



Police Constable recruitment - Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions and answers provide you with information about the Police Constable (PC) recruitment process.

The FAQs are listed in the following order:

- Salary
- Eligibility
- Application process
- Online assessment
- Assessment centre
- Interview
- Pre-employment checks
- Any further questions

Salary

How much will I be paid?

Our starting salary for student officers is £21,870 with the potential to rise to £40,650 within your first seven years. On completion of initial training (approx. six months) you will then move up to £25,086. For Sussex Special Constables with Independent Patrol, Sussex police staff who have successfully completed the national Investigators' Exam or PCSOs who have completed 18 months service at the time of appointment the starting salary will be £25,086.

These figures include 2018/19 South East Allowance of £1,500.

Eligibility

Eligibility Criteria

To apply for the role of Police Constable, you will need to:

- be aged 18 years or over (on the day you submit your application)
- 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 achieved a standard of education equivalent to Level 3 (see below for further details)
- by the time of appointment, have a full manual driving licence
- not be a member of the British National Party (BNP) or other relevant organisations, such as Combat 18 or The National Front
- not have tattoos which could cause offence (see below for further details)
- not have motoring offences (see below for further details)

What Qualifications do I need?

You will need to hold, on your date of application, a Level 3 qualification or higher, or have achieved Independent Patrol Status (IP) as a Special Constable or PCSO.

There are many routes to achieving a qualification at Level 3, you must have achieved one of the following qualifications: A Level / AS Level / Advanced Diploma / National Diploma / National Certificate / National Award / Level 3 Diploma / BTEC Level 3 / Level 3 Certificate / Level 3 Award / Level 3 International Certificate in Sussex Police July 2018 Computer Studies / (ICCS) NCC Education UK / Level 3 NVQ / City & Guilds, Level 3 / NEBOSH National General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety / Access to higher Education Diploma/ International Baccalaureate.

To find out more details about the level of your qualification please visit Gov.uk

Do you have to be really fit to join the police?

You need a good level of fitness, but you don't need to be an athlete. If you are successful in the selection process you will need to undertake a fitness test – for further details of this test, please see the pre-employment checks section of this document.

Does the police force only want young people to join?

Anyone over 18 years is eligible to join Sussex Police as a Police Constable. We welcome applicants from all ages, cultures and backgrounds and the wealth of employment and life experiences that a diverse workforce can bring to Sussex Police.

The usual retirement age for police officers is 60, therefore the upper age limit for a successful applicant to start training would be 58, due to the two year probationary period. We ask for people to declare if they are 57 or over to ensure there is a reasonable chance for them to complete the recruitment process and their probationary period before reaching normal retirement age.

I have tattoos. Will this stop me becoming a police officer?

Not necessarily. If you have tattoos that 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 it 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 perceived to be aggressive, offensive or not representative of our values may be rejected.

Do I need a driving licence?

You do not need a driving licence to apply, but you will need to have a full UK manual driving licence for us to offer you a start date.

I am not a British Citizen. Can I still apply to join Sussex Police as a Constable?

You can still apply to become a police officer 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. Applicants must have resided in the UK for three continuous years immediately prior to application.

I have motoring offence(s). Can I still apply to become an officer?

We will need to assess the motoring offences. However, if you have more than six penalty points on your driving licence and/or two or more motoring offences within three years prior to the application date you will not be eligible to apply to join Sussex Police as a student officer.

I am a serving Police Constable in another force. Can I transfer across into Sussex Police?

We are interested in hearing from serving officers who have certain skills. This is a separate process, and you should set up a vacancy alert via our vacancies page, using 'Police Officer –Transferees' to filter.

I am a serving Special Constable/Police Community Support Officer. Can I transfer across to be a Police Officer?

No, if you are a Sussex Police Special Constable or PCSO with Independent Patrol you may be able to go through a shorter process. Once you have applied we'll contact you directly about this after the application window has closed.

If you are a Special or a PCSO with another force then you will have to go through the full recruitment process in order to become a constable and must meet the stated minimum eligibility criteria.

I have attended the Police SEARCH Assessment Centre before – can I apply and take it again?

You cannot retake the Police SEARCH Assessment within six months of you attending the assessment. However, due to the time taken to complete the initial phases of the recruitment process, if you have failed the Police SEARCH Assessment centre, you will be eligible to re-apply after three months.

If you have passed, please see the question below regarding transferring your results.

I have recently passed the National Assessment Centre while applying to join another force. Can these results be used in an application to Sussex Police?

