

Your journey to joining the police

A guide for
applicants





A career to be proud of

It's great that you're interested in joining the police.

Policing is a hugely important, exciting and rewarding career, enhanced by the quality and diversity of the people you'll work alongside.

This is life-changing stuff, and not just for you. As a police officer, you'll have the power to make a real difference in your community, making life safer and happier for the people you serve, and preventing young people from engaging in a life of crime.

Right now we're looking for bright, talented people from a broad range of backgrounds to join our ranks. People who can bring the diversity of experience, thought and opinion that we need to make our police service the best it can be.

If that sounds like you, read on to find out more about joining the police. Learn about the benefits, the different ways into the police service, and what's involved in the application process.

What's on offer

Policing is a brilliant career that opens up so many opportunities for you to develop both personally and professionally.

Variety and diversity

It's a challenging, exciting role. No two days are ever the same. You could be out on patrol in the local community, supporting victims of crime, investigating burglaries, apprehending suspects, giving evidence in court. It's varied and interesting work.

Learn while you earn

You'll receive world-class training from day one – a mix of classroom and on-the-job, letting you earn while you learn. You'll end up with a Degree or Diploma in Professional Policing Practice, as well as valuable skills for life.

Career progression and support

There will be outstanding career progression opportunities for you to pursue, both in and out of uniform.

You'll also have access to a wide range of staff support networks, who can offer advice, guidance and community forums that encourage you to be your authentic self in the workplace.

Generous benefits

You'll also receive a package of generous benefits.

- A competitive salary
- Annual pay rise
- Opportunities for overtime, e.g. unsociable hours payments, double time on Bank Holidays
- Generous Pension (including the option to retire at 60)
- Generous annual leave
- Maternity/paternity leave
- Healthcare
- Emergency services/Police Federation discounts

Turn the page to see what's involved in the recruitment journey



The recruitment journey

In this section:

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Are you eligible to apply?

Before filling in the application form for your chosen force, you should check you meet the basic eligibility criteria for joining the police.

Basic eligibility criteria

- Over 18
You can apply at 17 and start work at 18. There's no upper age limit
- A British Citizen, an EC/EAA national or Commonwealth citizen, or a foreign national with no restrictions on your stay in the UK
- In good health, including fitness and eyesight (see p18 for more on this)

Education

You will need Level 3 qualifications (A-level or equivalent) in at least two subjects OR be able to demonstrate relevant experience or training that can be considered equivalent to a Level 3 qualification. Relevant experience and training will be considered on a case by case basis – please speak to your chosen force about the experience and training you have. They should be able to confirm if it's equivalent to a Level 3 qualification.

Criminal record?

Trust in the police is paramount. You therefore shouldn't have any cautions or convictions that could call into question your integrity or the integrity of the police service. However, some past offences may be considered by individual forces when you apply, and each case will be dealt with on its own individual merit.

More on eligibility

Take a look at the [College of Policing website](#) where you can get more details and download the eligibility criteria guidance



Choose your entry route

For the police service to serve our communities effectively, we need to recruit outstanding officers from a broad range of backgrounds and life experiences. That's why we offer several routes into policing – to make it as open to as many candidates as possible.

Here you can explore the best entry route for you, based on your qualifications and interests.

Don't already have a degree?

Pre-join Degree in Professional Policing

- Three-year degree course to learn theory behind policing
- Completed before applying to join police

Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship – PCDA

- Three-year apprenticeship
- Learn while you earn

Initial Police Learning and Development Programme – IPLDP AKA 'Traditional Entry'

- Two-year apprenticeship
- Learn while you earn

More on entry routes

Head to www.joiningthepolice.co.uk to explore entry routes in more detail

Already have a degree?

Degree Holder Entry Programme – DHEP

- Two-year training programme
- Combines work-based and off-the-job learning

Detective Degree Holder Entry Programme – Detective DHEP

- Two-year training programme with investigative perspective
- Combines work-based and off-the-job learning

Entry for Professional Policing Degree Holder

- Apply to chosen police force within 5 years of graduating
- Learning is put into practice and assessed during two-year probation period

Police Now Graduate Programmes

- Two-year national leadership development programmes
- Salaried on-the-job training

Want to try before you apply?

Volunteering as a Special Constable

- Find out what it's like to be a police officer before you apply
- Same training as regular paid officers

Who's recruiting?

Police forces open and close different entry routes throughout the year, so keep an eye on your preferred force's website to see what entry routes they have open. Even if they're not currently recruiting, you can register your interest and they'll let you know by email when they re-open.

