Your guide to becoming a police constable
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Policing in a modern Police Service

As a police officer your job will be to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and promote confidence among local people that the police understand and are prepared to deal with the issues that matter most to them. Policing will enable you to work in partnership with the public and other organisations and make a real difference to the local community.
“I wanted to make a difference – that’s why I joined the police. I wanted to do something to contribute.”

You will have a key role in supporting victims and witnesses and providing reassurance to individuals who have been subjected to crime and anti-social behaviour. Many people will look to you for guidance and protection from such experiences, and to provide this effectively you will need to be able to see things from their perspective, tailoring your approach to address their particular needs and fears.

How policing services are delivered needs to be informed by those who use them, in order to find solutions which are right for that particular individual or that particular area. Being able to effectively engage with, and harness the energy and support of, partners and local people to implement these solutions is a key skill for all police officers.

You will use the latest technology to assist with the detection and prevention of crime. You will be trained to manage and communicate information and intelligence effectively, in order to ensure that people are kept informed about what you are doing, and to support successful prosecutions in court.

As part of a professional team, you will be committed to providing a quality service that appropriately meets the needs of individuals and your local communities, as well as maintaining public confidence in the effectiveness of their local police.
Neighbourhood policing

Neighbourhood policing is not a soft option; it is hard-edged and intelligence led, and requires a sophisticated understanding of local people – who they are, what they expect in terms of policing and what their concerns and priorities are.

Using local knowledge and intelligence from local people, we can work with our partner agencies to tackle the crime hotspots and disorder issues that can be so damaging to people’s quality of life.

There are Neighbourhood Policing Teams in every part of England and Wales and these have quickly established themselves as an integral part of operational policing in their areas. These may often be the teams that the public deals with and sees on a regular basis.

“It’s a career that is exciting, monotonous, stimulating, tedious, rewarding, tiring and as many other varied and descriptive words as you can possibly think of. Ask yourself, why do so many people apply? Try it for yourself and you will soon know.”
KEVIN Neighbourhood policing, Merseyside Police

The fact that I have a chance to go out on the streets every day and make a real difference to this neighbourhood is very important to me. I love my job.

As a neighbourhood policing officer, my job makes me part of the local community and I really feel I belong here. I work with the residents and partners – like the local authorities – to sort out crime and disorder issues and generally ensure that the streets are safe for the people who live here.

The initial police training equips you with what you need to do the job, but it’s going out there and dealing with people that teaches you the commonsense life skills you need.

The very fact that I can give people peace of mind is one of the best things about this job. It gives me satisfaction to know I have helped and made a difference within the community. It’s easy to do, but not easy to do well.

It’s good to know that I have Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and police colleagues to rely on who can help me resolve the problems we encounter. At the end of the day, knowing that we’ve made an impact on the community we work within is a good feeling.
The selection process and competencies

First complete and return the application form. Your application form will be assessed against the entrance requirements and scored. If successful, you will be invited to the next stage of the selection process. If your application is not successful, we will write and tell you why.

The next stage will involve assessment tests and an interview. You don’t need to worry about these. You will receive plenty of information before the tests and you can find examples of the type of test you will face on our website at www.policecouldyou.co.uk

Typically these include written tests, ability tests, interactive role-play exercises and an interview. You will be assessed by trained assessors. Not all forces will appoint every candidate who achieves the minimum standard at the assessment centre. Some forces will prioritise candidates with higher pass marks and some will hold an extra interview. You can talk to the force you are applying to if you want to find out more. If you are successful, you will be invited for a medical examination and a fitness test. You will find details on the fitness test and a suggested training programme on our website at www.policecouldyou.co.uk

Appointment is subject to satisfactory reference checks and security vetting. Note that the order of tests may vary.
Competencies

What are we looking for in a police officer? These are the key competencies we are looking for. We have included some examples of when the competencies are applied well.

Effective communication
Communicates all needs, instructions and decisions clearly. Adapts the style of communication to meet the needs of the audience.

Community and customer focus
Sees things from the customer’s point of view and encourages others to do the same. Builds a good understanding and relationship with the community that is served.

Personal responsibility
Takes personal responsibility for own actions and for dealing with issues or problems that arise.

Resilience
Remains calm and confident, and responds logically and decisively in difficult situations.

Problem solving
Gathers information from a range of sources to understand situations, making sure it is reliable and accurate. Identifies risks and considers alternative courses of action to make good decisions.

