



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Interchange policy

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Introduction

The SPCB is committed to creating and sustaining an agile workforce to support, enable and promote the work of our Parliament and its Members. Critical to this achievement is continuous investment in relevant learning and development opportunities for staff which allow them to acquire new, or enhance existing skills to meet business needs and support individual career aspirations. Interchange is one such development tool and this policy sets out the arrangements which apply.

Interchange Arrangements and Principles

Interchange Arrangements

A range of interchange arrangements may be used to help equip members of staff appropriately. The SPCB supports and strongly encourages informal interchange arrangements such as:

- Job shadowing/involvement in projects - useful methods for helping to develop parliamentary awareness and understanding of particular roles and business issues; and
- Participation in professional networks/contact groups which support the exchange of good practice and facilitate benchmarking with external partners.

Such opportunities should align with needs identified through the PDP process and can be arranged in consultation with your line manager.

On a formal basis, exchanges and secondments are the most common form of interchange and refer to the temporary loan of a member of staff to another business area either internally or to an external organisation ("the host") for a specific purpose and for a defined period of time. An exchange involves a transfer where your substantive role is temporarily filled by an individual from the host business. The SPCB may also agree to a secondment as a one-way move.

Exchange/secondment arrangements support organisational agility by giving you exposure to different work practices and methods before returning to your substantive role with a fresh perspective, broader experience and transferable skills. They also allow the SPCB to fill internal staffing needs temporarily and to develop and maintain valuable links with external organisations. On a personal level, an exchange/ secondment can help you to achieve greater flexibility and diversity of opportunity for yourself in terms of your current role and your future career path.

The type of work which is generally appropriate to an exchange/secondment includes, but is not exclusive to: involvement in a new project; a review of existing processes or the introduction of new systems.

Principles

The following principles apply to all forms of interchange:

- All interchange arrangements must first and foremost be designed to meet a clearly defined business need. There should therefore be an explicit link between an interchange arrangement and your PDP with specific outcomes identified in advance;
- Heads of Office/Group will be responsible for assessing any potential conflict of interest associated with any interchange arrangement in accordance with the [Code of Conduct](#) and for authorising interchange arrangements in advance; and
- In accordance with the Equality Framework, the SPCB will not discriminate in the application of this policy and procedure in respect of age; disability; gender; race; nationality; ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sexual orientation; trade union membership or non-trade union membership. Reasonable adjustments will be put in place, as appropriate, to support staff with a disability.

The following principles apply specifically to exchanges/secondments:

- To be eligible for an exchange/secondment, you must have successfully completed your probationary period and have satisfactory conduct, performance and levels of attendance;
- Exchanges/secondments will normally be subject to a maximum time period of 12 months. The length of the arrangement will be determined with reference to the specified desired outcomes. Extension of the time period beyond 12 months may be authorised in exceptional circumstances;
- There will be clarity from the outset as to the responsibilities of all parties concerned with clear performance objectives agreed for both you and where applicable, your exchange partner, to achieve; and
- Providing there is a clear business case and the impact on the business can be managed effectively, requests to take up an exchange/secondment opportunity will not be unreasonably refused. The discretion of the relevant Head of Group will apply. Reasons for any refusal will be confirmed in writing and alternative opportunities for meeting the business need will be considered.

Initiating an Exchange/Secondment

Exchanges/secondments will largely originate from a combination of the workforce planning process led by Heads of Office/Group and the PDP process applicable to all members of SPS staff.

To support corporate agility, Heads of Office/Group have responsibility for managing interchange arrangements in a planned and proactive way. Heads of Office/Group will meet with their designated People Partner once a year to consider and assess staffing and skills requirements in the context of office plans and future challenges. Where there is an identified need to fill staffing and/or skills gaps, internal and external interchange arrangements will be considered as potential solutions. As appropriate, the People and Culture Office will support the Head of Office/Group in identifying whether internal or external arrangements would best meet the need and will help to initiate appropriate opportunities. Most interchange arrangements will initiate from this process. Similarly, where a vacancy arises within a business area, the Head of Group will consider if it would be beneficial to initially fill this staffing need on a temporary basis through an exchange/secondment opportunity.

In terms of external opportunities, links are already in place with a number of partner organisations which include other Parliaments and Assemblies. Additionally, the People and Culture Office can provide assistance in exploring opportunities with other external organisations on an individual basis.

The annual PDP process will identify where an internal or external interchange arrangement is likely to be an effective means of meeting individual development needs and career aspirations linked to business requirements. This data will be used by the People Partner to inform discussions with Heads of Office/Group. On an internal basis, this information will be used to facilitate 'matches' between members of staff and internal exchange/secondment opportunities on a temporary level transfer basis.

Typically, opportunities for internal exchanges/secondments or those within external partner organisations which exceed three months will be advertised via the Corporate Bulletin. In these circumstances, the People and Culture Office should normally be notified a minimum of one month in advance of advertising these opportunities to allow all aspects of the arrangements including salary and expenses to be negotiated and agreed in conjunction with the host. A short selection process will normally apply to identify the most suitable member of staff to undertake an internal or external interchange arrangement. This will generally take the form of expressions of interest assessed against pre-determined criteria although alternative means may be determined in conjunction with the host. Your Head of Office/Group must endorse your application.

Alternatively, providing a clear business case has been prepared and approved by the relevant Head of Group as an outcome of your PDP discussion, you may investigate relevant external options yourself. An exchange/secondment organised in these circumstances will not be opened up to a selection process. However, authorisation must be granted by your Head of Group and all aspects of the arrangements including salary and expenses must be agreed in principle prior to the commencement of such an arrangement. The People and Culture Office should be consulted from an early stage.

The People and Culture Office will then co-ordinate the development of an Interchange Agreement. Interchange Arrangement will cover all terms relating to the arrangement including the outcomes/objectives of the arrangement and the responsibilities and expectations of all parties. Any details specific to you as an individual, such as reasonable adjustments relating to a disability, will be reflected. This tripartite agreement must be signed by your Head of Office/Group, yourself and a nominated representative from the host business prior to the arrangement commencing.

Where the exchange/secondment is based abroad, the People and Culture Office can provide assistance in ensuring you meet any necessary immigration requirements.

During a secondment

You will be required to keep in touch with your line manager throughout your exchange/secondment. A preferred method and frequency of contact will be agreed in advance to ensure that you are kept abreast of developments in your business area and the wider Parliament as appropriate. Similarly, you are expected to keep up-to-date with significant developments in your substantive area of work such as legislative changes.

In the course of your exchange/secondment, your line manager may require you to attend work in your substantive business area for a specific purpose, for example, to participate in events relating to significant business change, strategic planning or development activity. In such circumstances, your attendance will be by mutual agreement with the receiving business.

The exchange/secondment will be reviewed every 3 months to ensure that it is operating effectively and is continuing to meet our business needs.

The SPCB reserves the right in exceptional circumstances to recall you to your substantive role, subject to the agreed notice period.

Returning to Substantive Role

At the end of your exchange/secondment, you have the right to return to the same job you had before, at the same place and in the same capacity. In exceptional circumstances and subject to the application of the SPCB's [Redeployment Policy](#), where your existing role is no longer required you may be offered another suitable vacancy at an equivalent level.

Prior to your return to your substantive role, your line manager will agree a tailored re-induction programme with you, in consultation with the People and Culture Office as necessary. In devising a suitable programme, account will be given to the length of time you have spent on secondment and the degree of change within your substantive role. Re-induction will typically involve bringing you up-to-date with developments and supporting you to refresh particular skills and achieve competence in new systems/processes.

It is crucial that the benefits of the learning and experience you have gained through your exchange/secondment are realised on your return and shared as appropriate. Your line manager will meet with you on your return to evaluate the benefits of the arrangement with reference to the specified desired outcomes. An on-going programme will be developed to allow you to embed your new/enhanced skills within your substantive role and/or in another way which will add value to the SPS such as undertaking a particular project. In terms of sharing your learning with others as appropriate, you may, for example, be asked to deliver relevant training/coaching, prepare a report assessing your experience and/or discuss the outcomes of the arrangement at a team briefing session. Where it is considered that the insights you have gained will add value to a wider audience, you may also be asked to deliver an SP Snippets session.

Impact on Terms and Conditions of Employment

Whilst on an exchange/ secondment, you remain an employee of the SPCB and your existing terms and conditions of employment will continue to apply including those relating to salary, continuous service rights and pension arrangements. If you have not yet reached the maximum of your salary scale, pay progression will continue providing your performance is satisfactory. Where you are undertaking an external secondment, the SPCB will pay your salary in the normal way and invoice the host, subject to agreed arrangements. If the external secondment post involves a higher level of responsibility than your current role and attracts a salary at a higher level than your salary band, you may be placed in the nearest equivalent SPCB grade in terms of salary, provided the host organisation is willing to reimburse the SPCB for the full salary costs at this higher level. At the end of your secondment you will return to the appropriate point on your substantive salary scale, which will take into account pay progression.

Your actual working practices may vary according to the needs of the receiving business, for example, in relation to patterns of work, leave arrangements/restrictions and reimbursement of travel and other expenses. Any such changes will be reflected in the Interchange Agreement which you will have the opportunity to review before accepting the terms.

You are required to comply with the SPCB's [Code of Conduct](#) throughout your exchange/ secondment but must also comply with the conduct rules of the receiving business.

You will be assessed in accordance with the host's Performance Management System during the period of your exchange/secondment. A report will be provided to your line manager who will add a supplementary paragraph, reflecting their regular review of your progress throughout the arrangement.

The SPCB remains responsible for managing any issues or difficulties relating to your attendance, conduct and performance. In advance of an external exchange/secondment, a mechanism will be agreed with the host business to advise of any need to consider invoking formal procedures as necessary.

You remain eligible to apply for internal vacancies within the SPS during an exchange/secondment.

Expenses

Reasonable expenses incurred as a result of the arrangement will be reimbursed. Exact provisions will be agreed prior to the commencement of the exchange/secondment. These will be tailored to the specific exchange/secondment opportunity with reference to the location and duration of the arrangement.

Monitoring and Review

To support fair and consistent application of the policy, the People and Culture Office will monitor applications for and use of interchange arrangements on an ongoing basis. This policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect experience and identified best practice.

For further information contact:

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