The application process

We won't pretend – applying to join the police is a fairly long and challenging process compared to most other jobs. But that's because we need to ensure we have the most talented and motivated candidates making it through.

To give yourself the best chance of success, take some time to get familiar with each step in the process. Preparation and practice will boost your confidence and ensure you have the opportunity to shine when the times comes.



STEP 1:

Fill in your application

The first thing you might notice is how long the application form is! Please don't let this put you off applying. All you need to do is take things one step at a time, complete each section, and answer all the questions with honesty.

Personal details

The application form will ask for your personal details, such as:

- your full name
- date of birth
- address
- contact details
- National Insurance number
- driving licence details
- your nationality
- your residential status

You'll also need to:

- list all of your educational qualifications, grades and dates
- if you can't remember the full details, find out [how to get a certified statement of results](#)
- declare any historic cautions or convictions with complete honesty, and tell us some information about your family and close friends so we can check for any convictions or cautions recorded against them

Any tattoos?

If you have tattoos on your hands, neck, forearms or face, you'll be asked to supply photos and include a translation if necessary.

Your finances

Having debts, like a mortgage, loan or credit card, shouldn't stop you from becoming a police officer. But you will need to disclose your finances with 100% honesty, because we need to be sure our officers aren't vulnerable to bribery or corruption. Specifically, you'll be asked about any money problems you have faced in the last six years, such as bankruptcy, defaults, repossessions or court action.

Policing experience

You'll be asked if you're already a special constable, community support officer or member of police staff.

Voluntary information

To help make sure the police service is representative of the communities we serve, we ask applicants to voluntarily supply confidential information such as ethnicity, age, gender, language and sexual orientation.

You may also be asked some questions to help us with our PR and marketing activities.

What happens next

Once submitted, your application will be checked thoroughly for eligibility and suitability and then we'll be in touch to let you know if you've successfully made it through to the next stage.

Next stage: an initial sift, followed by online assessment exercises >

STEP 2:

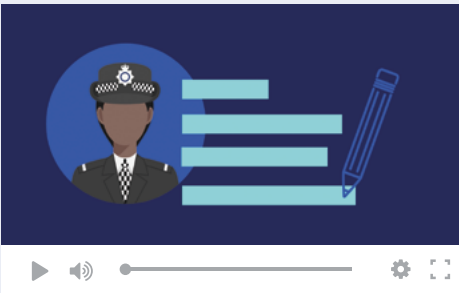
The initial sift and online assessment process

After you've submitted your application, you'll be asked to complete a sift, followed by an online assessment process. The number of exercises you complete in the online assessment process depends on the force you're applying to and their sifting process.

There are currently three types of sifting process:

- **In-force sift** – the force you're applying to will provide information on what's involved.
- **National sift** – this consists of two exercises that test you on the competencies and values that every police officer should have. You'll be asked to complete a situational judgement test (SJT) and a behavioural style questionnaire.
- **Situational judgement test (SJT)** – this measures your ability to choose appropriate actions and make effective decisions in situations you could find yourself in as a police constable.

If you make it through the initial sift, you'll get an email inviting to complete the online assessment process. This involves a series of exercises that test key values and competencies required for police officers.



Preparing for the online assessment process

Watch this short animation on what's involved in this stage of the recruitment process and how you can prepare to perform at your very best.

What happens next

Successfully made it through the online assessment process?
Give yourself a quick high five before preparing for the next stage.

Next stage: fitness and medical tests >

STEP 3:

Fitness and medical tests

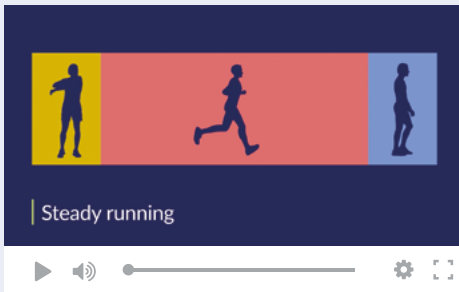
The fitness test

Once you've passed the Online Assessment, the next step to becoming a police officer is the fitness test.

It involves a multi-stage run known as the 'bleep test', which sees you running for just over 3.5 minutes between two points, with your speed increasing throughout the test.

Worried you're not fit enough?

Don't be – we're not looking for Olympic athletes. As long as you're reasonably fit and you've done some training in advance, you should be able to pass it no problem. A mix of interval training and steady running is an ideal way to prepare.



Get fitness test ready

Watch this [short animation](#) on what's involved in the fitness test and our top tips on training for it.

