



**GUIDE TO BECOMING A  
POLICE  
SPECIAL CONSTABLE**

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# **GUIDE TO BECOMING A SPECIAL CONSTABLE**

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Volunteering as a Special Constable is one of the most personally rewarding, challenging and diverse things that you can do in your spare time. Working alongside regular police officers and police staff, it is a vital and important role which offers a great sense of pride. This guide aims to provide you with all you need to know about the role, the application process and to answer the commonly asked questions we receive.

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# 1. BEING A SPECIAL CONSTABLE

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**Our Special Constables are volunteers who bring a wealth of skills and experiences from their day job to the organisation, helping to ensure Surrey is a county that is safe, and feels safe.**

From being the first to arrive at the scene of an incident, to being a shoulder to cry on; this voluntary role is constantly challenging. You'll work in a fast-paced environment where no two shifts will ever be the same. You'll need to be prepared for anything and be expected to act with the utmost professionalism and integrity at all times – both in and out of uniform.

You could find yourself:

- Attending a wide range of incidents
- Investigating reported crimes

- Apprehending and arresting suspects
- Identifying and gathering evidence at crime scene
- Supporting victims and witnesses of crime
- Engaging with children and young people to improve relations with the police
- Working in partnership with colleagues from other emergency services
- Responding to reports of anti-social behaviour
- Being a visible presence at large scale public events

From day one, you will be fully supported through in-depth training, which will equip you and your colleagues with the necessary skills. And when it comes to going out on patrol, you will not be alone.

*You'll need to be prepared for anything and be expected to act with the utmost professionalism and integrity at all times – both in and out of uniform.*



## 2. ELIGIBILITY

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### To apply for the role you will need to meet our eligibility criteria:

- Be aged 18 years or over when applying. There is no upper age limit
  - Hold a GCSE or equivalent (A-C) in Maths and English
  - Have lived in the UK for three continuous years, immediately prior to application. If you've lived abroad due to serving in the British armed forces or on UK Government Service, you're considered to have been resident in the UK
  - If you're from outside the EEA, you're required to have leave to enter or leave to remain in the UK for an indefinite period. Such applicants must reside in the UK free of restrictions or have an entitlement to do so
  - Not be a member of the British National Party (BNP) or other relevant organisations, such as Combat 18 or The National Front
  - Not have tattoos with designs which can be seen as discriminatory, violent or intimidating or could be offensive. Tattoos on the face are not generally accepted
- Not have more than six penalty points on your driving licence within three years prior to the application date. (You must have a full UK manual driving licence to be eligible to apply)
  - Be able to volunteer at least 16 hours a month
  - Ideally you should not have a criminal conviction or caution. We are unable to state whether any convictions/cautions will affect your application before you apply; this will be determined from the full and confidential information provided during the recruitment and selection process.

As part of the application process you will be asked to declare any business interest that you wish to maintain.

### Eligibility – Restricted roles

There are a number of jobs that are considered incompatible with the role of Special Constable. To be sure that your current employment will not prevent your application from proceeding, please check the precluded occupations list on the [Surrey Police careers website](https://www.surrey.police.uk/specials).



## 2. ELIGIBILITY (CONTINUED)

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### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **I don't have a level 2 (e.g. GCSE) qualification in English and Maths, what can I do?**

Whilst you can still apply, unfortunately you will not be offered a role until you have achieved this. To find out more details about the level of your qualification, please click [here](#).

#### **Am I too old to apply?**

There is no upper age limit to becoming a Special Constable.

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

Yes. 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?**

You need a full UK manual driving licence to become a Special Constable with Surrey Police.

#### **What if I have motoring offences?**

We assess motoring offences on an individual basis. However, if you have more than six penalty points and/or two motoring offences within three years prior to the application date then you will not be eligible to apply.

#### **If I have a disability, can I still apply?**

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



# 3. APPLICATION PROCESS

To ensure we recruit the very best, we adopt a four-stage process for our Special Constable recruitment. After each stage, candidates will be notified as to whether they have been successful and are therefore eligible to proceed to the next stage.

## **Stage one:** application form

This is where we check your personal details and that all eligibility criteria have been met.

## **Stage two:** assessments

We may use a combination of assessments to identify your suitability for the role of Special Constable. You do not need prior knowledge of policing policies and procedures to complete these assessments and further information will

be provided in advance.

## **Stage three:** In-force interviews and written test

The interview and written tests will be conducted remotely or at Surrey Police Headquarters in Guildford, Surrey. The interview will be based upon the Competency and Values Framework and our [Police Code of Ethics](#).