Respect for race and diversity
Understands other people’s views and takes them into account. Treats people with dignity and respect at all times no matter what their background, status, circumstances or appearance.

Team working
Works effectively as a team member and helps build relationships within the team.
Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP)

Student officer training

Once recruited into the Police Service, you will undergo extensive training as a student officer.

You will be trained under the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP). Every force follows a national curriculum; however, the IPLDP varies from force to force to take account of local force needs.

The IPLDP is divided into two parts and lasts for two years. The first part is made up of three phases and concludes with a declaration that you are fit for independent patrol. The second part (phase 4) consists of the time spent learning while also on independent patrol. You will receive further training during this phase and your performance will continue to be assessed. At the end of a successful two-year period, your appointment in the office of police constable will be confirmed.

Successful applicants will enter a two-year training programme comprising a number of phases.*

PHASE 1
This phase will introduce you to the Police Service and will focus on attitudes and behaviours, and ethics and values. It will provide you with the necessary understanding of how to conduct safe interactions with members of your communities. You will be taught first aid, officer safety and health and safety training. You will also learn about professional standards, race and diversity, basic technology applications and social/community issues. This phase will take from three to five weeks.

PHASE 2
In this phase you will be introduced to the community in which you will work. In addition to legislation around Community Safety Partnerships, you will learn about local police delivery and how the police can make an impact on community concerns and problems. In this phase you will commence your community engagement/placement. This phase will take two to three weeks and will include a minimum of 80 hours’ placement (split between phases 2 and 3) dedicated to community engagement. Your tutor/supervisor will maintain close contact with you during your placement.

* While every IPLDP programme will include these phases, the duration of these may vary between forces to take into account differing structures, higher education and further education partnerships and methods of entry between forces. These may include: foundation degrees, pre-join programmes, accreditation of prior learning between roles and a more staggered approach between acquisition of learning in the training environment and workplace experience.
PHASE 3
In this phase you will learn more about the law, policy and guidelines, and you will develop the operational skills required of a patrol constable. By the end of this phase you will have a good understanding of the investigative process. You will learn through a range of methods including some class-based learning and learning through engagement with your local community and real-life situations. Your suitability for independent patrol will be assessed throughout this stage and you will think about your further development.

PHASE 4
During this phase you will be on independent patrol up to the point of ‘confirmation’. You will be expected to achieve competence in the range of activities within the programme and you will be given an equivalent of 30 days’ protected learning time to support this objective.

Your performance will be assessed in terms of knowledge and understanding, competency, skills, attitudes and behaviours.

** In January 2010 a new national qualification – Level 3 Diploma in Policing – was introduced under Ofqual’s Qualifications and Credit Framework. This is the new qualification to be completed while student officers undertake their IPLDP. The Diploma in Policing links directly to the National Occupational Standards on which the IPLDP is based and defines requisite knowledge, understanding and competence that student officers must demonstrate across the operational policing arena.
Once you have completed your probation period (or earlier if you are a High Potential Development Scheme candidate, see page 14), you can consider entering the promotion process for the rank of sergeant.

**OSPRE**

In most forces this will involve taking part in the Objective Structured Performance-Related Examination (OSPRE) process that comes in two parts. OSPRE Part 1 tests your knowledge of criminal law and policing procedures. OSPRE Part 2 is a series of work-simulation exercises designed to test whether you have the necessary skills to perform in the higher rank. If you pass, you can take part in force selection procedures for appointment to the rank of sergeant.

**National Police Promotion Framework**

Some forces are trialling the National Police Promotion Framework, which is a four-step process to promotion to sergeant. The first step is to be considered competent in the current rank through the Personal Development Review. The second step is to sit the OSPRE Part 1 exam in criminal law and policing procedures. The third step is to be assessed against rank-specific competencies in a force selection process. And the final step is to undergo a 12-month temporary promotion, where candidates are assessed in the workplace.

All forces operate similar processes for promotion from sergeant to inspector.
While many officers prefer to spend the majority of their careers on patrol, others opt to transfer to more specialist areas of work. There is a wide range of specialisms but not all are offered by every police force. Specialist roles are popular and there is strong competition for them. These roles may also require higher standards of fitness and eyesight. You will only be eligible to apply for these specialist roles following the successful completion of your probation.

