



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. 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

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 scenes
- 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

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

- Must be aged at least 17 to apply, however to commence training you will need to be aged 18 and over.
- We ask that applicants hold a GCSE (A-C) in Maths and English or equivalent Level 2 qualification. However, if you do not have these, or are unable to evidence them, you can apply but will be required to complete a formal test to demonstrate your competence in these subjects.
- You must 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.
- 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 with designs which can be seen as discriminatory, violent or intimidating or could be offensive. Tattoos on the face are not generally accepted.
- All applicants must hold a valid driver's license with less 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

Certain occupations are not eligible to become a Special Constable, or are only eligible with approval from the Chief Officer.

The below list of occupations is not exhaustive but provides guidance about our approach which is in accordance with national guidance.



2. ELIGIBILITY (CONTINUED)

Occupations where staff are ineligible to be appointed as a Special Constable (but with some variations as described):

- 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)
- 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
- Enforcement roles within the Home Office including Immigration Officers

Occupations/interests where appointment as a Special Constable is at the discretion of the Chief Officer (and in some cases the 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 and Maths, what can I do?

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

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.

* Not all of these assessments are in person.

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-volunteering checks

If you are successful at stage 3, you will start a pre-volunteering clearance process. This will include security checks (known as vetting), a medical assessment, biometric sampling, testing for substance misuse and a fitness test.

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. 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.

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.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

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

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.

There may be exceptions to the above, 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.

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 may ask for a character reference and/or an educational reference

4. TRAINING

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 14 week initial training course, comprising one weekday evening each week and alternate weekends.

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

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.police.uk.



6. CONCERNED ABOUT APPLYING?

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

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.

Diversity statement

We are only as good as our people. It's really important to us that our officers, staff and volunteers 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.

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.



6. CONCERNED ABOUT APPLYING? (CONTINUED)

Potential danger

Whilst on duty, you cannot predict what you will have to respond to and sometimes this does mean you will find yourself in challenging situations. However, the training and ongoing support you receive means that you will be well prepared to deal with whatever you are faced with.

Tattoos

Having tattoos will not necessarily prevent you from becoming a Special Constable, however you may be required to cover them up.

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 reviewed and a decision made to reject or progress your application based on their content and coverage.

Tattoos that are perceived to be aggressive, offensive or not representative of our values may result in your application being rejected.

Duty 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

If you have any other questions or would like to know more about the role, please contact the Special Constabulary Team via specials@surrey.police.uk who will be happy to answer any questions.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO
RECEIVING YOUR APPLICATION.