



GUIDE TO BECOMING A SPECIAL CONSTABLE

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GUIDE TO BECOMING A SPECIAL CONSTABLE

Volunteering as a special constable is one of the most personally rewarding, challenging and diverse things that you can do in your spare time. Volunteering alongside regular police officers and police staff, it is a vital and important role which makes a direct contribution to frontline policing.

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. THE SPECIAL CONSTABLE ROLE

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 volunteer 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 scenes
- Supporting victims and witnesses of crime
- Engaging with children and young people to improve relations with the police
- Working in partnership with other emergency services
- Responding to reports of anti-social behaviour
- Policing large scale public events

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

To apply for the role of special constable you will need to meet our eligibility criteria as follows:

- You must be aged at least 17 to apply, however to commence training you will need to be aged 18
 - You must hold a GCSE (A*-C/4-9) in English, or an equivalent Level 2 qualification. If you do not hold this qualification, or are unable to evidence it, you can apply but will be required to complete a formal online test to demonstrate your competence at the required level
 - You must have lived in the UK for three continuous years immediately prior to application. If you have 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 are 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
 - You cannot be a member of the British National Party (BNP) or other relevant organisations, such as Combat 18 or The National Front
- You must not have any tattoos which may be perceived as discriminatory, violent, intimidating or offensive. Tattoos on the face are not generally accepted
 - You must have a full UK manual driving licence and no more than six penalty points
 - 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 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 certain occupations which are not compatible with the role of special constable; these are referred to as precluded occupations. The following list of occupations is not exhaustive but provides guidance about our approach which is aligned to national guidance.



2. ELIGIBILITY (CONTINUED)

Occupations which are incompatible with the role of special constable, therefore individuals in these occupations are ineligible to apply:

- Armed forces personnel
- Traffic wardens, civil enforcement officers and school crossing patrols
- Neighbourhood and street wardens, and other uniformed patrol wardens
- Highways Agency Traffic Officers (those employed in an 'on-road' capacity are ineligible; those who are office-based may be eligible)
- Police Community Support Officers
- Members of employer's police forces and private constabularies
- Certain roles concerned with the administration of the law including magistrates, judges, justices' clerks and CPS employees
- National Crime Agency (NCA) staff (some staff may be eligible depending on their designated powers)
- Enforcement roles within the Home Office including Immigration Officers
- Members of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) may be considered for appointment as special constables in a different area to where they are a member of the OPCC, with permission of the OPCC and at the discretion of the Chief Officer

Occupations or interests where appointment as a special constable is at the discretion of the Chief Officer (and in some cases the individual's employer):

- Members of the armed forces reserves are eligible subject to their reserve commitments taking precedence over their policing duties
- Members of the fire service are eligible subject to agreement between the Chief Officers of the police force and the relevant fire service
- Occupations with client privilege are eligible at the discretion of the Chief Officer, and where necessary, subject to approval of the employer
- Members of medical and health professions are eligible provided their local NHS Trust or Health Authority has no objections
- Holders of premises or personal licences, designated premises supervisors, and licensees of betting/gaming premises
- Probation officers and youth and social workers involved in the administration of criminal law
- Bailiffs, warrant officers, private detectives and inquiry agents
- Employees of security organisations and security personnel, guards and door supervisors: persons involved in the private security industry will be ineligible to become a special constable if their job involves the potential for them to use their position as a constable for their own advantage or that of their employer, e.g. contact with the public, patrolling/guarding buildings, etc



2. ELIGIBILITY (CONTINUED)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

You can still apply, however you will need to complete a formal test which will demonstrate competency in English.

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 are not eligible to apply.

Am I too old to apply?

There is no upper age limit to becoming a special constable.



3. APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process can take some time to complete, often a number of months. However, our rigorous approach ensures we select people who will make great special constables.

There are a number of stages within the special constable recruitment process as follows:

Stage One: Application Form

The application form will provide us with all relevant personal details and allow us to check your eligibility for the role of special constable.

Stage Two: Online Assessment

You will be required to complete an online assessment within a defined timeframe.

Stage Three: In Person Assessment Event

We will use a combination of assessments which will include an interview based on the [Policing Competency and Values Framework](#) and [Code of Ethics](#).

Stage Four: Pre-Volunteering Checks

If you are successful, you will commence the pre-volunteering clearance process which will include a security check (known as vetting), a medical assessment, biometric and hair sampling and a fitness test.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MEDICAL RELATED QUESTIONS

Will my medical condition mean I cannot become a special constable?

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. If you have epilepsy, our Occupational Health Team will provide guidance about whether you would be able to perform the role of special constable. 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 will need to be signed 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 provide a formal medical where they will check your BMI, eyesight, colour vision, lung function and hearing.

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.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

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.

How do you test for substance misuse?

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.

How fit do I need to be to pass the fitness test?

You don't need to be a professional athlete to succeed! 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](#).

VETTING RELATED QUESTIONS

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

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

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.

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 apply to be a special constable three years or more after your bankruptcy debts have been discharged.

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 will seek references for at least the last three years. If you have not been employed for three years, we may ask for a character reference and/or education references. If you have worked or volunteered in any other UK police force at any time, we will seek a reference from all relevant police forces.

4. TRAINING

Successful applicants will be required to complete an initial training course over 14-16 weeks; this will comprise of one weekday evening and alternate weekends (both Saturday and Sunday). You will need to attend all sessions within the training course to build the knowledge and skills you need for the role.

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 voluntary hours a month for the rest of your service, whilst also attending additional training sessions.

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. You will be posted to one of these three areas.





FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT SPECIALS@SURREY.POLICE.UK.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR APPLICATION