

Police rejoiners – guidance on changes to Police Regulations

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Introduction

This guidance provides information for rejoiners and forces looking to recruit them. The prevailing law will be authoritative. The guidance is a living document that will be updated dynamically in response to changing demands, regulations and provisions.

To provide more flexible re-entry to the service, in 2019 changes were made to police regulations that govern rejoiners. The changes removed the requirement that former officers must rejoin a police force within five years if they wish to retain their previous rank and introduced flexibility for chief officers to appoint to a higher, lower or the same rank.

This guidance provides minimum standards for those developing or broadening rejoiner programmes; details recommendations of good practice; and contains a section on frequently asked questions.

In simple terms, a rejoiner member is a person who is to be appointed as a member of a police force and who:

- satisfactorily completed the period of probationary service in the rank of constable required under Regulation 12
- resigned or retired from that force and immediately prior to the appointment was not a member of a police force

Minimum standards for rejoiner recruitment

The 10 minimum standards detailed below guide recruitment and assessment for those recruiting rejoiners. These standards should be complied with by recruiting forces. In all cases, rejoiner members are subject to the same regulations and determinations as any other police officer.

Good practice recommendations

The nine recommendations of good practice provide guidance on how forces can maximise the potential of rejoiner pathways. These recommendations can be adopted by forces subject to local business need.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

The document provides answers to the most frequently asked questions and details the most recent updates regarding pensions and police contracts.

Regulation changes

The changes to Regulation 10b were made by [The Police \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#).

In addition to the changes to Regulation 10b, amendments have also been made to Regulations 12(1), 13, 17 and 19a and associated annexes (Annex C and Annex OO to Regulation 33) to provide further detail and clarity.

Minimum standards for rejoiner recruitment

1. Selection, recruitment and appointment of rejoiner members must adhere to the College's [Code of Ethics](#) and the policing principles therein.
2. Recruiters should evidence a rejoiner member's suitability for appointment against the [competency and values framework](#) at the appropriate level for the rank or role.
3. Selection, recruitment and appointment of rejoiner members should include a rigorous interview process and comprehensive evaluation of a rejoiner's professional development needs against the role profile for the vacancy. Rejoiner members will only pass probation upon successful completion of all identified training and assessment components within the probationary period specified in Annex C to Regulation 10b.
4. Recruiters should provide appropriate and adequate support and guidance to rejoiner members with regard to training, development and assessment.

5. Rejoiner members entering the service at any rank, including a higher or lower rank than that at which they last served, will hold that rank from point of re-entry.
6. As part of the policing education qualifications framework (PEQF), new starters to policing are required to attain specified educational qualifications prior to completion of probation. Rejoiner members at any rank are not currently required to attain these educational qualifications.
7. Rejoiner members returning at a rank that requires the [national police promotion framework](#) (NPPF) legislative exam (sergeant or inspector) must sit the respective exam at the earliest opportunity. This applies to all rejoiners who have not already successfully achieved a pass at the required level, or if the currency of such a pass has lapsed.
8. Rejoiner members returning to a role that requires the [national investigators' exam](#) (NIE) (any detective role) must sit the exam at the earliest opportunity. This applies to all rejoiner members who have not already successfully achieved a pass at the required level, or if the currency of such a pass has lapsed.
9. Rejoiner members must complete a period of work-based assessment (WBA) appropriate for the rank or role. Those rejoining at a higher rank than which they previously served must complete any [existing established WBA for that rank](#). Those rejoining in a detective role must complete any [existing established WBA for that role](#) unless this is already completed and remains current.
10. Exit from the service as a result of failing to meet the required standard for any assessment component shall not preclude a rejoiner member from reapplying to rejoin the service at a later date. Upon re-entry, a rejoiner member, as with any other police officer, can seek to undertake promotion through the established promotion framework.

Good practice recommendations

The nine principles are largely adapted from guidance published by the Government Equalities Office (2018) – [Returner Programmes: Best Practice Guidance for Employers](#). This guidance was based on experience of working with those returning to the labour market following a break to care for others. However, the principles are relevant to broader rejoiner programmes in policing and

have been applied in other sectors such as health, social work and teaching.

Those responsible for establishing or developing returner programmes are encouraged to read the full published guidance. The implementation of these recommendations will depend on local need and may not be appropriate for all forces.

1. Organisational support

Senior buy-in is critical to the success of returner programmes and leaders should understand the business case so that they can champion the initiative. The support of those working with returners on a day-to-day basis is also vital and, as such, they need to understand the benefits of such programmes.

Forces should encourage visible role models to act as positive examples of how the programmes can work to demonstrate the benefits and offer support to others. The use of a senior officer as a talking head and case studies of those who have successfully rejoined policing are options forces can consider.

There is value in establishing a dedicated team with representation from HR, recruitment, training, and marketing and communications, along with training for line managers, mentors and coaches.

2. Understand the needs of rejoiners

While often not the key driver to return, returners want to be paid in line with their skills and experience. Returners are keen to return through a supportive programme and line management that supports their reintegration into the service.

Although rejoiners bring with them a level of skills and experience gained inside policing, they will need enough time and support to bring them up to speed on their return and rebuild their confidence in the role, commensurate with the period of absence.

Forces should recognise skills and experience throughout recruitment and deployment and consideration should be given to appointing at a higher rank where appropriate. Rejoiners will benefit from a bespoke personal and professional development plan.

3. Attraction and promotion

The way forces advertise rejoiner vacancies, and the channels through which they promote them, can have a big impact on the quality and quantity of applicants. It is important to set out clearly what the role they are returning to is or, if this is not possible, a clear indication of how the candidate will be matched to a vacancy.

Clarity in terms of time commitment, flexibility and other parameters is also important. Those that have left policing can be hard to reach through normal channels. Evidence suggests that for policing, using serving officers to promote opportunities can be an effective channel to use and social media channels can also help promote vacancies more broadly. Forces could build rejoiner attraction into their wider communications strategy.

4. Recruitment and selection

Even highly experienced officers may lose confidence in their professional skills and abilities after time away from policing. It is important to ensure that the recruitment and selection process is clear and proportionate.

Keep the application process as straightforward as possible. Explain what rejoiners can expect and provide a timeline. Accept that examples of recent knowledge and experience may not be possible and highlight important factors such as salary, pension implications, probation and options for flexible working at the outset.

Communication should be clear and prompt and forces should provide guidance and support to rejoiners throughout the recruitment timeline.

5. Flexible working

Those leaving policing do so for a variety of reasons and upon return, for some, flexible working could be a key priority. Forces should consider where people need to work, when they need to work and how much people need to work. Ideally the parameters of rejoining will meet the needs of both the force and the rejoiner.

Forces should consider whether working from home or across different locations is possible; whether the role can accommodate compressed or flexible hours, or annualised flexibility, and whether the role could be undertaken as a job-share or in a part-time capacity.

6. Supporting rejoiners

Providing strong and effective support helps to maximise the likelihood of returner satisfaction and retention and line management is critical to this support. It is important that rejoiners understand their objectives and expectations in role. Line managers should meet regularly with rejoiners to ensure appropriate support and training is in place.

The level of support offered is likely to be front-loaded and will reduce as the returner reintegrates. Other key support elements such as the appointment of a buddy, mentor or coach should be considered. Establishing a network of support for each rejoiner could also include a programme manager and rejoiner champions.

7. Creating career pathways

For many, rejoining the police will be a significant decision that has not been taken lightly. It is critical that support does not evaporate once the rejoiner is back in the service.

At an early stage it can be beneficial to retention and wellbeing to look at long-term career development. Within the first few months, it is important to discuss career aspirations and build a medium-to-long-term plan. Training beyond that which facilitates re-entry to the service could help to further develop skills and broaden experience and exposure to opportunities.

Where forces are able to provide mentors, consider retaining this support beyond the initial re-entry period along with other appropriate opportunities for training and continuing professional development.

8. Rejoiners and talent strategies

In pursuit of embedding a returner programme, forces should consider the incorporation of principles and practices for returners throughout the organisation. Longer term, learning from running a returner programme can be disseminated more widely across the force to foster an inclusive culture and support the attraction and retention of a more diverse workforce.

Forces could establish an ongoing rejoiner pathway into policing as part of their talent strategy rather than opening discrete windows for recruitment at times of impeded capacity. This could include the creation of a forum for managers to share best practice, such as an online discussion

group or through training sessions.

9. Aligning programme goals and business need

While a number of forces have established ways to welcome rejoiners back to policing, this is an underexploited recruitment pathway. As such, evaluation of what works well and what can be improved is limited in policing.

