



Volunteer as a special constable

Making a change for the better



Support the work of your local police force in the neighbourhood that matters most to you... yours

What is the Special Constabulary?

The Special Constabulary is a force of trained volunteers who work alongside, and support, their local police. Find out more about the people involved, what they get from their involvement and how special constables fit into the police service.

All specials are fully trained and are briefed ahead of every duty

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Special constables play a crucial role in fighting crime and making our streets safer. 'Specials', as special constables are known, come from many different backgrounds and all walks of life. They volunteer a minimum of four hours per week and form a vital link between their community and regular police officers.

Specials have to complete a training programme, after which they have the same powers as regular police officers and wear a similar uniform.

There are over 14,000 of these extraordinary people in the country, and we're looking for more.

If you would like to help make your neighbourhood a better place and

are ready for an exciting challenge, read further to find out how you can become a special.

What is a special?

- Specials are volunteer police officers with the same powers as regular officers.
- Specials spend a minimum of four hours a week, or more, supporting the police to tackle crime in their communities.
- Specials are recruited locally by all 43 police forces in England and Wales.
- Specials work in partnership with regular officers and the wider policing family.



Who can become a special?

- The Special Constabulary is made up of all kinds of people, from all walks of life and with a wide variety of skills and experiences.
- Specials are men and women of all races and faiths.
- Specials must be 18 or over.

What's in it for you?

- The satisfaction of supporting your community.
- The opportunity to learn new transferable skills and gain valuable experience.

- The opportunity to work in a professional environment, supported by up-to-date training and knowledge.
- A chance to challenge yourself and show what you're capable of.
- An opportunity to learn about the police before committing to a job within the service.

Will it change you?

- You can grow in self-confidence and may discover personal strengths not previously recognised.
- You'll improve your communications skills.
- You'll learn a great deal about your community.

You can make a difference in the local community

- You'll develop new contacts, associations and firm friendships.

Police service roles

- Police officers.
- Police community support officers (PCSOs) – members of the force, focusing on lower level crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in communities (no power of arrest).
- Police Support Volunteer roles – non-uniformed staff working in areas such as call handling, crime analysis and customer service.

What do they do?

From tackling anti-social behaviour to crowd control at major events, the work of a special is varied, challenging and, above all, rewarding.

Specials take part in front-line police work. They spend most of their time on the streets, doing intelligence-based patrols in crime hotspots or taking part in crime-prevention initiatives. This could mean anything from keeping town centres safe at night through to conducting house-to-house enquiries or helping prevent vulnerable members of the community from becoming victims of crime. It's hard, demanding work, but from your first day on duty, you'll see the impact you're having. It's 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 older people about crime and how to avoid it to reduce opportunistic crime and people's fear of it happening.
- Talking to school children 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 initiatives such as traffic speed in local communities.

Investigating crime

- Conducting house-to-house enquiries to gather information and support larger enquiries.

Securing convictions

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

Developing as a special

Once you have been trained and have practical experience you'll be able to take on more responsibility as a special. Training is available on an ongoing basis and some forces have ranks within the Special Constabulary so volunteers can be promoted as their experience and skills develop. This means that you'll constantly be faced with new challenges and the opportunity to acquire new skills.

Special constables have the same responsibilities and powers as regulars. They follow the same rules of conduct as regular officers and have the same disciplinary procedures. Like regulars, they also have the same power of arrest.

I'm a working, single mum. As a special I work alongside regulars performing duties which include drugs raids and issuing warrants. I enjoy Friday or Saturday evening shifts where possible, and I also like policing football matches.

Ailsa Pate
Special, Lancashire

**MY
STORY**



Why become a special?

If you're looking for a challenge, become a special and find out what you're capable of – for yourself and your community.



Becoming a special may provide you with new skills useful for your career and life

As a special constable you can make a direct contribution to your local community. You will help fight crime and forge stronger connections between the police and the people they serve. If you don't wish to become a special constable but still want to support your police service you could become a police support volunteer, providing back-up services that allow regulars to get on with their primary duties.

Find out what you are capable of

The truth is that we are all capable of far more than we know and becoming a special is one of the best ways to learn new transferable skills and develop untapped potential. You'll face exciting challenges, acquire valuable skills that will assist in your personal and career development, and you can take pride in your achievements and bolster your self-respect and confidence.

See a different world

Out on patrol, you will deal with situations and people you would probably never encounter in your day-to-day life. Most of all, you'll get to see the real impact of crime on people's lives and the extraordinary power you have as an individual to make a real difference. Being a special is one of the most eye-opening things you can do. It literally is a life-changing decision.

Whatever your plans, you'll find working as a member of the wider police service family, alongside regular officers of all ranks and other volunteers, an exciting, and rewarding experience.

Make the streets safer

Specials are rightly proud of the amazing work they do. Going out onto the streets to tackle crime helps increase public safety and maintain community spirit. It makes neighbourhoods better places to live, it helps young people make positive choices in their lives and it helps specials become more confident and respected members of their communities. Interested? Then read on to find out what kind of people we're looking for.

As a special you have duties and responsibilities to fulfil. I'm quite a well-known judo expert locally and one day, although I was off-duty at the time, I was asked to help disarm a would-be attacker who was spotted brandishing a knife in Scarborough town centre. I was able to approach him with confidence and authority, secure the weapon and ensure no harm came to the general public.

Rafli Aghanian,
Special, North Yorkshire

**MY
STORY**



A local response

The Special Constabulary is an excellent bridge between the police service and the public, representing both the community within the police service and the police service within the community.

The success of neighbourhood policing across the country owes a great deal to the important contribution of specials, who provide a link between regular police officers and the community. Special constables

live within the communities they serve and are well placed to investigate and solve local crimes and find solutions to local problems. The flexibility of specials, who often can work at evenings and weekends, gives

forces the extra resources they need to deal with the issues that really matter to local people such as speeding, graffiti, trespassing and underage drinking.



The skills you need

Specials have many varied talents, but a positive attitude and thorough training will give you a great start. Support and training are ongoing as you develop.

The Special Constabulary welcomes applications from people of all walks of life and backgrounds. One of the most important requirements for all specials is a commitment to making a positive difference in their local area.

Does this sound like you?

While there is some paperwork involved in police work, don't be put off by a lack of formal qualifications. The kind of people we need have good life skills and experience plus a strong community awareness. They need to be able to:

- stay calm in a crisis
- communicate clearly

- resolve disputes tactfully
- think laterally and solve problems
- plan and take the initiative
- be tolerant and work well in a team
- be honest, fair and impartial
- act with integrity
- treat the public and their colleagues with respect and courtesy.

- handling common crimes
- preparing evidence for court
- conflict resolution and handling difficult situations
- self-defence.

The training you get as a special constable, can be valuable and useful in your career and personal life. As a new special you'll continue to receive all the support and supervision you need to feel comfortable carrying out your duties.

Training to develop your skills

Before becoming a special constable all recruits are fully trained in areas including:

- what the police force does
- the role, powers and duties of police officers
- preventing, detecting and

As you develop, your role as a special can grow with you. Training is ongoing and there will be opportunities to take on more responsibility so you're constantly challenged and learning new skills.

I work for Rotherham Borough Council and I am married with one child. As a new special, my involvement in a plain clothes operation to set up a weekly meeting place for teenagers was one of my first tasks; and it's been challenging. The project has helped build a rapport with the kids, which helps when you meet them on general patrol. I also think we've dispelled the myth that the police always give them a hard time. They know now that we are approachable and are just normal human beings.

James Keeley,
Special Constable, South Yorkshire



How will it change my life?

With many opportunities for promotion and further training, plus the benefit to your CV, becoming a special can not only boost your career – it can change your life.





Becoming a special and helping keep your community safe is one of the most rewarding decisions you can make. As well as all the skills you learn and the new experiences you gain, it will have an affect on other areas of your life.

training you can be promoted and take on more responsibility. You may also have the option of training to join specialist teams – like marine support, dog units and roads policing.

Kit, training and expenses

When you give your time, you will receive your uniform, equipment and training. You will also be able to claim expenses to cover your costs, and some forces offer additional allowances for specific commitments, but this varies by area.

Development opportunities

Some forces have a rank structure in their Special Constabulary, so with the right experience and



Husband and wife, Chas and Lorraine Maiden (main picture with their son and in uniform as specials top right)

We're both specials. Chas joined first but I didn't just follow suit. We often go on patrol together, while our son stays with Grandma. I welcome the opportunity to have time out from the house where I work as a registered childminder.

Employer Supported Policing

Organisations in partnership with the specials create an excellent profile for themselves in the community, and reap other tangible benefits that make them stronger. Specials commit a minimum number of hours of their time every week (usually four) to vital front-line police work. As most also work full-time, they depend on the encouragement and support of their employers.

Support from employers

People often ask if having an outside commitment like being a special could upset their employers. Our experience is that employers are usually extremely happy for staff to become specials and many actually support them by giving staff paid time off while they're on duty. Some organisations actively encourage their staff to become specials and work in partnership with the Special Constabulary. Even employers who don't give time off still respect the work specials do.

The reason is straightforward. The skills that you learn, like communication, working under pressure, leadership and conflict management, are hugely valuable to businesses and can make you a much more attractive employee. Ask an employer to describe the kind of people they want to hire and they'll say dedicated, responsible, committed people – just the kind of people who become specials. Put simply, being a special looks great on your CV!

If you are considering becoming a special and you are worried about what your boss might think, visit www.npia.police.uk/specials and search under 'Specials employer support' for help and advice.

Benefits to employers

As mentioned above, the skills that you learn and develop as a special are directly transferable to your full-time career and are a positive benefit to your company at no cost to your employer. There are wider benefits too.

- Supporting the local community generates positive PR.
- Staff development at little or no cost – research reveals that it would cost companies £7,800 per employee to provide similar training.
- Positive promotional opportunities for the company – free editorial coverage in local newspapers.
- Improved staff morale and motivation – a fulfilled employee is a happy employee.
- Greater staff retention and lower recruitment costs – employees are more likely to be loyal.
- Tackling local crime and disorder.

In addition, specials provide a visible police presence in an organisation's area. Specials can help reduce crime rates and reduce fear of crime among their employer's clients and staff.

How can my organisation get involved?

Your local force co-ordinator will be happy to discuss the best arrangement for your organisation, and can speak directly to your employer about the benefits of having staff volunteer as specials.

If your employer is keen to be involved they can support members of staff who want to sign up by agreeing to a fixed number of paid or unpaid hours a month so they can carry out their duties. Your employer can also recognise volunteers' achievements and training of staff through appraisal procedures or an award scheme.

I wanted to give something back to the community I grew up in and being a special was the most effective and direct way I could think of. Like being a magistrate or town councillor, being a special constable is classified by my company as a civic activity, so I get a specified number of days paid leave each year for this work.

Dave Hutchinson
Cheshire

**MY
STORY**



What kind of scheme is available?

The Employer Supported Policing (ESP) programme has been running successfully in a number of forces around the country. Staff within a participating organisation can volunteer to be Employer Support Special Constables. Employers then allow these staff members time off during normal working hours to undergo their Special Constabulary training and then, once fully trained, they allow them an agreed amount of time off within a regular fixed period to undertake duties as a special.

The main ESP scheme is suitable for employers and their staff across a broad range of industry sectors. In addition, the programme also has specific schemes that have grown out of partnerships with different sectors of employment. These include:

- **ShopWatch** – unites retailers and the police in the fight against crime in stores and shopping areas.
- **ArtBeat** – encourages experts working in the field of art and antiques to work together with detectives from the Metropolitan Police's Specialist Art and Antiques Unit to help prevent and detect crime in this industry.
- **BoroughBeat** – working in partnership with local authorities (initially in London), local authority staff are encouraged to volunteer as specials.
- **BusBeat** – working with bus companies to provide police training for staff. This results in an increased sense of security for co-workers and for customers.
- **CampusWatch** – aimed at university staff and students to help make the university campus a safer place to be.
- **HospitalWatch** – This scheme encourages hospitals to work in partnership with the police to help improve safety and provide greater reassurance for the staff who work there and the members of the public who use them.



There are currently hundreds of British Telecom staff who work as specials, and BT is demonstrating its commitment to the Special Constabulary by giving our employees who work as specials additional days leave to spend on their volunteer duties.

Robert Leach
BT

**EMPLOYER'S
STORY**

Find out more

To find out more about the kind of partnership that your organisation could have with the Special Constabulary, contact Jamie Horton: jamie.horton@npia.pnn.police.uk

Can I join the specials?

The Special Constabulary recruits people of all ages and backgrounds, but there are a few basic criteria that you will need to meet if you want to become a special.

Those applying to become a special constable must satisfy the following basic criteria:

Nationality

You must be from a country in the European Economic Area or have leave to enter and remain in the UK free of restrictions.

Education

You don't need any formal qualifications. However, you will have to pass written tests.

Time

You must be available to volunteer for four or more hours a week, usually in a single shift (the Metropolitan Police Service initially ask for eight hours a week).

Age

You must be at least 18 to apply. There is no upper limit for becoming a special.

Height

There is no minimum height requirement.

Health and fitness

You need to be in good health. Some forces use a fitness test.

Occupation

You do not need to be working to become a special. We welcome applications from the unemployed and from those at home bringing up a family. Some people's jobs will, however, be deemed a conflict of interest. Members of the armed forces, for example, can't serve as specials. For details

of other jobs affected, please visit the specials website at www.npia.police.uk/specials.

Character and previous convictions

You must be of good character and must not associate with any known criminals. If you have previous minor convictions or cautions, this could disqualify you from becoming a special; it will depend on the type of offence. If you are a member of an inappropriate group (for example the British National Party), this could disqualify you from becoming a special.

My shifts are mainly in the evenings and weekends – the busiest periods for rowdiness in the high streets.

During the day I may help carry out road checks and issue speeding tickets. I'm often involved in local fêtes and I tend to work a lot with young people, moving on nuisance groups or seizing alcohol.

Missy Tsim,
Special, Kent

**MY
STORY**



What next?

You've now heard all about the role of a special, so whether you still have more questions or are ready to apply, it's time to take the next step.

Ready to become a special

If you are interested in becoming a special there are three steps to go through.

1. If you have not already done so, contact the force that you wish to apply to. You will need to make sure that they are currently recruiting for the Special Constabulary.
2. Complete the application form and submit it to the force that you are applying to.
3. Go through the individual force's recruitment procedure.

Got a question?

1. If your question relates to special constable eligibility and terms and conditions then contact the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) at specialsteam@npia.pnn.police.uk.
2. If your question relates to recruitment or the application process, please contact the force to which you are applying.



Impress yourself today with what you can achieve

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www.npia.police.uk