Police dog handlers
Dog handlers and their dogs work as a team. The dogs assist with catching criminals, searching buildings and policing large crowds, such as those at football matches. They are often trained to find drugs or explosives.

Traffic police
All forces have officers deployed on road policing. Their duties include tackling vehicle crime. They ensure road safety by enforcing traffic laws such as those relating to speeding and drink driving. They also deal with road accidents and help road users.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID)
Officers engaged in detective work account for about one in eight of all police staff. They receive intensive training to enable them to work effectively in this field. The day-to-day work of detectives is busy and demanding. Their core role is to investigate serious crime and to act upon intelligence, which can lead to the arrest and prosecution of hardened or ‘career’ criminals.

Counter-terrorist command
Counter-terrorism officers work at airports and seaports. They provide armed bodyguards for politicians and public figures and investigate firearms and explosives offences that may be connected to national security matters.

Drugs squads
The growth in the misuse of drugs in the United Kingdom is a major cause for concern. These specialist officers work with operational officers and other agencies to target drug dealers and tackle the drugs problem. They play a very important role in combating this area of organised crime.
Fraud investigation units
We all bear the cost of fraud in our insurance premiums or in the higher cost of products. Many forces have fraud investigation units and they assist each other. Fraud officers work with the Serious Fraud Office, a government department set up to investigate large-scale fraud.

Underwater search units
There are numerous underwater search units throughout England and Wales. Underwater units are vital for investigating crime and searching for missing persons.

Mounted branches
Police horses work under the guidance of very skilled riders and play a vital role at events where there are large crowds, such as football matches, race meetings and demonstrations. They are also used to provide high-visibility policing at a local level, often in parkland and open spaces.

Air support units
Many forces have or share full-time air support. Most of these use helicopters but planes are also used. They have on-board technology, including thermal imaging cameras that ‘see in the dark’ by following heat sources and relay pictures to ground commanders. They often assist with serious traffic incidents.
COLETTE Deputy Chief Constable, South Wales Police

Even though my dad was in the Royal Air Force and my mum worked in public services, I didn’t consider joining the police until my last year at university. It has given me an immensely rewarding and varied career – I couldn’t imagine doing anything else!

I joined the Police Service almost 30 years ago after graduating with a degree in English and psychology. My career started in north London where I worked as a police constable, but I soon progressed into the Criminal Investigation Department, working in various detective roles. A couple of years ago, I moved to South Wales and got involved in terrorism and serious and organised crime cases. I was recently appointed Deputy Chief Constable.

Being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated profession has never caused any issues. Things have changed a lot in the last 10 years, which means women have achieved equal pay and are promoted to senior positions. If you do a good job and work very hard, you’ll be successful regardless.

This job is all about people, so it’s crucial that you’re tolerant and appreciative of people from different cultures and backgrounds. I can truly say that it’s an incredibly satisfying profession.

“What are the hours and shifts like?”

The full-time working week is 40 hours and you will be expected to work the full range of shifts – earlies, lates and nights. Shift patterns vary between forces. Most fit and healthy people are able to manage shift work but you need to get used to it.
The High Potential Development Scheme (HPDS)

The High Potential Development Scheme (HPDS) is designed to identify, develop and progress the leaders of the future.

The HPDS selection process aims to identify those constables and sergeants who demonstrate significant potential to reach the rank of superintendent and above.

Joining the scheme is a serious commitment. Only those who demonstrate the very highest ability are selected. Selection is extremely competitive, with only a very limited number of places available each year. Applicants must have the ability and desire to perform at the highest level and to reach the top.

What is the HPDS?

The HPDS aims to produce a cohort of officers who have the operational credibility, management skills and strategic awareness to meet the challenges of senior police leadership. Successful candidates undertake a programme of professional and academic development.

Academic development –
This is undertaken through a two-year development programme with Warwick Business School, one of the UK’s leading universities, culminating in a Postgraduate Diploma in Police Leadership and Management. The diploma is delivered in six modules, which cover subjects such as leadership, performance and change management, partnership working and managing resources. Those who successfully complete the diploma then undertake a period of professional consolidation where they apply their learning in their force. High-performing scheme members also have an opportunity to study for a Masters qualification in police leadership.

Continuous assessment –
Scheme members are subject to continuous assessment, both on the academic programme and of their performance in the workplace, to ensure operational credibility.

Promotion – Members are able to progress more rapidly as they are not constrained by any time requirements under Police Regulations, and are not subject to normal force promotion requirements, as long as they clearly demonstrate suitability for promotion.

Who should apply?

Those with ability and ambition should apply. The previous cohorts have been diverse and it is hoped the HPDS will continue to attract officers from a wide range of backgrounds regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. This also includes academic background. The scheme is open to non-graduates and last year many successful applicants were not degree holders. It is vital that the Police Service reflects the community it serves. We aim to ensure that opportunities to move up the career ladder are open to everyone.

How to apply

If you are considering a career in the police, and are interested in the HPDS, you will first have to apply to one of the forces in England and Wales. Once you are a serving officer you can apply to join the HPDS. If your application is supported by your force, you will then be invited to take part in the assessment process. The HPDS is funded by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA). Go to www.npia.police.uk/hpds for more information.
High potential graduate entry scheme (HPGES)

The HPGES is run annually and provides an opportunity for a small number of talented graduates to secure their place on the HPDS before starting with their force. Those on HPGES will form a cohort and be allocated a development adviser. The first phase of the scheme is focused on student officer training, delivered by forces, and master classes and support provided by the NPIA. After this first phase (approximately a year), if the force is still confident in the officer’s ability and potential, the HPGES member will join the HPDS and commence the academic programme at Warwick Business School.

HPGES officers will have the same opportunities as HPDS officers as soon as they commence their training, and just like the HPDS officers they will only remain on the scheme if they are deemed to have the skills and potential to progress.

To get on the scheme you must first pass all phases of your force recruitment process, and if you are deemed by the force as suitable for the HPGES and meet the criteria, you will then be put through to the HPGES assessment centre. If you are successful at the assessment centre your start date with your force will, if necessary, be fast tracked and you will become a member of the HPGES on commencement of your service. If you are unsuccessful at the HPGES assessment centre you will still be able to start with the force as an officer through the standard process.

To be eligible to apply for the HPGES you must have a minimum of an upper second class degree (2:1), in any subject. Applications from final year students will be accepted but places on the scheme will only be offered to those who graduate with a 2:1 or above.

If you are interested in applying for the HPGES, please indicate your interest by ticking the box in section 1 of the application form.

Please note that not all forces participate in the scheme every year.
Del Detective Sergeant, Metropolitan Police

Working with the CID puts you on the cutting edge of crime, and it can be daunting. But you need to deal with it and be aware of your responsibility to diligently investigate serious crime at all times.

I applied to the police cadets and failed the entrance test. I decided I needed to get some life experience so I worked part time in sales and volunteered at a psychiatric hospital in London. I re-applied after a year, got the job, and haven’t looked back since.

I’ve been in the force for 23 years, but I decided I needed to challenge myself and last year I graduated and obtained a law degree after six years of night school. I was diagnosed as dyslexic but was determined not to let this stand in my way. My force was very supportive. I was allowed to arrange my shifts to accommodate classes. I deal with lawyers every day and this degree has helped put me on an equal footing with them.

The CID is a lot less glamorous and a lot more challenging than
“Can I specialise in particular types of work?”

There is a wide range of jobs in the Police Service and plenty of opportunity to expand your skills or move into specialist areas. Some specialist roles require a higher level of fitness or sharper eyesight than is needed for an operational constable. Subject to your ability to meet the higher standards and demonstrate the skills needed, the choice is yours.

in TV shows. You need to go for specialist training to equip you for this job and you deal with anything from criminal damage to murder – crimes that can end up in the magistrates’ court or Crown court. It’s tough, demanding and comes with a lot of responsibility.

Sometimes it’s disheartening to see the same people coming through the system again and again, but it’s a great feeling to see someone break that cycle.

I now work as a CID tutor – my tutors were amazing and inspiring and I want to do the same for the next generation of officers coming through the system.

CID officers could not do their job without their colleagues from armed response, safer neighbourhoods, Special Constables, etc. Each unit within the police family has its own importance and is as valued as the next.
Other opportunities

Police staff
You may wish to join the Police Service in a police staff role, working as a counter clerk or in one of the many administrative roles or civilian specialist positions such as forensic photographer or scene of crime officer.

