

Special Constable (Volunteer Police Officer) - Application Advice

Thames Valley Police is currently recruiting for volunteer police officers. You can find more information about becoming a Volunteer Police Officer, and apply for this volunteer role, at <http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/joinus.htm>. Please ensure you read the guidance notes before completing any application.

The Special Constabulary welcomes and encourages applications from members of the public who wish to give something back to their community, develop their skills or just take up a challenging volunteering role at the heart of the community.

Entry criteria for Volunteer Police Officers

Here are the main entry requirements for Volunteer Police Officers:

- Applicants must be at least 18 years of age to apply and join.
- There is no upper age limit for applying to the police service. However please bear in mind that the normal retirement age for police officers is 60 years, and that Special Constables have to undertake a significant amount of training before they can patrol independently.
- Applicants must either be a British Citizen, a citizen of the EU or other states in the EEA, or a Commonwealth citizen or foreign national with indefinite leave to remain in the UK.
- If you have a criminal record/conviction, it may lead to your application being rejected. National Policing Improvement Agency circular 02/2011 sets out the criteria for all convictions/cautions that will be considered.
- All convictions/cautions will be considered on individual merit, taking into account circumstances of the offence, the age of the individual, when the offence was committed, the lapse of time since the offence, and evidence of good character since the offence. Undisclosed convictions/cautions will lead to rejection.
- Applicants who have served any period of imprisonment or youth detention will **not** be considered for appointment.
- Applicants who have existing County Court judgements outstanding against them or who are registered bankrupt and their bankruptcy debts have not been discharged for at least three years will **not** be considered for appointment. Applicants who are the subject of a current Individual Voluntary Arrangement will also not be considered.
- Some tattoos (whether visible or not) and facial piercings might be unacceptable.
- Applicants must be in good health, of sound constitution and able to both physically and mentally perform the duties of a Special Constable once appointed. All medical criteria will be checked – including eyesight, hearing and Body Mass Index (BMI must be at least 18 and under 30).

Precluded Occupations

You should be aware that there are some jobs which are known as “precluded occupations”. These are roles where there is potential for a conflict of interest to arise between your current job and the role of Special Constable e.g. bar work and security work. For further advice please contact the recruitment team.

Biometric Vetting

All Police Officer and Special Constable applicants who are offered a provisional offer of appointment will have their DNA and fingerprints taken and a speculative search made on the respective databases to ascertain whether they have come to adverse police attention or their fingerprints or DNA are linked to any outstanding crime scenes. Their DNA and fingerprints will

also be retained on the respective Police Elimination Database for elimination purposes, if appointed.

Drugs and Alcohol Testing

In accordance with the Police (Amendment) Regulation 2005, all new candidates may be subject to alcohol, drug and or substance abuse assessments at any stage during their employment. In addition, all new candidates will be substance tested during the recruitment medical process. Refusal to participate in substance testing will mean that your appointment to join Thames Valley Police cannot be processed. A hair, saliva and/or urine sample may be used for testing purposes.

What happens after you apply?

The recruitment process takes between three to six months with various stages to complete. When we receive your application, the recruitment selection process begins. Your application will be assessed for eligibility and against the competencies required for the role. If your application is successful, you will be invited to attend an assessment – held at the Police Training Centre in Sulhamstead or at Force Headquarters in Kidlington.

Assessment

The assessment, which lasts approximately two hours, consists of a short dictation test and an individual semi-structured interview.

Post Assessment process

The next stages include a medical assessment, a fitness test (bleep test), and vetting and reference checks.

Initial Training

Training consists of ten weekends over a four / five month period (generally every other weekend). Weekends start on a Friday evening and run through to Sunday afternoon and are held at our Sulhamstead Training Centre (accommodation is provided for those living more than twenty crow miles from the site). Weekends include one induction day (Saturday only), one First Aid weekend, one witness interviewing weekend, two Officer Safety Training (OST) weekends and five Law weekends.

