

Sports facilities policy

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Owner: **Assistant Director, People Services**
Responsible work team: **Policy, Pay and Reward**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the Brigade's arrangements for sports facilities and applies to employees.
- 1.2 The Brigade recognises that its staff may participate in sporting contests which may be linked or provide the opportunity to be linked with the Brigade. This may be at an elite level and may reflect positively on the Brigade through association.
- 1.3 Your participation in sporting contests may require a time commitment on your part beyond normal work commitments and require your absence from work for the events. The Brigade can support you with paid time off during your working days referred to as sports facilities leave. In return for this support, the Brigade would require you to work some of this time back (reciprocate) by attending Brigade related events outside of your normal working days where you can represent the Brigade because of your sporting association.
- 1.4 This policy should be applied in line with the Brigade's values:
 - Service – We put the public first.
 - Courage – We step up to the challenge.
 - Learning – We listen so that we can improve.
 - Teamwork – We work together and include everyone.
 - Equity – We treat everyone fairly according to their needs.
 - Integrity – We act with honesty.

2 Sporting events

- 2.1 Elite level sporting events for the purposes of this policy is a general term to cover non-emergency services participation in a sporting event at a high level. Events at a minimum of full county level representation may be classified as elite sporting events.
- 2.2 The type of sport is also important, as not all sports will attract the same level of participation or professional recognition. Sports that receive direct government funding or have governing bodies that are affiliated to Sport England may be considered. If a sport falls outside this umbrella, then it may also be considered by a panel. Including if the sport has a profile which the Brigade may use to promote or further its work across London communities. Sports will also receive consideration that have a particular cultural significance or a sport popular with a group the Brigade is trying to engage with.
- 2.3 Participation in elite level sports may also attract remuneration or funding directly to the individual. While this will not preclude participation, should money be earned, an individual who is sponsored or funded from some other body they will still need to apply for permission, in line with the provisions of Policy number 551 - Outside employment policy.
- 2.4 Events recognised by Fire Sport UK or the LFB Welfare Fund will normally be ineligible for Sports Facilities Leave, but staff may seek release via current (unpaid) provisions under Policy number 512 - Special leave and public duties leave policy. Participants in National Fire Service or cross service teams may apply and each case would be considered on its merits.

3 Accommodating requests and conditions

- 3.1 Sports facilities may include flexibility in working hours and the granting of paid leave when there is the need for a partial day or full day away from work. For operational staff following a watch, the maximum disruption to a shift without a full day's leave requirement is 90 minutes at the start or end of a shift. Full leave days may be granted in addition to the leave entitlement. Station based staff may exceptionally be released above their leave allocation, although all sports facilities are a privilege, not an entitlement for staff. Agreement is subject to the following conditions:
- 3.2 The first condition is that the requirement for time off must not have an adverse impact on service delivery. Should it do so, the sports facilities will have to be withdrawn. Staff across all occupational groups are eligible to apply, provided they are not under suspension, or have a disciplinary warning/sanction outstanding. If staff are subject to a conduct investigation, the outcome may be taken into account and permission may be withdrawn. A poor sickness record may also preclude eligibility.
- 3.3 Other conditions include:
- Events may not occur at the beginning or end of a period of sickness absence. Sports facilities previously granted will need to be converted to another type of leave, with a default of annual leave if this is the case. The exception to this would be if the participation itself gave rise to an injury that was followed by the sickness absence. In such circumstances the injury cannot be regarded as a Due To Service (DTS) injury.
 - The conduct at the event must be of a professional standard.
 - Where staff are released for sports facilities, they will repay time granted, in line with the scales contained in the paragraph 6. A failure to do this within the prescribed time will result in future sports facilities permission being withdrawn.

