

Training and development

Forces have a clear duty of care to ensure that all PCSOs can fulfil their role and that they are trained effectively.

First published 1 July 2019 Updated 6 June 2022

4 mins read

Forces' duty of care

Before designating a person as a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), a chief officer (or director general) must be satisfied that the person:

- is suitable to carry out the functions of the PCSO role
- is capable of effectively carrying out those functions
- has received adequate training to carry out the core functions of the PCSO role, as outlined in the national standard for PCSO learning and assessment in England and Wales under the policing education qualifications framework (PEQF)

This places a clear duty of care on forces to ensure that all PCSOs can fulfil their role and that they are trained effectively before they are deployed to their duties.

National curriculum to support initial learning

The College of Policing, in partnership with higher education (HE) and key stakeholders across the service, has developed a full national curriculum to support the initial learning of PCSOs under the PEQF. This curriculum is accredited by national qualifications offered by either HE or Ofqual-regulated national awarding organisations.

The curriculum is based on the national policing curriculum for police constables, which will enable any PCSO who transfers into a PC role to gain recognition of prior learning (RPL), meaning they will only need to cover a percentage of the first year of the PC degree apprenticeship (PCDA) or degree-holder entry programme (DHEP). The College has provided RPL guidance and details of the additional learning required to complete the first part of the PC initial learning programme.

- HE-administered qualifications will have the title Level 4 HE Certificate in Community Policing Practice.
- Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation administered qualifications will have the title RQF Level 4 Diploma in Community Policing Practice.

All programmes are scrutinised by the College of Policing during the quality standards assessment (QSA) process to ensure that, regardless of the learning organisation delivering the programme, the same assessment criteria and learning outcomes are used.

All programmes need to meet the core requirements set out in the national programme specification for PCSO programmes, which is available through [College Learn](#) (formerly the Managed Learning Environment – login required). Compliance is tested through the aforementioned QSA process. Please refer to the programme specification for more details on how the programme can be delivered.

Initial learning PCSO initial learning under the PEQF can be delivered as an apprenticeship or as a stand-alone programme. Forces should note that apprenticeships in England are governed in a different way from those in Wales and ensure that any implications are considered. The main differences are in respect of funding and the requirement for an end point assessment. All programmes, apprenticeships or non-apprenticeships are based on the same curriculum, incorporating the same learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Accreditation of locally delivered training

Where a force delivers the programme using in-force training resources (as opposed to contracting with an external provider), they will need to engage with a suitably approved awarding organisation to accredit the programme and award the qualification. However, all PCSO training delivered locally must be accredited by a confirmed national qualification. Therefore, in all other circumstances, forces will need to develop partnerships with either an awarding organisation or HE to accredit the learning with one or other qualification previously mentioned.

Training programme requirements

The duration of all the programmes is 12 months – dictated by the volume of curriculum content and the academic credits (120 at level 4) associated with the programme. All programmes should:

- meet all the learning outcomes of the national PCSO PEQF curriculum
- contain a confirmed national PCSO qualification (outlined previously)
- contain learning and assessment (related to both knowledge and understanding and the application of skills in the workplace)
- require participants to provide evidence against the full PCSO competence criteria, collated in an operational competence portfolio (OCP)
- include a structured monitoring and development process comparable to that of police constables.

Appropriate monitoring documentation, such as an OCP, should be used

Regular continuation training

In addition to the learning programme, all PCSOs should undertake regular continuation training in self-defence and first aid, as recommended by local force procedures and College of Policing directives.

Further training aimed at enhancing and building on current skills should also be designed according to local need, then evidenced and subject to a learning-needs analysis.

Whenever new powers become available, individual forces need to ensure that PCSOs have been adequately trained and can use those additional powers effectively before the chief officer designates them.

PCSOs as tutors or mentors

Some forces have trained and appointed current PCSOs as tutors or mentors. This should be seen as good practice, particularly as it develops PCSOs laterally in the absence of a career pathway beyond their core role. They should be able to undertake a coaching/mentoring role, such as a tutor constable, having received the relevant training and accreditation.

Tags

PCSO Community engagement Career pathways