



**Workforce**

## **Secondment Policy: guide for managers**

This guide will help managers to understand the Secondment Policy. It provides a framework to manage secondment requests and a mechanism to support the development of employees.

The following guide forms part of the standard for workforce policies. These policies apply to all eligible staff within NHS Scotland, regardless of the board they are employed by. The guide covers:

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# **What is the purpose of the Secondment Policy?**

NHSScotland recognises the importance of supporting development and the role of secondments in ensuring our employees can develop the skills to meet our changing service needs.

The Secondment Policy provides a mechanism for employees to request secondments and gives managers a framework to manage secondment requests and support employees during their secondment.

## **Who is covered by this policy?**

The Secondment Policy applies to all employees who wish to apply for a secondment.

## **Duration**

Secondments usually last for a minimum of 3 months up to a maximum of 2 years. However, there may be occasions when an employee requests to extend their current secondment or asks to be seconded for more than 2 years. You should carefully consider each request and its merits before deciding whether to approve the secondment or extension.

## **Manager responsibilities**

### **Releasing manager**

As a releasing manager, you should carefully consider any secondment requests you receive on a case-by-case basis and whether you can support the request. You should consider all secondment requests and only refuse a request if there are clear service reasons why it is not practicable.

In reaching your decision, you should consider the following factors:

- The duration of the secondment
- Does the role need to be backfilled? If yes, is it a like-for-like replacement, or can the duties be covered differently?
- What are the operational, service, or financial implications of backfilling or not backfilling the role?
- How can you support timely backfill arrangements to support the secondment request and minimise service delivery impact?

- If the employee is on a fixed-term contract, whether there are financial and contractual implications by extending the contract where the duration of the secondment is longer than their fixed-term contract.

## **Receiving manager**

As a receiving manager, you should:

- Engage with the secondee and releasing manager to agree on reasonable timescales for commencement.
- Support the completion of the Secondment agreement, liaising with both the secondee and the releasing manager.
- Arrange an induction programme for the secondee, including orientation to their new workplace, reporting arrangements, and objectives for the duration of the secondment.
- Support and manage the secondee in line with the arrangements detailed in the secondment agreement.
- Engage with the secondee and the releasing manager regarding any significant issues that arise during the secondment, such as attendance, conduct, or capability.
- Engage with the releasing manager to discuss any changes to the terms of the secondment agreement. This includes any requests for the secondment to be extended.

## **Procedure**

Employees who wish to be considered for a secondment are asked to speak to you as the releasing manager. It is an opportunity for them to explore whether a secondment can be agreed upon before applying for a post. Where this has not been possible, they must speak with you, as the releasing manager, to discuss their secondment request before accepting the offer of employment.

When you receive a secondment request, you should arrange to meet with the employee as soon as possible. This will help you to gain a fuller understanding of the request and the duration of the secondment.

Employees are asked to request a secondment before applying for a vacancy. If the employee has already been offered the post before doing so, you should be mindful of recruitment timescales when deciding and giving feedback to the employee.

## Secondment request supported

If the secondment request can be supported, you should notify the employee as soon as possible. You should also confirm the decision in writing within 7 calendar days of the meeting.

As the releasing manager, you should:

- Liaise with the secondee and the receiving manager to complete the [Secondment agreement](#).
- Process the secondment arrangements in line with your local procedure and systems.
- Make sure the employee is aware of and agrees to the terms and conditions implications of their secondment, including any impact on existing protection arrangements or changes to their pensions, such as special class status.
- Make sure there is continued communication with the receiving manager regarding fulfilling the secondment agreement.
- Engage with the secondee if any changes to their substantive post are made.
- Support the secondee throughout their secondment and when they return to their substantive post at the end of their secondment.
- Understand any implications arising from terminating a secondment agreement at completion or earlier.

When supporting a secondment, it is anticipated that the employee will usually return to their substantive post at the end of the secondment period. However, there may be times when this is not possible due to the nature, funding, or challenges around temporarily filling the role.

If it is known when the employee requests a secondment that they will be unable to return to their substantive post at the end of the secondment, you should make this clear to the employee to support their decision-making process around accepting the secondment opportunity.

Where a secondee is unable to return to their substantive role at the end of their secondment, a suitable alternative role should be sought, in line with the [Redeployment Policy](#). You, as the releasing manager, should discuss this with the secondee. The secondee should be made active on the employing board's redeployment register 3 months before the end of the secondment. The secondee will remain your responsibility during the redeployment period.

If a permanent employee applies for a fixed-term post on a secondment basis, and the secondment is approved, the employee will retain their permanent contractual status.

## **Secondment request not supported**

You are expected to carefully consider any secondment requests and, where possible, support them. Where you cannot support a secondment request, this should be communicated to the employee as soon as possible. You must also confirm it in writing within 7 calendar days of the meeting. The outcome letter should detail the reasons for refusing the secondment request and outline the right of appeal against this decision.

If you cannot support a secondment request, the employee may resign from their substantive position to accept the other role on a fixed-term basis. When a permanent employee resigns from a permanent role to accept a fixed-term post, they will lose their permanent employment status. This must be confirmed to the employee in writing.

[Please refer to the Fixed-term Contract Policy.](#)

## **During a secondment**

As the releasing manager, you should plan to keep in touch with the secondee throughout the period of secondment. These arrangements should be documented within the Secondment agreement.

You should act as the contact point and keep the secondee up to date with any developments, changes and general information about the team or service. Where there are significant service or departmental changes, the secondee should be invited to meetings or sent minutes.

If the secondee's substantive role changes while on secondment, you should make sure these changes are communicated to the employee. In cases of more significant change, you should arrange to meet with the employee. You must make them aware of the change in circumstances and the potential impact on them and their substantive role. Where there is a decision that the substantive post can only be filled permanently, the secondee must be advised and offered the opportunity to end their secondment.

As a minimum, secondees should be:

- advised of any changes to the role
- consulted regarding any changes to the role

- offered the opportunity to be considered for any posts available to the affected group

## **Extending a secondment**

If the receiving manager requires to extend the duration of the secondment, they should discuss it with the releasing manager before speaking to the secondee.

If you are the releasing manager and agree that the secondment can be extended, the receiving manager will meet with the secondee to discuss this. If the secondee agrees to extend the secondment, this should be confirmed in writing, and the Secondment agreement should be updated.

If you do not support an extension to the secondment, you should meet with the secondee to discuss this. You should confirm your decision in writing within 7 days of the meeting.

The secondee may resign from their substantive role to accept the extension as a fixed-term contract. If they do so, they should be advised in writing that they have lost their permanent employment status.

## **Ending a secondment early**

Every effort should be made to allow a secondment to run to the timescales outlined in the Secondment agreement. However, there may be occasions where a secondment ends earlier than expected. The Secondment agreement should confirm the notice required for secondees to return to their substantive role if needed.

The secondment may be ended early at:

- The releasing manager's request
- The receiving manager's request
- The secondee's request

### **At the releasing manager's request**

As the releasing manager, you may need to recall a secondee due to unforeseen changes or staffing issues within your service. You should discuss ending the secondment early with the receiving manager and the secondee. You should also provide the rationale for recalling the secondee and giving the notice agreed in the Secondment agreement.



## **At the receiving manager's request**

There may be occasions where you, as the receiving manager, are required to end a secondment earlier than expected. For example, if a substantive postholder returns early from maternity leave.

These situations should be considered on a case-by-case basis to determine one of the following:

- the secondee remains for the duration of the secondment
- the substantive post holder returns to the post

In these circumstances, the receiving manager should discuss the terms of the secondee's return to their substantive post with the releasing manager before agreeing to them. The secondee would then discuss this with the receiving manager.

## **At the secondee's request**

If the secondee wishes to end their secondment early, they should discuss this with the receiving manager in the first instance. This discussion should allow the opportunity to explore the reasons for this and any adjustments that can be made to support the employee in continuing the secondment.

If, following the discussion, the secondee still wishes to end their secondment, they should give the required notice outlined in the Secondment agreement. The written notice should be sent to both the receiving and the releasing manager confirming the reasons for the early termination of the secondment.