4 Conduct

- 4.1 Outside of the events themselves, the conditions for granting sports facilities include the employee's conduct. The Brigade retains the right to withdraw time off granted for sports facilities for any reason but will endeavour to do so with reasonable notice.
- 4.2 The Brigade may require that staff use their own leave if they have acted in a manner detrimental to the reputation of the Brigade. This may include behaviour warranting disciplinary or managerial investigation; depending on the nature and status of the investigation and its finding, staff may be precluded from sports facilities on these grounds, or have it withdrawn.
- 4.3 If staff are subject to a conduct investigation, the outcome may be taken into account and permission may be reviewed and withdrawn.
- 4.4 In relation to the sport, where the employee is suspended or banned for violent conduct, or suspected of cheating by some means, including but not limited to substance abuse, or the use of banned substances for the purpose of performance enhancement, that such action may result in the suspension or withdrawal of the sports facilities, temporarily or permanently. Further, this may give rise to internal disciplinary action, in line with Policy number 550 - Alcohol and drugs policy and/or the disciplinary procedure as laid out in Policy number 392 – Discipline (Conduct) procedure.
- 4.5 The expected conduct during and around events for representative sport, or the time off for elite level sport, is that the individual will conduct themselves in a professional manner and apply workplace standards. Any inappropriate conduct at an event may be subject to the disciplinary procedure as set out in Policy number 392 – Discipline (Conduct) procedure.

- 4.6 Sport events bring people together socially as well as competitively and the sharing of common experiences and interaction is a positive outcome of this. If staff choose to drink alcohol at an event, there is no outright restriction on the consumption of alcohol, but staff are still expected to conduct themselves appropriately. Inappropriate behaviour at such an event, e.g. being heavily under the influence of alcohol, may be regarded as gross misconduct and subject to the Brigade's disciplinary policies, and could potentially lead to summary dismissal from the Brigade.
- 4.7 Staff should be mindful that when attending an event which is held close to the time when they are expected to return to work, that the requirements within Policy number 550 - Alcohol and drugs policy still apply.

5 Reciprocity

- 5.1 Reciprocity is the principle that after being granted paid time off from the workplace, there is a future requirement on the staff member who benefits to participate in events that support and promote the activities of the Brigade in return. This may include outreach type work including event publicity, open days, recruitment days, community safety work or representing the Brigade at borough events.
- 5.2 Therefore, if an individual is granted between two and six days of sports facility leave, this would require the equivalent of one day, or a shift equivalent repayment (unpaid). Similarly, 7 to 14 days would require two days or shift equivalent repayment (unpaid) within the same leave year normally, but at the most within a calendar year of the first day of sports facilities. A failure to honour this may result in withdrawal of any future facility. Individuals are likely to be asked to provide proof of their involvement in the reciprocal events.
- 5.3 It is the individual's responsibility to maintain a record of any activities they attend under these arrangements. Records may be in the form of an email from a station commander or above, or the most senior manager in attendance at the event, or the event organiser. The email should confirm their attendance and full participation, including a description of the event, the date and the duration. If an event ends early for reasons beyond the individual's control, such as inclement weather, this can still be recognised as being a whole day or single shift reciprocated.
- 5.4 Proof of providing support to these events will form part of the annual renewal request, where a request may be agreed, declined, or allowed for a period until the anniversary of their first instance of the sports facilities leave. The assistant director/head of service or AC may delegate responsibility to the individual's line manager to ensure days have been reciprocated. The line manager must confirm this and then, as appropriate, advise to extend permission for the full year, or withdraw permission. There is no right of appeal, but staff can re-apply 12 months after permission is withdrawn, provided sufficient days have been reciprocated.
- 5.5 The provision of sports facilities are non-contractual and the Brigade reserves the right to amend or withdraw it at any time, from one or all staff groups, dependant on the circumstances that led to the change.

Process

- 5.6 Staff who wish to apply for sports facilities should complete the application form on an annual basis and must re-apply for permission before the year has elapsed. All applications will require the signature of their line manager (at station officer, FRS D, or Ops manager grade level) and completed applications must then be forwarded, including any detail the line manager considers relevant to support their request. Representations may be made to the assistant commissioner for fire stations (ACFS), or the head of service if not within the ACFS's remit, or a panel convened by the head of service for this purpose.

The form can be located via Templates & Resources searching for 'Annual Sports Facilities Request.'

