



A GUIDE TO BECOMING A POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER

[SURREY.POLICE.UK/JOBS](https://www.surrey.police.uk/jobs)



Being a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) offers a challenging, yet incredibly rewarding career.

Our PCSOs play a vital role in keeping Surrey safe; working alongside our area policing teams to prevent and tackle local issues.

This guide aims to provide you with all you need to know about the role, the application process and to answer the more commonly asked questions we receive.

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1. BEING A PCSO

From dealing with anti-social behaviour, taking statements from victims of crime to providing reassurance and helping resolve community challenges; you'll play a critical, visible role in helping keep our communities safe, identifying and protecting the most vulnerable, and preventing harm.

You'll be out and about on the streets of Surrey, building relationships, engaging with the public and winning the trust of communities.

As the face of local policing for the community you'll need to act with the utmost integrity and professionalism, always.

As the first point of contact for the community, you'll need to be a great communicator; calm, confident and compassionate. You'll need to be able to listen carefully, think through challenges and find solutions. You'll work closely with your police officer colleagues and community leaders; making a real difference, together.

This is a career where genuinely every day is different. You'll find yourself:

- going on highly visible foot patrols
- reassuring the public after neighbourhood and local crimes or anti-social behaviour
- building relationships with community, religious, and business leaders
- working with young people and local schools
- making house visits to gather intelligence
- collecting CCTV evidence
- supporting missing person enquiries
- protecting crime scenes until police officers arrive
- providing crime prevention and personal safety advice
- offering support at large public gatherings, sports events, and public demonstrations.

1. BEING A PCSO (CONTINUED)

PCSOs have a number of powers designated to them by the Chief Constable including the powers to deal with a wide range of situations including issuing fixed penalty notices, requiring contact details, and seizing drugs. However, PCSOs do not have powers of arrest and cannot interview, or process, prisoners. Visit our [PCSO page](#) for the full list of designated powers.

As a PCSO you can expect:

- a starting salary of at least £29,313 (including shift allowance)
- fully-funded professional qualification- Level 4 Diploma in Community Policing Practice
- 25 days per year annual leave, rising to 29 days depending on your length of service
- a great learning experience that will support future career opportunities
- a competitive benefits package including pension, flexible benefits, employee

assistance programme for advice and counselling, access to discounts / savings / cash-back rewards

- a progressive approach to flexible working, enhanced maternity and paternity leave, and potential for a career break (after two years' service)
- opportunities to join various support networks, staff associations and sports clubs.

From day one, you'll be supported with great training and brilliant teammates; equipping you for every eventuality. Your life skills and experiences will help towards this role, along with diplomacy, and being in touch with the real world.

Above all, you'll simply care about the community and want to do all you can to keep it safe.



2. ELIGIBILITY

To apply for the role you will need to meet our eligibility criteria: These are that you must:

- be aged at least 17 (but you must be 18 the day you start PCSO training)
- have a full manual driving licence
- You can apply without a GCSE A*-C (4-9) or Level 2 Functional Skills qualification in English and Maths but must have obtained the qualifications by the date of your End Point Assessment
- be a British citizen, a citizen of a country that is a member of the European Economic Area or Switzerland, or a Commonwealth citizen or foreign national who is resident in the UK and free from restrictions
- have been resident in the UK for the past three years
- not have more than six penalty points within three years of your application date
- not have tattoos which could cause offence
- not be registered bankrupt (or have bankruptcy debts that have been discharged within the past three years)
- be able to pass a [job-related fitness test](#)
- be able to pass a medical screening and meet the [minimum eyesight standards](#)
- not be a current or previous member of a proscribed terrorist organisation or group

If you have a criminal record, this doesn't mean you won't be considered. This depends on the nature of your conviction. Please declare any current or previous cautions or convictions, including cautions as a juvenile, on your application form.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I think I'm too old to apply...

There is no upper age limit for our PCSOs so you are never too old to apply! We encourage applications from everyone – whether you're a college-leaver, career-changer or planning your return to work.