Yes, as long as you undertook the full assessment, including the written exercise, reached the national pass mark and have passed in the last 12 months. You would still need to complete all of the other selection steps in the process. If you wish to transfer results, please contact the recruitment team: recruitment@sussex.pnn.police.uk

Can I transfer my application from another force to Sussex Police?

You can only apply as a Police Officer to one force at a time. If you apply to join Sussex Police then your application with another force would need to be withdrawn. The only nationally recognised item of the selection process is the assessment undertaken by the Police SEARCH Assessment Centre, all other items are of the discretion of the recruiting force.

I would like to become a Firearms Officer (or another specific role) – if my application is successful can I join the unit straight away?

No. All newly recruited Police Constables must undergo a two year probationary period, so it is very unlikely that you could apply for any specialist posts within Sussex Police until you have completed at least two years' service.

I have already completed a Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) with an external provider, does that make any difference to the process?

No, however this is a Level 3 qualification and therefore contributes towards our qualification criteria.

I am a Special Constable or PCSO with Independent Patrol, do I need to complete the full training course?

Yes.

Application process

Can you tell me about the application process?

The recruitment process consists of several stages, further details of these are below, and you will be notified at the end of each stage whether or not you have been successful and therefore eligible to proceed to the next stage.

How long does the recruitment and selection process last?

The process will take a minimum of ten months. We recruit to a pool to cover several intakes, so on average you can expect to wait around a year between your application and starting with us.

Application form

You will be advised at the end of the questionnaire if you have met all the requirements and are able to progress to the online assessment stage. It is very important that you follow the instructions as incomplete forms cannot be submitted.

Stage 1: Online Assessments

Approximately ten days after the application window has closed, we will invite candidates who have met the minimum eligibility criteria to complete two online assessments. The online assessments are:

Behaviour Styles Questionnaire (BSQ)

The Behaviour Styles Questionnaire measures your typical behaviour and preferences at work to assess whether you have the right behaviours and attitudes to be effective in the role. In the questionnaire, you will be presented with a number of statements about your typical behaviour at work in blocks of four. You will need to read each statement carefully and then decide the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

Situational Judgement Test (SJT)

The Situational Judgment Test assesses your judgement and decision-making skills in relation to job relevant situations. You will be presented with a series of scenarios; you do not need prior knowledge of policing policies and procedures to respond to the scenarios presented. For each scenario, you will be presented with some introductory text depicting the scenario. You will be asked to rate four actions in terms of their effectiveness in addressing the scenario.

Stage 2: Police SEARCH Assessment Centre

The Police SEARCH Assessment Centre assessments run in week long blocks during which you will be required to attend on just one day. The assessments will be held in the Thames Valley Police force area – we will make sure that you know the exact location when you reach that part of the selection process. Please note that you will be responsible for making your own travel arrangements.

For further information on the Police SEARCH Assessment Centre, please see the College of Policing website: [Recruit Assessment Centre for police constables | Police Recruitment](#)

Stage 3: Interview

What can I expect at the interview?

The interviews will be competency-based, so we will ask you to tell us about the things that you have done and assess this in relation to the Competency and Values Framework: a set of nationally recognised behaviours for police officers. For more information please see the College of Policing website: [Competency and Values framework | College of Policing](#)

Where will the interviews take place?

They will be held at the Sussex Police Headquarters in Lewes, Sussex.

Stage 4: Pre-employment checks

After successfully completing the selection steps above, we will ask you to complete a number of pre-employment checks:

a. Fitness Test

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 (5.4 = five Levels and four Shuttles). Videos can be found on YouTube that give more information and examples of the test.

As a Police Constable you will need to complete the fitness test again as part of your initial training and on an annual basis once an officer.

If you fail the test, you will be given the opportunity to re-take the test twice more as part of the recruitment process. Should you fail both of these, your application will be rejected.

b. Medical

You will be asked to complete a confidential medical history questionnaire and have it signed off by your GP. Depending on your medical history, our Occupational Health team may have to contact your GP/Specialist for further information.

Once they have sufficient information, our Occupational Health team will see you for a formal medical. They will check:

- BMI
- Eye sight
- Colour vision
- Lung function
- Hearing

I have a medical condition, will that prevent me from joining Sussex Police?

It will depend upon the nature of the medical condition. You will need to pass the medical assessment to be eligible to join Sussex Police, but reasonable adjustments can be made.

Can you become a Police Constable if you wear glasses or contact lenses?

As part of the recruitment process you will need to undergo an eye test. New recruits must have at least 6/12 vision in the right or left eye, or at least 6/6 vision in both eyes. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, you must have at least 6/36 vision in both eyes without wearing your glasses or contact lenses.

Can you become a Police Constable if you are colour blind?

Those with colour blindness might 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.

Can you become a Police Constable if you 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 does contain a hearing test to determine if this standard is met.

If I have a disability, can I apply to become a Police Officer?

Yes. We welcome applications from people with disabilities. If you consider yourself to have a disability, please inform us of the type of reasonable adjustments you might need to assist you in participating in the recruitment and selection process in your application form. We will make reasonable adjustments wherever we can.

I have epilepsy, can I still apply?

You can still apply to become a Police Constable. We will look at each case on its merits and take guidance from our Occupational Health provider.

I have diabetes, can I still apply?

You can still apply as long as your diabetes is under control. Your doctor will need to supply a medical report for clarification.

What is the lung function level?

It is dependent on clinical judgement, but as a guide the Occupational Health team uses 75% of predicted (according to normal graphs based on age, sex and height) for Forced Vital Capacity (the determination of the vital capacity from a maximally forced expiratory effort) and FEV1 (volume that has been exhaled at the end of the first second of forced expiration).

Is there a height restriction for police officers?

No, there is no minimum or maximum height restriction.

c. Vetting

We will carry out security checks on you and your:

- Spouse/Partner
- Father/Stepfather/Mother's partner
- Mother/ Stepmother/Father's partner
- Brothers/Sisters (full/half/step)
- Children/Children of your partner (only those aged 10 years and over)
- Any other adult living at your address
- Financial circumstances
- Social media accounts

What if I have a relative who has convictions?

If your friends or family members have criminal convictions you must disclose this when asked on your vetting application. Your application will not be automatically rejected; consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis.

I have a criminal record, can I still apply to become a constable?

Applications for a position as a Police Constable will be rejected in all cases where:

- Offences were committed as an adult or juvenile which resulted in a prison sentence (including custodial, suspended or deferred sentence and sentences served at a young offenders' institution or community home); or
- The applicant is a registered sex offender or is subject to a registration requirement in respect of any other conviction.

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 acceptance 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.

Can I apply if I've been bankrupt?

Yes, you can apply but only if it is three years after bankruptcy debts have been discharged.

Can I apply if I have a County Court Judgement (CCJ)?

Yes, if the judgement has been discharged, you can be considered. If you have an existing judgement, your application cannot be considered.

Can I apply if I have an Independent Voluntary Agreement (IVA)?

Applicants with a current IVA will be considered. However the candidate will be required to show that there is an IVA repayment plan in place and that the applicant has maintained regular payments over a significant number of months.

Can I continue with my other business?

When you apply to become a Police Constable, 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 Constable will be made on the basis of the full information provided during the recruitment process.

d. References

We may send reference requests to all your previous employers in the last three years. If you haven't been employed for three years, we will ask for a character reference or an educational reference.

e. Substance Misuse

We will invite you in to attend an appointment where we will collect a sample of hair – approximately 50 to 100 strands from the crown of the head – to test for the presence of inappropriate substances.

Any further questions?

What Discount or Lifestyle Schemes would be available to me?

A voluntary benefits scheme is available to our employees which is dedicated to offering savings on everyday spending, such as supermarket and high street shopping, discounted corporate gym membership and discounted phones. Salary sacrifice schemes are also available.

What are the working hours?

The normal working week is 40 hours and you will work a variety of shifts – earlies, lates and nights. You will have to work over night, weekends and bank holidays.

What kind of focus is maintained on work-life balance with regard to working patterns?

We 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 in order to promote a work/life balance, and enable the recruitment and retention of a workforce which is representative of the diverse communities we serve.

Can I work part-time?

During the initial training course at Sussex Police Headquarters you will be required to attend Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm. Once you have completed the training you will be able to apply for a flexible working pattern. The 24/7 nature of policing does offer a range of potential flexible working arrangements, but if you are working fewer hours in your probationary period this may extend the duration of the probationary period.

What recognition policies are in place?

The importance of recognising the efforts of individuals and teams is part of the force culture – from something as simple as saying ‘thank you’ through to full Awards ceremonies.

Why is Sussex Police particularly keen to hear from applicants from diverse backgrounds?

We understand that it is important to reflect the community we serve, in order to deliver a high standard of policing to all residents of Sussex and reach everyone who needs us. For this reason, we are focused on improving the diversity of our organisation and are actively seeking and supporting applications from individuals from all communities.

How does Sussex Police demonstrate its commitment to equality and diversity?

We are committed to promoting equality and respect for diversity in the way it serves Sussex both as an employer and public service provider, through the lens of the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act.

Further information can be found on our website: [Equality and Diversity](#)

Any further questions?

If you have any questions that are not covered by the information above, you can email us at recruitment@sussex.pnn.police.uk. We aim to respond within two to three working days.