The releasing and receiving managers should discuss the arrangements for the secondee to return to their substantive post.

In situations where a return to the substantive post is difficult for service reasons, consideration should be given on a case-by-case basis to determine one of the following:

- the employee backfilling the secondment remains for the duration of the secondment
- the secondee returns to their substantive post

Alternative temporary arrangements should be made where necessary. Where the secondee's post no longer exists, the employee should be added to the redeployment register and assigned alternative duties. The terms of the Redeployment Policy would apply.

## **Returning to substantive role**

The releasing manager should ensure the secondee is reintegrated into the team at the end of their secondment. This should include a discussion to achieve the following:

- update the team member on changes within the team
- consider any training or development needs
- agree key work priorities or objectives

## **Changing seconded role to a permanent role**

If the seconded role becomes available permanently, for example, through the resignation of the permanent post holder, the permanent post would be advertised through the board's usual recruitment processes. The secondee would not automatically be entitled to be made permanent in that role and should apply through the recruitment process.

If the secondee is on the redeployment register, they may be given early access to the role through the redeployment process.

That organisation's policies will apply for secondments to organisations external to NHS Scotland.

## **Managing performance issues during a secondment**

The Secondment agreement should confirm what will happen in the event of, for example:

- long-term sickness absence
- frequent short-term absences
- capability or conduct concerns

The receiving manager should manage capability, conduct, or attendance concerns for employees seconded within NHSScotland. The secondee should be supported through the relevant NHSScotland Workforce Policy.

Staff seconded to an organisation outside NHSScotland should initially be supported in accordance with that organisation's relevant HR policies. Where more formal action is required, for example, in the case of a

serious conduct issue, process management would normally revert to the substantive line manager.

## **Appraisal and PDP**

It is important to confirm who will be responsible for the secondee's appraisal and personal development planning while on secondment.

Appraisal and PDP arrangements would usually be aligned with the practices within the receiving service or department. [For more information, please see the Personal Development Planning and Performance Review Policy.](#)

Arrangements should be confirmed in the Secondment agreement.

## **Terms and conditions**

### **Payment during secondment**

The secondee will be paid at the band or salary of the role as advertised. This may mean remaining on existing terms and conditions. As the receiving manager, you should make sure that the employee is clear about the salary that will apply.

When the secondee returns to their substantive post, they will revert to the terms and conditions that would have applied had they remained in their substantive role.

If the secondment is paid at a higher band, this service will be considered if the employee is promoted in the future.

### **Maternity leave**

If an employee becomes pregnant during a secondment, the terms of the NHSScotland Maternity Policy will apply.

A secondment request cannot be refused or ended early due to the secondee's pregnancy.

This would also apply to shared maternity, adoption and shared adoption leave.

### **Expenses**

Arrangements for the repayment of any expenses incurred during the secondment, such as travel expenses, should be detailed within the Secondment agreement. These costs would normally be the responsibility of the receiving manager.

## **Lease car**

There may be implications for existing lease car arrangements. Employees should seek advice from their local contact.

## **Equipment**

Arrangements for equipment should be detailed within the Secondment agreement. Unless otherwise agreed, the employee should return any equipment related to their substantive role, such as IT equipment. The receiving manager would normally be responsible for providing the equipment.

## **Pension implications**

A secondment to an alternative role may have pension implications. The releasing manager should inform the employee of this and signpost them to the Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA) for further information. [Visit the SPPA website.](#)

## **Continuity of employment**

Employees will retain continuity of employment throughout their secondment.

## **Maintaining professional registration**

If the employee requires a professional registration for their substantive role, you, as the releasing manager, should advise the employee of their responsibility to maintain their professional registration throughout their secondment.

## **Appeals process**

Employees have a right to appeal against decisions made regarding secondments. Reasons for appeal may include a decision to decline a secondment or refusal to extend a secondment.

The employee has 14 calendar days after receiving written confirmation of a decision to submit their appeal in writing, outlining the grounds for their appeal.