



College of Policing

Specials Recruit Assessment Process

Information for Candidates

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Introduction

We have received your application to become a Special Constable and would like to invite you to take part in the Specials Recruit Assessment Process.

This document will provide you with all the information you need to know about the assessment process in relation to what it will involve, how you will be assessed, how you can prepare and what happens afterwards. We advise you to take time to study this document before you come to the assessment process.

The assessment process will take approximately two hours. We are not able to provide meals at the assessment process, however you may want to bring a snack as you will get a short break.

Please bring the following documents with you to the assessment process to confirm your identity.

- A full 10-year passport or **two** of the following:
 - British driving licence
 - P45
 - Birth certificate (issued within six weeks of your birth)
 - Chequebook and bank card (with three statements and proof of your signature)
 - Credit card with your photo on it
 - Proof of where you live (for example, a Council Tax bill, gas bill, electricity bill, water bill or phone bill).

If you do not bring the documents as listed above you will not be able to take part in the assessment process.

When you arrive at the assessment process we will check your identification documents. We will give you an outline of the assessment process followed by a full briefing before each stage of the assessment. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and sort out any concerns you may have about the assessment process.

The assessment process will follow a strict timetable. You must arrive by the time we have set. If you arrive late you will not be able to take part in the assessment process at that time. We may let you take part in another assessment process later that day or week, but only in exceptional circumstances.

It is important to remember that you will be under assessment conditions for the duration of the assessment process, even between exercises. You are therefore advised to behave appropriately at all times during your assessment process.

What does the Specials Recruit Assessment Process involve?

The Specials Recruit Assessment Process consists of the following:

- one written exercise
- a competency based structured interview
- a situational judgement test

All candidates will do the same exercises and we will assess them equally. Other people will take the assessment process at the same time as you. However, they may take the exercises in a different order. For example, one group may take the interviews first while another group may start with the written exercises. We will tell you in the briefing we give you on the day the order in which you will carry out the exercises.

All of the assessment process documents were produced in line with the Plain English Campaign guidelines.

In the situational judgement test and written exercise, you will play the part of a newly appointed Customer Services Officer at a retail and leisure complex called The Westshire Centre. The Westshire Centre is a fictional place created for the assessment process only. We have set out full details of the main duties and responsibilities of a Customer Services Officer and information about the complex in The Westshire Centre Welcome Pack. We recommend that you read the information in the Welcome Pack as this will help you prepare for the exercises. You do not need to memorise the details of the documents in the pack as we will provide you with all the information you need in the preparation phases of the exercises.

For the situational judgement test and written exercise we will give you all the information you need to deal with the situations and you should not introduce any extra information.

Written Exercise

What will happen during the written exercise?

The written exercise will last for 20 minutes. We will show you into the exercise room along with the other candidates in your group. We will give you a thorough briefing before you start the exercise. We will provide paper and pens, together with a 'Proposal Document Template' to write your response, a copy of which is in The Westshire Centre Welcome Pack. You may make rough notes on a separate piece of paper, which we will not assess. We will tell you when you have five minutes left and again when you have one minute left. We will assess the written exercise after you have finished the whole assessment process.

What information can you give me about the written exercises?

In the written exercise you will have to write a proposal document about issues at The Westshire Centre

Interview

What will happen during the interview?

The interview will last for up to 20 minutes and we will ask you four questions about how you have dealt with specific situations in the past. These questions will be related to the competency areas relevant to the role of a Special Constable, which can be found in Appendix A. We will give you up to five minutes to answer each question. The person interviewing you will stop you if you go over the five minutes. As the person interviewing you asks you the question, they will also give you a written copy of the question to refer to. They may ask you further questions to help you to give a full response. When you consider your responses to the interview questions, please only choose examples that you feel comfortable discussing with the person interviewing you.

The person who interviews you will assess your responses against the type of behaviours you need to perform effectively in the role. So that you can do your best please make sure you are familiar with the competencies and that your answer gives you an opportunity to explain how you have shown this behaviour.

What information can you give me about the interviews?

We will assess you on five different competencies during the 20 minute interview. Oral Communication will be assessed throughout the interview and you will be asked one question in relation to the following four competency areas:

- Openness to Change
- Professionalism
- Service Delivery
- Working with Others

Situational Judgement Tests

What will happen during the SJT?

The situational judgement test will last for 50 minutes. You will take the test in an exercise room and you will receive a thorough briefing before you start the test. During this assessment you will be presented with 25 questions. Each question describes a situation and provides you with a choice of four response options. You will be asked to use your judgement to rate the effectiveness of each of the response options. Once you have made your decision you will then fill in the appropriate spaces on an answer sheet we provide. We will give you full instructions before you start the test. We will assess the situational judgement test after you have finished the whole assessment process. An example situational judgement test question has been provided at the back of this document in Appendix B.

What information can you give me about the situational judgement test?

The SJT will last for **50 minutes** and there are **25 questions** in the test. All the information you will need to pick a response will be given to you in the questions.

We advise that during the tests you work as quickly and accurately as possible.

How will you be assessed?

At an assessment process we look at how you perform in a variety of exercises.

We include the following processes in the assessment process:

- We assess **what** you do and **how** you do it
- Trained assessors measure how you perform in exercises which relate to specific competencies
- We use information from all of the exercises to determine whether or not you have met the national standard by how well you demonstrated evidence across the competency areas being assessed.

Although your performance may meet the minimum national standard at the assessment process, this does not necessarily guarantee you a post within the force you are applying to. For example, forces may have more candidates who have met the national standard than they have vacancies, therefore may choose to prioritise candidates by those who have achieved the highest scores above the minimum standard or adding an additional assessment criteria (e.g. a subsequent force interview) in order to meet their own resourcing demands.

Which competencies will you assess at the assessment process?

We assess competencies which are particularly relevant to the role of a Special Constable. Skills for Justice have set out detailed descriptions of each of these competencies, which can be found in Appendix A.

How do you assess me during the interview, situational judgement test and written exercises?

We have designed the assessment process to make sure that we assess each of the six competencies relevant to the role of a Special Constable at least two times, except for 'Working with Others', which will be assessed in every exercise. You should not be concerned if you feel that you have not done well in any one particular exercise as you will have at least one other exercise where we will assess the same competencies again.

We will award your performance a grade on a scale from A to D, in each competency area within the exercises. We give As to the highest performing candidates and Ds to the candidates who do not perform so well. We award grades in relation to **what** you did and **how** you did it.

You do not need to know about customer services or the law or procedures relating to police work.

How can I prepare for the interview, situational judgement test and written exercises?

You can practise and improve your skills in relation to the competencies we assess. It may be useful for you to carefully consider your ability in relation to each of the six competencies. You could carry out a detailed and honest self-assessment and think of anything you could improve. You may also want to discuss your own situation in relation to the six competencies with your colleagues, friends or family.

We advise you to approach any assessment process with an open mind, be yourself and behave as naturally as the circumstances allow.

For your information, the College of Policing does not endorse any training companies providing training or any training materials in relation to the Specials Recruit Assessment Process.

Who are the assessors and interviewers?

The assessors and interviewers are either police officers or people who have been specifically chosen from the community. All the assessors and interviewers are highly trained and they are continually monitored throughout the assessment process.

What information do the assessors and interviewers have about me?

The assessors and interviewers will only know your candidate number, which we will give you when you arrive. They will have no other information about you.

What accommodation or reasonable adjustment can be provided?

Should you have any condition, temporary or otherwise (e.g. pregnancy, injury, disability, including dyslexia etc.) that might cause you to be disadvantaged during the assessment process you **may** be entitled to accommodation or reasonable adjustment. If you believe you may have a condition that could disadvantage you at the assessment process, please contact the force you are applying to, who will be able to assist you with your application for accommodation or reasonable adjustment.

Any accommodation or reasonable adjustment provided for the assessment process will be based on the information provided to us in a relevant report produced by an appropriately qualified professional. Reasonable adjustments may include additional time in the SJT and written exercises or other adjustments as recommended by a specialist.

How will you give me my results?

You will receive a 'Candidate Feedback Report' providing detailed information on how you performed in the assessment process. The aim of the report is to show how you performed in each of the competency areas and exercises. Your force will give you your report. Please **do not** contact College of Policing Examinations & Assessment directly to ask about the release date for results or candidate feedback reports.

How do I give feedback about the assessment process?

As part of the monitoring and development of the Specials Recruit Assessment Process, we would like your views and experiences of the process and you can give us feedback online by filling in a candidate feedback questionnaire. We will give you the website address after your assessment process. We will not count any feedback you give us as a formal appeal.

What is the appeals procedure?

If you have a concern about an issue that occurs at a Specials Recruit Assessment Process you should raise it with your Candidate Co-ordinator on the day in the first instance. If it is not resolved and you still wish to report any extenuating circumstances or procedural concerns that you believe may have adversely affected your performance, you must do so in the form of a written appeal to the force you are applying to. It is your responsibility to provide supporting evidence at the time of writing.

YOU MUST SUBMIT THE APPEAL TO THE FORCE RECRUITING DEPARTMENT WITHIN SEVEN DAYS OF YOUR ATTENDANCE AT THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS. REPORTS RECEIVED AFTER THIS DATE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

Please note that views expressed through the candidate feedback questionnaire will **NOT** constitute a formal appeal. You should not expect a response to issues raised through this channel.

If you have met the national standard in the assessment process your appeal will not be considered further. Only if you have not met the national standard will your appeal be considered. Procedural issues, however, will still be investigated as they may have important implications for the assessment process as a whole.

Extenuating Circumstances

Extenuating Circumstances are likely to be a serious event or series of events, such as illness, accident or injury, or the death or serious illness of a family member. Lack of preparation and/or a heavy workload prior to attendance at the assessment process are not considered to be extenuating circumstances.

If you are aware of any extenuating circumstances prior to, or on the day of the assessment process, you should report any problems, which may affect your performance, to the Candidate Co-ordinator before your assessment process commences as these will not be grounds for appeal after the assessment process. You will be given the opportunity to raise any issues with the Candidate Co-ordinator prior to the start of your assessment process. It will be your decision as to whether you continue with the assessment process or withdraw and attend a later assessment process.

If you withdraw before the assessment process commences you will be given the opportunity to attend the next available assessment process. You will not need to re-apply, or wait until the end of the re-application period that is applicable if you withdraw once the assessment process has commenced; that is, if you have been exposed to the assessment process exercise material. Once you have decided to commence, extenuating circumstances will not be grounds for appeal. The Candidate Co-ordinator will have explained this in the initial briefing.

On receipt of your results

After attending the assessment process, you will have needed to have lodged an appeal within **seven days** of attendance at the assessment process through formal channels. This is the only opportunity for you to submit an appeal. Appeals that were not received within the specified time scale will not be considered. Therefore appeals **cannot** be lodged having received your **result**.

Procedural Concerns

Procedural concerns will be investigated by the organisation responsible for managing the assessment process.

Force recruitment representatives should respond directly to you to acknowledge receipt of the appeal. If the appeal has not been resolved within six weeks from the receipt of the appeal, the force representative should write to you to explain that your appeal is still being considered.

Successful appeals will not result in a fail result being changed into a pass. However, if upheld, you will be permitted, where possible, to attend another assessment process when the exercises are changed or once the minimum time period the force decides to apply between assessment processes has passed, which ever is sooner, without reapplication.

We hope this information is helpful and we would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success at the assessment process.

Appendix A - Competencies Relevant to the Role of a Special Constable

Practitioner

(Constable, PCSO, Special and police staff practitioner)

Serving the public

Demonstrates a real belief in public service, focusing on what matters to the public and will best serve their interests. Understands the expectations, changing needs and concerns of different communities, and strives to address them. Builds public confidence by talking with people in local communities to explore their viewpoints and break down barriers between them and the police. Understands the impact and benefits of policing for different communities, and identifies the best way to deliver services to them. Works in partnership with other agencies to deliver the best possible overall service to the public.

Openness to change

Positive about change, adapting rapidly to different ways of working and putting effort into making them work. Flexible and open to alternative approaches to solving problems. Finds better, more cost-effective ways to do things, making suggestions for change and putting forward ideas for improvement. Takes an innovative and creative approach to solving problems.

Service delivery

Understands the organisation's objectives and priorities, and how own work fits into these. Plans and organises tasks effectively, taking a structured and methodical approach to achieving outcomes. Manages multiple tasks effectively by thinking things through in advance, prioritising and managing time well. Focuses on the outcomes to be achieved, working quickly and accurately and seeking guidance when appropriate.

