



College of  
Policing



# Becoming a Special Constable



# What is the Special Constabulary?

The Special Constabulary is a force of trained volunteers who work alongside, and support, their local police. Find out more about the people involved, what they get from their involvement and how special constables fit into the police service.



Special constables play a crucial role in fighting crime and making our streets safer. 'Specials', as special constables are known, come from many different backgrounds and all walks of life. They volunteer around four hours per week and form a vital link between their community and the Police Service.

Once appointed, specials have to complete a training programme, after which they have the same powers as regular police officers and wear a similar uniform.

There are over 19,000 of these extraordinary people in the country, and we're looking for more.

If you would like to help make your neighbourhood a better place and are ready for an exciting challenge, read further to find out how you can become a special.

## What is a special?

- Specials are volunteer police officers with the same powers as regular officers.
- Specials spend around four hours a week, or more, supporting the police to tackle crime in their communities (duty hours may vary from force to force).
- Specials are recruited locally by all 43 police forces in England and Wales.
- Specials work in partnership with regular officers and the wider policing family, such as Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

**Specials receive appropriate training and have the same powers as regular officers**

## Who can become a special?

- The Special Constabulary is made up of all kinds of people, from all walks of life and with a wide variety of skills and experiences.
- Specials are men and women of all races and faiths.
- Specials must be 18 or over.

## What's in it for you?

- The satisfaction of supporting and policing your community.
- The opportunity to learn new transferable skills and gain valuable experience.
- The opportunity to work in a professional environment, supported by up-to-date training and knowledge.
- A chance to challenge yourself and show what you are capable of.
- An opportunity to learn about the police before committing to a job within the service.

## Will it change you?

- You can grow in self-confidence and may discover personal strengths not previously recognised.
- You can improve your communication skills.
- You will learn a great deal about your community.
- You can develop new contacts and associations.

## Other Police Service roles

- Regular police officers, paid and with power of arrest.
- PCSOs – operational members of police staff, focusing on lower level crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in communities (no power of arrest).
- Police staff – non-uniformed, paid members of staff supporting the police service.
- Police support volunteers – non-uniformed volunteers engaged in a variety of support roles that do not require police powers and complement the work of paid police personnel.



**You can make a difference in your local community. Do you want a challenge?**

# What do they do?

From tackling anti-social behaviour to crowd control at major events, the work of a special is varied, challenging and, above all, rewarding.

Specials take part in front-line police work. They spend most of their time on the streets, doing intelligence-based patrols in crime hotspots or taking part in crime-prevention initiatives. This could mean anything from keeping town centres safe at night through to conducting house-to-house enquiries or helping prevent vulnerable members of the community from becoming victims of crime. It is hard, demanding work, but from your first time on duty, you will see the impact you are having.

It is also extremely varied, and you could easily find yourself doing any of the following:

## Ensuring public safety

- Assisting at the scene of accidents, fires or incidents – helping control situations, ensuring people are safe.
- Providing security and crowd control at major public events – preventing injuries and disorder.

## Preventing crime

- Carrying out high-visibility foot patrols to deter and detect criminals.
- Educating businesses and the community about crime and how to avoid it to reduce crime and people's fear of it happening.
- Talking to school children about crime reduction and community safety to help them stay safe and make the right choices.

## Tackling crime

- Confronting anti-social behaviour on the streets such as gangs or intimidating behaviour.
- Managing alcohol-related incidents such as public drunkenness or violence.
- Enforcing road safety laws in local communities.

## Investigating crime

- Conducting house-to-house enquiries to gather information and support larger enquiries.
- Involvement in police operations to disrupt and arrest offenders.

## Securing convictions

- Present evidence in court to support the justice system in prosecuting offenders.

## Developing as a special

Once you have been trained and have practical experience you will be able to take on more responsibility as a special. Training is available on an ongoing basis and some forces have ranks within the Special Constabulary, so volunteers can be promoted as their experience and skills develop. This means that you will constantly be faced with new challenges and the opportunity to acquire new skills.

# Why become a Special?

If you are looking for a challenge, become a special and find out what you are capable of – for yourself and your community.

As a special constable you can make a direct contribution to your local community. You will help fight crime and forge stronger connections between the police and the people they serve. If you don't wish to become a special constable but still want to support your Police Service you could become a Police Support Volunteer, providing back-up services that allow regular officers to get on with their primary duties.

## Find out what you are capable of

The truth is that we are all capable of far more than we know and becoming a special is one of the best ways to learn new transferable skills and develop untapped potential. You will face exciting challenges, acquire valuable skills that will assist in your personal and career development, and you can take pride in your achievements and bolster your self-respect and confidence.

## See a different world

Out on patrol, you will deal with situations and people you would probably never encounter in your day-to-day life. Most of all, you will get to see the real impact of crime on people's lives and the extraordinary power you have as an individual to make a real difference. Being a special is both exciting and rewarding and for many it is a life-changing decision.

Whatever your plans, you will find working as a member of the wider Police Service, alongside regular officers of all ranks, police staff and other volunteers, an exciting and rewarding experience.

## Make the streets safer

Specials are rightly proud of the amazing work they do. Going out onto the streets to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour helps increase public safety and maintain community confidence.

It makes neighbourhoods better places to live, it helps young people make positive choices in their lives and it helps specials become more confident and respected members of their communities.



**Becoming a special may provide you with new skills useful for your career and life**

# The skills you need

Specials have many varied talents, but a positive attitude and thorough training will give you a great start. Support and training are ongoing as you develop.

The Special Constabulary welcomes applications from people of all walks of life and backgrounds. One of the most important requirements for all specials is a commitment to making a positive difference in their local area.

## Does this sound like you?

While there is some paperwork involved in police work, don't be put off by a lack of formal qualifications. The kind of people the police service needs have good life skills and experience plus a strong community awareness. They need to be able to:

- Stay calm in a crisis
- Communicate clearly
- Resolve disputes sensitively and appropriately
- Think laterally and solve problems
- Plan and take the initiative
- Be tolerant and work well in a team
- Be honest, fair and impartial
- Act with integrity
- Treat the public and their colleagues with respect and courtesy.

## Training to develop your skills

Before becoming a special constable all recruits are fully trained in areas including:

- What the police force does
- The role, powers and duties of police officers
- Preventing, detecting and dealing with crime

- Preparing evidence for court
- Conflict resolution and handling difficult situations
- Self-defence.

The training you get as a special constable can be valuable and useful in your career and personal life. In addition to your initial training, refresher training in various topics is also provided.

As you develop, your role as a special can grow with you. Training is ongoing and there will be opportunities to take on more responsibility so you are constantly challenged and learning new skills.

**Special constables have the same responsibilities and powers as regular police officers. They follow the same rules of conduct as regular officers and have the same professional standards and disciplinary procedures.**

# What next?

You have now heard all about the role of a special, so whether you still have more questions or are ready to apply, it is time to take the next step.

## Ready to become a special?

If you are interested in becoming a special there are three steps to go through.

1. If you have not already done so, contact the force that you wish to apply to. You will need to make sure that they are currently recruiting for the Special Constabulary.
2. Complete the application form and submit it to the force that you are applying to.
3. Go through the individual force's recruitment procedure.

## Got a question?

- If your question relates to special constable eligibility then contact the College of Policing at [specialsteam@college.pnn.police.uk](mailto:specialsteam@college.pnn.police.uk)
- If your question relates to recruitment or the application process, please contact the force to which you are applying.

Apply today and do something special for yourself and the community.



**Impress yourself today  
with what you can achieve**

# Are you eligible?

Before you proceed with your application, please check that you meet all the following criteria to ensure that you are eligible to apply to become a special constable.

- You must be 18 years of age or over at the time of applying.
- You need to be a British citizen or a citizen of a country that is a member of the European Economic Area, or Switzerland. Commonwealth citizens and foreign nationals who are resident in the UK and free from restrictions are also eligible to apply.
- Ideally, you should not have a criminal record. If you have a conviction as an adult or juvenile it is unlikely that you will be suitable, but some minor offences and cautions may not exclude you.
- You must not have tattoos on your hands, neck, forearms or face which could cause offence to members of the public or colleagues, or be considered lewd, garish or provocative.
- You must not be registered bankrupt with outstanding debts, have outstanding county court judgements against you, or be subject to a current Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA).
- You will need to be physically fit, and you will need to pass the job-related fitness test. You will undergo a medical screening and will also need to meet the minimum eyesight

standards for corrected (glasses or contact lenses) and uncorrected vision. For more information go to [www.policecouldyou.co.uk](http://www.policecouldyou.co.uk)

## Vetting

All candidates for the Special Constabulary will be subject to the same vetting procedures as apply to regular police officers.

## Occupation

You do not need to be working to become a special. Applications are welcome from the unemployed and from those at home bringing up a family. Some people's employment will, however, be deemed a conflict of interest. Members of the armed forces, for example, cannot serve as specials. For details of other jobs affected, you may view the 01/2011 special constable eligibility circular on the College of Policing Special Constabulary website at [www.college.police.uk/en/11420.htm](http://www.college.police.uk/en/11420.htm)

If you are still uncertain as to your eligibility or have any questions, please contact your local force.

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# College of Policing

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As the professional body for policing, we set high professional standards to assist forces in cutting crime and protecting the public.

We're here to equip all who work in policing with the tools, skills and knowledge they need to succeed and will provide practical, common-sense approaches based on the evidence of what works.

**[www.college.police.uk/specials](http://www.college.police.uk/specials)**

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