. Evidence on how the entitlement is used in practice will help inform decisions on whether updated guidance, improved communications, or other measures could be beneficial.

The purpose of this chapter is not to propose immediate wider reforms to the legislation beyond amendments to the list of public duties eligible for time off, but to gather evidence, experiences, and perspectives about how this legislation is used. Your views will help inform the government's understanding of how the entitlement operates in practice, and whether there are proportionate steps that could improve its effectiveness and accessibility.

Question 7: Have you looked for information about the right to time off work for public duties?

- Yes
- No (proceed to question 10 if selected)
- Not sure (proceed to question 10 if selected)
- Other (please specify)

Question 8: Where did you find information about the right to time off for public duties? (Select all that apply) If you responded 'No' or 'Not sure' to question 7, proceed to question 10.

- Undertaking a public duty
- Employer or workplace policy
- Trade union or staff association
- Guidance on GOV.UK
- Other (please specify)

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Question 9: How clear is [Time off work for public duties](#) information on GOV.UK? If you responded 'No' or 'Not sure' to question 7, proceed to question 10.

- Very clear
- Clear
- Unclear (please specify)
- Very unclear (please specify)
- Not sure

Question 10: From your perspective, what concerns, if any, would employees have about the impact of taking time off to carry out a public duty?

[Free text]

Question 11: From your perspective, what concerns, if any, would employers have about the impact of their employees taking time off to carry out a public duty?

[Free text]

Question 12: Would access to time off work make you more likely to carry out a public duty?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

Question 13: Has your employer ever rejected your request for time off work to carry out a public duty? (Select all that apply)

- Yes – my request for time off was rejected
- No – my request for time off was approved (proceed to question 16 if selected)
- Not applicable (proceed to question 16 if selected)
- Not sure (proceed to question 16 if selected)

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Question 14: On what grounds did your employer reject your request? Unless you responded 'Yes – my request for time off was rejected' to question 13, proceed to question 16.

[Free text]

Question 15: What, if anything, did you do next? (Select all that apply) Unless you responded 'Yes – my request for time off was rejected' to question 13, proceed to question 16.

- Discuss or negotiate the request with my employer
- Seek advice from a trade union or staff representative
- Seek independent advice
- Take formal action (for example, through an employment process or tribunal)
- Take no action
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

Question 16: Have you ever experienced any other difficulties in taking time off work to carry out a public duty?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Not sure

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Question 17: If you are an employer that employs or manages someone who carries out a public duty, how do you typically manage requests for time off for public duties? (Select all that apply). If you are not an employer, proceed to question 19.

- Assess requests on a case-by-case basis
- Use an internal policy or guidance
- Seek to agree alternative arrangements (for example, different dates or partial time off)
- Not applicable – we have not received any requests for time off for public duties
- Not sure / prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)

Question 18: If you are an employer that employs or manages someone who carries out a public duty, what challenges, if any, do you face when managing requests for time off for public duties? If you are not an employer, proceed to question 19.

[Free text]

Question 19: Do you have any further comments you would like to share on how the existing entitlement to time off works in practice?

[Free text]

Chapter 3: proposed changes to the list of public duties

This chapter seeks your views on the government's proposed changes to the list of public duties eligible for time off work. The [Time off for public duties review report](#) details the government's full set of proposed changes to this legislation.

This review considered a range of roles that span the education, emergency services, environment, health, law, criminal justice, immigration, and local government sectors. We looked at the duties that currently qualify for time off under the legislation, as well as additional duties that have been suggested for inclusion, and propose whether each should be retained, removed, or added.

Chapter 3 of this consultation seeks views on the government's proposed changes and is divided into 4 sections:

- A. summary of changes
- B. local representation and community governance duties
- C. frontline public service delivery duties
- D. national public service governance duties

Chapter 3, section A: summary of changes

Question 20: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following roles should be added to the list of public duties eligible for time off work?

- Special constables
 - Governors for academies and academy trusts
 - Members of a Conservation Board
 - Members of a Corporate Joint Committee
 - Audit committee members of a designated institution
 - Members of the governing body of a designated institution
 - Fee-paid judges
 - Members of an Integration Joint Board
 - Lay panel members of the Judicial Appointments Commission
-
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

Question 21: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following roles should be removed from the list of public duties eligible for time off work?

- Board members of the Environment Agency and Scottish Environment Protection Agency
 - Members of the General Teaching Council for Wales (now known as the Education Workforce Council)
 - Board members of national health bodies
 - Board members of Scottish Water
-
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

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You may choose to either finish and submit your response or continue to chapter 3, sections B, C and D to answer additional detailed questions regarding the government's proposed changes for each role.

