GUIDE TO BECOMING A
POLICE OFFICER

Have a career which matters.
sussex.police.uk/jobs
GUIDE TO BECOMING A POLICE OFFICER

Being a police officer is one of the most personally rewarding, challenging and diverse careers available to you. It’s a vital role and offers a great sense of pride from helping and protecting those within our community.

This guide aims to provide you with all you need to know about the role, the application process and to answer the more commonly asked questions we receive.

1. BEING A POLICE OFFICER

2. ELIGIBILITY

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

4. TRAINING AND PROGRESSION

5. TRANSFERRING TO SUSSEX POLICE

6. CONCERNED ABOUT APPLYING?

7. ANY OTHER QUESTIONS
1. BEING A POLICE OFFICER

From being the first on the scene or arresting an abuser, to being a shoulder to cry on and a reassuring face; this role is thrilling yet constantly challenging. You’ll work in a fast-paced, 24/7 environment where no two shifts will 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:
- Acting on emergency calls
- Investigating reported crimes
- Apprehending, arresting and interviewing suspects
- Collecting evidence at crime scenes
- Dealing with accidents and incidents
- Supporting victims and witnesses of domestic abuse
- Engaging with children and young people to help change perceptions of the police
- Working with emergency service colleagues from Ambulance, Fire and Rescue
- Responding to reports on anti-social behaviour
- Being a visible presence at large scale public events.

From day one, you will be fully supported through great training, which will equip you and your colleagues for every eventuality. And when it comes to going out on the beat for the first time, you will not be alone.
2. ELIGIBILITY

To apply for the role, you will need to meet our eligibility criteria:

- Aged 17 years or over (on the day you submit your application). You will need to be at least 18 years old to be offered a starting date.
- Have lived in the UK for three continuous years, immediately prior to application
- Have leave to enter or leave to remain and work in the UK for an indefinite period
- Have a full UK manual driving licence (by the time of appointment)
- Not be a member of the British National Party or other relevant organisations
- Not have tattoos which could cause offence
- Not have more than six penalty points (see page six)
- Be able to evidence the required qualifications (see page five).
POLICE CONSTABLE DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP (PCDA)

To be considered for entry to the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship, applicants must have achieved one A Level Grade A*-C or equivalent Level 3 qualification which is a minimum of 32 UCAS points. You can check how many points your qualification is worth on the UCAS tariff calculator.

You must also hold GCSE or level two functional skills in both Maths and English, or education equivalent to Level 2, at point of application.

You will need to provide copies of your qualifications at point of application.

Applicants without Level 3 qualifications can be considered if:

• You are a serving or previously serving PCSO or Special Constable with any force and have independent patrol status (IPS). Internal applicants will need to have completed their tenure before being given a final offer but this does not affect being able to apply before completing this. Previous service is a minimum of 18 months and you must not have left longer than 18 months ago.

• Previously served in the military, armed forces or similar law enforcement agency, have successfully completed the minimum term of service and have an exemplary reference (previous service in military or armed forces is a minimum of two years within the last five years).

• Previously served in another emergency service role considered to be operational by Sussex Police for a minimum of two years within the last five years and have an exemplary reference.

• Serving or previous service with any police force which is considered to be operational (contact officers, force control room operative, designated detention officer, investigating officer/crime investigator - exceptions to these roles will be considered on a case-by-case basis) and have completed a minimum 18 months service. Internal applicants will need to have completed their tenure before being given a final offer. You must have an exemplary reference (previous service is a minimum of 18 months and you must not have left no longer than 18 months ago). Exceptions to the roles listed will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

• You have gained a Certificate in Knowledge of Policing.

DEGREE HOLDER ENTRY PROGRAMME (DHEP)

Applicants for the DHEP should have successfully completed, and be able to evidence, a UK undergraduate honours degree (360 credits) in any subject. Applicants with non-UK degrees can be considered if their degree is recognised as equivalent by UK NARIC but will need to provide evidence of an acceptable English language qualification if their degree was not taught and assessed in English.
2. ELIGIBILITY (CONTINUED)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I'm not a British Citizen, can I still apply?
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?
Yes as you do not need a driving licence to apply. However you will need to have a full UK manual driving licence for us to offer you a start date so start taking those lessons!

I have motoring offences…
We assess motoring offences on an individual basis. However, if you have more than six penalty points within three years prior to the application date then you will not be eligible to apply to join Sussex Police as a police officer.

If I have a disability, can I still apply?
Yes. 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. We will make these wherever we can.

Is there a height restriction?
No, there is no minimum or maximum height restriction.

I don't have copies of my qualifications...
You will need to provide copies of your qualifications when you apply. We can accept statement of results but you will need to provide copies of the original certificates before being invited to an assessment centre. We are unable to accept provisional results. If you are unable to locate your certificates, Gov.uk can provide information on how to request duplicates or an accepted ‘certified statement of results’. We will be unable to able to allocate you to a course until we have received your certificates.

I don't have a level 2 qualification in English and Maths, what can I do?
If you are on the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship, the requirements of the Education for Skills and Funding Agency requires all apprenticeships to have a level 2 in Maths and English. You can obtain this through a training provider and the Government will fund functional English and Maths for you.

If you are on the Degree Holders Entry Programme, you do not need a level 2 in Maths and English as you will not be on an apprenticeship scheme.

I think I'm too old to apply...
The typical retirement age for police officers is 60. Therefore the upper age limit for a successful applicant to start training would be 56 due to the time it takes to go through the application process and the required probationary periods for the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) and the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP). We ask people to declare if they are 56 or over to ensure there is a reasonable chance for them to complete the recruitment and probationary period before reaching normal retirement age.

I don't have level 2 qualifcation in English and Maths, what can I do?
If you are on the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship, the requirements of the Education for Skills and Funding Agency requires all apprenticeships to have a level 2 in Maths and English. You can obtain this through a training provider and the Government will fund functional English and Maths for you.

If you are on the Degree Holders Entry Programme, you do not need a level 2 in Maths and English as you will not be on an apprenticeship scheme.

I think I'm too old to apply...
The typical retirement age for police officers is 60. Therefore the upper age limit for a successful applicant to start training would be 56 due to the time it takes to go through the application process and the required probationary periods for the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) and the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP). We ask people to declare if they are 56 or over to ensure there is a reasonable chance for them to complete the recruitment and probationary period before reaching normal retirement age.

Is there a height restriction?
No, there is no minimum or maximum height restriction.
3. APPLICATION PROCESS

To ensure we recruit the very best, we adopt a four-stage recruitment process for our police officers which can take approximately 10-12 months from application to appointment.
You can apply to more than one police force at a time for the position of a police officer. However, you will only be able to sit one assessment centre at any one time.

**Stage one:** completion of application (If Eligible)

**Stage two:** online assessment centre (consisting of three stages including situational judgement test, competency based interview, written assessment and exercise).

**Stage three:** In-force interviews. This interview will be based on the competency and value framework.

**Stage four:** pre-employment checks including medical, vetting, bio-metric vetting, substance misuse testing and a fitness test.

and have passed in the last 12 months. You can by-pass the online tests and be put through to the in-house force interview. If you wish to transfer results, please contact the recruitment team: recruitment@sussex.pnn.police.uk

MEDICAL RELATED

**I have a medical condition, is that an issue?**
If you have a pre-existing medical condition, you can still apply. You will need to pass the medical assessment to be eligible to join Sussex Police, but reasonable adjustments can be made. We also look at each case on its merits and take guidance from our occupational health team. Your doctor may be asked to supply a medical report for clarification.

**What does the medical involve?**
You will be asked to complete a confidential medical history questionnaire. Depending on your medical history, we may contact your GP/Specialist for further information. Our Occupational Health team will also require information regarding your BMI, eye sight, colour-related vision and hearing.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**ASSESSMENT RELATED**

**Why are you running online assessment centres?**
Sussex Police has introduced a new online assessment process during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Consisting of a three stage process, this approach ensures our national recruitment standards are maintained. We will be reviewing this in the coming months and you will be advised should the approach change.

**I have attended the National Assessment Centre before and failed – can I apply and take it again?**
If you have attended the National Assessment Centre before and failed you will be able to reapply after six months. If it was between three and six months ago, you may be able to reapply, depending on your assessment centre scores. Please contact the Recruitment Team for clarification via email.

**I have recently passed the National Assessment Centre while applying to join another force. Can these results be used in my application to Sussex Police?**
Yes, as long as you undertook the full assessment, reached our required pass mark and have passed in the last 12 months. You can by-pass the online tests and be put through to the in-house force interview. If you wish to transfer results, please contact the recruitment team: recruitment@sussex.pnn.police.uk

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**ASSESSMENT RELATED**

**Why are you running online assessment centres?**
Sussex Police has introduced a new online assessment process during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Consisting of a three stage process, this approach ensures our national recruitment standards are maintained. We will be reviewing this in the coming months and you will be advised should the approach change.

**I have attended the National Assessment Centre before and failed – can I apply and take it again?**
If you have attended the National Assessment Centre before and failed you will be able to reapply after six months. If it was between three and six months ago, you may be able to reapply, depending on your assessment centre scores. Please contact the Recruitment Team for clarification via email.

**I have recently passed the National Assessment Centre while applying to join another force. Can these results be used in my application to Sussex Police?**
Yes, as long as you undertook the full assessment, reached our required pass mark and have passed in the last 12 months. You can by-pass the online tests and be put through to the in-house force interview. If you wish to transfer results, please contact the recruitment team: recruitment@sussex.pnn.police.uk

**MEDICAL RELATED**

**I have a medical condition, is that an issue?**
If you have a pre-existing medical condition, you can still apply. You will need to pass the medical assessment to be eligible to join Sussex Police, but reasonable adjustments can be made. We also look at each case on its merits and take guidance from our occupational health team. Your doctor may be asked to supply a medical report for clarification.

**What does the medical involve?**
You will be asked to complete a confidential medical history questionnaire. Depending on your medical history, we may contact your GP/Specialist for further information. Our Occupational Health team will also require information regarding your BMI, eye sight, colour-related vision and hearing.
3. APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

I wear glasses/contact lenses...
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...
Those with colour blindness may be restricted from fulfilling certain posts, such as roads policing officer or firearms officer. 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 84 dB 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.

What does substance misuse testing entail?
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 inappropriate substances.

Is there a specific weight / BMI I need to be?
People who are overweight are more likely to struggle with the fitness test, and to get knee pain and other problems that make it hard for them while on patrol. Underweight people can be short of muscle bulk so they are also more likely to fail. 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. If it is likely you will need several months to lose the weight/body fat required, your application will be rejected on medical grounds. It is never too soon to review your lifestyle, so make sure that you have a healthy diet and take regular exercise.

I’m nervous about 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.

VEETING RELATED

What does vetting mean?
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.

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)
3. APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

or

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

For all other convictions or cautions, there is a rebuttable presumption that they should be rejected. In particular, the following would result in rejection: offences where vulnerable people were targeted; offences motivated by hate or discrimination; domestic abuse offences. Although the rebuttable presumption is that these should lead to rejection, there will be cases where this may be disproportionate in the circumstances. 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 acceptable may be justified.

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.

I've 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 judgment has been discharged then you can be considered however if you have an existing judgment your application will be unsuccessful.

I have an Independent Voluntary Agreement (IVA)...
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.

Can I continue with my other business?
You must declare any other employment for hire or gain or any other business interests that you intend to maintain. A decision on whether it is considered that your business interests are compatible with performing the role of police officer will be made on the basis of the information you provide during application.

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 or an educational reference.

“When we first receive a job from a 999 call at first it’s a surge of adrenaline - your mind is racing thinking of all of the possible outcomes and what’s expected of you. Then you arrive, your mind clears, your training kicks in and you take control of the situation.”

Alex, Police Officer
4. TRAINING AND PROGRESSION

We currently offer:

- **The Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA)** is a three-year apprenticeship programme with both on and off-the-job learning. On successfully finishing the programme, and completing probation, you will gain a Degree in Professional Policing Practice. Following your initial training and achievement of independent patrol status, you will then be supported by our in-house team to complete your learning journey. This will consist of academic modules which have practical elements integrated into them. You will be required to evidence practical competency by completing an Occupational Competency Portfolio (OCP) of the skills you have demonstrated in the workplace. Starting salary is £22,092 per annum (including South East Allowance of £1,500).

- **The Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP)** is aimed at degree-holders who have attained a degree in any subject area. At the end of this two-year practice-based programme, individuals will receive a Level Six Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing Practice. Starting salary of £26,280 (including South East Allowance of £1,500). You will be employed as an officer from day one, gaining valuable experience of the role alongside studying towards your degree. You will also be paid a salary while studying and will not be charged any tuition fees.

There are also many opportunities to progress through the ranks and/or specialise in any area of policing that interests you most – detective, firearms, public protection or the dog unit as some examples.

---

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Do I need a degree to apply to be a police officer?**
No, you do not need a degree. The College of Policing have reviewed the curriculum and found that the knowledge, skills and experience required for the role of a police officer meets the same standard as a degree (equivalent to a Level 6 qualification) which is why they’ve introduced the new entry routes.

**I have already completed a Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) with an external provider, does this make any difference to the process?**
No, however this is a Level 3 qualification and therefore contributes towards our qualification criteria.

**With the new entry routes, do I need to pay for the qualifications?**
No. We will pay for your degree/diploma and instead you will earn while you learn. All we ask is that you complete your probationary period which is three years for the PCDA and two years for the DHEP.

**Will I be expected to go to University?**
No. All training will be delivered locally by a combination of police staff trainers and University staff. Regional webinars will be conducted enabling Q&As in relation to the coursework from the University, working towards the degree.
If you’re a serving officer in another force and are looking for a new challenge, then we are interested in hearing from you. This is a separate process and you can view current opportunities here.
6. CONCERNED ABOUT APPLYING?

You’d like to apply but something’s holding you back…

- **Application process**
  We appreciate that the application process is lengthy. However, it’s this rigorous approach which ensures we select people who will make great police officers.

- **Diversity**
  We are committed to promoting equality and respect for diversity in the way we serve Sussex in delivering policing and also as an employer. We welcome applications from everyone in the community; particularly people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and white other backgrounds. We also encourage applications from women, the LGBT community and people with disabilities.

- **Fitness**
  While we don’t expect you to be a professional athlete, we do require a reasonable level of fitness to become a police officer. You will need to complete the fitness test as part of your application, again as part of your initial training and on an annual basis once as an officer.

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 which can be seen 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 desire which will ensure you can protect our communities. 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. The majority of our officers and staff demonstrate the highest levels of professionalism, integrity and standards. By joining us, we will expect you to also demonstrate these values and help us improve confidence in policing generally.
6. CONCERNED ABOUT APPLYING? (CONTINUED)

- **Potential danger**
  With policing, you cannot predict what you will respond to and sometimes this does mean putting people into challenging situations. However, through our in-depth training and ongoing support you will be well prepared to deal with whatever you are faced with. You’re also not alone – we are a team and will always have each other’s backs.

- **Tattoos**
  Having tattoos will not necessarily stop you becoming a police officer however if they are visible you may be required to cover them up, for example by wearing long sleeves.

  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 viewed individually and your application will be rejected or progressed based on their content and coverage. Tattoos that are on the face or perceived to be aggressive, offensive or not representative of our values may also cause the application to be unsuccessful.

- **Working hours**
  The normal working week is 40 hours in shifts that cover 24/7 on a rotational pattern. This does include evenings, weekends and bank holidays. You can see an example here. All shifts are available in advance meaning you will always know when you will be working and we always try to accommodate staff requests, as long as they fit in with operational demands.

  We also recognise the benefits of flexible working and are committed to equality of opportunity and the promotion of work-life balance. We will support opportunities for flexible working within the organisation where practical and suitable to promote a work/life balance and enable the recruitment and retention of a workforce which is representative of the diverse communities we serve. We aim to offer part-time options and are currently reviewing how this can be done, both during training and when on section.
7. ANY OTHER QUESTIONS

If you have any other questions, or would like to know more about the role and/or Sussex Police please contact the recruitment team on recruitment@sussex.pnn.police.uk who will be happy to arrange a conversation with you.

If your application has been successfully submitted, you will receive an email confirming it has been received. If you do not receive a notification, please check your spam/junk folder before emailing the recruitment team, providing them with your full name, telephone number and the date you submitted your application.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR APPLICATION