I'm 17 but will be 18 in a couple of months' time. Can I apply?

You can apply when you are 17 but must be 18 on the day you commence training (typically six months after application).

I'm not a British Citizen, can I still apply?

You can as long as you are an EEA national or a Swiss national. Commonwealth citizens and foreign nationals are required to have leave to enter or leave to remain in the UK for an indefinite period and unrestricted permission to work in the UK.

Can I apply without a driving licence?

To meet our eligibility criteria, you will need to hold a full UK manual driving licence at the point of application.

I have motoring offences...

We assess motoring offences on an individual basis. However, if you have more than six penalty points then you will not be eligible to apply to join Surrey Police as a PCSO.

If I have a disability, can I still apply?

Yes. We welcome applications from people with disabilities. If you consider yourself to have a disability, please inform us within your application of the type of reasonable adjustments you might need to assist you in participating in the recruitment and selection process. We will make these wherever we can.

Is there a height restriction?

No, there is no minimum, or maximum, height restriction.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

To ensure we recruit the very best, we adopt a three-stage recruitment process for our PCSOs which takes, on average, six months to complete.

Stage one: online application form with competency based questions.

Stage two: National Sift (Behavioural Styles Questionnaire and Situational Judgement Test) Multiple-choice assessments, which will assess whether you have the right traits to work as a Police Community Support Officer.

Stage three: In-person interview with Surrey Police representatives.

Stage four: pre-employment checks including medical, vetting, bio-metric vetting and a fitness test.

For more details, visit [‘How do I apply’](#).

much information in relation to the question as possible (within the recommended word count).

Can I state where I wish to be posted?

On your application you will be asked to state which of the Surrey divisions – East, North or West, would be your preferred location. We try to take these preferences into consideration upon posting, however please be aware that due to demand, and organisational requirements, you may not be posted to your preferred location.

MEDICAL RELATED

I have a medical condition, is that an issue?

Every candidate is individually assessed. Those with pre-existing medical conditions may be asked to provide additional medical evidence to support their application. The below acts as a mere guide to answer your initial questions.

Asthma: You will be individually assessed. Individuals with asthma that is well controlled with inhalers are usually acceptable.

Diabetes: Your blood-sugar levels need to be well controlled and you need to be able to adapt to the demands of the job such as varying shifts and meal times. You will be asked to provide evidence that your diabetes is well controlled.

Epilepsy: It is recommended that you have not experienced a seizure for at least 18 months (with or without medication) before you apply and have a full driving license

Stress, Anxiety or Depression: These roles are front-line and public facing, requiring the ability to deal with the public in a wide range of situations as well as exposing you to potentially upsetting incidents. A high level of emotional resilience is required to undertake this work. It is recommended that you have been stable and well for at least 1 year before you apply.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

APPLICATION RELATED

I have not received an email confirming if my application has been submitted?

Once your application has been submitted, you should receive an email confirming it has been received. If this has not been received, please check your spam / junk folders before emailing recruitment@surrey.police.uk

What do the online competency based questions cover?

The online application asks you a series of competency questions which is based upon the Competency and Values Framework (CVF) adopted by all police forces in the UK. You can find out more about the CVF [here](#).

Please take note of the recommended word counts. What you provide at this stage is used to progress or decline applications, therefore we encourage you to provide as

3. APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

Dyslexia: We are able to support reasonable adjustments if you have a report confirming your condition. For police officers this report must be carried out as an adult. Support is available during training and in the workplace.

Severe Allergy: Most allergies are compatible with these roles, but if you have a severe allergy (including a history of collapse or breathing difficulties) we may require further information to establish your fitness for role.

Any type of blood clotting disorder which requires medication such as Warfarin - We may require further information to establish your fitness for role.

What does the medical involve?

