

GUIDANCE NOTES

POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER

INTRODUCTION

These guidance notes are designed to help you through the application and selection process for a role as a police community support officer (PCSO). In addition to the information and advice provided here, we are committed to doing all we can to support you in your application.

Specifically, we endeavour:

- To give 24-hour access to the information on our website www.metpolicecareers.co.uk
- To respond to any question you submit via our website within two working days
- To respond to written enquiries within 10 working days of receipt
- To aim to answer 80% of all calls to PCSO Recruitment within five rings

THE APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

To become a police community support officer, you will need to complete the following stages:

Stage 1: Complete the application form and competency assessment

You should have received this form as part of your application pack or be completing it online. For advice on how to go about completing your form, please refer to pages 11 to 13 of these notes.

Stage 2: Initial paper sift

Once we receive your completed form, we will check it against our basic eligibility criteria – e.g. age, nationality and residency. If you are eligible to work for the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), your application will move on to the next stage. Your competency based questionnaire (CBQ) will also be marked during sifting.

Stage 3: Selection centre – Day 1

If your application passes the initial paper sift, you will be invited to attend our selection centre in Hendon for a 'Day 1' assessment. You will complete two written tests, an interview and two interactive role-plays. Your performance will be measured against the set of skills identified as necessary for the role of PCSO.

Stage 4: Selection Centre – Day 2

If you are successful at your Day 1 selection stage, you will be invited to attend 'Day 2'. This involves a medical assessment and the Job Related Fitness Test (JRFT). The JRFT is designed to test two aspects of your fitness: endurance and dynamic strength. See page 3 of these notes for more about the JRFT.

Stage 5: Offer

You must be physically and mentally able to perform the duties of a PCSO. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) covers PCSOs. If you have a disability, we will make adjustments where it is reasonable to do so. If you successfully complete the Day 2 assessment, and we are satisfied that you pass final recruitment checks, including security vetting procedures, we will contact you to agree your training date.

At some point during this process you may also be required to undertake a Substance Misuse Test and provide fingerprints.

You can find out more about the selection process, including the set of skills we will be assessing you against, by logging in to a protected area dedicated to your application on www.metpolicecareers.co.uk. Details of where you can find this area, along with details of how to access it, will be provided in the acknowledgement letter.

Should you have any queries during your selection process, we suggest that you contact our Recruitment Call Centre on 0845 727 2212, Mon – Fri, 9am – 4pm or the PCSO Recruitment Team.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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MEDICAL ASSESSMENT

The medical assessment involves screening your Health Declaration form and seeing you in person at Day 2. The purpose is to ensure that you are able to undertake this mentally and physically challenging job.

In some cases we may need further information (for example from GPs or specialists) and we will place you on 'medical hold' while this is being obtained.

At the Day 2 medical assessment you will have a hearing test, vision screen, lung function test, blood pressure check and urine test. Your height and weight will be measured to calculate your Body Mass Index (BMI).

If you are substantially overweight (BMI over 35), you will not be medically cleared. Putting this into perspective, doctors consider that a BMI greater than 26 is overweight. Candidates with a BMI between 35 - 38 with a body fat content of more than 30% for men and 36% for women will be placed on 'medical hold'. Candidates with a BMI of more than 38 with a body fat content of more than 30% for men and 36% for women are likely to be rejected as it would take many months to meet the BMI standard.

At Day 2 you should bring contact lenses (with the case and solutions for lenses, or a spare pair of disposables) or spectacles, if they are worn. It is advised that you visit your GP beforehand to remove excessive earwax. For 48 hours before your Day 2 assessment please avoid exposure to loud noise, for example riding a motorbike on a motorway, as this can affect the results of the hearing test.

If you have any questions about medical issues, find out more by visiting our website, emailing via the website, or contacting our Recruitment Call Centre on 0845 727 2212, Mon - Fri, 9am - 4pm.

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JOB RELATED FITNESS TEST

As a PCSO you will be required to handle a variety of situations involving physically challenging tasks, calling for a certain level of endurance and strength. The Job Related Fitness Test (JRFT) is designed to assess these aspects of your fitness.

Dynamic strength

Your dynamic strength represents your ability to exert muscular force repeatedly or continuously over time, to perform tasks, such as lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling, without suffering the onset of early fatigue. The JRFT uses a device called a Dyno machine to test your dynamic strength. You will be required to push 34kgs and pull 35kgs. After carefully positioning you on the Dyno, an assessor will ask you to perform three gentle seated chest pushes as a warm-up. They will then ask you to push five times using maximum effort, with only three seconds of recovery time between each effort.

Once you have completed this pushing exercise, the assessor will position you at the opposite end of the machine with your chest pushed against the padding. As with the pushing test, after three gentle warm-ups you will be asked to perform five pulls at maximum effort.

Endurance

Your level of endurance is your ability to continue physically exerting yourself over time – i.e. how long you can 'keep going'. The JRFT tests your endurance, by requiring you to reach level 5.4, which relates to 4 shuttles at level 5. This involves continuous running for approximately 3 minutes and 30 seconds to and fro along a 15-metre track, in time with a series of 'bleeps'. The timing between bleeps is slow at first, but becomes gradually and progressively faster as the test goes on, requiring you to increase your work rate and speed. The test will end when you can no longer keep up with the bleeps.

You do not have to be an Olympic athlete to successfully complete the JRFT! We are interested only in whether you meet the minimum standard of fitness required to operate effectively as a PCSO. If you prepare yourself properly, there is no reason for you to fail.

However, even if you don't pass at your first attempt, you will be allowed to re-take it within an agreed time span. If you fail after three attempts your application will be unsuccessful and you will not be eligible to re-apply for six months.

You can find out more about the JRFT under the 'Selection Process' section of our website. This will also include what you can do to prepare.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

As a community, security, station or victim support PCSO, you will be expected to carry out the following core responsibilities:

Patrol

Conduct high visibility uniformed patrols, responding to calls and requests for assistance, countering terrorist and criminal activity and public disorder, and minimising risks to public safety.

Incident management

Respond promptly and assist police to control incidents by providing appropriate support.

Investigation

Ensure that the necessary care for victims and witnesses is provided in an ethical and empathic manner, and in accordance with legislation, policies and procedures. Support police officers at the scene and act promptly to preserve it.

Custody and Prosecution

Attend court and give evidence in accordance with legislation.

Community safety

Support police officers in building and maintaining community relations by providing a service that is responsive to the needs of all communities and by ensuring that those affected by crime receive a fair and anti-discriminatory service. Participate in police and agency-led operations, working within appropriate authority limits and carrying out tasks necessary for the successful implementation of the operation while acting in accordance with legislation and procedure.

Intelligence

Ensure that information and intelligence is used ethically and in accordance with the relevant legislation, policy, protocols and codes of practice.

People

Ensure your behaviour complies with MPS values and organise your own work effectively to meet the demands of your role. Identify, implement and monitor development activities to enhance your own performance. Promote equality, diversity and human rights in working practices by developing equality of opportunity in working practices. Comply with health and safety legislation. Ensure that you show a duty of care and take appropriate action to comply with health and safety requirements at all times. Work co-operatively with team members and colleagues, contributing positively and constructively to the achievement of team and Service goals. Identify the nature of illness or injury and provide the necessary first aid treatment in accordance with approved procedures.

Resources

Make best use of technology in support of your role, ensuring correct operation and compliance with Service and legal requirements.

Process

Ensure that all matters relating to the process of information are carried out in a prompt, efficient manner in line with Service and legal requirements.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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As a community, security, station or victim support PCSO, you will be expected to carry out the following core responsibilities:

Legislative powers

The Police Reform Act details legislative powers for PCSOs to enable them to carry out the role. The Commissioner will designate a range of powers to you as a PCSO following your foundation training. These powers and training will provide you with the tools to engage with local communities, gather intelligence, tackle low level anti-social behaviour and address youth disorder.

Qualifications and personal qualities

There are no formal educational requirements to become a PCSO, but you will need to have a reasonable standard of English.

You should also be:

- **Smart and presentable**
- **Able to use your own initiative and work as part of a team**
- **Focused on the needs of London's communities**
- **Able to use tact and diplomacy**
- **Able to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing**
- **Approachable and positive in difficult situations**

We also need you to have consideration and respect for diversity, and to respect the opinions, circumstances and feelings of others.

