

Application Advice – Police Community Support Officers (PCSO)

The role of PCSOs

The role of PCSOs employed by the 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 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
- Attained English Language or Literature at GCSE Grade 9-4 or equivalent (e.g. GCSE A-C, English language level 2), or a higher academic qualification at Level 3 or above
- Been resident in the UK for three years in order to meet our vetting criteria

Recruitment & selection

Your application will be shortlisted solely on the basis of the answers you provide to the essential criteria questions. It is really important, therefore, that you evidence the qualities you already have or may develop to enable you to carry out the role of a PCSO, that you have researched the role of PCSO and you make full use of the word count allowed in each section. Your answers here will be used to decide whether your application progresses to the next stage so you need to provide as much information as possible. You need to 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.

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 a few months before you are allocated to an intake. This will depend on your posting choices and where our current organisational needs are.**

PCSOs are required to undergo a fitness test and a medical examination and your BMI must be between 18 and 30. PCSOs in Thames Valley are vetted to the same standards as police officers so candidates should be aware that the selection process can take several months to complete.

There are a number of PCSO intakes throughout the year and we will use candidates from the pool to fill these intakes, taking into account vacancies and posting preferences declared on your application form. **If your PCSO application is successful then 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.**

Powers

Under the Police Reform Act 2002, the Chief Officer can designate PCSOs with a range of powers. Full powers are detailed in the attached designated powers document.

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. It depends on their appearance, size, content and impact (perceived or otherwise) on members of the public and/or colleagues. Tattoos are not acceptable if they could cause offence; are garish, numerous or particularly prominent; indicate unacceptable attitudes towards women, minority groups or any other section of the community; indicate alignment with a particular group that could give offence to members of the public or colleagues and /or are considered to be discriminatory, rude, lewd, crude, racist, sexist, sectarian, homophobic, violent or intimidating.

Uniform and equipment

There is no national uniform for PCSOs and the uniform and equipment that has been approved for use in the Thames Valley has been determined through the risk assessment process and is in keeping with the image that Thames Valley Police wishes to project. The uniform worn by PCSOs in the Thames Valley consists of:

- Cap, or bowler hat, with a blue band, or a turban
- Blue wickie shirt
- Blue epaulettes with the wording POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER and the identification numbers of each PCSO
- Blue fleece
- High-visibility jacket bearing the wording POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER
- Thames Valley Police combat trousers
- Dual-purpose vest

The standard of dress and general appearance for PCSOs is the same as for police officers e.g. hair longer than collar length will be tied back and either worn up or beneath headgear etc.

Training

The initial training programme comprises eight weeks classroom based training followed by six 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.

Training takes place at the Force Training Centre near Reading and PCSOs that live more than 20 crow miles away will be offered accommodation.

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 six weeks with a tutor and their competence to perform their core functions will be assessed prior to being authorised for independent patrol.

Deployment restrictions

Needless to say PCSOs are not police officers and their primary role is to perform tasks that when performed by police officers do not need the full range of powers and skills possessed by them. 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 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

Driving

All references to PCSOs in the context of "patrol" should be interpreted as FOOT OR CYCLE and PCSOs are not required to possess a driving licence, although for some rural

postings a driving licence will be required. However, PCSOs that have a full driving licence and have passed a police driving assessment may drive police vehicles solely for the purpose of travelling to their patrol areas if travel by other means is impracticable.

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. Thames Valley welcomes applications from people that wish to work on a part-time basis. However, candidates would be expected to work on a full time basis for the period of their 14 week initial training programme.

Salary

The starting salary for PCSOs is £20,343 plus shift allowance (dependant on hours)