

Frequently asked questions



What is a Special Constable?

Special Constables (or "Specials") are volunteer police officers with the same powers as regular officers. They work in partnership with regular officers and the wider policing family, such as Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Cadets. Specials spend a minimum of four hours a week supporting their police colleagues to tackle crime in their communities.

What do Special Constables do?

Specials take part in frontline police work. They spend most of their time working as part of Safer Neighbourhood Teams performing patrols in crime hotspots and assisting with the policing of local issues for their area. This could mean anything from keeping town centres safe at night to conducting house-to-house enquiries or helping prevent vulnerable members of the community from becoming victims of crime.

It is hard, demanding work - but from your first time on duty you will see the positive impact you are having. It is also extremely varied, and you could easily find yourself doing any of the following:

Ensuring public safety

- Assisting at the scene of accidents, fires or incidents - helping control situations, ensuring people are safe.
- Providing security and crowd control at major public events - preventing injuries and disorder.

Preventing crime

- Carrying out high-visibility foot patrols to deter and detect criminals.
- Educating businesses and the community about crime and how to avoid it to reduce crime and people's fear of it happening.
- Talking to schoolchildren about crime reduction and community safety to help them stay safe and make the right choices.

Tackling crime

- Confronting anti-social behaviour on the streets such as gangs or intimidating behaviour.
- Managing alcohol-related incidents such as public drunkenness or violence.
- Enforcing road safety laws in local communities.

Investigating crime

- Conducting house-to-house enquiries to gather information and support larger enquiries.
- Taking part in police operations to disrupt and arrest offenders.

Securing convictions

- Presenting evidence in court to support the justice system in prosecuting offenders.



Does being a Special Constable help me to become a Police Officer?

Being a Special Constable will enable you to experience different aspects of police work and gain a wealth of professional knowledge.

Whilst time served as a Special will not guarantee a position as a regular officer, it gives you an insight into the service and will help you meet the criteria and gain the attributes needed to become a police officer.

You will be serving your community, gaining first-hand experience of the job and building up knowledge that will help with your police officer application should you wish to apply to become a regular police officer.

Will I receive continuous professional training?

Yes, once you have completed your initial training course and are on division, training will be delivered at divisional level to ensure you are always up to date with current laws, legislation and procedural matters. During your first year you will also be working towards Accompanied Patrol Status, with the help of a mentor.

Can I get promoted?

Yes, Nottinghamshire Special Constabulary has a rank structure and, through promotion, you can work towards becoming a Special Sergeant, Special Inspector or above. Each rank progression brings extra responsibility as with the regular service.

Are Special Constables entitled to receive expenses?

Special Constables are volunteers and are not paid for performing the role. However, specials are provided with uniforms free of charge and are entitled to be reimbursed for any reasonable expenses. Travel expenses within Nottinghamshire that are incurred during duties as a Special Constable are paid at a rate per mile or by submitting public transport tickets. Taxis are not included.

How many hours do Special Constables have to volunteer?

We ask that you volunteer a minimum of 16 hours a month. Most police forces expect members of their Special Constabulary to perform around four hours' duty per week.

Can I choose where to work?

You may request three bases that you wish to work at and, depending on the capacity of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams, you will usually be allocated to one of your choices. We will take into account where you live, however deployment depends on operational need and you will be required to serve anywhere across the county, as does a police officer.

Do I have the same authority as a regular officer?

Special Constables have the same warranted powers as a regular police officer.

You also wear the same uniform, which is provided for you.

Special constables have full policing powers, unlike Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) or police volunteers.

Would my job prevent me from applying?

If your job appears in the list below, you can't apply for the role of Special Constable, as it could cause a conflict of interest. However, this is not an exhaustive list and final decisions about eligibility are a matter for the Chief Constable.

- Member of Police and Crime Commissioner Panel
- Magistrate
- Clerk to justices or courts
- Member of employer's police forces
- Holder of liquor licence, manager of licensed house
- Licensee of betting and gaming establishment, lottery promoter
- Bailiff, warrant officer
- Probation officer
- Member of private security organisation (whether director, partner or employee)
- Security guard, door staff, uniformed patrol worker
- Prison custody officer
- Private detective, enquiry agent
- School crossing patrol, traffic warden
- Member of the fire service
- Member of the Armed Forces (If you are a member of the reserve forces, you can join the Special Constabulary and vice versa)
- Member of medical, nursing or midwifery profession, or the Ambulance Service (unless written permission is given by the employing NHS Trust or Health Authority)
- Highways Agency traffic officer

Who can be a Special Constable?