Question 22: Would you like to finish and submit your response now, or continue to additional detailed questions?

- Finish and submit
- Continue to additional detailed questions

Chapter 3, section B: local representation and community governance

This section focuses on public duties with a clear link to local representation and community governance. These roles are central to the original purpose of the entitlement to time off: enabling people to balance paid work with meaningful participation as part of a local body or office, dealing with matters affecting the community.

The time off for public duties review identified a small number of local governance roles that are either treated inconsistently across Great Britain or not currently included because the legislation has not kept pace with changes to public service structures. In several cases, individuals carrying out comparable duties with similar responsibilities have different access to time off depending on the type of institution or nation in which they serve.

The government is therefore consulting on proposals to extend the entitlement to people carrying out certain local representation and community governance roles where this would improve consistency and better reflect modern arrangements. These proposed changes intend to help ensure the individuals undertaking these duties are more representative of the communities they serve, and to maintain a coherent and proportionate approach to the entitlement across England, Scotland and Wales.

Academies and academy trusts

Academies were first introduced in 2000 and became more widespread from 2010. School and academy trust governance volunteers set strategic direction, hold the executive leadership to account for the quality of education, and ensure effective use of public money. Whereas governors for schools maintained by a local authority are entitled to time off to carry out their public duties, people in comparable governance roles for academies and academy trusts are not. To ensure a consistent entitlement to time off for employees carrying out comparable governance roles, we propose that members, trustees, chairs of trustees and local committees, and local committee governors for an academy trust should be entitled to time off work.

Question 23: Should governors for academies and academy trusts be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Natural Landscape Conservation Boards

The Chilterns Conservation Board and the Cotswolds Conservation Board respectively were established in 2004. While established under separate legislation, National Landscape Conservation Boards and National Park Authorities all have statutory duties to conserve and enhance natural beauty, promote public understanding and enjoyment of statutorily protected landscapes, and support local communities. National Park Authority

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board members are entitled to time off to carry out their public duties, whereas Conservation Board members are not. To ensure a consistent entitlement to time off for members of all designated protected landscape bodies, we propose that members of a Conservation Board should be entitled to time off work.

Question 24: Should members of a Conservation Board be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Corporate Joint Committees

Corporate Joint Committees were introduced in Wales in 2021. These regional bodies bring together council leaders and other statutory representatives, such as National Park Authority members, to plan and make decisions on issues that affect the wider region. They provide a way for councils and partners to work collectively on regional transport, strategic planning, and economic development. To ensure a consistent entitlement to time off for employees carrying out relevant local governance roles, we propose that members of a Corporate Joint Committee should be entitled to time off work.

Question 25: Should members of a Corporate Joint Committee be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Designated institutions and further educational institutions

A designated institution is a specific type of educational institution eligible to receive public funding and oversight. Members of the governing body of a designated institution set strategic direction, manage finance, estates and risk, and oversee executive leaders to ensure the delivery of high-quality education. Audit committee members of a further education corporation, sixth-form college corporation, or body that operates a designated institution provide independent assurance to the governing body that financial and non-financial controls and risk management procedures are operating effectively. Under the current legislation, designated institutions are defined by reference to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992. As a result, members of a designated institution based in Scotland are entitled to time off to carry out their public duties, whereas they are not in England or Wales. To ensure a consistent entitlement to time off for employees carrying out comparable educational institution governance roles across Great Britain, we propose that members of the governing body of a designated institution and audit committee members of a further education corporation, sixth-form college corporation, or

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body that operates a designated institution in England or Wales should be entitled to time off work.

Question 26: Should governing body members of a designated institution and audit committee members of a further education corporation, sixth-form college corporation, or body that operates a designated institution in England or Wales be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Fee-paid judiciary

Fee-paid judges balance full-time work as an experienced lawyer with occasional work as a judge. They provide important additional capacity for courts and help address backlogs by dedicating around 30 days per year to their duties. Whereas magistrates are entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties, fee-paid judges are not. The lack of a right to time off is a significant barrier to underrepresented groups becoming fee-paid judges, particularly for women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds. To support diversity within the judiciary and help remedy demographic disparities in the fee-paid judiciary, we propose that fee-paid judges should be entitled to time off work.

Question 27: Should fee-paid judges be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Integration Joint Boards

Integration Joint Boards were introduced in Scotland in 2014. They bring together NHS boards and local authorities to jointly plan, budget, and commission services. To ensure a consistent entitlement to time off for employees carrying out relevant local governance roles, we propose that members of an Integration Joint Board should be entitled to time off work.

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Question 28: Should members of an Integration Joint Board be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Judicial Appointments Commission

Lay panel members of the Judicial Appointments Commission select and recommend individuals for judicial office in England and Wales. They help to ensure fair, merit-based selection and support the delivery of a diverse and effective judiciary. To support accessibility and representation within the judicial selection process, consistent with the Judicial Appointments Commission's statutory duties, we propose that lay panel members of the Judicial Appointments Commission should be entitled to time off work.

Question 29: Should lay panel members of the Judicial Appointments Commission be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Chapter 3, section C: frontline public service delivery

This section considers a frontline public service delivery role where individuals carry out operational duties that directly support public safety. The time off for public duties review examined whether access to time off work is an effective and proportionate way to support participation for this role, taking account of the nature of the duty and the legal scope of the entitlement.

The government proposes extending the entitlement to special constables, recognising the role they play in local policing and the practical challenges many face in balancing service with paid employment. Access to time off could support recruitment, retention, and consistent participation, helping to widen access to the role and strengthen local policing capacity.

Special constabulary

Special constables are volunteer police officers with the same powers and responsibilities as paid police officers. They support policing by dedicating a minimum of around 16 hours per month to their duties. In the [Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee](#) (England and Wales), we committed to restoring visible patrols with a community-led focus. Similarly, [Police Scotland's Volunteering Plan](#) details a commitment to developing a skilled, flexible and adaptable volunteering service that expands and enhances the organisation's capability to meet modern policing demands. Entitling special constables to reasonable time off work may support these commitments by making the role more accessible to individuals from a wider and more diverse range of backgrounds, and improving recruitment and retention. This could increase the availability of officers able to support neighbourhood policing, strengthening the capacity of forces to deliver visible policing within communities. To support these aims, we propose that special constables should be entitled to time off work.

Question 30: Should special constables be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Chapter 3, section D: national public service governance

This section considers public duties related to national public service governance, including non-executive board membership roles for regulators and national public bodies. These roles are important for setting strategic direction and maintaining standards across public services, but differ in nature from the community-focused duties the entitlement to time off was introduced to support.

The time off for public duties review found limited evidence to suggest that access to statutory time off is a significant factor in enabling participation in these national governance roles. These positions are generally desirable, regarded as prestigious, and attract individuals with suitable experience and seniority who can typically manage participation alongside existing work commitments. The available evidence does not suggest widespread recruitment or retention challenges linked to access to time off.

In addition, the current entitlement only applies to members of a small and inconsistent subset of national public bodies. These bodies form part of a wider network of over 500 public sector regulatory and governance bodies. The review found no strong rationale to treat these differently to other national public bodies, and that their inclusion is a result of a patchwork of legislative reforms and consequential amendments. The government is therefore consulting on proposals to remove the entitlement to time off for board members of national public sector organisations.

Environment Agency and Scottish Environment Protection Agency

The Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency are the principal environmental regulators for England and Scotland, respectively. They carry out statutory responsibilities including regulating major industry and waste, the treatment of contaminated land, and some flood risk management. As these agencies regulate on behalf of a nation, going beyond the legislation's intended local focus, we propose that non-executive board members of the Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency should not be entitled to time off work under this legislation.

Question 31: Should board members of the Environment Agency or Scottish Environment Protection Agency no longer be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

General Teaching Council for Wales

The General Teaching Council for Wales, now known as the Education Workforce Council, plays an important role in maintaining and improving professional standards across the teaching profession in Wales. As this body regulates on behalf of a nation, going beyond the legislation's intended local focus, we propose that members of the General Teaching Council for Wales should not be entitled to time off work under this legislation.

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Question 32: Should members of the General Teaching Council for Wales (now known as the Education Workforce Council) no longer be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

National health bodies

Members of national health bodies play an important part in the good functioning of health services across the country, and they offer a wealth of expertise and experience. Currently, non-executive board members for a small number of national health bodies are entitled to time off under this legislation, whereas members of other national health bodies are not. As these bodies are responsible for providing health-related services on behalf of a nation, going beyond the legislation's intended local focus, we propose that non-executive board members of the following national health bodies should not be entitled to time off work under this legislation:

- NHS England
- the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
- the Health Services Safety Investigations Body
- a Special Health Authority established under section 28 of the National Health Service Act 2006 or section 22 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006

Question 33: Should board members of national health bodies no longer be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Scottish Water

Scottish Water is a public corporation of a trading nature and is responsible for providing water and wastewater services to household customers and wholesale licensed providers across Scotland. As Scottish Water is responsible for the provision of water on a national scale, going beyond the legislation's intended local focus, we propose that non-executive board members of Scottish Water should not be entitled to time off work under this legislation.

NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY – SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION

Question 34: Should board members of Scottish Water no longer be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Question 35: Are there any public duties not listed in this consultation that you think should be entitled to time off?

[Free text]

Question 36: Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the entitlement to time off for public duties?

[Free text]

Next steps

This consultation will close at 11:59pm on 4 September 2026. Following the closure of this consultation, we will analyse all responses and publish a government response in due course, including any actions the government intends to take.

Summary of consultation questions

Question 1: Please indicate whether you are responding as:

- An employer
- An individual
- An academic, or on behalf of an academic or research organisation
- A legal representative
- A business representative organisation (please specify)
- A trade union or staff association (please specify)
- A charity or interest group
- Other – please specify

Question 2: If responding as an employer, business, business owner or business representative, approximately what is the size of your business? If responding as an individual or worker, what size workplace are you employed in?

Question 3: Which region are you located in?

Question 4: What sector are you based in?

Question 5: Have you, at any time, carried out any of the public duties for which there is a right to time off work, or facilitated another person undertaking a public duty? (If yes, select all that apply)

Question 6: What type(s) of public duties or roles have you been involved with? (Select all that apply). If you responded 'No' or 'Not sure / prefer not to say' to question 5, proceed to question 7.

Question 7: Have you looked for information about the right to time off work for public duties?

Question 8: Where did you find information about the right to time off for public duties? (Select all that apply) If you responded 'No' or 'Not sure' to question 7, proceed to question 10.

Question 9: How clear is Time off work for public duties information on GOV.UK? If you responded 'No' or 'Not sure' to question 7, proceed to question 10.

NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY – SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION

Question 10: From your perspective, what concerns, if any, would employees have about the impact of taking time off to carry out a public duty?

Question 11: From your perspective, what concerns, if any, would employers have about the impact of their employees taking time off to carry out a public duty?

Question 12: Would access to time off work make you more likely to carry out a public duty?

Question 13: Has your employer ever rejected your request for time off work to carry out a public duty? (Select all that apply)

Question 14: On what grounds did your employer reject your request? Unless you responded 'Yes – my request for time off was rejected' to question 13, proceed to question 16.

Question 15: What, if anything, did you do next? (Select all that apply) Unless you responded 'Yes – my request for time off was rejected' to question 13, proceed to question 16.

Question 16: Have you ever experienced any other difficulties in taking time off work to carry out a public duty?

Question 17: If you are an employer that employs or manages someone who carries out a public duty, how do you typically manage requests for time off for public duties? (Select all that apply). If you are not an employer, proceed to question 19.

Question 18: If you are an employer that employs or manages someone who carries out a public duty, what challenges, if any, do you face when managing requests for time off for public duties? If you are not an employer, proceed to question 19.

Question 19: Do you have any further comments you would like to share on how the existing entitlement to time off works in practice?

NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY – SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION

Question 20: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following roles should be added to the list of public duties eligible for time off work?

- Special constables
- Governors for academies and academy trusts
- Members of a Conservation Board
- Members of a Corporate Joint Committee
- Audit committee members of a designated institution
- Members of the governing body of a designated institution
- Fee-paid judges
- Members of an Integration Joint Board
- Lay panel members of the Judicial Appointments Commission

Question 21: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following roles should be removed from the list of public duties eligible for time off work?

- Board members of the Environment Agency and Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Members of the General Teaching Council for Wales (now known as the Education Workforce Council)
- Board members of national health bodies
- Board members of Scottish Water

Question 22: Would you like to finish and submit your response now, or continue to additional detailed questions?

Question 23: Should governors for academies and academy trusts be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 24: Should members of a Conservation Board be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 25: Should members of a Corporate Joint Committee be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 26: Should governing body members of a designated institution and audit committee members of a further education corporation, sixth-form college corporation, or body that operates a designated institution in England or Wales be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 27: Should fee-paid judges be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY – SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION

Question 28: Should members of an Integration Joint Board be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 29: Should lay panel members of the Judicial Appointments Commission be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 30: Should special constables be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 31: Should board members of the Environment Agency or Scottish Environment Protection Agency no longer be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 32: Should members of the General Teaching Council for Wales (now known as the Education Workforce Council) no longer be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 33: Should board members of national health bodies no longer be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 34: Should board members of Scottish Water no longer be entitled to time off work to carry out their public duties?

Question 35: Are there any public duties not listed in this consultation that you think should be entitled to time off?

Question 36: Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the entitlement to time off for public duties?

The Department for Business and Trade

The Department for Business and Trade is an economic growth department. We ensure fair, competitive markets at home, secure access to new markets abroad and support businesses to invest, export and grow. Our priorities are the Industrial Strategy, Make Work Pay, the Trade Strategy and the Plan for Small Business.

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Published by
Department for Business and Trade

12 June 2026