PCSOs
Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are uniformed members of the wider police family and have a critical role to play in neighbourhood policing. They provide a high-visibility, reassuring presence in the communities where they patrol and focus on lower-level crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. They can be designated with a range of powers by their chief constables in order to have an impact on quality of life issues, including nuisance and disorder.

Special constabulary
As an alternative to becoming a regular police officer, you might like to consider joining the special constabulary. Special constables are volunteer police officers who provide crucial support to their regular police colleagues and provide a vital link between the regular police and the community. As a special constable you will have the same powers as a regular officer and wear a similar uniform. Your duties may include foot patrol, initiatives aimed at tackling specific local crime problems, and policing major incidents and events. The more training and experience you gain, the more responsibility you will be given.

If you wish to volunteer as a special, you can obtain further information directly from your local police force, or visit the special constabulary website at www.policecouldyou.co.uk

Police support volunteers
Police support volunteers are drawn from all sections of the community. They are not members of police staff, PCSOs or warranted officers and they do not wear a uniform. They perform their voluntary roles alongside police staff and officers and are vetted to a level appropriate to the roles they are asked to fill.

There are a number of roles that police support volunteers perform and these vary from force to force. For example, roles may range from administrative assistants and police station reception support to working with victims and witnesses of crimes. Police support volunteers provide an excellent link between the police force and the community they serve. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact your local force, which will be able to advise you of the opportunities it has available.

Cadets
If you are aged between 14 and 18 and want to get involved with your local force, you may wish to become a police cadet. Cadets get involved in stewarding national events, such as the London Marathon and London to Brighton races, and act as ushers at local events. They are also involved in local crime prevention initiatives such as leaflet delivery and property marking. Please note that not all forces currently run a cadet scheme – please contact the force you are interested in for advice on local arrangements.

If you are interested in undertaking any of the roles mentioned above, contact your local force for further information.
Support throughout your career

The Police Service is committed to ensuring that it reflects the communities it serves and is keen to improve its diversity. We particularly welcome applications from women, minority ethnic groups and the lesbian and gay community. Appointment is strictly on merit.

Police Service support associations

Throughout your service you will be supported by your colleagues, supervisors and trainers. A number of staff associations also exist to give you support and advice.

These include:

- Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)
- British Association for Women in Policing (BAWP)
- Christian Police Association (CPA)
- Gay Police Association (GPA)
- National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP)
- National Black Police Association (NBPA)
- National Disabled Police Association (NDPA)
- Police Federation of England and Wales
- Police Superintendents’ Association of England and Wales
I joined the police force after leaving university. Three years on, I can honestly say it’s the best decision I ever made. I love my job, and not many people can say that.

I applied for a job in the police force at a university graduate fair. I always wanted to experience something different in life, and I have definitely done that with this job. Every day is unique, and I get to meet so many people. The best bit is when members of the public thank you. That’s when you realise that you really have made a difference to them – and that’s the reason why I joined the force.

The police seem to have a bad press when it comes to racism. I’ve never come across anything like that working here and I can’t imagine ever doing so. My aunt and cousins are in the police force as well, and when I talked to them before joining they told me they hadn’t had any bad experiences.

In fact, in some situations being Asian can really help. In Sheffield we have a large Indian population and members of this community can sometimes find it easier to talk to me. Colleagues also ask me questions about my background. By passing on my knowledge I can help them learn about my culture, and we can all serve the public better.

In the police force I’m seen as a police officer; I’m not judged by the colour of my skin.
“Will I be able to work part time?”

Yes. Men and women can apply to join the Police Service as part-time officers working at least 24 hours a week and covering the full range of shifts, including night duties.

“Is it a dangerous job?”

Dealing with dangerous situations is part of the job. Putting yourself in unnecessary danger isn’t. You will be trained to deal with all types of situation.
## Police Service rank structure

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<th>Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and City of London Police</th>
<th>Other forces in England and Wales</th>
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<td>Commander</td>
<td>Assistant chief constable</td>
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<td>Deputy assistant commissioner (MPS)</td>
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<td>Assistant commissioner</td>
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- Police constable
- Sergeant
- Inspector
- Chief inspector
- Superintendent
- Chief superintendent
## Force recruitment websites

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<th>Force</th>
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<td>Avon &amp; Somerset</td>
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<td>British Transport Police</td>
<td><a href="http://www.btprecruitment.com">www.btprecruitment.com</a></td>
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Our thanks to everyone who helped with the production of this brochure.