The basic requirements are:

- You must either be a national of a country within the European Economic Area or, if not, have leave to remain in the UK free of restrictions.
- You must be at least 18 years old when making your application.
- You should be in good health, and of good character.
- You must be able to speak and write English competently.

What age limits are there for serving as a Special Constable?

You must be at least 18 years old at the time of your application. There is no upper age limit for appointment to the Special Constabulary, but all applicants are tested to ensure they are physically fit enough to perform the role.

Can non-UK citizens be appointed as Special Constables?

To be eligible for appointment as a Special Constable, you should be a British citizen or a citizen of another country that is a member of the European Economic Area (EEA), or Switzerland. If you are not a national of an EEA member state or Switzerland, you must have permission to enter or leave to remain in the UK for an indefinite period. All applicants must be resident in the UK free of restrictions, or have an entitlement to do so.

If I hold political office or take an active part in politics, can I become a Special Constable?

The position regarding Special Constables in Home Office police forces is that they should not take an active part in politics.

If I have (or a family member has) a criminal record, can I serve as a Special Constable?

Convictions or cautions will not necessarily preclude you from being appointed. It will depend on the nature and circumstances of the offence. However, your application will be terminated if you fail to disclose convictions or cautions. In your application, you must declare:

- all convictions for any past offences, formal cautions by the police (including cautions as a juvenile, i.e. when you were under 18 years), and bind-overs imposed by any court
- traffic convictions such as speeding, drink-drive offences, fixed penalties for motoring or disorder offences, anti-social behaviour orders and any appearances before a court martial
- any charge or summons currently outstanding against you
- spent convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (by virtue of the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions) Order 1975) or any involvement with civil, military or transport police.

You must also declare if you have ever been involved in any criminal investigation, whether or not this led to prosecution (of yourself or others).

We will also want to know whether any of your close family or associates are involved in criminal activity, including being involved in any criminal investigations, and will therefore search for any criminal convictions or cautions recorded against them. You must advise family and associates that these enquiries will be made. The police service cannot disclose the results of these enquiries.

Can Special Constables use Tasers or firearms?

The agreed view of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is that Special Constables should not be issued with Tasers or firearms.

Do I need a full UK driving licence in order to apply?

Applicants are not required to hold a full or provisional UK driving licence.

Can employers be compelled to release their employees to perform duty as Special Constables?

As Special Constables are volunteers, they cannot be compelled by law to report for duty. This in turn means that employers **cannot** be mandated to provide paid time off for Special Constabulary duties in cases of emergency. Your employer may already run an Employee Supported Programme which allows you take an amount of time each year to perform some of your duties. If your organisation does not do this already and would like further information, please get them to contact the Citizens in Policing Team at Nottinghamshire Police.

Are Special Constables covered by police disciplinary measures?

Special constables are subject to the Police (Performance) Regulations and the Police (Conduct) Regulations. Arrangements for police misconduct and unsatisfactory performance proceedings are kept under continuous review by the Home Office.

Can a Special Constable transfer to a different police force if circumstances change (e.g. moving house)?

The short answer is 'yes' if the correct procedures are followed and permissions obtained. The police force receiving the transferee will carry out certain checks including a knowledge check. A similar procedure applies for Specials transferring to Nottinghamshire Police.

What does the initial training involve?

There are a variety of Training courses available for new Special Constables. These include;

- Regular weekend training - Training takes place over 23 weeks on either Saturdays or Sundays
- Blended Learning – Training takes place over 23 weeks using a mixture of classroom weekend training and web based learning from your home computer.
- Summer School – Training takes place over a condensed period of time usually daily Mon – Fri for 3 weeks followed by 4 weekend dates of training.

The classroom training takes place between 9am and 5pm at our training centres in Hucknall and Watnall. Web based training usually takes place in the evening in the week. Training is intensive and includes Police Powers, Law, First aid, Personal safety, and IT.

Once you have completed your initial classroom training, this will be then followed up by working with a Tutor Constable on division where you will put your knowledge into practice. You will be assessed to ensure you are safe and legal and will complete a portfolio with your tutor to evidence your competence.

How do I apply?

Please visit the careers page on our website www.nottinghamshire.police.uk where you can find further information and apply.

If you have any questions regarding the role of a Special Constable, please email - specials.recruitment@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk or give us a call on **101 ext. 810 6922**