



Application Advice – Police Community Support Officers - Apprentice (PCSOA)

The role of PCSOs

The role of PCSOs employed by Thames Valley Police is to contribute to the policing of neighbourhoods, primarily through highly visible patrol, to reassure the public. By use of their powers, problem solving and working with communities and partner agencies, they reduce crime and disorder and tackle community safety issues at a local level. PCSOs have the potential to increase dramatically the police service presence on the streets, to free up the time of regular officers for the tasks which require their higher level of training and skills; and to enhance local policing.

PCSO core functions are to:

- Provide a highly visible presence within the community, to address local concerns and provide reassurance
- Provide disruptive patrols at crime / ASB hotspots
- Deal with neighbourhood level anti-social behaviour & monitor compliance with ASB interventions
- Gather community based intelligence
- Attend reports of offences in accordance with crime attendance policies
- Assist police officers with crime enquiries
- Engage with the community as point of contact for individuals and community groups
- Organise or participate in crime reduction initiatives
- Assist in the policing of community and other events to provide reassurance to the community

This list is not exhaustive.

Entry /Vetting Requirements

- Applicants must be aged 18 years or over at point of application – no upper age limit
- Attained English Language or Literature **and** Mathematics at GCSE Grade 9-4 or equivalent (e.g. GCSE A-C, Level 2) – certificates will be required
- Full driving licence
- Been resident in the UK for at least one year in order to meet our vetting criteria and have indefinite leave to remain in the UK if appropriate

Recruitment & selection

Your application will be shortlisted solely on the basis of the answers you provide to the essential criteria questions. Your answers here will be used to assess whether your application progresses to the next stage so you need to provide as much information as possible. It is really important, therefore, that you:

- Evidence the qualities/skills/experience that you have to enable you to carry out the role of a PCSO
- Research the role of a PCSO and evidence this on your application form
- Provide examples for effective communication and problem solving. What was the situation? What did you do to make a difference? What was the outcome?
- Make full use of the word count allowed in each section.
- Check your application for spelling and grammar, or get someone to read it through for you, as this will form part of the shortlisting process. As a PCSO you may be expected to write articles for community newsletters or press releases so a good standard of English is essential.

Interview/Pre-Employment Checks/Posting

If your application is successful, you will be invited to attend an interview. If successful at interview you will go into a candidate pool where further recruitment checks will take place, including references and sickness absence (our current intervention triggers are 3 absences in a rolling 12 month period and/or 14 days' in total). **Please note that as we only have a limited number of intakes each year you might be in the pool for several months before you are allocated to an intake. Length of time in the pool will depend on your posting choices and where our current organisational needs are. Final vetting and medical will only take place once you have been allocated to an intake date. It can take a minimum of six months from date of application to being on an intake.**

PCSOs are required to undergo a fitness test and a medical examination and your BMI must be between 18 and 30.

Please note you will need to complete 12 months' in the role of PCSO before you can apply to become a Police Officer. This is due to the training commitment and the need for the Local Police Area to get a return on the investment in training.

Tattoos

Tattoos are not a bar to appointment. However, some tattoos could potentially offend members of the public or colleagues, or could bring discredit to the police service. Visible tattoos are unacceptable if they could reasonably be interpreted as discriminatory or offensive and/or indicate attitudes or views inconsistent with the College of Policing's Code of Ethics and the Standards of Professional Behaviour. Careful consideration will be given by the organisation to any tattoo on the neck, face or hands in deciding if it is acceptable. This includes considering the size, nature and prominence of the tattoo.

Training

The initial training programme comprises ten weeks' classroom based training followed by ten weeks' tutorship. Training includes first aid, personal safety training, role and powers, community and race relations, the criminal justice process and all other subjects that enable PCSOs to carry out their role effectively. Initial training takes place at the Force Training Centre near Reading and PCSOs that live more than 20 crow miles away will be offered accommodation. Annual leave will not be permitted during the 20 week training period.

Tutoring

Before being authorised as being fit for independent patrol, line managers will need to be satisfied that each PCSO is competent to fulfil the core tasks required of them. To this end each PCSO will undergo a period of accompanied patrol for ten weeks' with a tutor and their competence to perform their core functions will be assessed prior to being authorised for independent patrol. As part of the Apprenticeship programme you will also receive learning on and off the job over the course of 12 months to enable you to complete the Level 4 Certificate in Community Policing Practice.

Deployment restrictions

Needless to say PCSOs are not police officers and their primary role is to perform tasks that do not need the full range of powers and skills possessed by police officers. In addition, they have not been trained to deal with the complex tasks carried out by police officers nor do they possess the powers or equipment to deal with anything that can be considered to be high-risk e.g. violent situations, incidents on fast roads etc.

PCSOs may be deployed as the initial resource to minor, low-risk incidents that are commensurate with their role and powers. However, it will not be appropriate for them to be deployed to other incidents unless they are a secondary response and their deployment is requested by a police officer at the scene.

Rules of intervention

There will be occasions when a PCSO comes across a confrontational situation or a situation escalates to the point where it poses an unacceptable risk to them. If the PCSO can deal with the situation safely then they should do so but:

- There will be no expectation that PCSOs will engage in activities assessed as 'high risk'
- The decision by a PCSO to withdraw, observe and report is a valid tactical option and will be supported by managers
- There is no positive duty for PCSOs to intervene – they are civilian staff not police officers

Hours of work

PCSOs will be expected to work to a duty pattern which will consist of day shifts, evening shifts and regular weekend work.