

# Joining as a PCSO

How to become a police community support officer (PCSO) and play a part linking local communities and policing.

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## Entry routes for police community support officers (PCSO)

PCSOs are non-warranted officers who provide reassurance to local communities by linking into the police service and providing vital support to police officers.

Applications to join as a PCSO should be made to [your preferred force](#) and you should check their recruitment pages for opportunities.

Eligibility is also set by each force, so you should check what your preferred force requires before making an application.

## What happens after I join?

Once you have successfully applied to join as a PCSO you will enter an initial learning programme.

Some forces have started running the new learning programmes that enable you to achieve a qualification. A key feature of the new learning is a stronger connection between learning and practice.

The new learning can be:

- level 4 PCSO apprenticeship (England)
- level 4 PCSO apprenticeship (Wales)
- level 4 (non-apprenticeship) PCSO programme

Forces can work with different awarding bodies, and depending on whether this is a higher or further education provider, the qualification could be either a:

- level 4 Diploma in Community Policing Practice
- level 4 Certificate in Community Policing Practice

The level of learning, the subject areas covered and the achievement of competence required is the same whichever programme the force is running.

You can find out more about apprenticeships:

- [in England](#)
- [in Wales](#)

Some forces may still be offering the old style level 3 learning programme, which is being phased out.

## National PCSO handbook

The PCSO handbook is an operational guide for PCSOs, their supervisors and the wider service; providing guidance on their role and purpose, deployment, relevant legislation and powers.

[Read the PCSO handbook](#)

## Tags

Career pathways   Community engagement