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

For more detail, visit the [Surrey Police careers website](#).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### MEDICAL RELATED

#### **I have a medical condition, is that an issue?**

It will depend on the nature of the medical condition. You will need to pass the medical assessment to be eligible to join Surrey Police, but reasonable adjustments can be made. For epilepsy, we look at each case on its merits and take guidance from our Occupational Health team. If you have diabetes, you can still apply as long as it's under control. Your doctor will need to supply a medical report for clarification.

#### **What does the medical involve?**

You will be asked to complete a confidential medical history questionnaire which has been signed off by your GP. Depending on your medical history, our Occupational Health team may have to contact your GP/Specialist for further information.

Our Occupational Health team will also see you for a formal medical where they will check your BMI, eyesight, colour vision, lung function and hearing. Unfortunately, if your colour blindness is monochrome you are not eligible to apply.

#### **What is the lung function level?**

It is dependent on clinical judgement, but as a guide the Occupational Health team uses, according to normal graphs based on age,

sex and height, 75% of predicted for Forced Vital Capacity (the determination of the vital capacity from a maximally forced expiratory effort) and FEV1 (volume that has been exhaled at the end of the first second of forced expiration).

#### **I wear glasses / contact lenses, can I still apply?**

There is no longer an unaided eyesight requirement. However, as part of the recruitment process you will be required to undergo an eye test. For distance vision, you must have at least 6/12 vision in the right or left eye with or without glasses or contact lenses, or at least 6/6 in both eyes with or without contact lenses. For near vision, you must have 6/9 with both eyes with or without glasses or contact lenses.

#### **I am colour blind, can I still apply?**

Those with colour blindness may be restricted from fulfilling certain posts. Unfortunately, if your colour blindness 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 84dB 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.

### 3. APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

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#### **What does substance misuse 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 prohibited substances.

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

Your BMI, which is calculated from your height and weight, needs to be in the healthy to overweight range. If your BMI is above 32 you will not be accepted unless your body fat is less than 30% for men or 36% for women.

#### **I don't think that I am fit enough for 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**

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#### **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

#### **What if 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 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 clearance may be granted.

#### **Do I have to declare if I was arrested but not charged?**

Yes. You must declare if you have ever been subject to a criminal investigation whether or not this led to a prosecution. Failure to make such declarations will lead to your application being rejected.

#### **What if I have 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 judgement has been discharged then you can be considered however if you have an existing judgement your application will be rejected.

### 3. APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

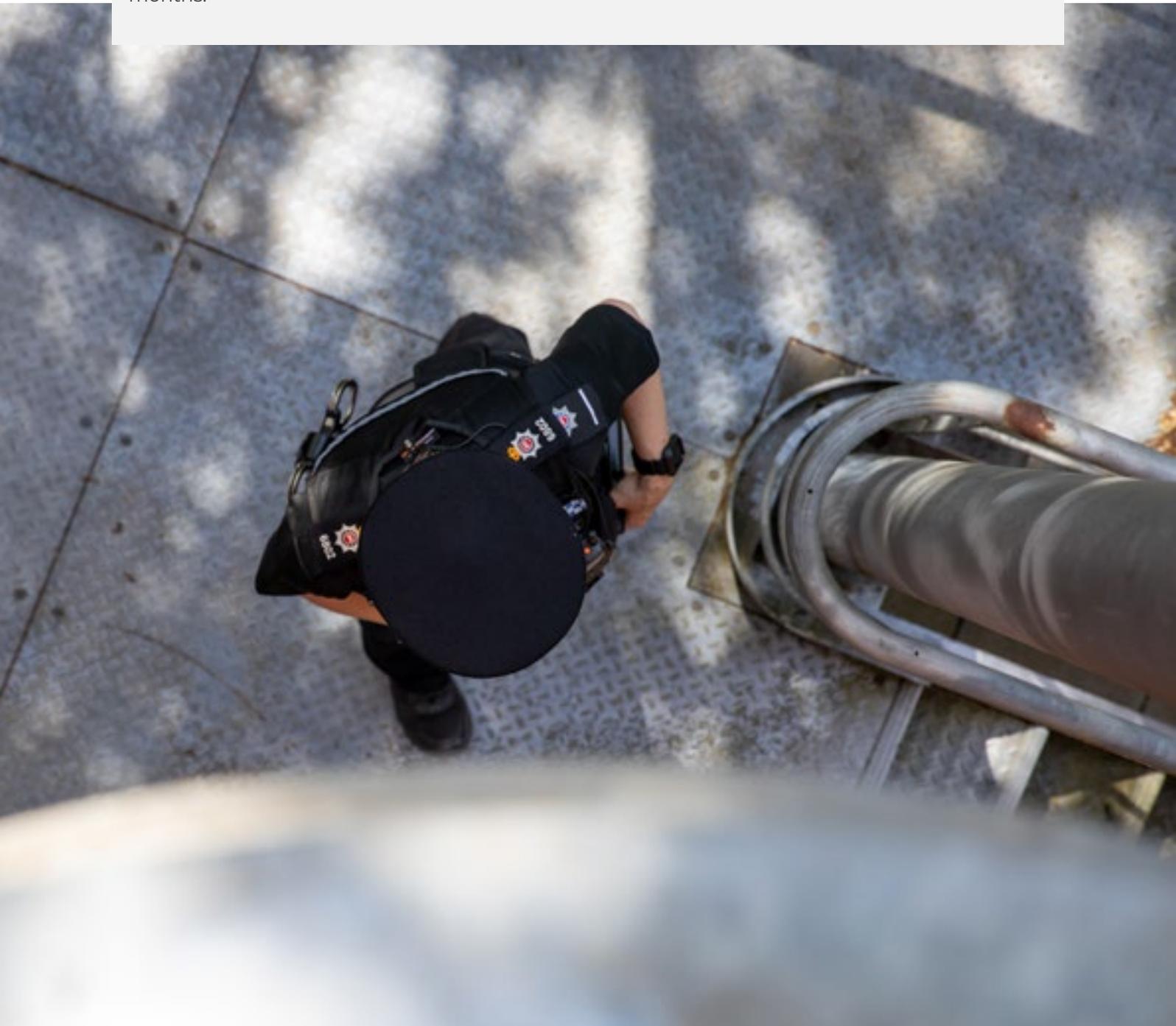
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#### **I have an Individual Voluntary Agreement (IVA), can I still apply?**