If you have any problems completing your application, please call 0845 2 66 66 77 (Option 4) or email RecruitmentSpecialCo@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk



Special Constable Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Considering the important role and nature of work you are applying for, it is essential that Thames Valley Police (TVP) ensures specific entry criteria are met. This form has been designed to assist you to understand our requirements, answer any concerns you may have and help you decide if this is an appropriate volunteering role for you.

Am I eligible?

There are four sections to this self-assessment questionnaire. Red answers will stop your application from proceeding. Yellow answers may stop your application from proceeding or may delay your application whilst further investigation takes place.

This questionnaire is for your personal use only. If any issues are identified on the second or third lists you should contact the Recruitment Team for advice.

Section 1 – Basic Eligibility Questions

If you tick a red box answer to any of the following questions you are unfortunately ineligible to apply for the role of Special Constable.

Question	Yes	No
Vetting Questions: In answering these questions, please include 'spent convictions' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, and traffic convictions (other than parking fines).		
Do you have an existing County Court/Tribunal Judgment (CCJ) made against you and / or have you entered into an Individual Voluntary Agreement (IVA)?		
Have you been registered bankrupt and your bankruptcy debts discharged within the last three years or your bankruptcy debts have not been discharged?		
Have you ever committed an offence that has resulted in a prison sentence?		
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for any of the following: treason, murder, manslaughter, rape, kidnapping?		
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for any of the following: incest / intercourse with a girl under 13, buggery with a person under 16 or a person who has not consented, gross indecency?		
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for: espionage, terrorism, sabotage or any actions to overthrow/undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means or association with any organisation advocating such activities?		
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for any of the following: hostage taking, hi-jacking or torture or associated with any organisation advocating such activities?		
Have you been convicted or cautioned for reckless or dangerous driving within the past ten years?		
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for any driving offences causing "death by" reckless / dangerous driving?		
Have you been convicted or cautioned or received a Fixed Penalty Notice for driving without insurance within the past five years?		
Have you been convicted or cautioned for drink/drug driving within the past ten years?		
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for more than one offence of drink / drug driving or drunk in charge?		
Have you been convicted or cautioned for failing to stop at an accident within the past five years?		

Question	Yes	No
Have you been convicted or cautioned for more than three endorsable traffic offences within the past five years?	Red	Green
Have you been convicted or cautioned for driving whilst being disqualified within the past five years?	Red	Green
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for any public order offence (excluding PND (Penalty Notice Disorder) notices over two years old) such as involvement in riot, violent disorder or affray?	Red	Green
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for grievous bodily harm (GBH)?	Red	Green
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for any of the following: Firearms offences and/or unlawful possession of weapons?	Red	Green
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for a hate aggravated offence (Race, Religion, Belief, Sexual Orientation, Transgender, and Disability)?	Red	Green
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for abuse or neglect of children?	Red	Green
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for any of the following: Offences which involve elements of dishonesty, corruption, substantial financial gain or serious loss to anyone including theft, fraud and deception?	Red	Green
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for interference with the administration of justice or the investigation of offences?	Red	Green
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for burglary and/or going equipped to steal?	Red	Green
Have you ever been convicted or cautioned for any of the following: Serious involvement in drugs including possession of a Class A drug or more than one Class B drug and/or supplying drugs of any kind?	Red	Green
Have you ever received a caution, conviction or PND (Penalty Notice Disorder) within the last 5 years for any offence except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drunk and disorderly • A minor drug offence • Common assault? 	Red	Green
Other Questions:	Red	Green
Are you a member of the British National Party (BNP), Combat 18, National Front or any similar organisations?	Red	Green
Do you take an active part in politics and intend to continue these activities if successful with your application to become a Special Constable?	Red	Green
Are you 18 years old or over? You must be at least 18 in order to apply for the role of Special Constable. There is no upper age limit for applying to the police service. But please bear in mind that the normal retirement age for police officers is 60 years and that new recruits are required to undertake a two-year probationary period.	Green	Red
Do you currently have a live application for the role of Special Constable with any other Police Force in England and Wales?	Red	Green
Have you previously submitted an application, either with Thames Valley Police or any other police force in England and Wales for the role of Special Constable, and been rejected within the last 6 months?	Red	Green
Are you either a British citizen or residing in the UK free of restrictions? To be eligible for appointment you must be a British citizen or member of the European Community or other states in the European Economic Area (EEA). Commonwealth citizens and foreign nationals are also eligible but only if they are resident in the UK free of restrictions. If you are a Commonwealth citizen or a foreign national, you will be required to provide proof that you have no restrictions on your stay in the UK.	Green	Red
If you are a member of Thames Valley Police staff have you completed your probationary period? You can only apply to take on this additional role once you have completed your probationary period.	Green	Red

