

Training for special constables

The different phases of learning and training activity to become a special constable.

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Special constable learning programme (SCLP)

The training that special constables (SCs) receive is part of the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF). This is the learning framework for all officers and staff, starting with the initial entry routes.

Background

The National Special Constabulary Strategy sets out how police forces in England and Wales can use special constables to support their frontline service to the public.

Completion of the strategy enabled the College to develop a new special constable learning programme (SCLP), based on the same learning provided for regular police constables. This underpins the strategy.

The training takes place in phases.

Phase one learning

The initial learning phase will provide the theoretical knowledge and understanding of practical skills and behaviour needed for a new SC to conduct a safe and lawful accompanied patrol. The new SC will be assessed appropriately before they can go out on patrol with an experienced officer, so that they can gain practical experience of what they have been learning. During this phase, they will also receive personal safety training (PST).

Accompanied patrol status (APS)

On successful completion of phase one learning (and PST), the SC operates at accompanied patrol status (APS). Accompanied patrol is the stage of professional development at which the SC goes out on patrol with an experienced officer. During this time, they will be required to demonstrate

basic operational skills of the SC role in a safe and lawful manner.

At the beginning of this phase, we would expect the learner to mostly observe real incidents as their experienced colleagues handle them. As they gain more exposure and confidence, we would then expect that they would begin to apply and demonstrate basic policing skills from phase one learning under direct observation.

Directed patrol status (DPS)

While the new SC is on accompanied patrol they will have the opportunity to demonstrate competence in their role. They will be expected to collect evidence of their competence in an operational competence portfolio (OCP). Their evidence will be assessed by a tutor, to determine whether they can carry out their role with a degree of independence, safely and lawfully under supervision. When they have gathered evidence to show competence against all relevant assessment criteria, they will reach directed patrol status (DPS), which is unique to the Special Constabulary.

While DPS indicates an assessed level of competence, this does not equip the SC to be fully independent. SCs who have achieved DPS should only be deployed in a supervised or managed environment, either on their own or as part of a team.

We estimate that, on average, an SC can achieve DPS in 18 to 24 months. An SC can remain at DPS level or they can choose to progress to the next phase.

Phase two learning

During this phase, SCs revisit core policing principles and can undertake more advanced learning in one or more of the five areas of policing practice:

- Response policing.
- Policing communities.
- Policing the roads.
- Information and intelligence.
- Conducting investigations.

Qualified special constable (QSC)

Once the SC has successfully completed phase two learning in their chosen area(s), they will need to demonstrate competence in that area. This is done through further work-based assessment and collecting more evidence in the OCP – this time against specific criteria that are relevant to a qualified special constable (QSC). Again, their evidence will be assessed and if it meets the criteria the SC will become a QSC. At this point the SC training is complete and the SC can be deployed independently in their chosen area of policing. We estimate that, on average, an SC would be able to achieve QSC in their chosen area of policing within four to six months after achieving DPS.

If an SC wants to become a regular PC, or to have parity with independent patrol status, they will need to complete the phase two learning, and provide evidence of competence against the relevant criteria, in all five areas of policing practice. We estimate that, on average, an SC would be able to achieve QSC across all five areas of policing practice within two years following DPS.

Other key information

All of the learning in SCLP is aligned with the first year of the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA). If an SC wants to become a regular PC, their learning and experience as an SC will be taken into account, so they will not have to duplicate any of the learning they have already completed.

There is an optional coaching, mentoring and assessment module within the phase two learning. This can be delivered separately to any SC who would like to go on to support future new special constables in a tutor role.

Tags

Neighbourhood policing