To ensure you are fit for the role we ask you to undergo a fitness test and an individual medical assessment. Your medical assessment will take place with the Surrey Police Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service under strict confidence. Disabilities will be assessed taking into account the Equality Act 2010 and recommendations regarding reasonable adjustments made where appropriate. If you have a health problem, or recently had a lot of time off, we may need to see a copy of any relevant medical records, such as specialist reports, test results or a note from your doctor.

You will not be able to proceed until we have received your GP report and optician test results.

I wear glasses/contact lenses...

A general level of eyesight is required to ensure you are able to carry out your role safely while driving police vehicles, taking accurate statements and relaying evidence in court. DVLA guidelines apply together with eyesight standards from the College of Policing. Corrected distance visual acuity must be 6/12 in

the better eye and 6/6 or better binocularly. A field-of-view of at least 120 degrees horizontally by 100 degrees vertically is required. Those with monocular vision should be able to reach the visual field requirements and 6/6 corrected vision in their eye and be subject to a risk assessment by the organisation. Corrected near static visual acuity must be 6/9 or better binocularly. Glasses and contact lenses are both acceptable. Seeing a qualified optician every few years is a good way to ensure your eyes are healthy. For Police Constables we ask you to see a qualified optician prior to your medical appointment.

I am colour blind...

Mild colour vision deficiencies are not generally a problem but you might not be able to progress into some specialist roles, such as roads policing officer or Taser/firearms officer. Unfortunately, if your colour vision deficiency is monochrome you are not eligible to apply.

What if I have hearing issues?

The hearing standard required is hearing loss of more than a total of 84 dB over the 0.5 – 1.2 KHz range or more than a total of 123 dB over the 3.4 and 6 KHz range. The routine medical includes a hearing test to determine if this standard is met.

What does substance misuse testing entail?

We will invite you in to attend an appointment where we will collect a sample of hair – approximately 50 to 100 strands from the crown of the head – to test for the presence of inappropriate substances.

Is there a specific weight / BMI I need to be?

Being overweight affects your overall health and puts you at increased risk of heart disease and diabetes. It can also affect your joints and might make it harder for you to achieve the fitness levels required for your role. Equally, being underweight can mean that you lack muscle mass to ensure adequate fitness levels.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

During your medical appointment your BMI will be calculated and used as a guide to assess your health risks and fitness levels. A BMI in the healthy to overweight range is desirable, if your BMI is above 30 for PCs and Specials and above 32 for PCSOs we will also assess your body composition and you might be deferred unless your body fat percentage is below 30% for men or 36% for women. Your best option is to ensure a healthy balanced diet and regular moderate exercise to ensure your own personal health and wellbeing as well as fitness for your role in policing. Check your BMI at www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight and assess your diet with the eat well plate guide www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide.

I'm nervous about the fitness test...

We understand that some people may feel nervous when it comes to the fitness test, however you don't need to be a professional athlete to succeed. [Click here](#) for more information.

VETTING RELATED

What does vetting entail?

We will carry out security checks on you and your:

- Spouse/partner
- Father/stepfather/mother's partner
- Mother/stepmother/father's partner
- Brothers/sisters (full/half/step)
- Children/children of your partner (only those aged 10 years and over)
- Any other adult living at your address
- Financial circumstances
- Social media accounts.

I have a relative who has convictions

If your friends or family members have criminal convictions, you must disclose this when asked on your vetting application. Your application will not be automatically rejected and consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis.

Can I still apply if I have a criminal record?

Applications will be rejected in all cases where:

- Offences were committed as an adult or juvenile which resulted in a prison sentence (including custodial, suspended or deferred sentence and sentences served at a young offenders' institution or community home)

OR

- The applicant is a registered sex offender or is subject to a registration requirement in respect of any other conviction.

For all other convictions or cautions, there is a rebuttable presumption that they should be rejected. In particular, the following would result in rejection: offences where vulnerable people were targeted; offences motivated by hate or discrimination; domestic abuse offences. Although the rebuttable presumption is that these should lead to rejection, there will be cases where this may be disproportionate in the circumstances. For instance, where the offence was committed as a juvenile, it was not serious, and the individual has demonstrated a commitment to help individuals or communities in the subsequent years. In these cases, vetting acceptance may be justified.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

What is biometric vetting?

We will take a fingerprint and DNA sample to determine whether an individual has come to police attention, whether that was under the identity being used for the application and whether the individual is linked to any outstanding crime scenes.

If you're appointed, these samples will be retained on a police database for elimination purposes. If you are not appointed, your fingerprints, DNA samples and DNA profile will be destroyed, along with all records and copies.

I've been bankrupt...

You can still apply but only if it is three years after bankruptcy debts have been discharged.

How about County Court Judgments (CCJ)?

If the judgment has been discharged then you can be considered however if you have

If you're appointed, these samples will be retained on a police database for elimination purposes. If you are not appointed, your fingerprints, DNA samples and DNA profile will be destroyed, along with all records and copies.

I have an Independent Voluntary Agreement (IVA)...

Applicants with current IVAs will be considered. However, you will be required to show that there is an IVA repayment plan in place and that you've maintained regular payments over a significant number of months.

Can I continue with my other business?

You must declare any other employment for hire or gain or any other business interests that you intend to maintain. A decision on whether it is considered that your business interests are compatible with performing the role of PCSO will be made on the basis of the information you provide during application.

Do you ask for references?

We will take references for the past five years. If you haven't been employed for five years we will ask for a character or educational reference.



4. TRAINING AND PROGRESSION

By successfully completing the recruitment process, you will join Surrey Police as a PCSO through our new 12-month apprenticeship programme. This will give you the best possible training and, upon successful completion, you will achieve a Level 4 Diploma in Community Policing Practice – equivalent to a Higher National Certificate (HNC), foundation degree or the first year of an undergraduate degree.

You will be employed as a PCSO from day one, gaining valuable experience of the role alongside studying towards your diploma. You will also be paid a salary while studying and will not be charged any tuition fees.

The training remains focused on practical policing, with the majority of learning taking place on the job and out in the public alongside experienced colleagues. To ensure you have the tools and knowledge to excel as a modern-day PCSO it will cover subjects including digital policing, problem-solving, safeguarding and identifying vulnerability and risk.

The course consists of:

Phase one

- Operational learning – eight weeks, full-time based at Surrey Police headquarters in Guildford helping you gain skills in areas such as report writing, dealing with evidence, managing a crime scene and stop and search.
- Tutoring – two weeks out in the community, supported by a tutor.
- One week compulsory annual leave.

Phase two

Operational learning – a further four weeks focusing on skills development and assessments, based at Surrey Police headquarters.

Tutoring – up to 10 weeks in the community alongside your tutor, after which Independent Patrol status (IP) will be awarded.

Upon achieving IP, using the skills and knowledge you've gained through your training you will continue to build up your portfolio of evidence required to complete the qualification and apprenticeship. The final assessment involves a professional discussion around your work-based activities as well as a presentation relating to a problem-solving activity in the community.

While there is no formal route currently from PCSO to police officer, the training and experience you will gain from being a PCSO will help you if you want to move into this role. We are happy to arrange shadowing opportunities for you if this is your desired career path.

“I wanted to become a PCSO to help people, and victims of crime.”

Debbie, PCSO

4. TRAINING AND PROGRESSION (CONTINUED)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are you introducing apprenticeships for PCSOs?

Apprenticeships are a great way to gain hands-on experience while studying towards an industry recognised qualification and earning a salary. We've been offering apprenticeships for a number of years and are excited to extend this to a broader range of roles and, specifically, to the role of a PCSO.

Do I need to pay for the diploma?

No. We will pay for your diploma and instead you will earn while you learn.

Will I be expected to go to college?

No. All training will be delivered locally by a combination of police staff trainers and experienced tutors

Can I apply for other jobs in the organisation while training?

The role of PCSO is tenured for 24 months the first 12 months of this will form your probationary period. This means you will not be able to start a new position within the Force during this time. You may, however, be able to apply for a role with longer recruitment timeframes i.e. police officer. We would encourage you to speak with your line manager if you wish to change roles.

Why is the role tenured for 24 months?

A number of roles within the Force are tenured positions. This recognises the investment we make in terms of training and developing people in these areas.



5. CONCERNED ABOUT APPLYING?

You'd like to apply but something's holding you back...

- **Application process**

We appreciate that the application process is lengthy. However, it's this rigorous approach which ensures we select people who will make great police PCSOs.

- **Diversity**

We are committed to promoting equality and respect for diversity in the way we serve Surrey in delivering policing and also as an employer. We welcome applications from everyone in the community; particularly people from black, asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and white other backgrounds. We also encourage applications from women, the LGBT+ community, and people with disabilities.

- **Fitness**

While we don't expect you to be a professional athlete, we do require a reasonable level of fitness to become a PCSO. You will need to complete the fitness test as part of your application, again as part of your initial training and on an annual basis once as an officer.

We test endurance through a fitness shuttle commonly known as the 'Bleep Test'. A good indicator of the fitness level needed for this test is to be able to run at a good pace for around four minutes over a distance of about 700 metres. The required pass level is 5.4 which means completion of five levels and four shuttles. The College of Policing offers additional guidance [here](#).

If you fail the test you will be given the opportunity to re-take it twice more as part of the recruitment process. Should you fail both of these, your application will be rejected.

- **Lacking experience**

Our people come from all walks of life. You don't need any specific experience, all we're looking for are the skills, behaviours and desire which will ensure you can protect our communities. If you believe you can make a difference, then we want to hear from you.

- **Perceptions**

Policing faces both positive and negative perceptions. As a force, we subscribe to the highest ethics and request our people to do the same. The majority of our officers and staff demonstrate the highest levels of professionalism, integrity and standards. By joining us, we will expect you to also demonstrate these values and help us improve confidence in policing generally.



5. CONCERNED ABOUT APPLYING? (CONTINUED)

- **Potential danger**

With policing, you cannot predict what you will respond to and sometimes this does mean putting people into challenging situations. However, through our in-depth training and ongoing support you will be well prepared to deal with whatever you are faced with. You're also not alone – we work together.

- **Tattoos**

PCSOs may have tattoos as long as they do not breach Home Office or College of Policing guidance. If you have visible tattoos on your head, face, neck, hands or arms then you will need to make a declaration within the eligibility section of the application form and attach two digital pictures of each tattoo (one distance photograph clearly showing where on the body the tattoo is located and a second close up photograph).

These will be viewed individually and your application will be accepted or rejected based on their content and coverage. You may have your application accepted but with the condition that the tattoo must be

covered at all times. Tattoos that are considered to be offensive, discriminatory, contrary to the Code of Ethics, rude, lewd, racist, sexist, sectarian, homophobic, violent or intimidating should not be acceptable.

- **Working hours**

The normal working week is 36 hours. You will work Monday to Sunday between the hours of 7:00am and 22:00pm on a rotating shift pattern which includes evenings, weekends and bank holidays.

All shifts are available in advance meaning you will always know when you will be working and we always try to accommodate staff requests, as long as they fit in with operational demands.

We also recognise the benefits of flexible working and are committed to equality of opportunity and the promotion of work-life balance. We will support opportunities for flexible working within the organisation where practical and suitable to promote a work-life balance and enable the recruitment and retention of a workforce which is representative of the diverse communities we serve.



6. ANY OTHER QUESTIONS

If you have any other questions, or would like to know more about the role or Surrey Police, please contact the recruitment team at **recruitment@surrey.police.uk** who will be happy to arrange a conversation with you.

If your application has been successfully submitted, you will receive an email confirming it has been received. If you do not receive a notification, please check your spam/junk folder before emailing the recruitment team, providing them with your full name, telephone number and the date you submitted your application.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR APPLICATION.