Professionalism

Acts with integrity, in line with the values and ethical standards of the Police Service. Takes ownership for resolving problems, demonstrating courage and resilience in dealing with difficult and potentially volatile situations. Acts on own initiative to address issues, showing a strong work ethic and demonstrating extra effort when required. Upholds professional standards, acting honestly and ethically, and challenges unprofessional conduct or discriminatory behaviour. Asks for and acts on feedback, learning from experience and developing own professional skills and knowledge. Remains calm and professional under pressure, defusing conflict and being prepared to step forward and take control when required.

Decision making

Gathers, verifies and assesses all appropriate and available information to gain an accurate understanding of situations. Considers a range of possible options before making clear, timely, justifiable decisions. Reviews decisions in the light of new information and changing circumstances. Balances risks, costs and benefits, thinking about the wider impact of decisions. Exercises discretion and applies professional judgement, ensuring actions and decisions are proportionate and in the public interest.


Working with others

Works co-operatively with others to get things done, willingly giving help and support to colleagues. Is approachable, developing positive working relationships. Explains things well, focusing on the key points and talking to people using language they understand. Listens carefully and asks questions to clarify understanding, expressing own views positively and constructively. Persuades people by stressing the benefits of a particular approach, keeps them informed of progress and manages their expectations. Is courteous, polite and considerate, showing empathy and compassion. Deals with people as individuals and addresses their specific needs and concerns. Treats people with respect and dignity, dealing with them fairly and without prejudice regardless of their background or circumstances.

Appendix B – Situational Judgement Tests Practice Questions

Answer Sheet

Important directions for completing the answer sheet

- Use only soft pencils
Do not use ink or ballpoint pens 
- Make heavy black marks that fill the gates completely

Examples

WRONG 0 1 2 3 4 5

WRONG 0 1 2 3 4 5

WRONG 0 1 2 3 4 5

RIGHT 0 1 2 3 4 5

- Fully erase any answers you wish to change
- Please make no stray marks on the answer sheet

- Q1. A 0 1 2 3 4 5
- B 0 1 2 3 4 5
- C 0 1 2 3 4 5
- D 0 1 2 3 4 5

Practice questions overleaf

Practice Questions – Situational Judgement Test

You must rate each of the options using the rating scale provided. Each option should be rated for its effectiveness individually and not in comparison with the other options. Options within the same question can be given the same ratings.

0	1	2	3	4	5
Ineffective or counter-productive	Marginally Effective	Partially Effective	Moderately Effective	Mostly Effective	Highly Effective
A very poor response to the problem that does not work or might make the situation worse	A generally poor response that is likely to produce a less than satisfactory outcome	A less than ideal response which has some merit	A reasonably good response that is likely to produce an outcome that is more or less satisfactory	A good response that is likely to produce a good outcome	A strong response that is likely to produce a very good outcome

You have just attended a meeting where you were informed there has been a recent increase in the number of complaints from customers with disabilities. These are mainly related to mobility scooters hired from The Westshire Mobility Shop. Customers have reported waiting times of over half an hour when scooters have broken down. Staff at the shop have also been accused of being patronising towards customers with disabilities. Your manager has asked you to deal with the situation.

Please rate the effectiveness of the following options in responding to the situation outlined above.

- A. Send a memo to the shop to emphasise the need to ensure scooters are maintained and the staff treat customers respectfully.
- B. Arrange a meeting with the manager of The Westshire Mobility Shop to talk about the issues and how they can be resolved.
- C. Wait to gather more information about the issues to establish the extent of the concerns.
- D. Create a policy for all the staff to follow regarding the treatment of customers with disabilities.

Answers to Practice Questions

Answers

The answers to the practice questions are below, the correct answer is indicated by a completed gate.

0	1	2	3	4	5
Ineffective or counter-productive	Marginally Effective	Partially Effective	Moderately Effective	Mostly Effective	Highly Effective
A very poor response to the problem that does not work or might make the situation worse	A generally poor response that is likely to produce a less than satisfactory outcome	A less than ideal response which has some merit	A reasonably good response that is likely to produce an outcome that is more or less satisfactory	A good response that is likely to produce a good outcome	A strong response that is likely to produce a very good outcome

- Q1. A 0 1 2 3 4 5
- B 0 1 2 3 4 5
- C 0 1 2 3 4 5
- D 0 1 2 3 4 5