



Police Community Support Officer Recruit Assessment Process

Information for candidates

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We have received your application to become a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), and we invite you to take part in an assessment process. This will give you information about how we choose suitable candidates for the Police Service.

The assessment will take about four hours. We are not able to provide meals at the assessment site, however, you may want to bring a snack, as you will get a short break.

For the assessment, we need you to bring the following documents with you.

- A full 10-year passport or **two** of the following.
 - British driving licence
 - P45
 - Birth certificate (issued within six weeks of your birth)
 - Chequebook and bank card (with three statements and proof of your signature)
 - Credit card which has your photo on it
 - Proof of where you live (for example, a Council Tax bill, gas bill, electricity bill, water bill or phone bill)

If you do not bring the documents as listed above you will not be able to take part in the assessment process.

During the assessment process you will take part in a series of exercises. This document has been produced to help you prepare for the assessment process. We advise you to take time to study this document before you come to the assessment process.

What is the PCSO Recruit Assessment Process?

The PCSO Recruit Assessment Process is where we look at how you perform in a variety of exercises.

We assess your performance against competencies that are relevant to the role of a PCSO.

We include the following processes in the assessment process.

- We assess **what** you do and
- **how** you do it.
- Trained assessors measure how you perform in exercises which relate to specific skills.
- We use information from all of the exercises to produce your final results.

Which competencies will you assess in the assessment process?

We assess competencies which are particularly relevant to the role of a PCSO. A Home Office working group have set out detailed descriptions of each of these competencies, which are shown in Appendix A of this booklet.

How many exercises will I have to take part in?

You will take part in:

- a competency-based structured interview, which is made up of four questions;
- two interactive exercises; and
- two written exercises.

All candidates will do the same exercises and we will assess them equally.

What will you ask me to do at the assessment process?

In the interview we will ask you four questions about how you have dealt with certain situations in your past.

In the interactive and written exercises, you will play the part of a newly appointed customer services officer at a retail and leisure complex called The Westshire Centre. The Westshire Centre is a made-up place created for the assessment process only. We have set out full details of the main duties and responsibilities of a customer services officer and information about the complex in The Westshire Centre Welcome Pack. We recommend that you read the information in the Welcome Pack as this will help you to prepare for the exercises. You do not have to memorise the details of the documents in the pack, as we will give you all the information you need in the preparation phases of the exercises.

For each of the interactive exercises and written exercises we will give you all the information you need to deal with the situations and you should not introduce any extra information.

What will happen during the interview?

The interview will last for up to 20 minutes and we will ask you four questions about how you have dealt with specific situations in the past. These questions will be related to the competency areas found at the end of this document. We will give you up to five minutes to answer each question. The person interviewing you will stop you if you go over five minutes. As the person interviewing you asks you the question, they will also give you a copy of the question to refer to. They may ask you further questions to help you to give a full response. When you consider your responses to the interview questions, please only choose examples that you feel comfortable discussing with the person interviewing you.

The interviewer will assess your responses against the behaviours you need for the role. So that you can do your best please make sure you are familiar with the competencies described in Appendix A and that your answer provides you with an opportunity to explain how you have shown these behaviours.

What will happen during the interactive exercises?

Each of the two interactive exercises will be split into two five-minute parts. The first part will be the preparation phase, which lasts for five minutes. The second part will be the activity phase, where you will meet a role actor.

Preparation phase

During this phase we will give you written information relevant to the exercise. We will give you a desk where you will have five minutes to study the information and prepare for the activity phase. If you want to make notes you may do so and you may refer to them during the activity phase. We will not assess you on your preparation. After five minutes a buzzer will sound and you will move to an activity room, taking any notes you have made with you for the activity phase.

Activity phase

In this phase you will interact for five minutes with a trained role actor, in your role as a new customer services officer. In each exercise the role actor may be male or female and the written information we gave you in the preparation phase will have taken this into account. You will start the activity and they will respond to you using a strict set of lines, which they have rehearsed beforehand. In this phase you are not allowed to write anything. A trained assessor will be in the same room and they will make notes of what you do and how you do it. An independent observer may also be present.

What will happen during the written exercises?

Both of the written exercises will last for 20 minutes each. We will show you to the exercise room along with the other candidates in your group. We will give you a thorough briefing before you start each exercise. We will provide paper and pens, together with a report template to write your response. A copy of the report template is in the Westshire Welcome Pack. You may make rough notes on a separate piece of paper, which we will not assess. We will tell you when you have five minutes left and again when you have one minute left. We will assess the written exercises after you have finished the whole assessment process.

How do you assess me during the interview, interactive and written exercises?

We have designed the assessment process to make sure that we assess each of the six competencies relevant to the role of PCSO at least twice, except for 'Respect for Race and Diversity' which will be assessed in every exercise. You should not be concerned if you feel that you have not done well in any one particular exercise as you will have at least one other exercise where we will assess the same competencies again.

We award your performance a grade on a scale from A to D, in each competency within the exercises. We give As to the highest performing candidates and Ds to the candidates who do not perform as well. We award grades in relation to **what** you did and **how** you did it.

You do not need to know about customer services or the law or procedures relating to police work.

Who are the assessors, role actors and interviewers?

The assessors, role actors and interviewers are either police officers or people who have been specifically chosen from the community. All the assessors, role actors and interviewers are highly trained and they are continually monitored throughout the assessment process.

What information do the assessors, role actors and interviewers have about me?

The assessors, role actors and interviewers will only know your candidate number, which we will give you when you arrive. They will have no other information about you.

Will there be a timetable to follow?

The assessment process will follow a strict timetable. You must arrive by the time we have set. If you arrive late you will not be able to take part in the assessment at that time. We may let you take another assessment later that day or week, but only in exceptional circumstances. Otherwise, we will refer you back to your original police force.

Other people will take the assessment at the same time as you, but they may take the exercises in a different order. For example, one group may take the interviews first while another group may start with the written exercises. We will tell you in the briefing we give you on the day, which order you will carry out the exercises.

What will happen in the preliminary briefing?

When you arrive we will register you on the process and we will check your identification documents. We will give you an outline of the assessment process followed by a full briefing before each stage of the assessment. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and sort out any concerns you may have about the assessment process.

How can I prepare for the interview and the interactive and written exercises?

You can practise and improve your skills in relation to the competencies we assess. It may be useful for you to carefully consider your ability in relation to each of the six competencies. You could carry out a detailed and honest self-assessment and think of anything you could improve. You may want to discuss your own situation in relation to the six competencies with your colleagues, friends or family.

We advise you to approach any assessment process with an open mind, be yourself and behave as naturally as the circumstances allow.

What information can you give me about the interviews?

We will assess you on five different competencies during the 20-minute interview. These are:

- Personal Responsibility;
- Resilience;
- Teamworking;
- Respect for Race and Diversity; and
- Oral Communication.

We recognise that some people find the term 'Diversity' confusing. Diversity is about the wide variety of differences between people that make up our society. These differences can be of any nature. To help you prepare for the Respect for Race and Diversity part of the interview please read the behaviours that make up this area. You can find these in Appendix A. Consider an example or examples of when you have dealt with others who are different from you in some way. This may be because of their race, religion, position in society, background, circumstances or appearance. In your response for this question, you may provide an example that reflects any diversity issues you have experienced in the past.

What information can you give me about the interactive exercises?

The following is an outline of the two interactive exercises you will carry out in your assessment process. The names we use refer to the last name of the role actor in the activity phase of the exercise.

- Bailey, a customer of The Westshire Centre, wants to discuss an incident at the centre.
- Morelli, a customer of The Westshire Centre, wants to discuss an incident at the centre.

What information can you give me about the written exercises?

The following is an overview of the written exercises that you will undertake in your assessment process.

- Written exercise one – in this exercise you will write a report responding to a newspaper article which is about an issue at The Westshire Centre.
- Written exercise two – in this exercise you will write a report responding to an issue at The Westshire Centre.

How will you give me my results?

You will receive a 'candidate feedback' report providing detailed information on how you performed in the assessment process. The aim of the report is to show how you performed in each of the competency areas and exercises. Your force will give you your candidate feedback report. Please **do not** contact NPIA Examinations & Assessment directly to ask about the release dates for results and candidate feedback reports.

How do I give feedback about the assessment process?

As part of the ongoing improvement of the PCSO Recruit Assessment Process, we would like your views and experiences of the process and you can give us feedback online by filling in a candidate feedback questionnaire. We will give you the website after your assessment. We will not count any feedback you give us as a formal appeal.

What is the appeals procedure?

The appeals procedure is a document that gives you guidance on what to do if you have any concerns about your assessment. The appeals procedure is in Appendix B at the back of this booklet. Please make sure you read this before your assessment.

We hope this information is helpful, and we would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success at the assessment process.

Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark does not apply to the following pages.

Appendix A

Competencies relevant to the role of Police Community Support Officer

1. Respect for race and diversity

Considers and shows respect for the opinions, circumstances and feelings of colleagues and members of the public, no matter what their race, religion, position, background, circumstances, status or appearance.

Level A: Understands other people's views and takes them into account. Is tactful and diplomatic when dealing with people, treating them with dignity and respect at all times. Understands and is sensitive to social, cultural and racial differences.

Sees issues from other people's viewpoints.

Is polite, tolerant and patient when dealing with people, treating them with respect and dignity.

Respects the needs of everyone involved when sorting out disagreements.

Shows understanding and sensitivity to people's problems, vulnerabilities and needs.

Deals with diversity issues and gives positive practical support to staff who may feel vulnerable.

Makes people feel valued by listening to and supporting their needs and interests.

Uses language in an appropriate way and is sensitive to the way it may affect people.

Identifies and respects other people's values within the law.

Acknowledges and respects a broad range of social and cultural customs and beliefs.

Understands what offends others and adapts own actions accordingly.

Respects confidentiality, wherever appropriate.

Delivers difficult messages.

Challenges attitudes and behaviour which are abusive, aggressive and discriminatory.

2. Teamworking

Develops strong working relationships inside and outside the team to achieve common goals. Breaks down barriers between groups and involves others in discussions and decisions.

Level C: Works effectively as a team member and helps build relationships within it. Actively helps and supports others to achieve team goals.

Understands own role in a team.
Actively takes part in team tasks in the workplace.
Is open and approachable.
Makes time to get to know people.
Co-operates with and supports others.
Offers to help other people.
Asks for and accepts help when needed.
Develops mutual trust and confidence in others.
Willingly takes on unpopular or routine tasks.
Contributes to team objectives no matter what the direct personal benefit may be.
Acknowledges that there is often a need to be a member of more than one team.

3. Community and customer focus

Focuses on the customer and provides a high-quality service that is tailored to meet their individual needs. Understands the communities that are served and shows an active commitment to policing that reflects their needs and concerns.

Level C: Provides a high level of service to customers. Maintains contact with customers, works out what they need and responds to them.

Presents an appropriate image to the public and other organisations.
Supports strategies that aim to build an organisation that reflects the community it serves.
Focuses on the customer in all activities.
Tries to sort out customers' problems as quickly as possible.
Apologises for mistakes and sorts them out as quickly as possible.
Responds quickly to customer requests.
Makes sure that customers are satisfied with the service they receive.
Manages customer expectations.
Keeps customers updated on progress.
Balances customer needs with organisational needs.

4. Effective communication

Communicates ideas and information effectively, both verbally and in writing. Uses language and a style of communication that is appropriate to the situation and people being addressed. Makes sure that others understand what is going on.

Level C: Speaks clearly and concisely, and does not use jargon. Uses plain English and correct grammar. Listens carefully to understand.

Makes sure all written and spoken communication is concise and well structured.

Communicates information in a friendly and approachable style.

Uses appropriate language and does not use jargon.

Makes sure communication has a clear purpose.

Makes sure communication is factual and accurate, and provided at the right time.

Communicates information in an interesting way.

Pays attention and shows interest in what others are saying.

Uses correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Listens carefully to understand.

Asks questions to clarify issues.

5. Personal responsibility

Takes personal responsibility for making things happen and achieving results.

Displays motivation, commitment, perseverance and conscientiousness. Acts with a high degree of integrity.

Level B: Takes personal responsibility for own actions and for sorting out issues or problems that arise. Is focused on achieving results to required standards and developing skills and knowledge.

Takes personal responsibility for own actions.

Takes on tasks without having to be asked.

Uses initiative.

Takes action to resolve problems and fulfil own responsibilities.

Keeps promises and does not let colleagues down.

Takes pride in own work.

Is conscientious in completing work on time.

Follows things through to a satisfactory conclusion.

Shows enthusiasm about own role.

Focuses on a task even if it is routine.

Improves own job-related knowledge and keeps it up to date.

Is open, honest and genuine, standing up for what is right.

6. Resilience

Shows resilience, even in difficult circumstances. Prepared to make difficult decisions and has the confidence to see them through.

Level B: Shows confidence to perform own role without unnecessary support in normal circumstances. Acts in an appropriate way and controls emotions.

Deals confidently with members of the public, drawing on own skills and experience.

Is comfortable working alone with an appropriate level of supervision and guidance.

Puts a positive view on situations and concentrates on what can be achieved.

Is aware of and manages personal stress.

Accepts criticism and praise.

Controls emotions and does not get emotionally involved in disputes.

Is patient when dealing with people who make complaints.

Acts in a confident way when challenged.

Says 'no' when necessary.

Appendix B

Police Community Support Officer Recruit Assessment Process

Appeals information for candidates

The following document outlines the process that you need to follow when raising concerns about your attendance at a PCSO Assessment Process.

If you have a concern about an issue that occurs at a PCSO Assessment Process you should raise it with your Candidate Co-ordinator on the day in the first instance. If these are not resolved and you still wish to report any extenuating circumstances or procedural concerns that you believe may have adversely affected your performance, you must do so in the form of a written appeal. It is your responsibility to provide supporting evidence at the time of writing.

You must submit the appeal to the force recruiting department within seven days of your attendance at the assessment process. Reports received after this date will not be considered.

Please note that views expressed through the candidate feedback questionnaire will **NOT** constitute a formal appeal. You should not expect a response to issues raised through this channel.

If you have met the national standard in the PCSO Assessment Process your appeal will not be considered further. Only if you have not met the national standard will your appeal be considered. Procedural issues, however, will still be investigated as they may have important implications for the assessment process as a whole.

Extenuating circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are likely to be a serious event or series of events, such as illness, accident or injury, or the death or serious illness of a family member. Lack of preparation and/or a heavy workload prior to attendance at the assessment process are not considered to be extenuating circumstances.

If you are aware of any extenuating circumstances prior to, or on the day of the assessment process, you should report any problems, which may affect your performance, to the Candidate Co-ordinator before your assessment commences as they will not be grounds for appeal after the assessment process. You will be given the opportunity to raise any issues by the Candidate Co-ordinator prior to the start of your assessment. It will be your decision as to whether you continue with the assessment or withdraw and attend at a later date.

If you withdraw before the assessment commences you will be given the opportunity to attend the next available assessment process. You will not need to re-apply, or wait the six month period that is applicable if you withdraw once the assessment process has commenced, i.e. if you have been exposed to the assessment exercise material. Once you have decided to commence, extenuating circumstances will not be grounds for appeal. The Candidate Co-ordinator will explain this in the initial briefing.

Marking appeals

Candidates wishing to query their results or the marking of the assessment process should contact the force recruitment representative who will respond appropriately. Please **DO NOT** contact NPIA Examinations & Assessment directly with enquiries about any marking appeals.

Procedural concerns

Procedural concerns will be investigated in the first instance by the organisation responsible for managing the assessment process. If unresolved, the appeal will be passed to an Appeals Board.

Force recruitment representatives will respond directly to you to acknowledge receipt of the appeal. If the appeal has not been resolved within six weeks from the receipt of your appeal, the force representative will write to you to explain that your appeal is still being considered.

Successful appeals will not result in a fail result being changed into a pass. However, if upheld you will be permitted, where possible, to attend another assessment process when the exercises are changed or six months after your original assessment process, whichever is sooner, without re-application.

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