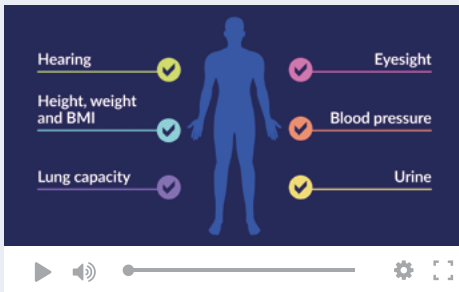
Medical assessment

Alongside the fitness test, you'll complete a confidential health declaration. You'll also have a medical assessment, which checks:

- hearing
- eyesight
- height
- weight
- Body Mass Index (BMI)
- blood pressure
- lung capacity
- urine

Worried about an existing health condition?

If you have an existing health condition, e.g. asthma or diabetes, that doesn't mean you can't become a police officer. If you're fit and well and your condition is well managed, it shouldn't hold you back. You can also request reasonable adjustments are made to help you perform at your best.



Preparing for the medical assessment

[Watch our short animation](#) showing how you can prepare for the medical assessment.

What happens next

If you successfully pass the fitness test and medical assessment, you'll be ready to move on to the final stage of the recruitment process.

Next stage: vetting >

STEP 4:

Vetting

Vetting is a very thorough process – and with good reason. It involves detailed background checks on you and certain people you know. You'll also be asked to give your consent to finger-printing and DNA checks.

Why it's necessary

Police officers are in a position of trust, so we need officers who are 100% honest and trustworthy, with the highest levels of integrity, and who won't be vulnerable to blackmail or corruption.

What's involved in vetting?

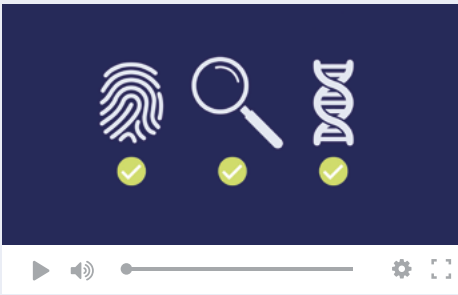
You'll be asked about:

- any previous names/aliases you've used
- your address history for the last five years
- your financial situation
- your family, partner, friends, associates and co-residents
- any previous contact you've had with the police

The two key things to get right

1. Always be 100% honest.
2. If you're unsure about whether you need to declare something, declare it anyway.

If candidates fail to provide all the information requested or don't declare something they should have, it raises questions about their honesty and integrity. This can often lead to vetting clearance being declined.



The low down on vetting

Watch our short animation [explaining the vetting checks and the common errors to avoid.](#)



Become an officer

If you successfully pass the full police recruitment process, well done!

You've made it through a hugely competitive process and shown you've got the potential to be the outstanding police officer we're looking for.

What happens next

Your force will send you a formal job offer by either post or email, detailing:

- your start date
- how to formally accept your offer

You'll then start your training programme, earning while you learn and making a positive difference in the communities you serve from day one.



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Ready to apply?

We hope this has given you a useful overview of the police recruitment process and that you're inspired to apply. We wish you the best of luck with your application.

Why not use our handy checklist to help you prepare?

THE APPLICATION FORM

- Dig out educational qualifications
- Have National Insurance number handy
- Have Driving Licence details handy
- HM Forces? Have your Service Number and reason for discharge ready

ONLINE ASSESSMENT

- Familiarise yourself with the Competency & Values Framework
- Read all Candidate Guidance docs
- Check equipment and internet connection
- Think about relevant work/life examples to include

FITNESS & MEDICAL TESTS

- Create a training plan (e.g. NHS Couch to 5K)
- Read all Candidate Guidance docs
- Practise the 'Bleep' test regularly
- Smoker? Try to stop or at least cut down
- Check your BMI is between 18 and 30
- Medical condition?
 - Check if you need reasonable adjustments made
 - Request your medical records or a note from your GP about how your condition is managed

VETTING

- Have your address history for the last five years handy
- Collate details of your income, expenditure, savings and borrowings
- Ever been declared bankrupt or had a CCJ? Get proof of debt being discharged
- Collate details of any secondary employment or business interests
- Collate details about your family/friends/associates:
 - Your partner and their address history for the last 5 years
 - Your parents, partner's parents, siblings and children
 - All co-residents at your current address (e.g. lodgers)
 - Any criminal associates
- Collate details of any previous contact with the police, including cautions, convictions, Fixed Penalty notices, traffic offences, arrests or involvement in an investigation