

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Special Constable??

A Special Constable is a part-time, volunteer officer who works alongside regular police officers. As a special constable, you'll have similar powers as your colleagues – forging strong partnerships in the community, patrolling our streets, preventing crime and interacting with all kinds of people.

There is a fuller job description, person specification and associated competency descriptors available from the Special Constables- 'Application' section of the Police Scotland website.

What kind of duties will I undertake?

You will be deployed with regular officers - so you could literally be involved in anything at all from patrolling the streets, attending a breach of the peace, attending a community council meeting, providing support to a victim of crime, attending football matches, giving evidence in court or even providing support at national sporting and cultural events.

What are the benefits of volunteering as a special constable?

As you experience new and different challenges every time you go out on patrol, you will grow in confidence. Working as part of a close-knit team, you will form lasting friendships and learn more about yourself, life and human nature than most people will ever see.

You will also develop core skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, leadership, team-working and interpersonal communication skills that will not only help you develop as a Special Constable but will enrich your daily life and potentially improve your full-time career prospects.

Am I paid anything for the role?

Special Constables are volunteers. Although you will not be paid a salary, you'll receive a comprehensive training programme, plus serving the public will offer you unique and challenging life experiences.

You will develop new and valuable skills and will hopefully experience a sense of pride and achievement for doing something worthwhile in your community. We do pay expenses so you will not be out of pocket for giving us your time and skills. The Recruiting Team will be able to give you more information on what expenses you are entitled to.

What age do I need to be before I can apply?

You need to be 17.5 years of age to apply - but you must be 18 before you can start.

Do I need to have a full driving licence to apply?

No you do not require to have a driving licence to apply to become a Special Constable.

What is the recruitment process?

The process is very similar to that used for the recruitment of regular officers. The stages are: Application Assessment; Standard Entrance Test; Fitness Assessment; Interview; Vetting; Medical; Pre-employment Substance Mis-use Testing; References.

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How do you assess the application forms?

Firstly we need to make sure you meet the minimum essential criteria, such as age and residency. We also consider the overall quality of your written communication and assess your understanding of the role and the duties you will perform.

Can I apply to be a special constable if I have any previous convictions?

Yes, whilst the public is entitled to expect that Police Scotland will only recruit people who demonstrate the highest standards of professional conduct, honesty and integrity, having convictions does not preclude you from applying.

Can I join if I have tattoos?

Tattoos are not a bar to appointment and you will be required to tell us about any tattoos you have on the application form. Notwithstanding the above, tattoos that are on the face are not acceptable, other than for religious or medical reasons. Tattoos, whether visible or not, should not:

- undermine the dignity and authority of the office of constable
- cause offence to members of the public or colleagues and/or invite provocation
- indicate unacceptable attitudes towards any individual or section of the community
- indicate alignment with a particular group which could cause offence to members of the public or colleagues
- be considered inflammatory, rude, lewd, crude, racist, sexist, sectarian, homophobic, violent or intimidating

Q. Will I have to sit an exam?

Yes. The selection process for Special Constables who join Police Scotland includes a mandatory requirement for all applicants to sit and pass the national Standard Entrance Test. Sample papers with answers are available within 'The Selection Process and Essential Reading' section for you to print and use for preparation and practice. However if you have passed this before you will not be required to re-sit the exam.

Will I have to do a fitness assessment?

Yes. The national selection process for Special Constables does include a mandatory fitness assessment. The fitness assessment and standard for Special Constables is the same as that used for regular police officers.

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How can I prepare for the interview?

You will attend a competency based interview. This is the only interview which you will attend. It will be conducted by two members of the local recruiting team. You will find really helpful information about each of the behavioural competencies that are assessed on the Special Constables Recruitment- 'Application' page of the Police Scotland web site.

As well as web site research we recommend that you include speaking to a serving Special Constable and/or a Probationary Constable to find out more about how you will help keep people safe.

Is there an eyesight standard?

Yes, all applicants are required to meet the mandatory national eyesight standard. This is assessed at the medical stage. If you are uncertain about your eyesight standard, it is recommended that you visit an optician to ascertain whether or not you meet the required standard. The Guidance on Eyesight PDF document is available on our web site in the 'Selection Process and Essential Reading' page of the Special Constables recruitment section.

Do I get training?

Yes. If successful, you will undergo the national training programme. Training now incorporates two residential periods at Tulliallan supported by local training. A 'Training' document is available to download from the Special Constables 'Selection Process and Essential Reading' web page of the Police Scotland website.

What officer safety training do I get?

You receive the same officer safety training as a regular police officer, as you carry the same safety equipment. You will be fully trained so that you will know exactly what to do and how to do it, should the need ever arise for you to protect yourself, members of the public or even your colleagues when you are on duty.

What uniform/equipment will I have?

As a Special Constable you will be required to wear the same full uniform as a police officer - this includes a hat, radio, body armour, handcuffs and additional officer safety equipment.

Will I be told what hours to work?

No. You choose the days, shifts and number of hours that you can work- it's all about what fits in with your other personal commitments. To ensure you keep your knowledge and skills up to date we suggest that you work a minimum of four hours a week, or eight hours per fortnight or even one weekend a month but this is really up to you.

Is there an actual minimum number of hours I would need to work?

Yes, there is a nationally agreed minimum requirement of 96 hours per year.

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Will my current job stop me becoming a special constable?

Some jobs may preclude you from becoming a special constable. Check out the 'Eligibility and What it Takes' page for further details. If you have any questions contact the Recruiting Team who will be able to offer advice.

What happens if, as a serving special constable, I am injured on duty?

Special Constables now enjoy an enhanced level of insurance benefits from a Personal Accident Policy which provides limited cover for duties required by Police Scotland and directly related travel. Applicants may require additional personal cover depending on their circumstances.

Do you think it could lead to full time employment with Police Scotland?

Being a Special Constable doesn't guarantee anything but it will undoubtedly give you great experience within an operational policing environment. If you can demonstrate the right aptitude, attitude, skills and motivation as a Special Constable - then the rest is up to you!

Can I volunteer locally even though it is a National Force?

Yes. Most Special Constables work in their own local communities. You will be asked to select which Division you would prefer to work in.

If I'm not successful the first time I try, can I apply again?

Yes. If you don't pass the selection process, make sure you understand what you need to do differently the next time. Your local recruitment team will be able to help you with some feedback.

If you have been rejected for any reason, you must wait six months from the date of rejection before you can submit a new application.

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