- 5.7 Decisions are not appealable, and permission may be withdrawn without notice. This may be for any reason, including staff shortages affecting the day to day running of the Brigade, disciplinary investigation, previous conduct, behaviour unaligned with expected standards at sporting events, or activity which is damaging to the Brigade's reputation, such as the use of recreational or performance-enhancing drugs.
- 5.8 This list is not exhaustive, and in the event of a staff member being suspended from their sport, Brigade permission will be automatically suspended, either pending the suspension's outcome with the appropriate sporting body, or the conclusion of the suspension. In either case the individual is responsible for notifying the ACFS, or assistant director/head of service, or delegated staff member of all details and developments. A failure to do so in a timely manner may result in all future sports facilities being withdrawn.

Release and notification

- 5.9 The timing of the absence from work may be an issue for reasons of leave allocation, cover arrangements, workload or a failure to provide adequate notice. Therefore 28 days is the minimum notice required, otherwise it is difficult to re-arrange many aspects of work. Staff who apply are expected to be proactive and should ensure any request has been agreed by their appropriate manager. Applicants are expected to take personal responsibility for their request and not rely on others to pass on or relay requests. Staff are also encouraged to apply as soon as they are aware of future event dates and times.

6 Operational staff application process

- 6.1 The 28-day notification requirement is based on the applicant already possessing a current 12 month agreement from their assistant director/head of service (see paragraph 3 below). For uniformed operational staff in the majority of cases this will be the AC Fire Stations, or designated officer. The application will require agreement from their line manager (sub officer or above) in the first instance as will all subsequent requests within the 12 month period.
- 6.2 With agreement from the local line manager, the employee is to submit an e-mail to PROP@london-fire.gov.uk. If the request can be accommodated the information will be entered by them (only) on to STARS. If the request cannot be accommodated, then EPT will notify the individual by email that the request has been declined.

7 FRS and Control staff application process

You will require agreement from your line manager and provide the annual (renewable) agreement approved from your assistant director/head of service or DAC Control, this will be managed locally on an ongoing basis.

8 Annual re-application

- 9.1 All staff will need to re-apply to their respective head of service/assistant director, DAC Control or assistant commissioner on an annual basis. The applicant will provide proof of the activity or activities they have undertaken in reciprocating sports facilities in the current year, along with a record of days taken as sports facilities leave. The authorising manager will have three options in these circumstances, pending proof being provided. They may approve and extend for a further 12 months, decline the request outright, or partially extend permission pending proof that all days have been reciprocated.

- 9.2 As the requirement to reciprocate runs from the first day sports facilities leave is taken, the 12 months reciprocation window may fall beyond the date they need to reapply. In this instance the authorising manager may partially extend permission until the first anniversary of that date.

9 Records

- 9.1 Please send records by email to RecordsServices@london-fire.gov.uk. Records will be kept on your electronic personal record file (e-PRF) and retained in accordance with Policy number 788 - Electronic personal record files (e-PRF) policy. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with Policy number 351 – Data protection and privacy policy.

10 Help and support

- 10.1 Please contact the HR Helpdesk on extension 89100 option 3 and by email to IT.HR@london-fire.gov.uk.
- 10.2 This policy may also be available on request in other alternative accessible formats as set out in Policy number 290 – Guidance note on translation and interpretation. Please contact Communications on extension 30753 and by email to communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk to discuss your needs and options.
- 10.3 The Brigade invites your engagement so that it can learn so if you have a suggestion that can improve this policy then please submit your idea via the Staff Suggestion Scheme on Hotwire as set out in Policy number 887 – Staff suggestion scheme. Any changes do need to go through the agreed engagement, consultation, negotiation or governance requirements.

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	22/04/24	SDIA	L – 19/03/26	HSWIA	19/03/26	RA	N/A
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 2, para 2	Elite and Brigade representative sports combined into section 2 from sections 5 and 6.	02/01/2025
Throughout	Reviewed against 2025 Grey Book 7 th edition.	15/05/2025
Page 5, para 7	Control staff to send requests to PROP removed.	04/08/2025
Page 7	SDIA and HSWIA updated.	23/03/2026

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Sports	
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Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification