

Wellbeing hour pilot

1. What is a wellbeing hour?

The wellbeing hour is an innovative approach to improving the health and wellbeing of colleagues at work. It allows you to use up to one hour of your normal weekly working hours to undertake activities to improve your physical or mental wellbeing. This wellbeing time is part of your normal working hours and is available in addition to standard breaks, as well as being separate to other forms of leave.

We hope the wellbeing hour will benefit all colleagues and encourage you to use it in the interests of your health and wellbeing. Managers are expected to support their team members to use their wellbeing hour every week, as well as role model the use (and benefit) of it.

Wellbeing hour pilot

The wellbeing hour pilot was agreed as part of the [supplementary pay award for 2022 to 2023](#). It will run for an initial period of 12 months, from 1 July 2023. All [Scottish Government \(SG\) Main](#) employees including those on fixed-term appointments (FTAs), but not senior civil servants (SCS), special advisers and those employed in the SG Marine Bargaining Unit, can participate in the pilot. [Temporary and interim workers](#) are not able to participate in the pilot phase.

We hope effective use of the wellbeing hour will help shift our approach from treatment of health issues to prevention. Should the pilot be rolled out, we also hope the longer-term effects will help to reduce the levels of absence due to mental health and musculoskeletal-related causes.

Pilot review process

Throughout the pilot, we will review uptake of the hour and encourage its use to make sure it benefits colleagues and the organisation. We'll do this by gathering information from all eligible colleagues through surveys. This will be used alongside reviewing data about organisational health and performance, including overtime and flexi-balance.

Following the pilot period, we will undertake a review. During this time, the wellbeing hour will continue for those taking part in the pilot, until an agreed way forward is established.

The introduction of this pilot is without prejudice to the realisation of the established public sector pay policy position of moving to a 35-hour week as standard across the sector.

The wellbeing hour pilot will be implemented on a non-contractual basis and will not vary wider terms and conditions including hours of work. For example, hourly pay rates (including overtime rates) will continue to be based on a divisor of 37 hours.

2. Using your wellbeing hour

The wellbeing hour consists of one hour per week (pro-rated for part-time colleagues) and is part of your normal working hours. You can use the hour in a full block, or you could break it up and spread over the week. To ensure you benefit from the wellbeing hour, it should be taken in the working day. When planning how to use your hour, we encourage you to use it in a way that will provide the maximum benefit to your personal wellbeing, whether mental or physical. If you work part-time, a [wellbeing hour calculator](#) is available to download and work out your entitlement.

You may be able to add the time to lunch breaks or take it at the beginning or end of the day – as long as it is between working hours (within the flexi bandwidth of 7am and 7pm). If you want to split your wellbeing hour, we recommend taking a minimum of 4 x 15 minutes (for full-time colleagues). This will ensure the time is still beneficial, allowing you to undertake activity linked to your wellbeing.

Agreeing your wellbeing hour with your manager

You will need to agree with your manager when to take your wellbeing hour, taking business needs into consideration. You should give as much notice as possible, to ensure there's no impact on business requirements or the needs of other team members. Your manager may not always be able to accommodate a request, or they may not be able to agree it as a regular set time. Similarly, a request agreed on one occasion may not be agreed on another occasion if something has arisen or a pre-planned work commitment is due to take place. Managers and teams are expected to work together to adopt the pilot in a way which works best for local need.

Wellbeing hours can't be:

- carried forward week-on-week ('banked' as additional flexi time)
- used to directly increase your flexi credit or reduce your debit

It can only be used to offset time spent on wellbeing activities during your normal working hours.

The wellbeing hour should not be used instead of any breaks, and you still need to take a minimum of a 30-minute break if working more than six hours in a day.

If you're off part of the week (annual leave, flexi leave, sick leave) you can still use your wellbeing hour as per your contracted hours. However, you cannot use it if you are off a whole week.

3. Recording your wellbeing hour on Flexi Online

You should record your wellbeing hour on [Flexi Online](#) by making an adjustment request. This will help us evaluate its use and uptake.

To do this when in [Flexi Online](#):

1. Click on the 'Clock Card' icon
2. Click on 'Modify' under 'Abs Code' for the day you want to apply the wellbeing hour update.
3. Click on the drop-down menu in the 'Abs Code' column and select 'Wellbeing Hour'.
4. Enter the amount of time the 'Abs hrs' column, then click on the 'Submit' button.
5. The request will then be sent to your flexi supervisor for approval, if you are a flexi self-authoriser your balance will be updated immediately.

You can also [view screenshots of this process](#).

Examples

If your normal working day is 8am to 4pm and you use your wellbeing hour from 8am to 9am, your flexi will have a clock-in of 9am and a clock-out later that day at 4pm. The following day, you'll log in and submit an adjustment request for one hour to offset the use of the wellbeing hour between 8am to 9am.

If you're using your wellbeing hour during your working day you should clock out and in for the hour, as well as recording your lunch time. For example, if your normal working day is 8am to 4pm and you want to use your wellbeing hour from 9:30am to 10:30am, you'll need to clock out for this hour at 9:30am and then clock back in at 10:30am. You'll also need to clock out and in for your standard lunch break. The following day, you should log in and submit an adjustment request for one hour to offset the use of the wellbeing hour between 9:30am to 10:30am.

Once your manager approves the flexi credit request (for B Band colleagues and below), your flexi balance will be as expected.

Your manager needs to authorise the wellbeing hour on the Flexi System for B Band and below, so we can evaluate the pilot. The adjustment and/or the authorisation can be done retrospectively, as you will already have had a conversation with them to agree when you will use your hour.

Once your manager approves the flexi credit request (for B Band colleagues and below), your flexi balance will be as expected.

This will change when the new flexi system on Oracle Cloud is introduced, and Band B colleagues can approve their own updates. Guidance will be updated to reflect this when available.

For C Band colleagues, you can amend your hours in the Flexi System to accommodate for your wellbeing hour.

4. What to use your wellbeing hour for

As long as what you do benefits your wellbeing, how you use the time is up to you.

Wellbeing encompasses a broad range of things which can relate to both mental and physical wellbeing.

Some examples of things you can do are:

- connect – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.
- be active – you don't have to go to the gym, you can go outside and enjoy fresh air and nature. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.
- keep learning – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike?
- give to others – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. These acts can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.
- be mindful – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

There is no requirement for you to tell your manager how you are spending the time. The purpose of the wellbeing hour is to improve your individual wellbeing, but you can also use the time jointly with other colleagues so you all benefit at the same time. Consideration will need to be given to business requirements to determine if and when it is possible to do this. The key is to do something that will help you gain the maximum benefit from the wellbeing hour.

Find inspiration

Check out the [guidance on sports and fitness](#) to find out what facilities and offers are available to you.

Read the [social, volunteering, and charity pages](#) for examples of activities undertaken in the workplace and outside, and examples of volunteering activities.

5. Wellbeing hour - guidance for managers

We are piloting the wellbeing hour as there are international studies which indicate working fewer hours can lead to improved employee wellbeing and increased performance within an organisation. During this pilot we are only looking to ensure there is no decrease in productivity and if we have similar results in relation to improved employee wellbeing.

Managers are expected to encourage their team members to use their wellbeing hour every week and role model the application of it. To make sure all your team are benefiting from it, we expect you to monitor and support its use across your team.

This trial is due to take place in all areas of Scottish Government Main, including operational areas. Managers of operational teams are expected to plan for the impact of the pilot and agree locally any arrangements that may be required to allow colleagues to take the wellbeing hour.

Discussions with your team members

Your team members will discuss with you when they intend to use the wellbeing time. They may do this as part of your regular catch-up conversations with them or separately. You need to consider when they would like to take the time and whether this might impact on a deadline or a meeting as it shouldn't have an adverse effect on carrying out business. If it doesn't, you should agree to the proposed timing.

If you think there may be a better alternative time that works for both the colleague and the business, you can suggest that instead but be reasonable in your proposal. Above all, don't say they can't take it - after all this could only be 30 mins depending on how your team member is suggesting they use it. You should ensure authorisation is given to your team members on when they will use their wellbeing hour – for example on MS Teams or email.

Authorising the wellbeing hour on the Flexi System

You will need to authorise the wellbeing hour (for Band B colleagues and below) on the Flexi System, with the adjustment being authorised retrospectively.