Applicants with current IVA's 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.

#### **Do you ask for references?**

We may send reference requests to all your previous employers in the past three years. If you haven't been employed for three years, we will ask for a character reference or an educational reference.



## 4. TRAINING

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You will be trained to use the same powers as regular Police Constables - there will be a lot for you to learn. Successful applicants will be expected to complete a 12 week initial training course, comprising one evening and one weekend day per week.

This training will be supplemented by online learning modules. Unfortunately due to the amount of learning required there is little flexibility to miss a day so please bear this in mind when applying.

Following completion of your initial course, you will continue your probation within your allocated policing team, where you will be expected to commit at least 16 hours a month for the rest of your service, whilst also attending additional training sessions.

**Postings:**

As you near the end of your training course, you will be asked to select up to three areas (or boroughs) within which you would like to volunteer. We will try our best to post you within one of these three areas, although this may not always be possible.



## 5. TRANSFERRING TO SURREY POLICE

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If you are a Special Constable in another force and are interested in transferring we would love to hear from you.

Please check our website for current transferee opportunities. Should you have any questions about the process, please email our Special

Constabulary Team at [Specials@surrey.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Specials@surrey.pnn.police.uk).

If you have Independent Patrol status you may be eligible to bypass the initial selection process. A training needs analysis would then be carried out to assist with the transfer process.



## 6. CONCERNED ABOUT APPLYING?

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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 Special Constables.

### **Diversity statement**

We are only as good as our people. It's really important to us that our officers and staff can be themselves in the workplace and we believe that as an organisation we'll benefit from the variety of thinking, approach and skills that diversity can bring; all of which helps us to deliver a better policing service.

We have worked really hard to create a safe, open and inclusive culture. We have a range of staff networking groups to provide specific support and advice and we are proud to be members of Stonewall and Disability Confident, and to be aligned with the Armed Forces Covenant and the HeForShe movement.

We value the differences that people bring from all backgrounds and communities so, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, disability, social status or religious beliefs, we would love to hear from you.

