



HM Government

Employee Guide

A close-up portrait of a female police officer. She has brown hair pulled back and is smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a dark, tactical police uniform with a vest. A blue radio is clipped to her shoulder. On her chest, a badge is visible with the word 'POLICE' partially seen. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Becoming a Special Constable

A Guide for Employees



Where do I start?

If you enjoy a challenge, solving problems and would like to contribute to keeping your community safe, whilst developing a wider range of skills, then volunteering in policing could be for you.

There are many different ways you can contribute to the police. Becoming a Civil Service volunteer Special Constable could be one way.

This guide can help you find out more about what Special Constables do and how you can join.

Special Constables are men and women who give up their time to support and work alongside the regular police force. They perform a vital link between the local community and their police force, and make an important contribution to keeping our communities safe.

They are trained volunteers, who come from all walks of life - they are teachers, taxi drivers, accountants and Civil Servants to name a few.



As a volunteer Special Constable, you will:

- work with a police force, including its regular officers, staff and other specials
- upon completion of your initial foundation training, have the same powers and responsibilities as regular officers
- receive a full police officer uniform that will be provided free of charge
- work towards 'Independent Patrol Status' in your first two years, by demonstrating your competency in a range of tasks
- be reimbursed for any expenses you incur whilst volunteering
- continue to be employed by the Civil Service and be offered special leave to cover some of your duties.



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Why become a Special Constable?

“As a Citizen in Policing, you will discover loads about your local community and help make a positive impact. You will get involved with local policing initiatives, make new friends, work as a team and grow in confidence”

Special Inspector Alex Bidolak

Joining the Special Constabulary opens up a world of opportunity like no other.

Through participating in the exciting world of policing, you will develop new skills and qualities and build on those you already possess. These include:

- self-confidence
- communication skills
- the ability to remain calm under pressure
- swift and effective decision-making
- time management
- leadership.

These skills can better equip you for challenges in other areas of life and can be applied to your role in the Civil Service.

Being a Special Constable provides the chance to learn more about your community by seeing it from an entirely new perspective. It gives you the opportunity to give something back to your local area, making it safer and enhancing relationships between the public and the police.

You will work as part of the policing family and many Special Constables create long-lasting friendships with colleagues.



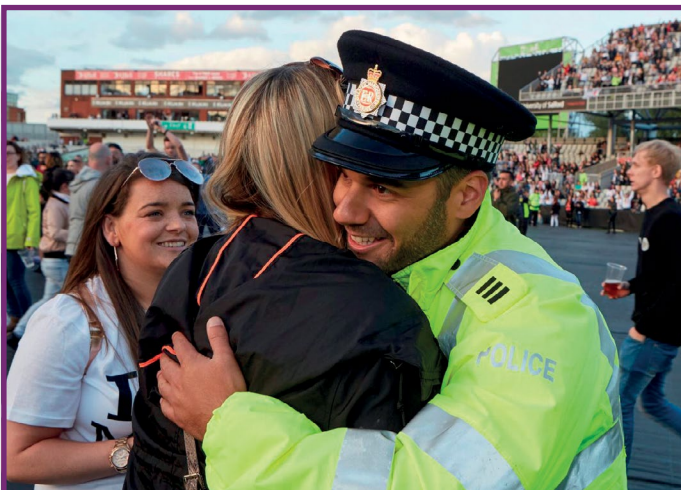
Am I eligible?

Being a Special Constable requires integrity, honesty, tact, leadership and excellent communication skills.

Applicants are welcome from all backgrounds and are not limited to any particular age group – life experience is an important attribute for specials.

Basic eligibility requirements for joining the Special Constabulary are the same as for joining the regular police force.

- You must be over the age of 18.
- There is no upper age limit.
- You will need to be reasonably fit and in good health.



In Addition

- there are no minimum or maximum height requirements
- there is no formal educational requirement, but you will have to pass written tests
- only applications from member states of the European Economic Area, or other nationals who have leave to enter or remain in the UK for an indefinite period, will be accepted
- convictions or cautions will probably make you ineligible, but this will depend on the nature and circumstances of the offence
- you must be judged physically and mentally able to undertake your duties



What is the time commitment?