Section 2 – Eligibility Questions

If you tick a yellow answer to any of the following questions you are not automatically ruled out from becoming a Special Constable but your application may need to be checked by the recruitment department before proceeding; you are advised to seek advice from the recruitment team at the earliest opportunity.

Question	Yes	No
Vetting Questions: In answering these questions, please include 'spent convictions' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, and traffic convictions (other than parking fines).		
Have you ever been cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence?	Yellow	Green
Have you ever been involved in any other criminal investigation?	Yellow	Green
Have you been charged or summonsed for an offence that has not yet been dealt with?	Yellow	Green
Do you have any relative or associate (including co-resident) who you know or have reason to believe has criminal convictions (excluding traffic convictions), OR is engaged in criminal activities, OR is a person who associates regularly with such persons?	Yellow	Green
Other Questions:		
In the last three years, have you spent any continuous period of over one month outside of the UK? Time spent abroad is unlikely to be a bar to recruitment however you may be asked to supply certificates of good conduct from the local police authorities of the countries you have visited. From experience this may take some time and involve some cost to you.	Yellow	Green
Do you intend on continuing with any other employment for hire or gain or any other business interest when you apply to become a Special Constable?	Yellow	Green
Do you or your spouse (unless separated) or close relative living with you have a financial interest in any license or permit relating to liquor, betting or gaming or the regulation of places of entertainment?	Yellow	Green
Do you have any tattoos or piercings? Tattoos (or piercings) are not a bar to appointment, however, some tattoos (or piercings) could potentially offend members of the public or colleagues, or could bring discredit to the Police Service - it depends on their size, nature, location and sometimes on the extent.	Yellow	Green
Is your Body Mass Index (BMI) between 18 and 30? This can be determined if you know your weight and your height. The actual calculation is your weight (in kilograms) divided by your height (in metres). Guidance and easy to use charts on how to calculate your BMI can be found on the NHS website. You cannot be appointed to the role if your BMI (or body fat percentage) is outside the acceptable range.	Green	Yellow
Do you meet the Eyesight Standards for police officers? http://www.college.police.uk/en/docs/Eyesight_standards_police_recruitment.pdf If you do not meet the eyesight standards you cannot be appointed as a Special Constable. However, you may wish to consider laser eye surgery in order to meet the standards. Candidates, who would consider laser eye surgery, can apply and progress their application through the assessment stages to avoid spending money before knowing whether they are otherwise appointable to the role.	Green	Yellow

Section 3 – Role Considerations

Before committing to the application process, and a career as a Special Constable, here are some aspects of the role that you are strongly advised to consider:

Question	Yes	No
Where you will serve and your home address Do you live within 20 miles of the station to which you wish to be posted? Thames Valley Police will only pay mileage expenses up to 20 miles each way. This is also considered to be the maximum advisable distance between your Home address and base station for Health & Safety / welfare reasons.	Green	Yellow
24 hour, 365 days a year role	Green	Yellow

