

NHS SCOTLAND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMME



Making it easier for all NHS staff to participate in global citizenship, both here in Scotland and overseas.



NHS SCOTLAND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP HR GUIDANCE

Introduction

This guidance should be used by any employee who wishes to get involved, support or undertake Global Citizenship work. This guidance provides ways to support the aims of the NHS Scotland Global Citizenship Programme within the current NHS policy framework.

Background

The NHS Scotland Global Citizenship Programme aims to (a) support Scottish Government's existing international development commitments and (b) help and encourage staff to participate in Global Citizenship by ensuring better guidance, co-ordination and support. The [NHS Scotland Global Citizenship Framework](#) published on 8th October 2024, sets the direction for the Programme and articulates what Global Citizenship in NHS Scotland looks like. Recommendation 7 in the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow Report "[Global Citizenship in the Scottish Health Service](#)" recommended that "*NHS Scotland, in partnership with Health Boards, should consider defining support mechanisms for international volunteering*". This recommendation was based on engagement and feedback from NHS Boards that what would help them to support Global Citizenship was a "Once for Scotland" approach which applied consistent guidance to all staff.

Currently participation in Global Citizenship is undertaken using a range of leave offerings. Recommendation 8 of the above named report, set out that "NHS Scotland should consider articulating its expectations of Scottish health service employees when engaging in global health work" and this is a particularly important area given events such as the allegations of sexual exploitation by Oxfam staff in Haiti in 2018. This guidance updated in September 2024 was previously developed through a partnership working group including NHS Boards Deputy HR Directors, SG Health Workforce and Strategic Change, Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) to formalise existing good practice and guidance around leave policies, code of conduct and safeguarding.

Global Citizenship

Global Citizenship can be undertaken in a number of ways both here in Scotland and abroad. Traditionally it has been considered through the lens of overseas placements. However, staff from across the NHS contribute in multiple different and innovative ways including:

- Mentoring healthcare staff from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) who come and work in NHS Scotland in order to observe or develop new skills and learning.
- Providing remote support including, virtual learning, networks, coaching and mentoring using a wide range of technology from Scotland to staff in LMICs.
- The ways that teams support each other while a team member is working in an LMIC.
- Fundraising to support local initiatives and health partnership work.

- Voluntary work within Scotland to support refugees/asylum seekers
- Supporting healthcare system development in an LMIC with skills, experience and tools in areas such as project management, financial management and quality improvement.
- Supporting the introduction of new technology to LMICs, both virtually and in-country.

The Scottish Global Health Co-ordination Unit is available to provide support to NHS Boards and employees and can be contacted through the website; www.scottishglobalhealth.org, and by email at ScottishGHCU@gov.scot. There are resources on risk assessment for overseas work and insurance and visa requirements in the "[Doing it Well](#)" guide on the website.

Process for Staff Applying for Leave for Global Citizenship

All absences must be agreed in advance with the operational manager / clinical lead who will ensure that any planned absences will not impact on service delivery. Applications for leave can be made using the Global Citizenship Leave Request Form (Appendix One). This template is required to be completed for each request to undertake Global Citizenship alongside the relevant paperwork for the leave requested.

In order to qualify for leave members of staff must also agree to undertake and follow best practice in terms of induction, pre-departure briefings and training, including risk assessment, prior to engagement in global health work. These resources are available in the [Doing it Well Guide](#) on the website. On return from their trip, the staff member will be asked to capture their work by adding to the [health partnerships map](#).

All NHS employees who participate in Global Citizenship are reminded that they are required to continue to meet the NHS Scotland Code of Conduct and [Scottish Government Policy on Safeguarding for international development work](#). All requests from staff to participate in global health work should be considered and all reasonable efforts should be made to enable Global Citizenship participation.

Global Citizenship requests can be considered following receipt of the application form using one or more of the bullet points below;

- Where possible **flexible working** should be explored to examine if time can be freed up while minimising salary detriment. This could be for example for nursing staff amending shift rotas to allow leave. This may only be possible for a one to two week period maximum. i.e. the employee still works all of their contracted hours but just in a different pattern e.g. not spread over 4 weeks as usual but spread over 2 weeks. Agreement for a temporary flexible working approach would lie with the line manager.
- **Annualised hours** systems provide a way of organising working time by contracting with staff to work an agreed number of hours per year rather than a standard number

each week. The actual number of hours worked by a member of staff during the week will then be “flexed” to match workload requirements. As well as hours being varied week to week, they may also be varied seasonally and/or according to fluctuation of service demands. Annualised hours are used to match attendance of staff to the periods when they are most needed by services.

Annualised hours working can offer a flexible and efficient way of deploying staff by matching staffing levels more closely with variances in workload. For staff, annualised hours working offers greater flexibility and the opportunity to better manage working hours to allow individuals to tailor the time they spend at work, at home or supporting global citizenship.