There are over 11,000 Special Constables volunteering across England, Wales and Scotland.

Generally speaking, most forces would expect you to perform around 200 hours a year, which is approximately 16 hours a month.



Training

Initial learning for the Special Constabulary (IL4SC) is a national programme designed to take Special Constables to the point of safe and lawful accompanied patrol. It includes personal safety and first aid training. This will usually take around 20 days or 4 weeks to complete.

Each force has its own training schedules, with some offering intensive four week courses, or a mixture of evenings and weekends.

Each local force is responsible for your on-going Special Constable training.

You must be willing to undertake an initial training course and attend regular training at your chosen division or police force in order to maintain your skills.

Once you're trained

Once your training is complete, you will arrange when you would like to turn out with supervision to fit in with your other commitments. This will involve a Defined Training Period, during which you will undertake a range of coached duties with more experienced officers.



What roles are available?

In many forces, you could be involved in policing major incidents and providing operational support to regular officers.

Depending upon your individual force, you may:

- conduct foot patrols
- respond to 999 or 101 calls
- tackle anti-social behaviour
- tackle alcohol-related incidents
- assist at the scene of accidents, fights or other public order offences
- enforce road safety initiatives
- conduct house-to-house enquiries
- provide a policing presence at major events (e.g. festivals, sports, community and religious events, demonstrations)
- present evidence in court
- participate in specialist operations
- spend time at local schools educating young people about crime reduction and community safety
- get involved in specialist teams – see right.

Responsibility grows with experience

Once you have the right training and practical experience as a Special, you can take on more responsibility and training is available on an on-going basis. Some forces have rank structures within their Special Constabularies so volunteers can be promoted as their experience grows. You will then supervise and support other Specials. This ensures you're constantly challenged and learning new skills

Specialist Teams

For those who want to take on more specialised roles after gaining Independent Patrol Status, there may be the opportunity to join specialist teams within your local constabulary. This varies from force to force, but could include:

- drug enforcement operations
- surveillance and operational support
- rural policing
- marine support
- dog units
- roads policing
- aviation policing
- royalty and specialist protection
- tactical pursuit and containment
- inspecting the carriage of hazardous materials.



How do I apply?

“I may not be able to change the world but this is a role where you really can make a difference to somebody’s life and this is what I really thrive upon.”

Special Chief Inspector Ola Ajani

You will need to search for vacancies by selecting your chosen force.

Please note you can only apply to one force at a time.

Eligibility can vary from force to force, so don't forget to check the precise eligibility criteria with your chosen force before applying.

Arrangements for joining Police Scotland or the British Transport Police as a Special Constable may be slightly different. For further information please visit:

www.scotland.police.uk/recruitment/special-constables/

www.btp.police.uk/about_us/volunteering/specials.aspx





What happens after I apply?

Most forces will require you to take the National Recruit Assessment Process for the Special Constabulary. This assesses candidates against the role-related competencies needed to be a Special Constable.

While most forces now run this process, some may have their own recruitment processes in place.

Candidates applying to forces that have adopted the Specials National Recruit Assessment Process may be required to fill in a Competency Based Questionnaire (CBQ), which will be part of the application form.

You will need to take a Situational Judgement Test where candidates are asked to use their judgement to rate the effectiveness of response options to a number of scenarios, as well as a written test and a competency-based structured interview. Some forces may additionally conduct second interviews. Further information about the Specials National Recruit Assessment Process can be found here: <https://recruit.college.police.uk/Special/Pages/apply.aspx>



Candidates can expect to take the basic fitness test that regular officers take to establish their fitness for the role. Forces may also request a medical examination that is performed either by the force occupational health unit, or by your GP. Eyesight is particularly important and you may need to have your eyes checked by an optician as part of your assessment.

For further information about the recruitment and training process for the Special Constabulary, please contact your chosen force.



What support does the Civil Service offer Special Constables?

Your department will support you by providing paid special leave for some of the time you spend as a Special Constable.

You will need to check your department's special leave policy to see exactly what you can apply for. This may be different depending on whether you are a Special Constable or are taking on some of the other opportunities to volunteer with the police described in the next section of this booklet.

Through police volunteering you will:

- be provided with exceptional opportunities to develop communication, leadership and decision-making skills
- gain experience and a broadened outlook through working with communities on the front line of policing
- benefit as an individual and bring a new perspective and wider skills to your work in the Civil Service
- be able to count your police volunteering as part of your five day learning and development a year
- be able to join the Cross-Civil Service Network for Special Constables if you wish.

You may also be able to arrange to do flexible working around some of your duties or to use flexi-time. Talk to your manager about the support you would find helpful.

If you are the manager of a Special Constable, talk to them about what the role involves and how this might impact on their work commitments. Try to be supportive in offering paid special leave and flexible working options.

A few roles within the Civil Service are considered incompatible with becoming a Special Constable, for example, certain roles concerned with the administration of the law, or roles already holding certain powers. These are detailed in the full eligibility guidance published by the College of Policing (<https://recruit.college.police.uk/Special/Documents/npia-01-20112835.pdf>).



Are there other opportunities to volunteer with the police?

Not everyone is eligible to be a Special Constable. There are other options available to work with the police and give something back to your community.

Police Support Volunteers

Police support volunteers play a vital role in ensuring the service runs efficiently and effectively. Each force operates slightly differently and may not have the same job roles, so you should contact your local force to discuss the opportunities available.

As a police support volunteer, you could find yourself doing a number of tasks. Below are some examples of the kind of roles you might be able to do:

- analyst - providing analytical support by collating and studying information to help detect and reduce crime
- call handler - providing a professional response to calls received
- front counter personnel - staffing the front counter and answering enquiries
- librarian - providing an efficient library service

- supporting Volunteer Police Cadets
- acting as a first-line interpreter.

You will need to check with your department how much special leave you can claim to be a Police Support Volunteer. This may differ from what you can claim as a Special Constable.

Police Cadets

If you're aged between 16 and 18 and you can't wait to get a taste of what it's like to be a police officer, you could join the police cadets. There are lots of police cadet schemes around the UK. Contact your local force for details of their scheme.





Where can I find out more information?

If you'd like more information on how to become a Special Constable, there is plenty of support and information available.

Your departmental intranet is a good starting point and should have information on special leave for special constables and other forms of volunteering.

There are also a number of useful websites

<https://recruit.college.police.uk/Special/Pages/apply.aspx>

<https://www.citizensinpolicing.net>





Case studies

Caroline Powney **Department for Education** **Cumbria Police Force**

1. How long have you been a Special Constable?

I've been a serving Special for Cumbria Police for the past 12 years.

2. Why did you join?

I joined because I wanted to build my skills in tactical communications and decision-making, and because I wanted to make a positive contribution to my local community.

3. What do you like the most about your role?

I've found it really valuable to feel that I am able to make a direct contribution to keeping my community safe, and that I can help the police to provide a good service. I've also learned an enormous amount from my colleagues, in terms of observing how they deal effectively with people in difficult situations.

4. What valuable skills have you learnt?

I'm now a Special Sergeant, so I support a team of Special Constables in my locality. I've really enjoyed supporting them to build their confidence and skills. And every shift is different, so I feel I get a unique insight into my community. It's sometimes a difficult role, and I've definitely been pushed out of my 'comfort zone', but it's always interesting. I also feel that the experience I've gained has helped in my career.



Case studies

Christopher Haynes- Brown **Defra** **Devon and Cornwall Police Force**

1. How long have you been a Special Constable?

I've always had an interest in the work of the Police. A few years ago I decided to take this a step further and arranged to meet up with my local Special Superintendent to find out more.

2. Why did you join?

To make a difference in your local community and supporting your regular colleagues, whilst demanding, is incredibly rewarding.

3. What do you like the most about your role?

The diversity of work you can support is an attraction, as well as supporting neighbourhood and response teams on the frontline, I've worked in plain clothes to tackle drug gangs and supported counter terrorism work.

4. What valuable skills have you learnt?

As well as some obvious training benefits such as annual First Aid training, it's a great leveller. It's particularly effective at rebalancing your sense of perspective. You regularly see people at their worst when working as a Police Officer, be it behaviourally when making an arrest or when you are providing reassurance to someone in their time of need. This can make you step back and re-evaluate your approach to certain issues in the workplace!