Question	Yes	No
<p>Being a Special Constable will often involve you being out and about on foot patrol, in all weathers and at all hours of the day (shifts cover 24 hours a day, 365 days a year). You may be asked to work a variety of shifts including night work, weekends and bank holidays. The Special Constable role is not a weekday only role.</p> <p>As a Special Constable, are you prepared to work shifts and unpredictable hours?</p>		
<p>Standards of dress</p> <p>Would you be able to put aside your own sense of style and dress and comply with the police uniform and dress code?</p> <p>Please note: The police uniform and dress code makes allowances for items of religious dress.</p>		
<p>Employment / Other Volunteer Roles</p> <p>Are you intending to undertake paid employment (or other voluntary work) whilst being a Special Constable?</p> <p>In most cases this will not be a problem; however you should be aware that there are some jobs (volunteer roles) which are known as “precluded occupations”. These are roles where there is potential for a conflict of interest to arise between the job and the role of Special Constable.</p> <p>Some relevant examples are:</p> <p>Precluded Occupations – Roles where you would not be allowed to be appointed as a Special Constable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar work • Door Staff • Custody visitor volunteer <p>Precluded Occupations – Roles where you may be allowed to be appointed as a Special Constable depending on the nature of the work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security work • Any role in the criminal justice sector <p>This is not a definitive list. If you have any queries you should contact the Recruitment Department to discuss.</p>		
<p>Effect on private life</p> <p>Being a Special Constable means that sometimes, in your day-to-day private life, you have to put yourself on duty and take appropriate actions even when you are off duty.</p> <p>Are you prepared for this?</p>		
<p>Following rules</p> <p>Could you follow strict rules and authority to carry out the needs of the service?</p>		
<p>Fitness</p> <p>The job can involve strenuous physical activity and it is important to maintain high fitness levels to ensure you can effectively protect yourself and others. Police officers (including Special Constables) are expected to take part in annual fitness tests.</p> <p>Do you feel confident about continually maintaining a high level of fitness throughout your career as a Special Constable?</p>		
<p>Training</p> <p>You will be required to attend initial training upon appointment which will be every other weekend over 18 weeks. After the initial training you will be required to attend update training on a regular basis.</p> <p>Are you able to make this professional development commitment?</p>		
<p>Minimum Hours</p> <p>It is expected that Special Constables will volunteer for a minimum of 18 hours per month.</p> <p>Are you able to make this commitment?</p>		
<p>Prepared to give evidence in court</p> <p>Are you prepared to stand up and provide evidence in court?</p>		
<p>Using initiative</p> <p>Are you happy about working in a team, but also confident about taking the initiative when needed?</p>		
<p>Paperwork</p> <p>Are you able to complete paperwork and meticulously keep detailed records?</p>		

Question	Yes	No
Dealing with difficult situations You will have to deal with circumstances or scenes of a difficult or distressing nature e.g. road traffic collisions, child cruelty, sudden deaths. Could you deal with traumatic and distressing situations with sensitivity and a level head?		

If any of your answers in the third section fall into the yellow column, you may want to take some time to consider whether the role of Special Constable is right for you before proceeding to the application stage.

Section 4 – Code of Ethics – Policing Principles

A Code of Ethics has been published by the College of Policing (<http://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Ethics/Pages/Code-of-Ethics.aspx>). This code sets out the principles and standards of behaviour we expect to see from police professionals. It applies to every individual who works in policing, whether a warranted officer (including Special Constable), police staff, volunteer or someone contracted to work in a police force.

If you tick any red answers or have any questions or doubts over whether you can comply with the principles and standards set out below then you should not submit an application.

Question	Yes	No	Maybe
Accountability Are you prepared to take ownership and full responsibility for your decisions, actions and omissions?			
Fairness and respect Can you act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect (including respect the rights of all individuals) and courtesy?			
Honesty and integrity Can you act with honesty and integrity at all times? This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being sincere and truthful • Showing courage in doing what you believe to be right • Ensuring your decisions are not influenced by improper considerations of personal gain • Not knowingly making false, misleading or inaccurate oral or written statement in any professional context • Neither soliciting nor accepting the offer of any gift, gratuity or hospitality that could compromise your impartiality • Not using your position to inappropriately coerce any person or to settle personal grievances 			
Leadership Can you take personal responsibility for promoting and reinforcing the principles and standards set out in the College of Policing Code of Ethics?			
Objectivity Can you use your training and experience to make objective decisions and use your best professional judgement?			
Openness Can you be open and transparent in all your actions and decisions?			
Selflessness Can you act in the public interest at all times?			

If you tick any red answers or have any questions or doubts over whether you can comply with the principles and standards set out above then you should not submit an application.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Recruitment Team on 0845 2666677 (Option 4) or email RecruitmentSpecialCo@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk