

## **Recruitment**

The fundamental first step to achieving a committed volunteer workforce is a successful recruitment process.

### **Eligibility**

The National Policing Improvement Agency Circular NPIA (WSU) (SC) (07)1 Eligibility for Recruitment, provides guidelines to those involved in the recruitment and selection process with respect to eligibility criteria. The guidance is not an exhaustive list of occupations that are eligible or ineligible but offers general principles and guidance to assist those involved with the recruitment and selection process for the Special Constabulary.

The eligibility guidance can be found by clicking on the following link:  
[http://www.npia.police.uk/en/docs/WSU\\_SC\\_07\\_1.doc](http://www.npia.police.uk/en/docs/WSU_SC_07_1.doc)

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 checks and eyesight standards.

For further information please follow the link below:  
<http://www.npia.police.uk/en/10986.htm>

### **NPIA National Recruitment Standards Process**

The new standards are based on the competencies required for the job of special constable. These standards will be assessed through a specials recruitment assessment process, which includes a:

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

To allow forces a degree of autonomy and flexibility, forces may choose their own method to deliver the above assessment components e.g. assessment centres over one or two days, evenings, weekends, etc.

### **Key qualities required in Special Constables:**

- Integrity and honesty
- Communication skills.

### **Successful recruitment and retention**

Forces with a focussed and candidate friendly approach are the most successful in recruitment and retention. To achieve this they:

- Invest in focussed and realistic advertising campaigns.
- Ensure a smooth running of the national recruitment process.
- Have chief officers who actively and visibly sponsor the recruitment and deployment of their special constables.

- Involve their Special Constabulary in the process.
- Have a dedicated Special Constabulary recruitment resource to take forward processes and ensure quality management.

## **Who to involve**

### **The recruitment department – structure and quality assurance**

A successful recruitment campaign rests on the availability of adequate resources and defined protocols to deal with enquiries and candidates. As applicants are altruistically volunteering their free time to assist as special constables, they should be treated as valued 'customers' of the organisation.

**Recommendation:** Candidates should experience an effective and seamless recruitment process, facilitated by a dedicated **recruitment administrator** or **recruitment 'champion'**.

It is also helpful for forces to consider establishing a service level agreement between recruitment departments and the Special Constabulary management to set out measurable expectations.

## **Innovative recruitment campaigns**

The best way the Special Constabulary can effectively protect and support the culturally varied communities it serves is to reflect those communities within a culturally broad force.

### **Recruiting culturally diverse groups**

Pro-actively targeting diverse cultural groups is important to promote positive race relations and create a sense of trust within the community that every minority group receives the same level of service.

However, minority groups are often hard to reach with general recruitment campaigns, and so it is worth tailoring recruitment campaigns to break down cultural and communications barriers.

### **Successful campaigns to recruit minority groups:**

- Include existing minority group officers in the recruitment process to help overcome language barriers.
- Appoint officers that minority groups can relate to as mentors during the recruitment, selection and training process to ensure fairness and impartiality. For example, gay, lesbian, racial, and other minority mentors.
- Provide recruitment literature in minority ethnic language, to promote buy-in from candidates' families.
- Promote diversity training and awareness of minority community issues.
- Identify and contact local minority group leaders and break down barriers by answering their questions.
- Devise a modern and appealing recruitment advertising campaign – in minorities' own press and their own language,

- Hold open days or evenings for potential candidates and their families.

### **Measuring recruitment and retention**

It's important to measure recruitment and retention of officers from minority groups

### **Recruitment campaign marketing**

#### **Marketing**

Marketing is key to a successful recruitment campaign. Forces should aim for dynamic and attention grabbing, yet cost effective, methods of fostering interest in the role of the Special Constabulary.

#### **Marketing aims:**

- Improve awareness of the special constabulary.
- Directly target and interest specific age groups / demographics relevant to the recruitment area.
- Grow recruitment figures.

#### **Managing the marketing campaign**

- Firstly, ensure that all other elements of good practice are in place, for a well supported campaign.
- Set ring-fenced budget – insufficient resources may reduce the impact, but if you throw money at the marketing campaign, be sure that you have the personnel resource to follow up enquiries.
- It's worth seeking funding from partners, private sector or sponsorship.
- Install a dedicated phone line for dealing with Special Constabulary enquiries.

#### **Marketing messages**

- Convey the role of the Special Constabulary
- Relate the benefits to the potential recruit and their community.
- Make sure campaign is founded in reality rather than hype. Don't over-sell the role!

#### **Marketing tactics**

There are a number of ways to raise awareness of your recruitment drive. The more innovative and attention grabbing the better! Here are just a couple of tactics you could consider:

#### **Web sites**

- A regularly updated, easy-to-navigate website with a specific section for the Special Constabulary is a great tool to attract potential candidates and provide them with further information.
- An 'apply on line' facility can increase interest as it simplifies the recruitment process for candidates.

#### **Bus advertising**

Making an impact and maximising your spend:

- Stretch your budget by identifying slow periods of the year for advertisers. February and March, after the sales and before the new

financial year, can reap rewards. Summer holiday season is also a good target.

- Decide whether to advertise on the exterior or interior of the buses.
- Devise an advert with a short, punchy message. The average commuter will read the advert for just seven seconds.
- Be creative. Maybe pose a subliminal question that will keep the potential recruit thinking long after the bus has passed by.
- Include a memorable contact number – preferably free-phone and a name to create the sense of a warm reception.

### **Newspaper/magazine adverts**

- Build relationships with the advertising departments in your target media. That way it's more likely they'll ring you if cheap, late space becomes available.
- Ask for a right hand page - where it will create the most impact. .
- Why not team up with another force in your area? Offer to include their contact details in return for sharing the cost of the advert.

### **Radio adverts**

- Pick your timing carefully as this can be an expensive way to advertise. Drive-time programmes attract the most listeners.

### **Promotional events**

Open days or evenings offer an excellent opportunity for potential applicants to gain a sense of what becoming a special constable involves.

### **Open days - what your force should aim to achieve:**

- An open dialogue with potential candidates, offering the opportunity for them to ask questions and for you to directly market the role to them.
- A chance for potential candidates to understand what being a special constable involves before committing themselves. This lowers the number of withdrawn applications – reducing recruitment time and costs.

### **Promotional material**

First impressions count. An initial 'Information Pack' is the first piece of police force literature received by candidates. So, it's important that it is clear, easy to follow, informative, and it identifies realistic expectations of the role of special constable. Forces may also consider organising open evening events.

### **Processing application forms**

Applying to be a special constable should be a simple process, so ensure that candidates are offered:

- Measurable, clear and achievable timescales for the processing of their application.
- Forces using the optional Competency Based Questionnaire (CBQ) should ensure that this is included as part of the application form/pack.

- A single point of contact that can support and guide them through their application.

### **Feedback**

It's vital to receive feedback from candidates who don't wish to pursue their applications as this will help to evaluate the recruitment process and offer the opportunity to re-direct the candidate to other types of community volunteering.

### **Assessing candidates**

#### **Physical expectations**

- It's your responsibility to ensure that specials within your force are physically fit for the job.
- You should take into consideration: Health and Safety Legislation, the duty of care and the need for credibility with other forces and the public.
- There's a fine balance between testing rigorously enough to meet standards and discouraging candidates. Some forces find it useful for their Occupational Health Unit or the applicant's own GP to carry out the physical.
- Eye examinations are vital and standards should meet those of the regular force. Many forces reimburse eye test costs or arrange sponsorship from the local health authority.

For further information, please click on the following link

<http://www.npia.police.uk/en/10986.htm>

#### **General requirements**

- Nationality and minimum age requirements are the same for both special constables and regular officers (following changes in the 2002 Special Constables [Amendment] Regulations).
- Police Officers and Specials are subject to the employment provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act. It is unlawful to treat someone less favorably for a reason related to their disability, unless there is a 'material and substantial reason' to justify less favorable treatment.

#### **Unsuccessful applicants**

Don't waste willing volunteers! Establish a clear process for unsuccessful candidates and you could have a rich seam of volunteers for other projects.

#### **Maintain applicant loyalty by:**

- Offering feedback on applicants' performance and the chance to re-apply after six months.
- Providing them with a development mentor within the Special Constabulary.

- Suggesting alternative volunteering opportunities within the police family, such as: Crimestoppers, Neighbourhood Watch, Victim Support etc.

### **Flexibility for re-joiners and transfers**

Save recruitment time, effort and money with a streamlined process that allows officers to re-join or transfer between forces easily.

Flexibility helps retain valuable, trained special constables:

- Streamline the process for leavers who'd like to re-join, so they don't have to follow the full application procedure.
- Encourage people who are moving out of the area to transfer to the force in their new location.
- Help develop unsuccessful applicants or suggest alternative voluntary work they could apply for within the police family.

### **Leave of absence policy**

A leave of absence is preferable to a leaver. Encourage volunteers who need some time out to take a break from service rather than resigning entirely.

#### **It's worth considering:**

- Setting a policy for leave of absence.
- Keeping the officer's details on file (in accordance with data protection and freedom of information).
- Contacting them at regular, set periods to keep the force top-of-mind and minimise the level of re-training they'd need upon re-entry.
- Providing a set point of contact, so the officer can keep in touch easily.

### **The Swearing in Ceremony**

A milestone for the new recruit and force alike, the Swearing In - or Attestation Ceremony - is a vital part of the recruitment process. It's possible to find the right balance between the solemnity of the occasion and a family-friendly event.

Create a sense of occasion for new recruits, by:

- Holding a dedicated ceremony for special constables at police headquarters or the main training centre.
- Having a dedicated administrator to organise and manage the ceremony.
- Inviting the candidate's family and employer.
- Ensuring a senior (ACPO level) officer attends.
- Providing refreshments.
- Taking photographs to commemorate the occasion.