Reporting and Recording Trade Union Representatives and associated Paid Time Off

NHS Blood and Transplant

Frequently asked questions

1. Reporting Trade Union Representatives

1.1 How should trade unions notify NHSBT of any changes to trade union representative status?

The process for notification of both new or ceasing representatives is to contact HR Direct via one of the following methods:

- Telephone: 0117 322 7700
- Postal Address: NHSBT Filton Centre, 500 North Bristol Park, Northway, Filton, Bristol, BS34 7QH
- On-line Form
- Email: HRDirect@nhsbt.nhs.uk

1.2 How are the records maintained and up to date?

NHSBT will hold a central record of the representatives by union and this information will be made available to the relevant National SPC Representatives annually for validation and update to ensure complete and accurate records are maintained.

1.3 Do I need the commitment of my manager if I wish to become a union representative?

NHSBT has a commitment to working in partnership with recognised trade unions and this commitment is covered in the NHSBT partnership agreement available on People First.

To understand the commitment and ahead of agreement, managers may request to meet with you to understand and agree:
- Any routine requests – regular meetings/events
- Any normal or minimum notice periods required
- Service and Operational impact considerations – to enable discussion on how these may be mitigated

1.4 Do I need to seek my manager's approval for paid time off for trade union duties or activities?
Yes, you need to notify your manager of your request for time off, including the date and duration of time needed for the trade union duty or activity. This approval should be requested in advance with as much notice as possible, to enable your manager to be able to plan for operational cover.

1.5 Am I required to notify my manager of the nature of the meeting that I am attending?

It is helpful if you confirm to your manager whether you are attending a consultation meeting, partnership meeting, service improvement meeting, job evaluation, representing a union member or undertaking training and the likely duration of the time off that will be required.

You are not required to give the name of any members or their work base location that you are representing.

1.6 Are there circumstances in which my time off request will not be granted?

Ordinarily, time off requests are granted in line with our partnership agreement provided that arrangements for making a request with notice are adhered to. Granting time off takes into account the circumstances of the request and exigencies of the service.

The expectation is that turning down a request should be minimal and subject to review if the decision is challenged.

1.7 What should I do if my manager is concerned about my time release and has difficulty releasing me for union duties?

If after discussing the release time with your line manager, you are not able to agree the time off and you wish to escalate this, please discuss with your lead trade union representative in the first instance who may discuss with HR colleagues to seek to resolve and come to a mutual acceptable outcome.

2. Recording Trade Union Paid Time Off

2.1 Why are we required to collect data on time off for trade union work?

We have legal obligations arising from the "Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017" to annually report paid time off for trade unions on our website and in our annual accounts by 31st July each year. The data reported refers to the previous financial year, so in July we are reporting on paid time off during the previous financial period i.e.1 April – 31 March. (Any trade union related activities undertaken outside of paid employment are not reported.)

2.2 Who is responsible for entering the data and how?

Representatives are responsible for entering and submitting their own trade union hours worked. I.e. union work undertaken, which is during paid time and away from their normal workplace, via a separate login in EASY. Representatives are encouraged to input hours monthly and ideally within two months, particularly at year end to enable reporting of data within the published timetable.

2.3 What data is being collected?

Paid time off for trade union work undertaken is collected against the relevant category (full descriptions in the guidance document) to enable analysis of information and confirmation of the information for publication each year, following discussion with our Joint Officers.

The time worked is reported hours (rounded to the nearest half an hour). Travel time, if paid, should be included as hours worked.

2.4 How will the data be used?

Six-monthly data reports will be reviewed centrally by NHSBT SPC to allow time for data to be checked to ensure we can publish robust, complete data each year.

2.5 What is published and where?

NHSBT must publish the following information for each year, by 31 July each year.
- Number of employees who were relevant union officials
- How many employees who were relevant union officials spent a) 0%, b) 1 – 50%, c) 51-99% or d) 100% of their working hours on facility time
- Percentage of the total pay bill spent on facility time
- Time spent on paid trade union activities as a percentage of total paid facility time hours

This information is published on the Government website, NHSBT's corporate website, and facility time data is also included in the Annual Report for that year.

2.6 Who will have access to my specific data?

Your time off data is held in the electronic EASY system.

Your line manager will be asked to retrospectively authorise your paid time off via the EASY system in line with any other EASY records.

Reports on time off granted may be accessed by the People Directorate for time off reporting purposes.

Reports on time off data is also available to line managers for members of their team. It is not available to line managers from other departments.

Each National Union officer will receive a copy of the data for their relevant union and are encouraged to raise any questions which arise from this with representatives directly or with the Associate People Director, to enable any necessary and relevant monitoring, analysis and amendments to be made prior to publication.

2.7 Why is the paid time off recorded as "absence"?

This is a category definition within the EASY system and refers to a period of time away from your substantive role, rather than absent from work. The paid time off for trade union work is extremely valuable to NHSBT and is not in any way a period of non-attendance.

2.8 Which Union activities am I not required to report on EASY?

Union work which is carried out in your own time, the legislation requires us to report paid time off for trade union work only.

2.9 Which Union duties do I report on EASY?

Any union related work which is paid time away from your usual role and work.

2.10 Are my trade union release hours counted as being absent?

The EASY system is set up to indicate any paid time off from your normal role but this is a generic term to cover any type of time away so includes for example annual leave and sickness too. The trade union time off is not counted towards any absence targets, it is collected and used only to satisfy our legal requirements as a Public Body and is considered very valuable work for NHSBT.

3   Using the EASY Electronic System

3.1 How may I access my user ID if I have forgotten it?

Your user ID for the system is tu(underscore)_first initial + surname. So, for example Joe Bloggs would be tu_JBloggs. If you are unable to access the system, a call to HR Direct will enable you to access the information you need.

3.2 What do I need to do if I encounter an access issue when I log into EASY?

Please log a call with HR Direct to enable you to access the information you need to resolve this. Please have the specifics around the access issues to enable HR Direct to provide the best support.

3.3 How frequently should I do my EASY inputting for trade union paid time release?

Representatives are encouraged to input hours monthly and ideally within two months to avoid the task becoming onerous and also to help ensure that we meet our year end deadline for reporting of data within the published timetable. The deadline for recording to be complete for each year, at the end of March is mid-April to allow time for analysis and calculation for year-end account publication.

3.4 Why does the EASY system say the manager is authorising the data entry if they have already granted me the time release?

This is a process within the EASY system, for your manager to formally submit and authorise the entry you have made. Their approval is confirmation that the verbally agreed time release was actually taken.

3.5 Can my manager input the paid release time on my behalf?

Technically, this is possible on the system, but we have agreed based on union colleague feedback that union representatives will do their own inputting of their data retrospectively and so if you have examples where your manager has input the time off, please let your lead union representative know and they can discuss with HR to advise your manager they are not required to do this on your behalf.