- Request a period of **paid annual leave**. There should be mutual agreement between the member of staff and their manager. Requests for specific dates should normally be accepted and agreed and should only be refused if there are justifiable service/staffing reasons for so doing. Further guidance can be viewed in the national policy; [OFS Annual Leave Policy](#).
- All NHS Boards should support Global Citizenship as a form of development for NHS Scotland employees. Paid per year may be allocated as **study leave** (Continuing Professional Development) for an employee to participate in Global Citizenship work subject to approval from their line manager. Normal study leave arrangements would apply as per standard requests for study leave in each NHS Board.
- If the request is to support as part of the reserve forces then employers should attend to the request in line with the [Reserve Forces Training and Mobilisation Policy](#). While the Reservist is mobilised, the employer is not obliged to pay them earnings. However, staff who are mobilised will receive their full salary from the employer from the time of the call-up until the first full monthly salary has been paid by the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- An application can be made to undertake Global Citizenship work as a Career Break. This leave would be considered under the **NHS Scotland Workforce Career Break Policy** which can be viewed here [Career Break Policy Overview](#). To be eligible for a career break staff must have at least 12 months’ service with one or more NHS employers before an application can be made. Each application will be considered on its merits with a meeting to discuss it with the employee within 28 calendar days from the date of the application. When the manager agrees to the employee’s career break, both parties should sign a [Career Break Agreement](#). The written agreement should confirm the employee’s career break period. An employee’s request for a career break, or an extension to their career break, should be supported where possible.

A manager should only refuse a request for valid service or organisational reasons such as the adverse impact on service delivery and quality. A manager may decide to refuse the employee’s request. If so, their decision, including the reasons for

refusal, should be confirmed in writing within 7 calendar days of the meeting. The minimum period for a career break is 3 months, and the maximum period for a career break is 5 years across NHS employment.

- Consultant Grade Doctors may make an application to take [Sabbatical Leave](#). After 7 years' service in the consultant grade, a consultant will be eligible to apply for one period of sabbatical leave of up to 6 weeks or after 10 years' service, a consultant will be eligible to apply for up to 3 months sabbatical leave. If either of these options is granted with pay, no further period of paid sabbatical leave will be granted until retirement. Sabbatical leave has clear benefits for the individual and the service, enabling a period of development and refreshment.

The consultant applying for such leave must set out a stated case explaining how the leave will be used and how the sabbatical will benefit the NHS. The leave will only be granted subject to approved arrangements having been made to cover the absence of the consultant. An application must be made a minimum of 6 months in advance of the intended date of leave to be taken. Where an application for sabbatical leave is rejected, a period of 12 months must elapse before a fresh application can be considered. Applications will be considered by the Medical Director / Director of Public Health and must have the written support of the Clinical Director / manager.

- **Request a period of unpaid leave.** All requests for unpaid leave should be dealt with in accordance with the principles of partnership working in NHS Scotland. There should be mutual agreement between the member of staff and their manager. Requests for specific dates should normally be accepted and agreed and should only be refused if there are justifiable service/staffing reasons for so doing.

Impact on a staff member's terms and conditions such as annual leave accrual and pension will be as per the details in the particular national policy or Board policy that has been applied. Members of staff must make their managers aware of the potential need for Global Citizenship leave at the earliest opportunity and, where appropriate, keep in regular contact throughout the period.

Recording Leave

Leave should be recorded on the appropriate system for future reference and to enable monitoring of its fair application throughout the organisation. It must also be notified to Payroll to ensure appropriate payment and recording.

Grievance Procedure

No request for leave under this policy will be unreasonably withheld. Should a disagreement arise, the individual should refer to the policy that has been used to make the decision with regard next steps. The employee does however retain the right to raise a formal grievance. It may be preferable in such circumstances, however, for the manager to seek advice on

resolving the matter from an appropriate member of the HR Team and a Trade Union/or Professional Organisation representative.

Review and Monitoring

This policy and procedure has been assessed for relevance and screened for equality impact, to identify and mitigate, where possible, any potential for the policy and procedure to have differential impact on employees having regard to their differences, such as ethnicity, gender, trans. identity, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, literacy or belief.

This policy will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated every three years by the Scottish Partnership Forum (SPF), taking into consideration legislative changes and developments in good practice to ensure it meets the needs of all employees.

Appendix One

Global Citizenship Leave Request Form

This section to be completed by the employee:

Name:

Job Title:

Department/Ward:

Directorate/HSCP:

Description of Global Citizenship Activity:

Dates Requested:

Please tick type of leave / arrangement requested:

Flexible Working:
Annualised Hours:
Special Leave:
Annual Leave:
Study Leave:

Career Break:
Reservist Leave:
Sabbatical Leave:
Unpaid Leave:

Once the box is ticked then the standard policy paperwork must be completed as per the relevant NHS Scotland Workforce Policy.

=====

This section to be completed by the manager:

Authorising Manager:

Amount of Leave Authorised (incl. dates):

Type of Leave / arrangement authorised:

Paid: Unpaid:

If request rejected, please detail reason(s) below: