Options assessment

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1. Summary of proposal

1. In 2025, the government launched a review of the list of public duties in section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 for which individuals are entitled to time off work. The findings of this review and the government's proposed changes to the list of duties eligible for time off work are set out in the Time Off for Public Duties Review Report. This review employed an evidence-based, proportionate approach that supports public participation, promotes fairness and consistency, and minimises unnecessary impacts on employers.

2. The review found some changes to the list of public duties entitled to time off was necessary to ensure the legislation is suitable for the modern day. These proposals seek to restore the legislation to its primary objective, which is to enable working people to balance paid employment with public duties in the community, supporting broader and more inclusive participation.

3. The consultation is seeking views on 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; and
    - 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.

4. The consultation, which this options assessment accompanies, seeks views on proposed changes to this legislation.

2. Strategic case for proposed regulation

Problem under consideration

5. Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 provides employees with a statutory right to reasonable time off work to carry out specified public duties. When the legislation was originally introduced, its purpose was to enable working people from all backgrounds to make a meaningful impact by participating in public duties. Section 50 captures public duties that are primarily local in character and deal with matters affecting the community.

6. However, there had not been a comprehensive review of the list of duties since its introduction in the Employment Protection Act 1975, despite significant changes across many sectors in which individuals carry out public duties. These include reforms associated with devolution and wide-ranging developments in the education and health sectors, among others. As is, the list does not fully reflect the modern structure of public services or the current institutional landscape. A statutory requirement to undertake a review of the duties eligible for time off under this legislation, with consideration of special constables, and publish a report setting out the findings of the review, was included in section 19 of the Employment Rights Act 2025.

7. Three core issues have been identified with the current list of public duties in section 50.

8. First, there are inconsistencies and gaps in coverage across like-for-like roles within a nation, and between England, Scotland and Wales. In some cases, individuals undertaking functionally similar duties are treated differently under the legislation. For example, governance roles in maintained schools are currently covered, while equivalent roles in academies and academy trusts are not, due to changes in the education system that were not reflected in the statutory definition of a “relevant education body” following the introduction of academies and academy trusts. ‘Every child achieving and thriving’ details the government’s plan for all schools to join or form high-quality school trusts.[1] As a result, a significant number of individuals, estimated to be around 99,000[2], fall outside the scope of the entitlement despite performing comparable functions. If the legislation is not updated, any expansion of academy trusts is likely to increase the number of individuals undertaking comparable governance functions who are not entitled to time off work, potentially making it more difficult to recruit and retain individuals into school governance roles.

9. Second, some roles currently included within the legislation no longer align with its original intent. The legislation was introduced to support participation by working people in community civic duties, yet some national public body roles have been included over time without a clear policy rationale. These roles typically involve national governance or regulatory functions and are often carried out by individuals with specialist expertise or established careers. The available evidence does not suggest that participation in these roles is constrained by lack of access to time off work, and therefore the case for maintaining a statutory entitlement is weaker.

10. Third, the current list of duties does not include some duties that are essential to the running and effective governance of public services. For roles not covered under section 50, this can create

[1] Every child achieving and thriving, GOV.UK, April 2026
[2] DfE internal analysis of published data on the department’s ‘Get Information about Schools’ page (February 2026).

barriers to participation for individuals in employment, particularly for roles where duties must be carried out during working hours. While many public duties are undertaken on a voluntary basis, participation may be more accessible to individuals who are retired, not employed, self-employed, or in flexible employment. This can limit the diversity and representativeness of public bodies or offices, particularly in terms of age and employment status. Evidence from the Extending Statutory Time Off Work to Volunteer Monitors 2018 Impact Assessment[3] suggests that lack of access to time off work can act as a deterrent to participation for those in full-time employment, contributing to imbalances in representation.

11. Taken together, these issues suggest that the current legislative framework is not fully aligned with its intended purpose, does not treat comparable roles consistently, and may not adequately support participation by working individuals for certain public duties.

Rationale for Intervention

12. The government routinely intervenes in labour markets to extend individual employment rights for equity purposes. The statutory entitlement to time off for public duties is intended to ensure that individuals from a wide range of backgrounds are able to participate in civic life. Where the current framework excludes certain roles without a clear justification, or treats comparable roles differently, this can result in inequitable outcomes and uneven access to the entitlement.

13. Inconsistencies within the framework can create uncertainty for employers and employees and may deter participation in roles that deliver public value. The report accompanying this Options Assessment highlights that individuals undertaking these duties can have a meaningful impact on their communities and that, in the absence of volunteers, some functions would still need to be carried out by the state, potentially at greater public cost. Updating the list of duties under section 50 supports clearer and more consistent application of the entitlement across comparable roles, and between England, Scotland and Wales.

14. More broadly, the current list of qualifying duties reflects incremental changes made over time rather than a coherent assessment of which roles best support the underlying purpose of the legislation. Changes in public service structures and governance arrangements, particularly in sectors such as education, have not always been accompanied by corresponding updates to the statutory framework. A central rationale for intervention is therefore to support the effective functioning of public services and local governance. Many of the duties covered by the legislation contribute to oversight, accountability and community representation within public bodies or offices. In some cases, duties are directly tied to delivery of statutory functions. These activities can have benefits to wider society, impacting those outside the parties directly involved. Where barriers exist to participation by individuals in employment, this can undermine the ability of these bodies to recruit and retain members from a diverse range of backgrounds, weakening effective governance and public confidence. This reflects a market failure rationale for intervention because, in the absence of a statutory entitlement, employers may not fully account for the wider public value generated by employees undertaking public duties.

15. Targeted intervention is required to address these gaps and ensure the legislation is aligned with current public service arrangements and fit for purpose.

[3] Extending Statutory Time Off Work to Volunteer Monitors Impact Assessment, Ministry of Justice 2018

Impact of no intervention

16. No intervention would fail to address the issues highlighted in the rationale for intervention, meaning the persistence of inequitable outcomes and a risk of continued barriers to participation affecting the effective functioning and delivery of public services and local governance.

3. SMART objectives for intervention

17. The objective of this policy is to update the list of duties in section 50 so that it reflects the modern structure of public services and the current institutional landscape. The purpose is to enable individuals in employment to participate in civic life and public service roles without undue barriers.

18. The intended outcome is to create a more coherent and consistent statutory framework and improve access to suitable public duties for working individuals, particularly where participation may otherwise be limited by employment commitments. The policy also aims to support the effective functioning of local governance and public services by enabling a broader and more diverse pool of individuals to undertake these roles alongside employment.

19. This measure is not intended to expand the entitlement beyond its original purpose or create an open-ended right to time off work. The legislation does not specify whether time off must or must not be paid. Employers will retain the ability to refuse requests for time off work that are not reasonable. The government recognises the need to balance the benefits of participation in public duties with the potential impacts on businesses.

20. <u>SMART Objectives:</u>

- Improve consistency of the statutory framework by ensuring that like-for-like public duties across Great Britain are treated equally under section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, including addressing gaps where equivalent roles are currently excluded.
- Reduce barriers to participation for individuals in employment by extending statutory protection to relevant public duties, enabling employees to request reasonable time off without relying solely on employer discretion or informal arrangements.
- Support participation in, and delivery of, key public service and local governance roles by improving access for individuals in full-time employment, particularly in roles where duties require time during working hours.

21. These objectives align with the government’s wider priorities to raise living standards and create opportunities for all.

4. Description of proposed intervention and explanation of the logical change process whereby this achieves SMART objectives

22. The proposed intervention will amend section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 through secondary legislation to update the list of public offices and bodies eligible for statutory time off work.

23. This will involve adding certain roles that align with the legislation’s intended purpose and community focus, removing roles that no longer align with that purpose, and ensuring that equivalent roles are treated consistently across sectors and jurisdictions.

24. The intervention will not change the underlying entitlement. The amount of time off and the number of occasions time can be taken off will remain subject to reasonableness, with employers retaining discretion to refuse requests where they would have an undue impact on business operations.

25. The consultation accompanying this Options Assessment seeks views on the roles proposed for inclusion and removal, as well as the practical implications for employers and individuals. The intended outcome of the policy is to create a more coherent and consistent statutory framework that supports participation in public duties while maintaining a proportionate impact on business.

Theory of Change

26. Inputs:
    - Secondary legislation amending section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 to:
        - Update the list of eligible public offices and bodies
        - Include additional roles aligned with local governance and public service delivery
        - Remove roles that do not align with the original intent of the legislation

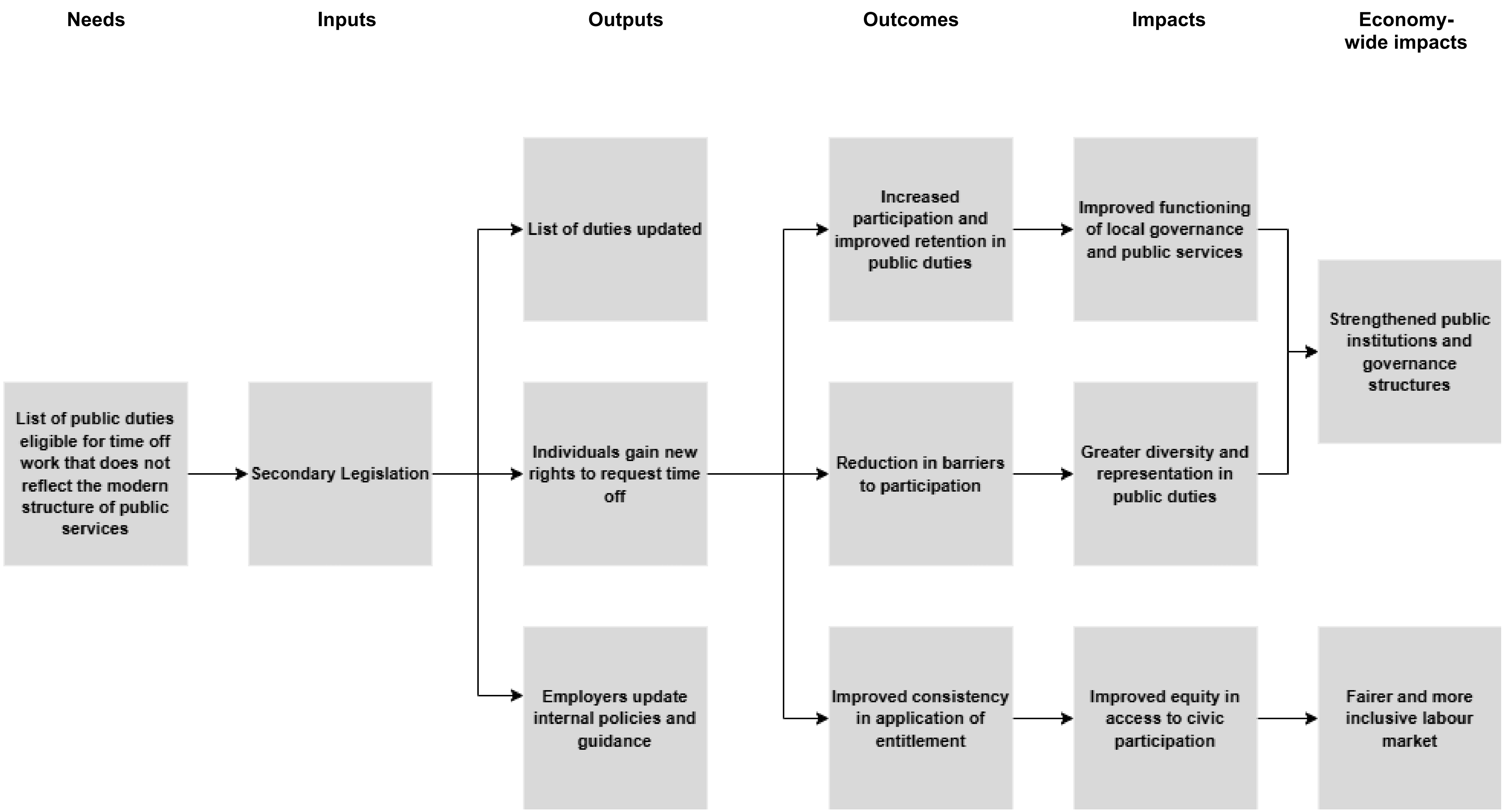
27. Outputs:
    - The statutory list of public offices and bodies is updated to reflect the current public service landscape.
    - Individuals undertaking newly included roles gain a statutory right to request reasonable time off work.
    - Employers update internal policies, HR processes and guidance to reflect the revised entitlement.

28. Outcomes:
    - Improved consistency in the application of the entitlement, with like-for-like roles treated equally under the legislation
    - Reduced barriers to participation for individuals in employment, particularly in roles requiring time during working hours
    - Increased participation or improved retention in certain public duties, particularly where work commitments were previously a constraint

29. Impacts:
    - Improved functioning of local governance and public services, as key roles are more accessible to a broader pool of individuals
    - Greater diversity and representation in public duties, particularly in terms of age and employment status, leading to increased public confidence in service delivery
    - Improved equity in access to civic participation, reducing disparities between individuals with different working arrangements

30. Economy-wide impacts:
    - A fairer and more inclusive labour market, where individuals are better able to balance employment with civic participation
    - Strengthened public institutions and governance structures, supported by a wider and more representative pool of participants

Theory of Change: Impact of changes to the list of public offices and bodies in section 50 of the Employment Right Act 1996



5. Summary of long-list and alternatives

31. Detail on the options being consulted on is covered in Section 6. In addition, the initial long-list of options contained the following:

32. No intervention (Do Nothing): The baseline option is to maintain the status quo. Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 would remain unchanged, so employees would continue to have a right to reasonable time off only for the public duty roles currently listed in section 50. This option was discarded because the review has identified that the current list is not fully aligned with the modern public service landscape and contains gaps and inconsistencies across like-for-like roles. This would allow inequity in the labour market to continue, without making changes to better support the effective functioning of public services and local governance.

33. Non-regulatory option: Revised guidance and promotion of voluntary employer practice. The government considered whether, instead of amending section 50, time off work for other roles could be achieved through clearer guidance to employers and employees. Clearer guidance, supported by engagement with sponsoring departments and representative bodies, could improve awareness and encourage employers to allow time off voluntarily where appropriate. This could include updating GOV.UK and employer-facing guidance on the current entitlement, examples of the reasonableness test, and encouragement for employers to support civic participation through workplace policies. Guidance would be lower cost and easier to implement than legislative reform. However, this option was discounted as a standalone solution because it would not correct the legal gaps and inconsistencies identified by the review. In particular, it would not reinstate a statutory entitlement for academy trust governance roles, would not place special constables clearly within scope, and would not remove roles that no longer align with the policy purpose. It would therefore rely on employer discretion and informal practice, rather than providing a coherent statutory framework.

34. Add all proposed duties and retain all existing duties: The government considered a broad expansion option under which all roles proposed by departments and stakeholders would be added to section 50, while all existing offices and bodies would remain in scope. This would maximise coverage and reduce the risk that any potentially valuable role was excluded. However, this option was discounted because the review has taken a deliberately targeted approach, applying a high bar to inclusion in order to avoid unnecessary burdens on business. The report concludes that several proposed roles are either unsuitable for inclusion because they do not involve holding an office or membership of a body, or do not align with the legislation's original intent. Indicative cost estimates for these roles is provided in Section 7, including police support volunteers and on-call firefighters, which may increase business costs materially without meeting the legal or policy tests for inclusion.

35. Add proposed duties that meet the legal and policy test, but make no removals from the current list: The government considered a partial reform option under which relevant new roles would be added, but existing offices and bodies would only be retained and none would be removed. This would be simpler to communicate and may be seen as less controversial than a package involving both additions and removals. However, this option was discounted because it would address only one side of the problem. While it would improve access for some newly included roles, it would leave in place existing duties that the review considers to be outside the intended scope of the legislation, particularly certain national public service governance roles. This would potentially weaken the coherence of the statutory framework.

36. Targeted amendment of the statutory list, based on the review's guiding principles (preferred option): The preferred option is to amend section 50 through secondary legislation so that the statutory list better reflects the modern public service landscape and the original purpose of the entitlement. Under this option, roles with a local representation, community governance or civic oversight function would be retained or added where they meet the legal and policy tests, while

roles relating to national public service governance would be removed. This would include, among other changes, reinstating academy trust governance roles, adding special constables and selected comparable governance roles, and removing certain national governance roles. Further detail on the full list of changes can be found in Section 6. The preferred option is targeted rather than maximalist, and is designed to improve fairness and consistency while keeping business impacts proportionate.

37. Compared to a broad expansion approach, the preferred option applies a clearer legal and policy filter to proposed duties. Compared to a guidance-only approach, it directly addresses the statutory gaps and inconsistencies identified by the review. Compared to an additions-only approach, it also removes roles that no longer align with the legislation's intended scope.

38. The consultation therefore proceeds on the basis of a targeted package of changes to the list of offices and bodies in section 50 as this is the option most likely to meet the policy objective of establishing an updated list of roles in section 50 that reflects the modern structure of public service and current institutional landscape, while maintaining proportionality for employers.

6. Description of shortlisted policy options carried forward

39. Following review of the long-list of policy options, the following option was brought forward for consideration:

40. <u>Targeted amendment of the statutory list, based on the review's guiding principles (preferred option):</u> Together with supporting guidance, the preferred option is to amend section 50 through secondary legislation so that the statutory list better reflects the modern public service landscape and the original intent of the entitlement.

41. The government proposes the following changes to the list of public duty roles eligible for time off:
    - Add special constables and local representation and community governance public duties. The entitlement to time off for these roles fits the original intent of the legislation and ensures they are accessible to a diverse range of people within the local community.
    - Remove national public service governance duties. The relevant bodies form part of a network of around 500 public sector governance bodies; there is no strong rationale to treat these differently from other national public bodies.
    - Do not add frontline public service delivery duties that are not eligible for time off under this legislation, nor any further national public service governance duties.

42. The accompanying consultation document seeks stakeholders' views on each of the shortlisted proposals, as well as any alternative approaches.

Small and Micro Business Assessment

43. The preferred policy option would apply to employers of all sizes, including small and micro businesses. This is in line with the existing legislation which gives a statutory right to reasonable time off for public duties for all employees, regardless of employer size.

44. Using business population statistics[4], we estimate that around 80% of businesses affected are small and micro businesses. These businesses account for 13% of employees.

Table 1: Breakdown of number of GB businesses by business size

Business size	Number of businesses (GB)	% of businesses
Micro (1-9)	1,161,654	80%
Small (10-49)	229,780	16%
Medium (50-249)	42,725	3%
Large (250+)	11,200	1%
Total	**1,445,359**	**100%**

45. Exemptions: The policy measure is intended to ensure fair and equitable basis to reasonable time off for specified civic and public duties. Exempting small and micro businesses would significantly reduce coverage, leaving many employees without access to the entitlement and making access dependent on business size rather than on the nature of the public duty. This would undermine the policy objective and making such a change is not possible via existing legislation. The accompanying review does not consider changes to the structure of the entitlement itself and is limited to assessing whether the list of eligible public duty roles remains appropriate and consistent with the original purpose of the legislation. Exemptions for specific businesses would create disparities within the entitlement.

46. Smaller businesses may nevertheless face disproportionate higher costs per absence in managing employee absence as they have limited capacity to re-allocate work among existing staff. External evidence on employer-supported volunteering also suggests that participation is lower in smaller organisations and that practical barriers, including staff and financial constraints, make it harder for smaller businesses to get involved in schemes that require time away from work (e.g. NCVO[5] and Institute for Volunteering Research[6]). While this does not map directly onto public duties and robust data on the distribution of public duty-holders by employer size are not available, it is consistent with the view that smaller employers may find it harder, on average, to absorb absences where they arise.

47. Mitigations: The policy contains built-in mitigations which reduce the risk of disproportionate burdens on small and micro employers. First, the entitlement is to reasonable time off only. Employers are not required to pay employees for time off taken for public duties, so the central business cost arises through indirect reorganisation rather than a mandated wage cost. Second, employers may refuse requests that are not reasonable in the circumstances, including where an employee's absence may unduly affect the running of the business. Third, many public duties are typically planned in advance, undertaken on a part-time basis, or carried out outside core working hours, which reduces the incidence of disruption to business.

48. The evidence on the employment characteristics of volunteers undertaking both existing and proposed duties is limited. Some duties may be more common among individuals from particular sectors or professions (e.g. fee-paid judges among legal professionals or audit committee roles among individuals with accounting or finance experience). However, the majority of duties in scope are open to individuals irrespective of their professional background.

49. Even where participation in specific duties may be more common within certain professions, the design of the entitlement limits potential business impacts. Requests remain subject to a

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2025, Office for National Statistics, 2025
[5] Time well spent: employer-supported volunteering, NCVO, June 2019
[6] Employer supported volunteering: what the research says?, University of East Anglia (accessed April 2026)

reasonableness test, allowing employers to deny requests that would cause significant disruptions to business operations. It also does not specify whether time off must or must not be paid. This limits the potential costs and operational burden on employers, including those in sectors where participation may be relatively higher. Therefore, any distributional impacts across sectors are expected to be limited. For many businesses, particularly those whose employees are unlikely to hold the relevant offices or memberships, the impact of the policy measure is likely to be negligible or limited to a small one-off familiarisation cost. For others, the primary impact may arise from managing occasional absences rather than direct financial costs.

50. While there is currently a lack of evidence on the size of businesses volunteers work in, larger businesses are expected to have a higher probability of experiencing an employee taking time off for public duties due to the larger number of people in their workforce. In practice, it is also likely that SMEs will only familiarise themselves fully with the legislation as and when they really need to (i.e., when the leave is requested). In contrast, it is likely that larger businesses will invest more time in familiarisation at the point the legislation is introduced as they will have dedicated HR departments responsible for understanding and articulating changes to employment law routinely, as and when they occur.

51. On balance, the preferred option is considered proportionate for small and micro businesses. Smaller employers may face relatively higher reorganisation costs per absence where requests arise, but these are mitigated by requirement for leave requests to be reasonable, the lack of requirement for the time off to be paid, the planned nature of many duties, and the targeted scope of the proposed changes.

7. Regulatory scorecard for preferred option

Part A: Overall and stakeholder impacts

(1) Overall impacts on total welfare		**Directional rating**
Description of overall expected impact	The direction of the overall impact on businesses is expected to be negative, reflecting monetised re-organisation, familiarisation costs and administrative costs. These may be partially offset by the reputational benefits to business as well as the strengthened capabilities and employee goodwill generated from allowing them to participate in public duties, with knock-on effects on productivity and better staff retention. Although, the scale and magnitude of these benefits are uncertain. The impact on households is expected to be positive, driven by non-monetised benefits including enhanced skills and capabilities from undertaking public duties and wellbeing benefits, which refer to the improvements in an individual's overall quality of life that are not directly financial in nature. The policy is also expected to generate significant societal benefits. Changes to the list of duties in section 50 is expected to reduce barriers for some individuals who would otherwise face constraints in accessing	**Uncertain** **Based on all impacts (incl. non-monetised)**

	public duties. This increased equality of opportunity contributes to more representative public bodies and offices and brings additional knowledge and expertise. Reducing barriers to participation helps support recruitment and retention, which in turn can lead to improved functioning of public service and community outcomes. Where public duties would need to be completed by paid labour, the policy may reduce public sector resource requirements. Because many of the benefits are non-monetised and evidence on their scale is limited, it is not possible to determine whether benefits outweigh the costs.	
Monetised impacts	NPSV **-£196.1m** Estimated costs include: 1. One-off familiarisation costs to businesses of **£28.1m**. This is an upper bound estimate as many businesses will not have to familiarise themselves with the changes in legislation until time off to uptake civic duties is requested. 2. Annual ongoing reorganisation costs to business of **£17.7m** from extending the statutory time off work for new duties. 3. An additional ongoing annual administration cost to business of **£2.1m** was calculated to process requested time off. Total annual ongoing costs: High estimate: **£24m** Central estimate: **£19.8m** Low estimate: **£18.7m** Business and Household costs from legal costs to employees making claims to the ET and ACAS are anticipated to be nil/negligible. This is covered more in paragraphs 95-98.	**Negative** **Based on likely £NPSV**
Non-monetised impacts	Non-monetised impacts include: 1. Wellbeing benefits to employees, reflecting evidence from some studies that engagement in civic roles may support increased community engagement and wellbeing. 2. Benefits to employers through improve staff retention, reputational benefits and improved workforce capabilities by employees undertaking public duties. 3. Benefits to the general public by enabling a broader and more diverse pool of individuals to undertake civic roles contributing to more	**Positive**

	representative and effective public bodies and offices, leading to improved functioning of public services and community outcomes.	
Any significant or adverse distributional impacts?	Potential distributional impacts on businesses and households are indicated in the full costs and benefits section.	**Uncertain**

(2) Expected impacts on businesses		
Description of overall business impact	The overall impact on businesses is expected to be negative, primarily driven by annual reorganisation costs. Other monetary impacts on businesses include one-off familiarisation costs, and ongoing administrative costs for processing leave requests. Conversely, businesses may benefit from improved employee engagement and retention, reputational benefits and strengthened workforce skills and capabilities. This can have positive effects on productivity and reduce staff turnover, helping to cut future hiring costs. The benefits may partially offset the costs of the policy measure. However, because of the nature of the benefits, this Options Assessment does not attempt to monetise these impacts.	**Negative**
Monetised impacts	**Business NPV (if available): -£196.1m** **Equivalent annual net direct cost to business (EANDCB): £22.8m** One-off familiarisation costs to business of £28.1m. Annual reorganisation costs to business of £17.7m of duties proposed to be added. Annual administrative costs of £2.1m. Overall, the monetised impact on businesses is expected to be negative.	**Negative** **Based on likely business £NPV**
Non-monetised impacts	The policy does not require employees to be paid for time off for public duties, leaving this at the discretion of the employer. Where employers voluntarily choose to pay employees during time off, there will be wage costs to the employer and benefits to employees, but this is not monetised as a) it is discretionary and b) it is not possible to reliably determine the extent that time off is paid. Benefits to business through improved employee engagement and retention, reputational benefits and strengthened workforce skills and capabilities.	**Positive**

	Overall, the non-monetised impact on businesses is expected to be positive.	
Any significant or adverse distributional impacts?	<u>SMEs impacts</u> SMEs may be more likely to face challenges in managing employee absence due to public or civic duties, as they have fewer resources and less capacity to reallocate work compared to larger businesses. <u>Sectoral impacts</u> Although participation in some duties may be more common among certain professions and individuals from particular sectors (i.e. fee-paid judges, audit committee members), most duties are open to individuals regardless of professional background. Overall, there is limited evidence to suggest a disproportionate impact on specific sectors when considering all duties collectively. <u>Regional impacts</u> There may be some regional variation in impacts, as uptake is likely to reflect local demand for civic roles. However, there is limited evidence on current and future demand for such roles. Nevertheless, the preferred policy option is expected to support a more coherent and consistent statutory framework across regions and nations in Great Britain, reducing the risk of regional variation in business regulatory burden.	**Negative**

(3) Expected impacts on households		
Description of overall household impact	The overall impact on households is expected to be positive, driven by the non-monetised benefits to households. These include the development of transferable skills through participation in civic roles, which may support individual career progression, and wellbeing benefits through increased engagement with the community.	**Positive**
Monetised impacts	There are no monetised impacts on households.	**Neutral** **Based on likely household £NPV**
Non-monetised impacts	Costs to employees from loss of income during the time taken off work for public duties, as section 50 does not require that employees are paid for this time. However, as participation is optional, it is assumed that individuals who choose to take time off generally do so where, in their circumstances, perceived benefits outweigh the loss of income. Additionally, we expect benefits to households from skills development and wellbeing benefits from	**Positive**

	undertaking more public duties. Volunteering may also support career progression through improvements in human and social capital, as a result of the skills training and confidence building from public duties. Overall, the non-monetised impact on households is expected to be positive.	
Any significant or adverse distributional impacts?	Low income Low income groups may be less able to make use of the provision as the entitlement does not require employees to be paid for time off work. However, we assume that where they do take time off for public duties that the benefits of the activity outweigh the loss of income, as take-up of public duties is optional. Regional There may be distributional impacts on certain regions insofar as those undertaking public duties are concentrated in specific regions, but we do not have enough evidence on the regional concentration of public duties. However, there may be a positive impact on these regions as the proposed changes to the entitlement ensures parity across nations. Other impacted groups There may be distributional impacts across age groups due to differences in employment patterns. For example, younger individuals are more likely to be in paid employment, while older individuals may still undertake public duties but may not require time off work if they are retired. Additionally, based on consultation with stakeholders, there is some evidence to suggest that there is a higher prevalence of those aged above 40 undertaking some of the roles proposed to be added. Therefore, there may be a positive impact on younger age groups, particularly those under 40, as changes to the entitlement is expected to bring parity across age groups.	**Positive**

Part B: Impacts on wider government priorities

Category	Description of impact	Directional rating
Business environment:	The policy is not expected to have any impact the ease of doing business in the UK as it is a minor amendment to an existing entitlement.	**Neutral**

Does the measure impact on the ease of doing business in the UK?		
International Considerations: Does the measure support international trade and investment?	The policy is not expected to impact international trade and investment, either positively or negatively.	**Neutral**
Natural capital and Decarbonisation: Does the measure support commitments to improve the environment and decarbonise?	The policy is not expected to have any impact on the environment, natural capital and decarbonisation, either positively or negatively.	**Neutral**

Costs and benefits to businesses

Monetised costs

Familiarisation costs

52. Changes to employment legislation introduces a cost to business, at least in the short term. Employers will need to familiarise themselves with the changes to the list of offices and bodies included in section 50. The familiarisation cost is a one-off cost to business which covers the time needed to understand how their own schemes interact with the statutory provision, update internal guidance and disseminate changes to staff.

53. However, it is important to note that this policy measure reflects changes to existing legislation, rather than the introduction of new employment legislation. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that many businesses have provisions for duties covered under the existing legislation, which could reduce some of the familiarisation time.

54. For modelling purposes, we assume that familiarisation costs are incurred by all businesses. This reflects the fact that employment legislation applies across the economy and that employers are expected to be aware of statutory rights. However, larger businesses are expected to have a higher probability of experiencing an employee taking time off for public duties due to the larger number of people in their workforce. Previous impact assessments on leave entitlements such as the 2018 Parental Bereavement Leave Impact Assessment[7] led to the view that, in practice, it is also likely that SMBs (a business with fewer than 50 employees) will only familiarise themselves fully with the legislation as and when they really need to (i.e., when the leave is requested) and spend a short amount of time to understand the basics. On the other hand, it is likely that larger businesses will invest more time in familiarisation at the

[7] Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay IA, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2018

point the legislation is updated as they will have dedicated HR functions responsible for understanding and disseminating changes routinely. They are also more likely to have formalised guidance for staff in place compared to SMBs. We therefore assume a familiarisation time of 0.5 hours with businesses with fewer than 50 employees and 1.5 hours with businesses with 50+ employees[8]. As a result, the assumed familiarisation times should be interpreted as an average upper-bound across businesses, rather than a reflection of immediate behaviour for all firms.

55. Labour costs for businesses familiarising themselves with the policy are estimated to be £36.23 per hour. This cost is calculated based on the median hourly wage rate for human resource managers and directors (£29.79) from the 2025 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)[9]. The wage is then uplifted by 22%, derived from internal analysis of the UK Economic Accounts[10], to account for non-wage labour costs.

56. There are approximately 1,445,359 businesses in scope, consisting of 1,391,434 businesses with fewer than 50 employees and 53,925 businesses with 50+ employees. We assume that the number of employers is the same as in 2025 from the DBT Business population estimates for the UK (excluding Northern Irish businesses and businesses with zero employees).

57. Applying the hourly costs to our assumed familiarisation times and population estimates, we estimate total familiarisation costs to be £28.1m.

58. This should be interpreted as an upper bound estimate given the expected number of employees volunteering for public duties annually. In practice, many businesses will not have employees that undertake public duties, and they are not expected to familiarise with the policy until time off is requested.

Reorganisation costs - the cost of time off work for public duties

59. Reorganisation costs are those incurred by businesses due to employees in their organisation taking time off work for public duties. Reorganisation costs attempt to capture the need to reallocate work among existing staff which could drive-up costs either because overtime is paid to maintain output or that in reallocating work, other work is dropped, resulting in a loss of output.

60. Our approach to estimate the hourly cost of reorganisation is based on data on the cost of absence from a survey on absence and workplace health published by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI)[11]. This is consistent with the approach taken in the 2018 Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Impact Assessment and the 2025 Options Assessment for New Rights to Unpaid Bereavement Leave including Pregnancy Loss, which also relate to statutory leave entitlements. The survey found an average cost of absence of £720 per employee per year, based on 5.2 days of absence. This figure includes wage costs, reorganisation expenses, and non-wage labour costs such as national insurance. Given the lack of duty-specific absence cost data, this provides a reasonable proxy for estimating reorganisation effects.

[8] This is consistent with familiarisation time assumptions used in impact assessments for other leave entitlements, such as the 2025 Options Assessment for New Rights to Unpaid Bereavement Leave Including Pregnancy Loss.
[9] Earnings and hours worked, occupation by four-digit SOC: ASHE Table 14, Office for National Statistics, 2025.
[10] UK Economic Accounts time series, Office for National Statistics, 2025
[11] Time for employers to place workplace health and wellbeing front of mind, CBI September 2018.

61. To isolate reorganisation costs, we deduct estimated labour costs from the total cost of absence reported in the CBI survey. Using 2017 median wage data uplifted by 20.8%[12] to capture UK non-wage labour costs, we estimate labour costs associated with the average level of absence at £524.80 per employee per year. Deducting this from the annual absence cost of £720 per employee implies a residual cost of £167.70 which is attributed to reorganisation and other non-labour effects associated with employee absence (32.0% of labour costs).

62. We convert this to 2025 prices by applying the 32% derived to the median hourly wage figure from 2025 ASHE data[13], uplifted to account for non-wage labour costs. This gives us an hourly reorganisation cost per employee of £6.97. A breakdown of this calculation is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Methodology to calculate hourly reorganisation costs

Median absence cost = £720.0 per employee (5.2 days per year)

Median absence cost per work week = [£720.0 per employee ÷ 5.2] x 5 = £692.3

Total labour costs (2017 = wage costs x nonwage uplift = £434.3 x 1.208 = £523.6

Reorganisation costs = £692.3– £524.6 = £167.7 (which is 32.0% of labour costs)

Conversion to 2025 prices = median hourly earnings (2025) x non-wage uplift = £17.9 x 1.216 = £21.77

Hourly reorganisation costs (2025) = total labour costs (2025) x 32.0% labour cost = £6.97

63. The CBI data covers both planned and unplanned absences. Since public duty leave is generally planned with reasonable notice, actual reorganisation costs may be lower than the estimates. We assume reorganisation costs are a fixed 32% of total labour costs, though this may vary across businesses.

Estimating the total hours of statutory time off work

64. To calculate the total cost of time off work for public duties, we multiply the hourly reorganisation cost by the estimated total hours of statutory time off work for a given duty. We estimate this using the following:
    - The annual time commitment (in hours) for each duty, per person.
    - The eligible population for each duty. This is the expected number of people that hold or will hold this role following its inclusion as a public duty under section 50 of the ERA.
    - The expected proportion of eligible individuals who would make use of the provision for time off work. This is our uptake assumption and adjusts the population estimate to reflect that many role holders may not be in full time employment, may carry out the duty outside of work hours or by using other leave entitlements (such as annual leave), or may not receive permission from their employer to take time off.

65. Multiplying the number of people affected by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the average hours each person is expected to perform their duties gives us an estimate for the total time off work (in hours) as a result of a given office or body being added to the list in section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996. Figure 2 shows an illustrative example of the overall approach.

[12] UK National Accounts, The Blue Book: 2017.
[13] Earnings and hours worked, all employees: ASHE Table 1, Office for National Statistics, October 2025

Figure 2: Methodology to calculate total cost of time off work for public duties

> Hourly reorganisation costs (2025) = £6.97
>
> Annual time off work to perform Duty A, per employee = 74 hours
>
> Expected number of people that will hold role for Duty A = 250
>
> Estimated proportion of eligible population making use of provision for statutory time off work = 30%
>
> Total hours of statutory time off work for Duty A = 74 x 250 x 30% = 5,550
>
> Total annual cost of time off work = total hours of statutory time off work x hourly reorganisation cost = 5,550 x £6.97 = £38,684.5

Estimating the take up rate

66. Not all public duties are performed during work hours or by those in employment. Many individuals carry out these roles part-time, on an ad hoc basis, or outside standard working hours, resulting in no direct business cost. To avoid overestimating costs, we adjust the total time spent on public duty activities to account for the proportion that actually uses the statutory entitlement.

67. There is insufficient reliable data regarding the take-up rates for certain proposed duties. For these duties, we take ONS data for October - December 2025 to find the overall employment rate of 75% and apply the proportion of individuals in full-time equivalent (FTE) employee employment to arrive at a final estimate of 49%. We apply this figure to adjust for those not in employment, self-employed, or in part-time work, assuming they would not use the provision.

68. This approach overlooks situations where employers deny time off, does not account for work performed outside working hours, and does not capture differences in employment patterns by demographic or sector, which may relate to specific public duties. As such, in most cases, the resulting figures are likely to be an upper-bound estimate.

69. Using this approach, we estimate an annual reorganisation cost to businesses of £17.5m for our preferred option. This captures the additional reorganisation costs to business from extending the statutory time off work for new roles. Table 2 provides a summary of the time commitment and take up assumptions for each of the proposed roles under consideration. A full breakdown of the underlying assumptions and calculations for these roles are set out in Annex A.

Table 2 - Reorganisation cost for proposed roles to be added

Role	Population in scope	Take up assumption	Annual individual time commitment	Total cost of statutory time off work
Academy or academy trust governor	99,210	9%	206 hours	£13,022,000
Academy trust member	12,720	9%	4 hours	£28,000
Corporate Joint Committee member	30	35%	48 hours	£4,000

Designated institution, further education corporation, or sixth-form college corporation audit committee member[14]	1,070	49%	66 hours	£241,000
Designated institution governing body member[15]	230	49%	120 hours (governors) 351 hours (chairs)	£105,000
Fee-paid judge	3,300 (230 expected)	85%	220 hours	£299,000
Integration Joint Board member	90 (50 non-voting members)	49%	18 hours	£3,000
Judicial Appointments Commission lay panel member	80	15%	160 hours	£13,000
National Landscape Conservation Board member	20	49%	220 hours	£17,000
Special constable	5,900	50%	192 hours	£3,942,000
Roles proposed to be added	**122,610**	**-**	**-**	**£17,676,000**

Note: Population figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 and cost figures to the nearest £1,000. As a result, component parts may not sum to totals.

Table 3 – Illustrative reorganisation costs for roles outside the policy scope

Role	Population in scope	Take up assumption	Annual individual time commitment	Total cost of statutory time off work
General Teaching Council for Scotland member	40	49%	42 hours	£5,000
National health body member (for 18 additional health bodies)	240	49%	220 hours	£179,000
On-call firefighter	11,870	49%	140 hours	£5,716,000
Police support volunteer	6,760 (6,200 excluding youth)	50%	56 hours	£1,209,000
Reserve forces member	32,000	-	-	Not estimated
Roles not proposed to be added	**50,940**	**-**	**-**	**£7,109,000**
All roles	**173,520**	**-**	**-**	**£24,785,000**

Note: Population figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 and cost figures to the nearest £1,000. As a result, component parts may not sum to totals.

[14] These figures are based on available data for educational institutions in England only.
[15] These figures are based on available data for educational institutions in England only.

Administrative costs

70. Employers incur ongoing administrative costs when processing requests for time off for eligible employees. This cost captures the cost of making an assessment of the reasonableness of leave requests and maintaining any required record, and it is associated with every leave request.

71. However, we assume that the time required to process requests will be small because:

    a. The majority of businesses should already have HR systems to receive, record and account for periods of leave.
    b. The policy changes are an update to existing legislation, and many employees will already make use of the entitlement for public duties. Therefore, employers are expected to have systems in place for other public duties that can be easily adapted for the changes to the list of offices and bodies in section 50.
    c. In many cases, leave requests are expected to be routine. Employers may therefore spend less time assessing the reasonableness of requests for subsequent requests or approve multiple requests simultaneously.

72. As such, our central assumption for time spent on ongoing administrative costs is assumed to be 10 minutes per request. We also provide a lower bound and upper bound estimate of administrative costs, using an assumption of 5 minutes and 30 minutes respectively. The central estimate aligns with the assumption used in the 2025 Options Assessment for New Rights to Unpaid Bereavement Leave including Pregnancy Loss, which considers the cost of administering (i.e. receiving, responding and recording) leave requests. The upper bound mirrors the assumed time taken to process leave requests for Carer's Leave in the 2020 Consultation on entitlement to Carer's Leave. The lower bound is intended to capture potentially shorter processing times relative to other leave entitlements, given that this measure is an update to an existing entitlement rather than the introduction of new one.

73. We estimate the total number of leave requests for each duty by converting total hours of statutory time off work into working days, using ONS data on average actual weekly hours of work for full-time workers (seasonally adjusted)[16]. Each day of statutory time off is assumed to correspond to a single administrative action. The labour cost of processing each request is valued at £36.23 per hour, as set out in paragraph 55.

74. The central cost estimate for the annual administrative cost of the policy measure is £2.1m, with a lower bound estimate of £1m and upper bound estimate of £6.2m. This captures the additional administrative costs to business from extending the statutory time off work for new duties. A summary is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Annual administrative costs

Lower bound	Central estimate	Upper bound
5 minutes processing time	*10 minutes processing time*	*30 minutes processing time*
£1,047,000	£2,093,000	£6,279,000

75. For simplicity, we have assumed that there will be a leave request for each working day taken off for public duties. In reality, we expect that there will be cases where employees request leave

[16] Average actual weekly hours of work for full-time workers (seasonally adjusted), Office for National Statistics, April 2026

for half days or for multiple days in one block. This is expected to depend on both the nature of employment and the type of public duty activity being undertaken.

Non-monetised costs to businesses

76. Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 does not require that employees are paid when they take time off for public duties. This is at the discretion of the employer. Where the employer chooses to pay employees during time off, they will incur wage costs for the duration of the leave period. As this decision is voluntary, we assume employers choose to do so where, in their judgement and circumstance, the perceived benefits to the business justify the associated costs.

Non-monetised benefits to businesses

Employee engagement and retention

77. Employers who support employee participation in public duties through the provision of time off may experience improvements in workplace relations and organisational culture. Such support can signal employer recognition of employees' wider civic responsibilities, generating goodwill and trust between employers and employees, contributing towards improved employer-employee relations.

78. Improved relations and perceived organisational support are associated with higher levels of employee engagement and job satisfaction, as employees value the ability to balance work with public service commitments. Increased job satisfaction can, in turn, lead to improved employee motivation and performance.

79. Higher job satisfaction and engagement may also reduce employee turnover, as workers are more likely to remain with employers they perceive as supportive and fair, lowering recruitment and training costs for employers.

Reputational benefits

80. Supporting employees to undertake public duties may enhance a business's reputation as a socially responsible employer. This can help with brand image and recruitment activity.

Skills development and strengthened workforce capabilities

81. Employees undertaking public duties may develop skills in areas such as leadership and decision making. This could benefit employers through improved staff capabilities and enhanced productivity.

Cost savings from removed duties

82. Where offices or bodies are proposed for removal from the list in section 50, businesses may save costs from time that was previously taken off for public duties, as well as administrative costs from processing leave requests. However, given that the offices or bodies proposed for removal are either defunct or concern a relatively small pool of volunteers, the overall impact is expected to be negligible.

Significant or adverse distributional impacts to businesses

83. Smaller businesses may face disproportionate challenges in managing employee absence as they have limited resources compared to larger businesses. It is also possible that volunteers for certain duties are concentrated in specific sectors, industries or regions. However, because of the nature of the entitlement, including the ability for employers to refuse requests that are not reasonable, the policy measure is not expected to have significant or adverse distributional impacts to businesses (see Section 6 for full explanation).

Costs and benefits to households

Non-monetised costs to households

Cost of taking off time off work for public duties

84. Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 does not require that employees are paid when they take time off for public duties. This is at the discretion of the employer. Therefore, where employees take time off without pay from their employer, they will experience a loss of income during the leave period. However, because take-up of the entitlement is optional, it is assumed that, for those who take it, the benefits to the employee from volunteering activity are greater than the loss of the income. Furthermore, people carrying out certain public duties, such as local councillors, are entitled to receive financial compensation called an 'allowance' and expenses. This may mitigate the financial impact for employees of carrying out certain public duties.

Non-monetised benefits to households

Skills development and wellbeing benefits

85. Employees undertaking public duties may develop a variety of skills in areas such as leadership, decision making, teamwork and communication. These experiences can support the development of transferable skills that are relevant both within and beyond the individual's primary employment.

86. Volunteering could support career progression through improvements in human and social capital, as a consequence of activities such as skills training and confidence building. For example, Degli Antoni (2015) found that participation in activities that developed social networks and increased human capital also increased the probability of being employed[17].

87. Governors for Schools survey data exploring the personal and professional development volunteers gained through school governance highlighted that 87% of respondents agreed with the statement "being a school governor has positively impacted my professional and personal development", with 64% of employed respondents feeling that "the value of the experience they gained is recognised by their employer"[18].

88. Participation in public duties may also contribute positively to wellbeing through increased engagement with the community. Evidence from volunteering and civic participation literature suggest that engagement in community roles is associated with improved wellbeing and social connectedness, although the scale of this effect varies across individuals and roles[19].

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[17] Estimating the economic and social value of volunteering, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, July 2025

[18] School governance: a powerful development opportunity for employees, Governors for Schools, 2025

[19] Estimating the economic and social value of volunteering, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, July 2025

89. Other social benefits to individuals participating in public duties and to wider society may include social and community cohesion (for example, feeling connected to the neighbourhood, and increased civic trust), social capital (for example, stronger social relationships), and soft skills.

Significant or adverse distributional impacts to households

Low income

90. Low income groups may be less able to make use of the provision as the entitlement does not require employees to be paid for time off work. However, we assume that where they do take time off for public duties, the benefits of the activity outweigh the loss of income, as take-up of public duties is optional.

Regional

91. There may be distributional impacts on certain regions insofar as those undertaking public duties are concentrated in specific regions, but we do not have enough evidence on the regional concentration of public duties. However, there may be a positive impact on these regions as the proposed changes to the entitlement ensures parity across nations.

Other impacted groups

92. There may be distributional impacts across age groups due to differences in employment patterns. For example, younger individuals are more likely to be in paid employment, while older individuals may still undertake public duties but may not require time off work if they are retired.

93. In the 2025 National Governance Survey[20], the majority of volunteers surveyed (90%) reported being 40 or over. Therefore, there may be a positive impact on younger age groups as changes to the entitlement is expected to bring parity across age groups.

94. Within the judiciary, 44% of judges are female and 12% are from ethnic minorities[21]. To the extent that women and ethnic minorities appear more concentrated within parts of the employed legal profession than in self-employed practice, easing barriers to access may support improvements in diversity over time.

Other wider impacts

Acas services and Employment Tribunals

95. Extending the right to reasonable time off for new duties could introduce additional costs associated with disputes between employees and their employer in relation to the entitlement. For example, this may include employees challenging decisions about time off. This will incur potential costs to households, business, Acas and the tribunal.

96. There are currently no published statistics on the number of disputes related to section 50 of the Employment Rights Act, which would ordinarily fall under “Failure to allow time off for trade union activities or duties, for ante-natal carer or for public duties”. In some cases, any such

[20] Annual School and Trust Governance Survey 2025, NGA, 2025
[21] Diversity in the judiciary – 2025 statistics, Ministry of Justice, July 2025

disputes could potentially be absorbed into broader categories such as unfair dismissal or breach of statutory rights. Given the nature of the entitlement, disputes related to the provision are unlikely.

97. Tribunal statistics reporting aggregates claims into a small number of jurisdictional types. A single ET1 claim often includes multiple complaints, and we expect any time off for public duties issues to be resolved via internal grievance or Acas conciliation, and, when litigated, are absorbed into larger umbrella claims (e.g., unfair dismissal).

98. In practice, public duties related cases are likely to make a small subset of these claims, and we expect these impacts to be negligible.

Diversity and representation in public duties

99. Changes to the list of office and bodies in section 50 is expected to help attract a wider range of diverse candidates to public duty roles who would otherwise face constraints and therefore not be in a position to undertake these roles. For example, extending the regulations to cover new duties could encourage participation among younger individuals in employment. In the absence of the policy measure, participation may be skewed towards those in retirement, with more flexible working arrangements, or who do not need to work to earn a living. Increased equality of opportunity to civic roles contributes to more representative public bodies and offices. The inclusion of these individuals can bring additional and novel knowledge and expertise, supporting the more effective fulfilment of various statutory functions.

Improved functioning of public services and community outcomes

100. Households may benefit indirectly from improved functioning of public services supported by public duties. Extending the right to reasonable time off is expected to support recruitment and retention of appropriately skilled volunteers for public duty roles. Within the statutory further education sector, more volunteers in key governor and audit and risk roles is expected to contribute to effective governance and better-performing further education institutions, helping to improve management of public funds and risks, safeguard public investment and maintain confidence in the sector. This can help reduce costs and mitigate potential financial and non-financial negative outcomes to the public sector by improving budgeting, procurement and other strategic and operational decisions. Where boards handle appeals at a school level, this reduces need for escalation to external bodies (DfE and Ofsted), therefore reducing cost for them, and may also apply to other panel work like HR matters and exclusions.

101. For academy and academy trust governance roles, more effective governance may potentially lead to improved school performance[22]. This can have various long-term economic returns such as higher lifetime earnings for pupils, higher productivity of the economy and reduced remediation costs. The 2025 Annual Governance Survey[23] found that 85% of respondents agreed that “my governing board has made a positive impact on the strategic direction and outcomes of my school or trust in the past year”.

102. With the entitlement to time off work supporting special constables to spend more time volunteering, this could improve their tenure, operational performance and increase standards of policing, while also allowing police forces to reduce expenditure on recruiting and training new special constables.

[22] Based on qualitative feedback from DBT stakeholder consultation.
[23] Annual School and Trust Governance Survey 2025, NGA, 2025

103. While the relationship between time off and service outcomes is indirect, the policy supports conditions that enable these roles to function effectively.

Replacement cost of volunteering

104. Where public duties would need to be completed by paid labour in the counterfactual scenario, voluntary activity substitutes paid labour. The value of their activity is then the opportunity cost of employing an individual to perform the role, and public bodies benefit from cost savings that they would otherwise incur to replace volunteers with paid staff to maintain the provision of their services.

105. This assumes that the additional volunteer hours induced by the policy are close substitutes for paid staff hours that would otherwise be used to deliver the same outputs, at similar quantity and timeliness; and paid input would be reduced as volunteer input rises.

106. Given the uncertainty of these assumptions, and that many roles are already carried out by volunteers in some capacity despite not being included in the existing list of public duty roles (for example, outside work hours or by those not in employment), we do not include this benefit in our NPSV estimate.

107. Table 5 shows the estimated annual cost savings to the public sector for time taken off for public duties added under the preferred option replacing paid staff. Given the lack of data on the professional backgrounds of volunteers, we take the UK median wage from ASHE data[24] (£17.90) and apply our non-labour cost uplift (22%) to estimate the hourly savings from volunteering activity. For simplicity, we model scenarios of where voluntary activity displaces 10%, 20% and 50% of paid labour. In practice, the extent of paid labour activity displaced is uncertain and the estimates are for illustrative purposes only.

Table 5: Estimated annual cost savings from public duty activity

Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
10% of time replaced	*20% of time replaced*	*50% of time replaced*
£5,524,000	£11,047,000	£27,618,000

108. Based on these estimated cost savings, we estimate that 32% of paid labour activity would need to be replaced by voluntary activity to cover the reorganisation costs of the duties added under the preferred option of the policy measure.

Training and onboarding costs

109. There may be an increase in the demand for induction programmes, safeguarding and compliance training, and ongoing professional development. Public bodies may need to invest in external training providers or dedicate staff time to support onboarding of new volunteers. This is expected to vary across duties, with some organisations already having infrastructure in place which negates a surge in ‘need’.

[24] Earnings and hours worked, occupation by four-digit SOC: ASHE Table 14, Office for National Statistics, 2025.

8. Monitoring and evaluation of preferred option

110. The Department for Business and Trade will lead on all monitoring and evaluation activities.

111. The government intends to undertake proportionate monitoring and evaluation of the proposed reforms, depending on the need for reassessment. This will be set out further in the final regulations.

112. Section 4 sets out a Theory of Change which identifies the expected inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the policy. This will form the analytical framework for any monitoring and evaluation activity. The approach to a review for this policy measure would combine quantitative indicators, where available, with qualitative evidence to assess whether the policy is achieving its intended objectives.

113. The objective of the review would be to assess the effectiveness of the policy in achieving the following:

- Improve consistency of the statutory framework by ensuring that like-for-like public duties across Great Britain are treated equally in section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, including addressing gaps where equivalent roles are currently excluded.
- Reduce barriers to participation for individuals in employment by extending statutory protection to relevant public duties, enabling employees to request reasonable time off without relying solely on employer discretion or informal arrangements.
- Support participation in, and delivery of, key public service and local governance roles by improving access for individuals in full-time employment, particularly in roles where duties require time during working hours.

Monitoring framework

114. Table 6 outlines the proposed monitoring framework, linking each SMART objective to measures, data sources, collection approaches and limitations. The data sources and approach are intended to be indicative and non-exhaustive at this stage and are subject to change following the consultation.

Table 6: Proposed monitoring framework

Objective	Indicators	Data sources	Collection approach	Limitations
Improve consistency of statutory framework	a. Employee/ employer clarity on which roles are eligible under section 50. b. Number of queries or disputes relating to eligibility of duties. c. Evidence of remaining gaps or inconsistencies in	Stakeholder feedback (Trade Unions. Business Representative Organisations, Acas) Targeted employer/ employee surveys	Qualitative review of stakeholder feedback Post-implementation survey	No tribunal statistics reported specifically for public duties.

	list of offices or bodies.			
Reduce barriers to participation for individuals in employment	a. Number of employees undertaking public duties. b. Evidence of reduced reliance on informal arrangements. c. Employee reported data on ease of access to entitlement.	Published data on governance roles (for example, statistics on volunteer demographics reported by the National Governance Association) Stakeholder feedback	Monitoring of published datasets Qualitative review of stakeholder feedback	No existing baseline data on public duty usage.
Support participation and delivery in key public service and governance roles	a. Representation of employees in key roles. b. Changes in recruitment and retention rates for key roles. c. Changes in duties carried out during works hours compared to outside work hours.	Published data on governance roles Targeted employer/ employee surveys	Monitoring of published datasets Post-implementation survey	Data quality/ availability expected to vary across duties.

115. The government will seek to gather feedback from a range of stakeholders to ensure impacts across all affected groups are considered. This will include engagement with representatives of employer groups, including small and micro businesses, as well as employee and volunteer organisations. The department will also explore whether relevant intelligence can be gathered from Acas and Employment Tribunals on disputes relating to the application of the entitlement.

116. The following is a list of high-level evaluation questions that could be used to assess whether the anticipated outcomes as set out in the Theory of Change and SMART objectives have been achieved, and the extent to which the measure has led to any unintended consequences. These questions are indicative and will be refined following consultation and as implementation progresses.

<u>Objective 1 – Improve consistency of the statutory framework</u>

- Has the updated list of offices and bodies improved consistency across like-for-like roles?
- Are there remaining gaps or inconsistencies in the statutory list of eligible public duties?
- Have stakeholders reported improved clarity regarding which roles are covered?

<u>Objective 2 – Reduce barriers to participation for individuals in employment</u>

- Has there been any change in participation levels among individuals in employment undertaking relevant public duties?

- Has participation increased among individuals in full-time employment or underrepresented groups?
- Do employees report that access to statutory time off has reduced reliance on informal arrangements or employer discretion?
- Are there differences in access to the entitlement across sectors or employer size?

Objective 3 – Support participation in key public service and governance roles

- Have public bodies or offices reported changes in recruitment or retention for relevant roles?
- Are duties being undertaken more frequently during working hours where appropriate?

Cross-cutting outcomes and impacts (applicable across all SMART objectives)

- What impacts have been observed on public bodies or offices, including governance and service delivery?
- What unintended consequences have occurred, including any disproportionate burdens on particular groups or sectors?

117. The evaluation would also consider the economic impact of the measure, including its costs and benefits. These questions will vary depending on the final scope of the evaluation but may include:
    - What costs have been incurred to employers?
    - What benefits have been generated by the implementation of this policy measure for employers?
    - What benefits have been generated by the implementation of this policy measure for employees?
    - What is the nature and scale of the costs incurred by businesses?
    - What is the nature and scale of the costs incurred to the wider economy as a result of this policy measure?

118. These questions are indicative of the key areas that could be covered in a review. Both the wording and content are subject to change following consultation and further policy development.

119. The final questions may be tested through stakeholder engagement, roundtables or surveys, either carried out by the department or commissioned externally. The approach taken will be proportionate to the expected scale of impacts and the availability of data.

120. The department will continue to develop its monitoring and evaluation approach in line with HM Treasury Green Book and Magenta Book guidance. Any monitoring and evaluation activities will be designed to ensure that evidence collected on this policy contributes to understanding its effectiveness and informs any future changes to the statutory framework.

9. Minimising administrative and compliance costs for preferred option

121. The Time Off for Public Duties Review placed a high bar on which offices and bodies should remain and be added to the list, to avoid additional time off requests being unnecessarily placed on businesses.

122. The proposed policy changes are intended to be proportionate and draw on existing processes to minimise administrative and compliance burden. As the review considers an update to existing legislation rather than introduction of new legislation, most employers are expected to have systems in place for other public duties that can be easily adapted. The review does not make reference to changes outside of the list of public duties which could incur additional administrative or compliance costs for business.

123. Smaller businesses may however face disproportionate challenges in managing employee absence as they have limited resources compared to larger businesses. However, as employers retain the right to deny requests for unreasonable time off, the measure is not expected to place undue burden on SMBs.

Declaration

Department: Department for Business and Trade

Contact details for enquiries: ERDAnalysisEnquiries@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Minister:

Kate Dearden MP, Minister for Employment Rights and Consumer Protection

I have read the Options Assessment and I am satisfied that, given the available evidence, it represents a reasonable view of the likely costs, benefits and impact of the leading options.

Signed: Kate Dearden.

Date: 1 June 2026

Summary: Analysis and evidence

Price base year: 2026

PV base year: 2026

This table may be reformatted provided the side-by-side comparison of options is retained	**1. Business as usual (baseline)**	**3. Targeted amendment of the statutory list (preferred way forward)**	**4. Add all proposed duties (for illustrative purposes only)**
Net present social value (with brief description, including ranges, of individual costs and benefits)	Used as baseline for analysis	**NPSV of -£196.1m** **Equivalent annual net direct cost to business (EANDCB): £22.8m** Key monetised impacts include: • One-off familiarisation costs to business of £28.1m. • Annual reorganisation costs to business of £17.7m of duties proposed to be added. • Annual administrative costs of £2.1m Because of the nature of the benefits of the policy measure, these are non-monetised. It is not possible to determine whether benefits outweigh the costs.	**NPSV of -£263.3m** **Equivalent annual net direct cost to business (EANDCB): £30.6m** Key monetised impacts include: • One-off familiarisation costs to business of £28.1m. • Annual reorganisation costs to business of £24.8m of duties proposed to be added. • Annual administrative costs of £2.9m Because of the nature of the benefits of the policy measure, these are non-monetised. It is not possible to determine whether benefits outweigh the costs.

Public sector financial costs (with brief description, including ranges)	Used as baseline for analysis	Public sector employers will incur costs where they provide time off for public duties. At the same time, public sector employees will benefit from this change where they make use of entitlement. Impacts have not been split between private and public sector employers because it is not known to what extent use of the entitlement will vary across sectors. Impacts on Acas services and tribunals are expected to be neglible.	
Significant un-quantified benefits and costs (description, with scale where possible)	Used as baseline for analysis	Key non-monetised impacts include: • Wellbeing benefits to employees, reflecting evidence from some studies that engagement in civic roles may support increased community engagement and wellbeing. • Benefits to employers through improve staff retention, reputational benefits and improved workforce capabilities by employees undertaking public duties. • Benefits to the general public by enabling a broader and more diverse pool of individuals to	Ibid.

		undertake civic roles contributing to more representative and effective public bodies and offices, leading to improved functioning of public services and community outcomes.	
Key risks (and risk costs, and optimism bias, where relevant)	Used as baseline for analysis	Use of the entitlement may vary across industries, sectors and/or regions. However, because of the nature of the entitlement, including the ability for employers to refuse requests that are not reasonable, the policy measure is not expected to have significant or adverse distributional impacts to businesses.	Ibid.
Results of sensitivity analysis	Used as baseline for analysis	Based on a lower bound estimate of administrative costs, we calculate an NPSV of -£186.8m and EANDCB of £21.7m Based on an upper bound estimate of administrative costs, we calculate an NPSV of -£231.9m and EANDCB of £26.9m	Based on a lower bound estimate of administrative costs, we calculate an NPSV of -£251.4m and EANDCB of £29.2m Based on an upper bound estimate of administrative costs, we calculate an NPSV of -£313.5m and EANDCB of £36.4m

Annex A: Methodology for estimating the cost of time off for public duties

We assume that businesses do not incur direct wage costs when employees take time off work to carry out public duties. We base this assumption on the fact that section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 does not require that employees are paid when they take time off for public duties. While employers may choose to pay employees at their discretion, we do not include this in our modelling.

Instead, businesses incur reorganisation costs from employees taking time off work as they seek to maintain output by reorganising work rather than losing it outright. We value these costs as the additional resource cost of managing the absence, which may include overtime premia for other staff, temporary cover, reduced efficiency from reallocating tasks, and HR or management time. For example, employing temporary cover staff may be more expensive than absent employees and may be less productive. This represents the cost of the time off work for public duties and is considered to be the main cost to businesses.

This approach assumes that a material share of the absent employee's workload is covered or rescheduled, and that the incremental costs reflect the 'friction' of covering and coordinating work rather than lost output. While reorganisation may be more difficult for unplanned absences, section 50(4) of the Act requires that time off be reasonable, so short-notice absences are unlikely. This enables employers to arrange cover, supporting the assumption that costs are mainly in managing the absence, not lost productivity.

The following sections apply this framework to each relevant public duty. For each duty, we estimate:

- the number of individuals eligible for statutory time off;
- the expected take-up of the provision;
- the average time commitment required; and
- the resulting cost to businesses based on the hourly reorganisation cost.

Population figures have been rounded to the nearest 10, total time commitment and business costs have been rounded to the nearest 1,000[25]. All calculation figures use underlying unrounded figures. Consequently, calculations using the rounded figures shown may not reproduce the totals exactly.

Local representation and community governance duties

Academy or academy trust governor

The National Governance Association (NGA) estimates that the current number of school governors, trustees, chairs of trustees, local committee governors, and chairs of a local committee for an academy trust is approximately 250,000[26]. Maintained school governors and chairs are entitled to time off work for public duties under the existing legislation. When school reforms were introduced under previous governments and academy trusts became more widespread, the meaning of a 'relevant education body' under section 50 was not updated. This resulted in individuals inadvertently losing their entitlement to time off to carry out their governance role when their maintained school became an academy.

[25] With the exception of total time commitment estimates for Corporate Joint Committee and Integrated Joint Board members, which have been rounded to the nearest 500 hours.
[26] A matter of time, National Governance Association, 2024.

Academies and free schools now make up 46.1% of primary schools (47.3% of pupils), 83.0% of secondary schools (82.7% of pupils), and 49.6% of state-funded special schools (46.4% of pupils)[27]. As such, amendment to expand section 50's list of offices and bodies to include volunteers who are trustees, chairs of trustees, local committee chairs, and governors for an academy trust represents an increase of approximately 99,210 volunteers brought back within scope of the Act, based on Department for Education Estimates[28]. Of these, many volunteers will be retired and are therefore not expected to make use of the entitlement. Data from the 2024 NGA Annual school and trust governance survey suggests that approximately 29% are in full time employment[29]. Furthermore, based on a breakdown of results from 2024 NGA survey data, we note that, of academy governors and trustees in employment, 55% of respondents said they were given time off by their employer for school governance duties (paid and unpaid) and 13% did not need time off. 31% respondents were refused time off or did not ask for time off.

Assuming that only volunteers in full time employment would make use of the provision, and adjusting for cases where volunteers are already receiving time off or don't require time off, we estimate that 9% of academy volunteers would do so[30]. This is based on the estimated 29% of volunteers in full time employment multiplied by the 31% who were refused or did not request time off. This implies that 9,000 volunteers would take time off work.

According to the NGA report A Matter of Time[31], volunteers spend an average of 17.2 hours per month (2.3 days per month) on their role. The sample included both maintained schools and trusts, and both chairing and non-chairing positions. This equates to 206.4 hours per year (27.6 days per year), which we use for our annual time commitment estimate for academy governance volunteers, following consultation with the Department for Education.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 1,869,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £13m per annum.

Academy trust member

At present, there are around 12,720 academy trust members. In line with the approach for academy and academy trust governors, we estimate that 9% of members would make use of the provision for statutory time off work. This suggests that 1,160 members would take time off work.

Based on consultation with the Department for Education, the assumed time commitment for each member is 3.5 hours annually.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 4,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

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[27] Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25, GOV.UK, 2025
[28] DfE internal analysis of the total number of trustees, chair of trustees, local committee governor, chair of local committee, based on published data from the governor fields dataset on the 'Get Information about Schools' page. Analysis was conducted in March 2026. As data is updated daily, figures may have changed since then.
[29] Annual school and trust governance survey, July 2024, National Governance Association.
[30] Volunteers that already have existing arrangements with their employers (currently receiving time off) or not requiring time off are not expected to make use of the provision. The costs to businesses from existing time off are already accounted for in the counterfactual and would therefore not incur any additional costs to business. Therefore, we assume only those that have not asked for time off or have been refused time off previously would make use of the entitlement (31%).
[31] A matter of time, National Governance Association, 2024

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £28,000 per annum.

Corporate Joint Committee member

At present there are around 30 Corporate Joint Committee members. We estimate that 35% of Corporate Joint Committee members would make use of the provision for statutory time off work, informed by engagement with Welsh Government. This suggests that approximately 10 members would take time off work.

Based on consultation with the Welsh Government, the assumed time commitment for each member is 48 hours annually.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 500 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £4,000 per annum.

Designated institution, further education corporation, or sixth-form college corporation audit committee member

At present there are around 210 relevant bodies in the further education statutory sector in England[32], each with an audit committee with an average size of 5 members. The total number of audit committee members for these further education corporations is therefore estimated to be 1070. In the absence of data provided on the take up of the provision for time off to perform this public duty, we estimate that 49% of audit committee members would make use of the provision for statutory time off work. This suggests that 530 members would take time off work. Audit committee members who are governors of an eligible further education corporation are already entitled to time off work to carry out their duties. Some audit committee members are not governors, being appointed from outside the education body. In the absence of data provided on the number of non-governor audit committee members, we assume that all audit committee members are not already entitled to time off work – this represents an upper bound estimate.

Based on consultation with the Department for Education, the assumed time commitment for each member is 9 days, or 66 hours, annually[33].

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 35,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £241,000 per annum.

Designated institution governing body member

At present there are around 20 designated institutions in the further education statutory sector in England and approximately 230 designated institution governing body members. Assuming each institution has one chair, this implies that 20 of the 230 governing body members serve as chairs. In the absence of data provided on the take up of the provision for time off to perform this public duty, we estimate that 49% of governing body members would make use of the provision for statutory time off work. This suggests that 110 governing body members would take time off work, approximately 10 of whom would hold chairing responsibilities.

[32] Collect Key Facts, Association of Colleges, 2026
[33] Total hours calculated using ONS data on average actual weekly hours of work for full-time workers (seasonally adjusted) for October 2025.

Based on consultation with the Department for Education, the assumed time commitment for each governing body member is 10 hours a month (120 hours annually). The approximate time commitment for a governing body chair is 4 days a month (351 hours annually)[34].

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 15,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £105,000 per annum.

<u>Fee-paid judge</u>

At present there are approximately 3,300 fee-paid judges. However, many fee-paid judges are self-employed and would not make use of the entitlement for time off work for public duties. In 2023, 41% of fee-paid judges were employed lawyers (measured as the proportion who are solicitors and chartered legal executives). The Ministry of Justice estimates that the proposed policy would increase the number of employed lawyers who become judges by approximately 230. Employed lawyers that are already acting as fee-paid judges are assumed to have existing agreements with their employers and therefore would not make use of the entitlement. In addition, we assume only employed lawyers working full-time would make use of the provision, which represents 85% of the population. This suggests that around 200 fee-paid judges would take time off work.

Based on consultation with the Ministry of Justice, the assumed time commitment for each fee-paid judge is 30 days, or 220 hours, annually.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 43,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £299,000 per annum.

<u>General Teaching Council for Scotland member</u>

At present, there are around 40 General Teaching Council for Scotland (GCS) members. In the absence of data provided on the take up of the provision for time off to perform this public duty, we estimate that 49% of GCS members would make use of the provision for statutory time off work. This suggests that 20 GCS members would take time off work.

Based on consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the assumed time commitment for each member is 42 hours annually.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 1,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £5,000 per annum.

<u>Integration Joint Board member</u>

At present, there are around 90 integration joint board members, of whom around 30 are voting members. As voting members are already covered under section 50 (as members of a local authority or local health body), the amendment would bring around 50 members in scope of the Act.

[34] Central estimate based on a monthly time commitment of 3-5 days a month.

In the absence of data provided on the take up of the provision for time off to perform this public duty, we estimate that 49% of integration joint board members would make use of the provision for statutory time off work. This suggests that 30 members would take time off work.

Based on evidence submitted by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, we assume a time commitment for each member of 18 hours annually (comprised of 6 boards meetings, with a 3-hour time commitment per meeting).

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 500 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £3,000 per annum.

Judicial Appointments Commission lay panel member

At present there are around 70 lay panel members, and the expected number is between 65 and 120. We use a central estimate of 80 to represent this range. The Judicial Appointments Commission estimates that up to 15% of members would make use of the provision for statutory time off work, based on the composition of existing panel members[35]. This suggests that 10 panel members would take time off work.

Based on consultation with the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Appointments Commission jointly, the assumed time commitment for each lay panel member is 20 days annually, with 8 hours of involvement per day.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 2,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £13,000 per annum.

National health body member

At present, there are around 290 non-executive board members across 25 arms-length bodies, 18 of which are not already included in section 50. Of the 18 arms-length bodies not included, there are around 240 members. In the absence of data provided on the take up of the provision for time off to perform this public duty, we estimate that 49% of board members would make use of the provision for statutory time off work. This suggests that 120 board members would take time off work.

Based on consultation with the Department of Health and Social Care, the assumed time commitment for each member is 30 days, or 220 hours, annually.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 26,000 hours taken off per year performing for this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £179,000 per annum.

National Landscape Conservation Board member

At present, there are around 60 conservation board members, of whom 30 are local authority members, 10 are appointed parish members, and 20 are national appointments. As local appointees

[35] The take up is expected to vary in the region of 10 to 20%, depending on the profile of new recruits.

and parish members are already covered under section 50, the amendment would bring 20 members in scope of the Act.

In the absence of data provided on the take up of the provision for time off to perform this public duty, we estimate that 49% of conservation board members would make use of the provision for statutory time off work. This suggests that 10 members would take time off work.

Based on consultation with the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, the assumed time commitment for each conservation board member is 30 days, or 200 hours, annually[36].

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 2,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £17,000 per annum.

Frontline public service delivery duties

On-call firefighter

In the year ending March 2025, there were 7,860 on-call firefighters in England[37], 1,306 in Wales[38], and 2,705 in Scotland[39]. In the absence of data provided on the take up of the provision for time off to perform this public duty, we estimate that 49% of on-call firefighters would make use of the provision for statutory time off work. This suggests that 5,860 on-call firefighters would take time off work, noting that this is an upper bound estimate as many on-call firefighters already leave their primary employment to attend operational incidents, at the discretion of their employer.

Based on consultation with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the assumed time commitment is 140 hours annually, consisting of approximately 10 hours spent on incidents and 2.5 hours of weekly training.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duties suggests a total of 820,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £5.7m per annum.

Police support volunteer

As at 30 September 2025, there were 5,964 police support volunteers in England and Wales[40]. In Scotland, there are approximately 800 Police Scotland Youth Volunteers (PSYVs), which includes both youth and adults[41]. While there is currently no data available on the split of youth and adult volunteers, we note there are 38 local groups, and each group can have up to 10 adult volunteers and 24 youth volunteers (aged between 13–17 years) across Scotland[42]. Applying this split to the total population, we estimate that there are approximately 240 adult volunteers who would be

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[36] Based on a monthly time commitment of 2-3 days per month. While some appointees may work more or less than this expected time commitment, this is expected to balance out on average across all members.
[37] Fire and rescue workforce and pensions statistics: England, year ending March 2025, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, December 2025
[38] Fire and rescue authorities operational statistics: April 2024 to March 2025, Welsh Government, October 2025
[39] Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics 2024-25, Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, August 2025
[40] Police workforce, England and Wales: 30 September 2025, GOV.UK, January 2026
[41] Volunteering - Special Constables & Police Scotland Youth Volunteers, SPA.POLICE.UK (accessed April 2026)
[42] PSYV members, Police Scotland Youth Volunteers, Police Scotland (accessed April 2026)

eligible to make use of the entitlement for time off work for this public duty. For simplicity, we assume that youth volunteers would not make use of the entitlement.

Based on stakeholder engagement with the Association of Special Constabulary Officers, we estimate that 50% of police support volunteers would utilise section 50 protections to formalise their service. This assumption is derived from evidence submitted to the Home Office and Department of Business and Trade by the Association of Special Constabulary Officers, who considered a combination of qualitative stakeholder feedback and utilisation of similar time-off policies. This suggests that 3,100 police support volunteers would take time off work.

The assumed time commitment is 56 hours per volunteer annually, based on consultation by the Home Office with the Association of Special Constabulary Officers (ASCO) of total volunteer hours in 2024.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duty suggests a total of 174,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £1.2m per annum.

Reserve forces member

At present, there are an estimated 32,000 reserve forces members. However, given that most training activity occurs outside of core working hours, and the role is ineligible for inclusion, we have not estimated the cost to business from persons taking time off work to perform this duty.

Special constable

As of 30 September 2025, there were 5,304 (headcount) in the 43 territorial police forces across England and Wales[43]. There are approximately a further 380 special constables in Scotland[44] and 211 in the British Transport Police as at September 2025[45].

Based on stakeholder engagement with the Association of Special Constabulary Officers, we estimate that 50% of the active Special Constabulary would utilise section 50 protections to formalise their service. This assumption is derived from evidence submitted to the Home Office and Department of Business and Trade by the Association of Special Constabulary Officers, who considered a combination of qualitative stakeholder feedback and utilisation of similar time-off policies. This suggests that 2,950 special constables would take time off work.

Based on consultation with the Home Office, the assumed time commitment is 16 hours per month, or 192 hours annually, noting that there is likely to variation between police forces.

Multiplying the number of eligible individuals for the provision by the expected uptake in the provision for statutory time off work and the total time each person is expected to take to perform their duty suggests a total of 566,000 hours taken off per year for performing this duty.

Multiplying this by our hourly reorganisation costs estimate suggests a total cost to UK businesses of £3.9m per annum.

[43] Police workforce, England and Wales: 30 September 2025, GOV.UK, January 2026
[44] Volunteering - Special Constables & Police Scotland Youth Volunteers, SPA.POLICE.UK, p. 7. There were 384 volunteers in 2024; we use 380 as our best estimate, based on input from stakeholders.
[45] Police workforce, England and Wales: 30 September 2025, GOV.UK, January 2026

Annex B: Administrative costs sensitivity analysis

Sensitivity analysis has been performed on the administrative costs of the policy measure to estimate the costs that would arise if all duties proposed in the review were to be included.

This analysis follows the method set out in Section 7. Section 7 estimates the administrative costs arising from requests for time off for added duties only. For the sensitivity analysis, we have estimated these costs using the same method but for all duties proposed in Scenario 2. A summary of these costs is provided in Table 7.

Table 7: Annual administrative costs

-	Lower bound	Central estimate	Upper bound
-	*5 minutes processing time*	*10 minutes processing time*	*30 minutes processing time*
Scenario 1: Recommended duties only (preferred option)	£1,047,000	£2,093,000	£6,279,000
Scenario 2: All proposed duties	£1,467,000	£2,935,000	£8,805,000

Note: Scenario 2 excludes reserve forces, which are not estimated in this Options Assessment.