



# National Recruitment Standards for Specials

## Frequently Asked Questions

## 1 Why have the national standards and process been developed?

The 'National Strategy for the Special Constabulary' was published in March 2008. This set out a vision for the Special Constabulary and included a number of recommendations for implementation on a national scale. One of those recommendations was the standardisation of recruitment standards for the Special Constabulary in England and Wales.

The process and standards were developed to contribute to the professionalisation of the Special Constabulary and to achieve national consistency, thereby facilitating interoperability and transfers between forces.

## 2 What is the new standards and process and how are they assessed?

The new standards are based on the Integrated Competency Framework (ICF) competencies required for the job of special constable. These standards will be assessed through a specials recruitment assessment process, which includes the following components:

- Competency Based Questionnaire (CBQ) (optional)
- Situational Judgement Test (SJT)
- Written Exercise
- Competency Based Structured Interview

To allow forces a degree of autonomy and flexibility, they may choose their own method to deliver the above assessment components e.g. assessment centres over one or two days, evenings, weekends, etc. In addition to the above standards and assessment components, it is also recommended that forces adopt the same checks and standards that apply to the recruitment of regular officers in respect of **fitness testing, medical and eyesight standards**.

## 3 How will this benefit my force?

By adopting the national standards and process for the recruitment of specials, forces will benefit from:

- the development of a professional Special Constabulary
- improved retention rates from good candidate selection
- a process that facilitates the transfer of specials between forces and interoperability
- a flexible method of delivery that is designed to meet force's needs
- economies of scale and the potential for forces to reduce the bureaucracy involved in a force's recruitment process as the production and maintenance of the national assessment process is handled centrally by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA)
- reduced reputational risk through the use of fair, valid and consistent processes
- reduced delivery costs through cross-border or regional collaboration

- potential reduced costs in the future recruitment and training of regular officers who have previously been special constables as the national standards align with regular officer recruitment

#### 4 What are the costs involved?

The NPIA are offering the first assessor training course and the quality assurance & exercise training course (12 delegates for each course) free of charge to those forces that choose to adopt the new process in the first year of roll out (1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011).

In particular, during this period, the NPIA are committed to delivering to forces the following free of charge:

- Assessor skills training.
- Training in quality assurance and the assessment process exercises.
- Provision of materials and documents for the assessment process.
- Continued advice and technical support.
- A quality assurance presence for the first assessment process.
- The marking and analysis of national and force specific assessment process
- CASA forms will be provided to Forces free of charge; however, Forces will have to purchase their own candidate labels from a stationary supplier, details of which will be contained within the Specials Protocols and Manual of Guidance. It is anticipated that the cost per pack of labels will be £5-£10 per 100.
- Candidates are responsible for paying for reasonable adjustment reports. Forces are responsible for ensuring that the reasonable adjustment process is adhered to once a candidate has been granted adjustments.

#### 5 What is the cost to forces after the first year of roll-out?

The cost of the assessor training and the quality assurance & exercise training course (12 delegates for each course) will free of charge to those forces that choose to adopt the new process in the first year of roll out (1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011). Thereafter it will cost £1000 for each. The force in question will need to work out their assessor turnover rates to determine whether there will be any costs to them each year. Forces could save money by putting staff through courses jointly with other forces (where each force requires fewer than 12 assessors to be trained, for example).

Unlike Police SEARCH and the PCSO Assessment Process, there is no cost per candidate for the Specials Assessment Process. The marking of papers is provided free of charge by the NPIA.

Additionally, there will be no cost to forces when the materials change (which is not planned for at least two years).

#### 6 How long will the whole recruit assessment process take?

The assessment process takes approximately 3 hours although it depends on the delivery timetable chosen by each force.

### **7 How long will it take to turn around the assessment process results?**

The NPPIA have committed to the turn around of results 5 days or sooner. However, this is dependant on staff resource and how quickly the force can forward all the relevant information required to mark the assessment.

### **8 How long does it take to complete the SJT?**

Currently the time taken to complete the SJT is 1 hour and 15 minutes.

### **9 Will the CBQ take as much time to mark as the Police SEARCH and PCSO AP CBQ?**

There will be fewer questions and the marking guide will be simplified. This will mean that the marking time is reduced.

### **10 To potentially speed up the process, could the assessment centre exercises be marked internally instead of externally by the NPPIA?**

The marking will be done by NPPIA and we appreciate that forces would like results quickly. Results will be sent back to the forces within five working days.

### **11 Is there a timeline for the process?**

The NPPIA have aimed to make the process as flexible as possible. Forces will be required to adhere to two key deadlines:

- i. Notification of intention to run a Specials Assessment Process (2 weeks prior to the process)
- ii. Receipt of all information after an Specials Assessment Process (required to begin marking of assessment process)

A timeline has been produced and included within the Specials Protocols and Manual of Guidance.

### **12 What is the lead in time for forces wishing to run their first Specials Assessment Process?**

We are currently looking at a 12 week lead in time for running the first assessment process. This is to allow for the installation of CASA software and for supporting assessment training (assessor courses, exercise training, Casa training and material handovers).

After the initial implementation, forces will be required to notify NPPIA of the intention to run a Specials Assessment Process two weeks prior to the event.

### **13 Will forces be able to use the written element of the assessment process to count towards sifts for the later stages or can the interview be replaced, keeping the forces existing interview?**

This process is a composite assessment process and can not be broken down into constituent parts (with the exception of the CBQ component which is optional). This was agreed by the Specials National Recruitment Standardisation Programme Board.

### **14 How has greater flexibility been built into the Specials recruitment process?**

Greater flexibility has been included in the Specials CASA process. In particular:

- It has been agreed by the Specials NRS Programme Board that the Competency Based Questionnaire (CBQ) is an optional stage of the assessment process. It will therefore be possible to allocate a candidate to an assessment process without a CBQ record.
- Assessment processes may be configured to be syndicate or non-syndicate based to allow forces to be more flexible with their delivery approach.
- Forces are now responsible for printing the CASA materials necessary to deliver a live assessment process. This includes overprinting attendance registers and printing candidate labels. This has the benefit of allowing forces to amend their candidate allocations by adding candidates at the last minute and reprint any associated documentation immediately prior to running their assessment process.
- The assessor allocation restrictions have been relaxed to allow for more flexibility delivering the assessment process as forces may wish to combine roles.
- Assessment process scanning functionality has been added to the force and collaborative versions.
- Attendance registers may be scanned or manually marked.
- Instead of numerous data exchanges via CASA, the NPIA have reduced this to a single data exchange occurring after the assessment process.

### **15 Is it possible to send files for marking at a frequent regular period?**

Files can be sent as often as a force requires. The NPIA would need to know dates so that resources can be planned to support the marking.

### **16 Will there be a national application pack and will it be made available online?**

There will be a national application pack for Special Constabulary and this will be made available in hard copy and online.

### **17 Are the Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs) based on police scenarios?**

## National Policing Improvement Agency

---

It has been agreed by the Specials NRS Programme Board that the SJTs should remain as police based scenarios.

### **18 Could the CBQ be paper based rather than on-line?**

Both options are available.

### **19 How have the selected competency areas been chosen?**

The selected competencies are taken from the Specials Integrated Competency Framework role profile which is maintained by Skills for Justice.

### **20 Will there be an option to do the SJT and written test online?**

There are no plans to make these tests available online.

### **21 Will everything be available electronically and be compatible with the internal force e-Recruitment system WCN (World Careers Network)?**

CASA will work exactly how it does for regular police officer and PCSO recruitment processes.

### **22 Will guidance be provided for reasonable adjustment candidates?**

Yes there is a reasonable adjustment process in place for Specials.

### **23 Could the training of assessors be delivered over weekends/evenings to allow Specials with employment to attend?**

Yes. Where required, the NPIA will offer the flexibility of weekend and evening assessor training.

### **24 How long would the training be?**

- Material handover & CASA training – 1 day
- Assessor course – 2 Days
- QA & exercise training – 2 Days
- 

### **25 Would there be some progression for Specials who undertake this process i.e. some exemption in SEARCH process?**

This will be scoped as part of future work looking into Recruit accreditation.

### **26 Will there be any future training for marking the CBQ application form?**

Existing CBQ assessors will still be able to complete the CBQ assessment using an assessor guide. The training in marking the CBQ is also covered as part of the QA and exercise training course.

The NPPIA can mark the CBQ for forces if requested at the cost of £3 per candidate.

### **27 What are the standards for fitness, medical and eyesight?**

The fitness tests, medical standards and eyesight standards are the same as those for regular officers.

### **28 Will serving specials be able to express an interest in becoming assessors?**

Assessor courses are open to all interested serving specials and police support volunteers. This is a matter for the force to decide.

### **29 Why do all assessors have to be trained?**

There is a need for the process to be kept standardised to enable the process to be valid, reliable and consistent.

### **30 Is CASA simple to use?**

Users who are familiar with the Police SEARCH and PCSO versions of CASA will find the Specials CASA very similar.

Additional changes have been made to simplify how CASA works and to reduce the time taken to prepare materials for a Specials Assessment Process.

### **31 Will additional CASA training be available for staff not currently trained?**

CASA training forms part of the material handover day and is free.

In addition, please note that:

- CASA manuals are issued to forces that have come on board. These documents provide step-by-step instructions on how to deliver the Specials Assessment Process using Specials CASA.
- Additional CASA support and guidance may be obtained by contacting the CASA Helpdesk on 01423 876900 and by email to [recruitcasaqueries@npia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:recruitcasaqueries@npia.pnn.police.uk).

### **32 What management information will be available from CASA?**

The management information will be the same as is currently available for Police SEARCH and the PCSO Assessment Process.

### **33 Will the use of CASA for the production of results/data cause delays in the recruitment process?**

If forces provide the marking team with all information after the assessment process there should not be any delays. The team are currently looking to reduce timescales for the turn-around of results.

**34 Is it possible for the interview section of new process to be delivered and administered in Welsh?**

The process will be available in Welsh in the future as part of the Welsh Language scheme.

**35 How soon can an unsuccessful candidate retake the Specials Assessment Process?**

A candidate can retake the assessment process six months after their first assessment.

**36 How long does a successful pass last for?**

As with a pass in Police SEARCH, a pass in the Specials Assessment Process.

**37 Police SEARCH includes interactive exercises whereas the Specials assessment process does not. Why is this?**

In consultation with forces we found that they wanted a streamlined and more flexible Special Constabulary recruitment process. Interactive exercises are resource intensive and require role actors to learn lines two weeks in advance of an assessment process. Given the nature of the Special Constabulary and that quite often assessors will be specials themselves, the use of such exercises would undermine flexibility and make it more difficult for the process to be delivered.

The Situational Judgement Test is used in place of interactive exercises.