### **Fitness**

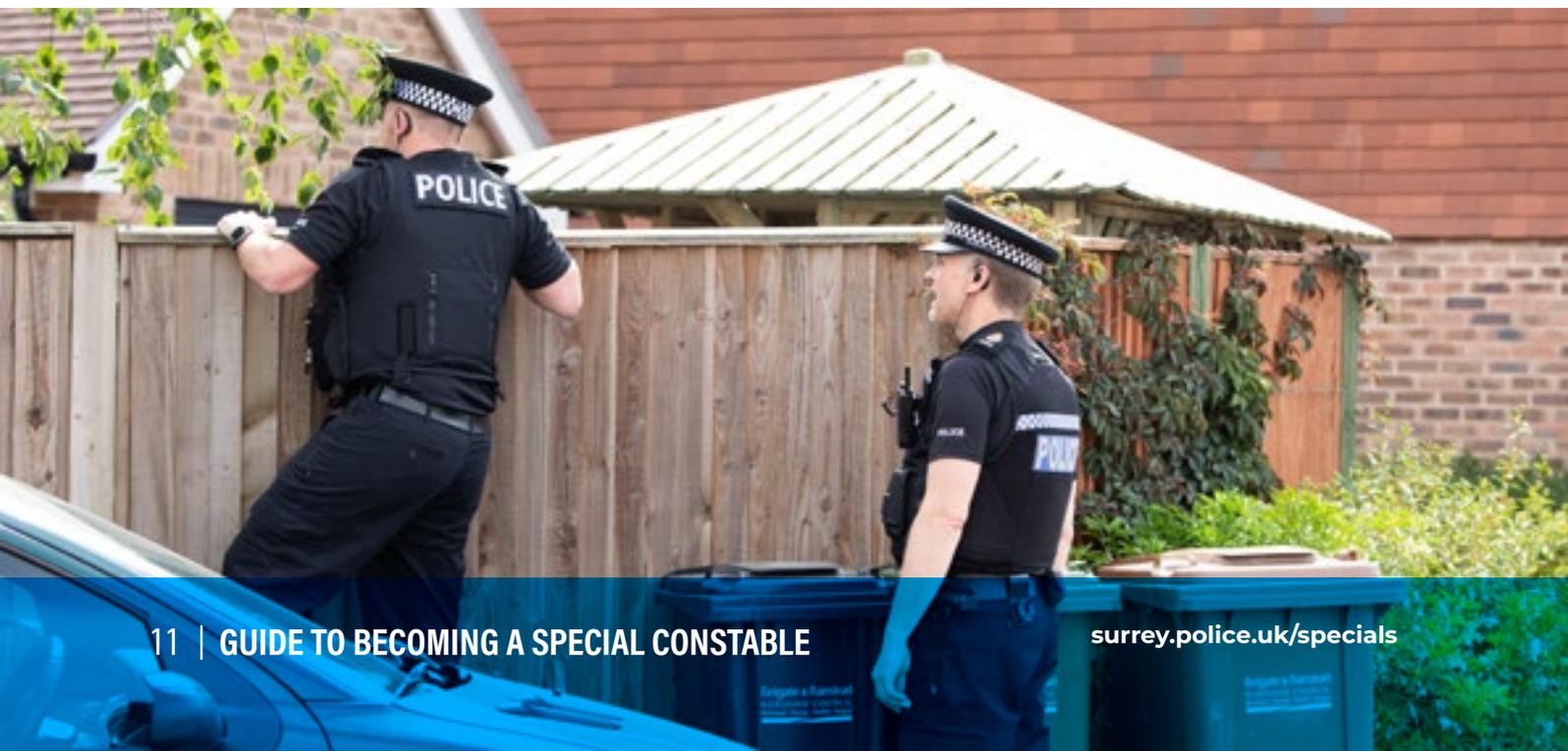
While we don't expect you to be a professional athlete, we do require a reasonable level of fitness to become a Special Constable.

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 desires which will enable you to help us ensure Surrey is a county that is safe, and feels safe. If you believe you can make a difference, then we want to hear from you.



## 6. CONCERNED ABOUT APPLYING? (CONTINUED)

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### 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. By joining us, we will expect you to demonstrate these values and help us improve confidence in policing generally.

### 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.

### Tattoos

Having tattoos will not necessarily stop you becoming a Special Constable however if they are visible you may be required to cover them up, for example by wearing long sleeves.

If you have visible tattoos on your head, 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 rejected or progressed based on their content and coverage. Tattoos that are perceived to be aggressive, offensive or not representative of our values may also cause the application to be rejected.

### Working hours

Special Constables are required to commit a minimum of 16 hours a month to the role, but how that is carried out can be flexible and there are a variety of shift times available. With the nature of policing, there is always something for a Special Constable to do, no matter what the day or time!



## 7. ANY OTHER QUESTIONS

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If you have any other questions or would like to know more about the role, please contact the Special Constabulary Team via [\*\*specials@surrey.pnn.police.uk\*\*](mailto:specials@surrey.pnn.police.uk) who will be happy to answer any questions.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO  
RECEIVING YOUR APPLICATION.**