Hours

You will be expected to work shifts on a rostered pattern, according to the shifts worked at your location. You may be entitled to a shift disturbance allowance of up to 20% of your salary, depending on which shifts you work. (Please note that your planned duties may be disrupted in accordance with the operational needs of the MPS).

The MPS is a 24-hour service and accordingly PCSOs are generally required to work a combination of early, day, late and night shifts on a 4-week pattern or 6-week pattern.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU PCSO (TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC)

As a transport and traffic PCSO, you will be expected to carry out the following core responsibilities. Specifically, your main tasks and activities will be:

- **Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices and parking tickets**
- **Checking validity of road fund licences on vehicles and notifying police if you suspect a criminal offence has been committed**
- **Regulating traffic at designated road junctions to ensure free flow of traffic**
- **Patrolling areas where waiting and loading restrictions are in force as directed**
- **Authorising the removal of vehicles when appropriate**
- **Making formal statements as required**
- **Administering emergency first aid at the scene of an accident (if trained) and summoning emergency services**
- **Reporting any street hazards in road**
- **Undertaking driving/motorcycle duties as and when required (if appropriately trained)**
- **Preparing written reports and your own statements as appropriate**
- **Acting as a professional witness**

You will also be expected to support your police officer colleagues by:

- **Ensuring that necessary care for victims and witnesses is provided in an ethical and empathic manner and in accordance with legislation, policies and procedures**
- **Supporting police officers at the scenes of incidents**
- **Participating in police operations as required in the appropriate manner**
- **Ensuring that your behaviour complies with MPS values and organising your work effectively to meet the demands of the role**
- **Complying with health and safety legislation**
- **Working effectively as a member of a team**
- **Providing appropriate first aid treatment as required, in accordance with training and instructions**
- **Communicating effectively, verbally and in writing, and effectively using listening techniques**

Qualifications and personal qualities

There are no formal educational requirements to become a PCSO, but you will need to have a reasonable standard of English. You should also be:

- **Smart and presentable**
- **Able to use your own initiative and work as part of a team**
- **Focused on the needs of London's communities**
- **Able to use tact and diplomacy**
- **Able to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing**
- **Approachable and positive in difficult situations**

We also need you to have consideration and respect for diversity, and to respect the opinions, circumstances and feelings of others.

In addition, you will need to demonstrate a good understanding of traffic enforcement regulations (although training in this area will be provided) and hold a valid driving licence, for either cars or motorcycles, with no more than six penalty points.

You should also note that you will be subject to different health requirements to other PCSO posts and will undergo more stringent health screening.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU PCSO (ROYAL PARKS)

There are a limited number of roles for PCSOs to work in the Royal Parks of Hyde Park, St James' Park, Regent's Park, Greenwich Park, Bushy Park and Richmond Park.

The role has the usual elements of the PCSO role but the particular aims of the Safer Park Teams are to:

- **Maintain London's Royal Parks as safe and secure open spaces for all**
- **Reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour**
- **Reduce the fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour**
- **Uphold the law and enforce Royal Park Regulations**
- **To identify and deal with local priorities**

This will be achieved by:

- **Working together with our partners in the Royal Parks Agency, statutory agencies, voluntary community groups and park users**
- **Being visible in the Royal Parks**
- **Being familiar with people who live in, work and visit the Royal Parks**
- **By adopting a problem solving approach to local issues**
- **Engaging with all sections of the community**

Find out more about what life as a PCSO involves by visiting our website.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

Station PCSO (SPCSO)

Application for this role involves an additional interview.

This entails working at the front counter of the police station dealing with enquiries from the public and recording allegations of crime from victims. SPCSOs continue to patrol for a minimum of 2 days a month.

The SPCSO will provide an initial response to enquiries received at front counters. They will conduct the initial investigation of crimes reported in person; respond to public enquiries; make appropriate referrals to other departments and outside agencies and generally become the face of the MPS at customer contact points in police buildings. The SPCSO will also retain a skilled patrol capacity and will be expected to conduct foot patrol in the community 2 days a month. This will enhance the capacity of the MPS to respond to major incidents if the need arises.

SPCSOs will receive the generic PCSO foundation course. Those who have completed their probation and have been selected for the role of SPCSO will be given specialist training specific to the role. This is a 3-week course and will encompass areas such as dealing with property, driving documents, accidents, persons on bail, forensics/packaging, customer care and other tasks consistent with providing a service to members of the public. There will also be training in relevant legislation and investigation techniques to enable SPCSOs to report and conduct the initial investigation into allegations of crime.

Victim PCSO (VPCSO)

After successful completion of the probationary period PCSOs can apply to specialise as a victim PCSO.

This entails working in the Crime Management Unit and contacting victims of crime to ensure that they have been updated about the investigation and provided with access to appropriate support services. VPCSOs continue to patrol for a minimum of 2 days a month.

The VPCSO is a single point of contact for victims and witnesses of crime. Their role will involve identifying the needs of victims and responding to those needs in a consistent and compassionate manner. They will provide information about support services; explain the processes and procedures of the criminal justice system and act as liaison between police departments, Crown Prosecution Service and the judiciary. The VPCSO will also retain a skilled patrol capacity and is expected to conduct foot patrol in the community 2 days a month. This will enhance the capacity of the MPS to respond to major incidents if the need arises. VPCSOs will receive the generic PCSO foundation course and an additional week's training focusing on the 'codes of practice for victims of crime', customer service, communication and browse/update access to the Crime Reporting Integrated System (CRIS).

Find out more about what life as a PCSO involves by visiting our website.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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WHAT WE WILL GIVE YOU IN RETURN

Many of the benefits the MPS offers are significantly better than those you would find in other organisations and that is partly why we are widely regarded as an employer of choice.

Salary

Your precise salary will depend on a variety of factors. However, the basic structure is quite straightforward:

- **Basic salary (visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso for the latest scales)**
- **Shift disturbance allowance of up to 20% depending on your shift pattern**
- **Location allowance, relating to your place of work**

Depending on operational requirements, you may choose to work part-time, as part of a job share, or only during certain times of the year (for which you will receive pro-rata payments).

Overtime

For work exceeding conditioned hours, you will have the option of paid overtime, or where possible, time off in lieu.

Holiday entitlement

Annual leave year is 1st April – 31st March.

The paid annual leave entitlement will be 22 days on appointment rising to 27 after the completion of one year's service and to 32 days after 9 years' service. You will be compensated if you are required to work on a public holiday.

Pension scheme

A choice of pension schemes is available to all MPS PCSOs. Full details will be provided prior to offer of employment.

Interest-free season ticket loan

After two months, you will be able to apply for an interest-free advance to purchase a quarterly or longer period travel season ticket. Repayment will be deducted from your salary.

Flexible working

The MPS offers all PCSOs a number of flexible working opportunities, balancing the needs of the individual with those of the Service. Requests for flexible working will be dealt with on an individual basis.

This represents just a small sample of the range of benefits available to PCSOs at the MPS. For full details, please visit our website.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Training

When you start your employment, you will need to undertake an initial training course, which takes approximately six weeks to complete. TPCSO training is longer at eight weeks. On this course, you will be assessed for your ability to undertake everything that is expected of a PCSO. You will be given full support and guidance throughout, giving you the best opportunity to fulfil these requirements. However, failure to achieve the necessary standard could result in termination of employment.

Probation

Your first year as a PCSO will represent a probationary period, during which you will be required to demonstrate your ability to meet the normal requirements of the role. Your appointment will be confirmed upon satisfactory completion of your probation.

Place of work

After training, you will be posted to a particular Operational Command Unit. You may, however, be required to work at other locations throughout London.

Requirements of Role

When you start your employment, you will be required to have your photograph taken for local publication in line with our aim to give the community confidence in the police. This will appear on our Safer Neighbourhood website and other advertising material.

Termination of employment

You will be required to provide one month's notice if you wish to resign your appointment.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION

When completing your application form and competency assessment, always bear in mind what you're trying to achieve: that is, to provide the assessors with evidence of how you meet the criteria they're looking for.

Go through this guide carefully, then read through your application form, making sure you understand everything that is being asked, before you fill anything in. It's a good idea to make a photocopy of the form and do a rough draft first. Please try to keep your answers concise and relevant.

Regrettably, your CV, loose continuation sheets or any separate letter of application cannot be considered.

Please note that for those filling out the online application form there may be slight variations to these instructions. Clear guidance will be given on the online application form.

General instructions

- **You must complete all documentation yourself. Complete the application form in BLOCK CAPITALS avoiding contact with the box lines, as the forms are electronically scanned**
- **Use BLACK ink throughout**
- **Enter all dates in full**
- **Sign all forms where requested**
- **Do not tear your forms – or fold them more than once**

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION

SECTION 1

Details of candidate

To be considered for appointment as a PCSO you must satisfy the minimum requirements as outlined in the brochure accompanying these guidance notes.

Providing you have the legal right to live in the United Kingdom you are eligible to become a PCSO. Non-UK citizens will be required to produce a valid passport. If you are unable to produce a passport then you should produce a letter from the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate endorsed to the effect that you have leave to remain in the country without restriction. If you cannot produce either document your application cannot proceed.

SECTION 2

Education

There are no set educational requirements to become a PCSO. If you have recently left or are still in further education we will ask for a reference from the Institution you most recently attended/are still attending.

You are asked to provide information on your education and professional qualifications for record purposes only. This information forms no part of the recruitment/selection process.

SECTION 3

Employment history

In reverse date order, starting with your most recent employment, please account for all time within the last five years. Do not leave any time unaccounted for. Please indicate whether you were employed, unemployed, in full or part-time education, or working or travelling abroad.

Please give the full postal address of any previous employer, as we will probably take up references if your application proceeds to further stages. We will not take up references from your current employer until you have been provisionally offered a position.

If you have been dismissed or required to resign this must be clearly indicated in the 'Reasons for Leaving'.

SECTION 4

Previous police applications

Please give details of any applications or service with any police force as a constable, special constable or police staff. If you have previously applied to be a PCSO with the MPS and been unsuccessful, you need to check the date on which your application was rejected. A further application can only be accepted six months after that date.

SECTION 5

Address history

Excluding your current address, please enter all addresses at which you have lived in the last five years, including college or university addresses, together with the dates of residence. For periods of service in HM Forces, you may just indicate the date and addresses as 'HM Forces' although your current residence should be detailed in full.

It is essential that you do not leave any time unaccounted for and ensure that you provide full postal addresses including postcodes.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION

SECTION 6

Declaration of conduct

Please read this question very carefully. If you have been involved in any incident with the police, military police or statutory prosecuting authorities, you **MUST** disclose it on your application form. Some candidates make the decision not to declare information that they believe might no longer be held on record. In the course of our enquiries, even incidents from long ago are uncovered and failure to disclose these will cause your application to be rejected.

You should provide details of convictions for any offence (including traffic convictions and fixed penalty notices and appearances before a Court Martial) or formal cautions by police for any offence (including cautions as a juvenile) or any bind-overs imposed by any Court. You must include spent convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 – by virtue of the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions Order 1975) – including endorsable traffic offences which have been deleted from your driving licence.

SECTION 7

Tattoos

The nature of policing, particularly in London, is very sensitive and the image of the service presented by PCSOs to members of the public is very important. For this reason, all tattoos are judged on their individual merit. However, tattoos that could cause offence or invite provocation from members of the public or colleagues cannot be deemed acceptable.

Our overriding concern is that all staff representing the Metropolitan Police Service must show serious commitment and understanding in delivering a service based on fairness and equality to all people.

Please provide colour photographs of your tattoos with your application form.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso



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WHAT TO DO NEXT

If you are not submitting an online application please complete the application form, along with any additional material you are required to submit, and send it to:

METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE
PCSO RECRUITMENT
SIMPSON HOUSE
PEEL CENTRE
AERODROME ROAD
LONDON
NW9 5RF

Make sure you do this before the relevant closing date indicated on your application form. It is strongly recommended that you keep a copy of any completed forms you send us.

Please attach a passport size photograph to your application form. This photograph will not be submitted with your application at the short-listing stage.

You will receive an acknowledgement letter on receipt of application form. We will write to you to let you know the outcome of your application as soon as possible. Please be patient as we receive many applications and our initial enquiries do take some time to complete.

All decisions relating to your application will be confirmed in writing. Until an offer of an appointment is confirmed you should not assume that your application has been successful.

If you apply for this post and are offered the position, your appointment will be on the terms set out in your contract, which will prevail over any terms presented as part of this application pack in the event of any conflict between them. Please note that pay and conditions of service are liable to alteration.

The Commissioner reserves the right to reject any candidate whom he may consider unsuitable for the police service.

For more information, please visit www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/pcso

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