At the outset, forces should establish a method to evaluate the benefits to policing and the methods used to attract, recruit, support and retain rejoiners. This could include:

- assessing the calibre and success rates of candidates based on what attraction and recruitment processes were adopted
- seeking feedback from rejoiners and line managers
- in the longer term, assessing levels of retention

Frequently asked questions

Eligibility

What is a rejoiner?

A rejoiner is a person who is to be appointed as a member of a police force having previously served as a member of a police force, having satisfactorily completed the period of probationary service in the rank of constable required under [Regulation 12](#) and resigned or retired from that force. A rejoiner is not a transferee from another force; someone on secondment; someone on a career break or a member of a police force.

Can a rejoiner member who left as a uniform officer rejoin in a detective post?

Yes. A rejoiner member can re-enter into a detective role subject to the rejoiner minimum requirements. The rejoiner minimum requirements provide guidance for how to ensure the rejoiner member has the appropriate skills available to them in whichever role they undertake upon rejoining.

Can a serving officer leave the service and apply as a rejoiner member at a higher rank, therefore circumventing existing promotion mechanisms?

Any serving officer wishing to apply as a rejoiner member to a higher rank would be required to resign from the police to be defined as a rejoiner member. They would then be subject to the rejoiner minimum requirements; the recruitment standards set down by the recruiting force and a probationary period during which assessments must be successfully completed ahead of passing probation. There is no guarantee that a rejoiner member would be successful in recruitment to rejoin the service at a higher rank and if they were they would still be required to undertake any legislative exam or work-based assessment required at that rank.

Terms and conditions

Police terms and conditions are set out in the relevant police legislation and regulations, including but not limited to [The Police Act 1996](#), [The Police Regulations 2003](#) and determinations thereunder, [The Police \(Performance\) Regulations 2020](#) and [The Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2020](#). This guidance does not replace legislation in respect of rejoiners, but sets out the position of rejoiners in relation to legislation.

What will a rejoiner member be paid at point of re-entry?

[Regulation 24 of The Police Regulations 2003](#) provides for the pay of police officers. Regulation 24 states that reckonable service for the purposes of pay takes into account all service in that rank and/or at a higher rank (on temporary promotion or otherwise). A rejoiner member would not be expected to restart the pay scale if re-entering at the same or lower rank as on departure. Instead, they will re-enter at the pay point commensurate to length of service previously completed in that rank as per governing regulations for police pay.

What about pensions?

How an individual rejoiner is treated for pensions purposes will depend on which police pension the rejoiner was formerly a part of, the length of time away from the police service, and if any of the time away has been spent in public service. Most people are likely to join the 2015 police pension scheme, but we recommend that rejoiners (and prospective rejoiners) contact their pension administrator (for example, for the last force they served in) to understand what applies in their circumstances.

How are other conditions of employment affected?

Rejoiner members are treated in the same manner as any other police officer. This includes conditions on full and part-time working, maternity leave, testing for substance misuse, restrictions on private life, dismissal and personal records. Rejoiner members wanting to take a career break must have completed their rejoiner probationary period before applying.

Regulations on career breaks are set out in Annex OO to [Regulation 33 of The Police Regulations 2003](#).

Support for rejoiner members

What if rejoiners require additional flexibility?

Rejoiners may have ongoing care-giving responsibilities or other reasons for flexible working requirements. Changes to the regulations give chief officers discretion to extend probationary periods where appropriate. The rejoiner minimum requirements allow rejoiners at least six months to study for an exam, with the opportunity to resit an exam should they not meet the required standard on the first attempt and allow flexibility on when training should be completed. In addition, rejoiner members working part time are subject to probationary periods calculated in relation to their agreed weekly period of duty.

What support will be available to help rejoiners?

Police procedures, technology and demands change over time. Rejoiners will need to become familiar and comfortable with these changes. In addition to completing the formal requirements for a role, forces will conduct a comprehensive assessment of rejoiner members' development needs, in line with the rejoiner minimum standards. This will include a period of WBA, additional training and formal assessment. Forces have a duty, under the rejoiner minimum requirements, to provide appropriate and adequate support and guidance to rejoiner members with regard to training, development and assessment.

Assessment and probation

Who decides what a rejoiner member is required to complete in terms of training and assessment?

A comprehensive evaluation of a rejoiner's professional development needs against the role profile for the vacancy will be completed by a suitably qualified person as determined by the recruiting force, in line with the rejoiner minimum standards. This person will be able to identify the

appropriate WBA, training needs and other essential requirements for the role.

Do rejoiners have to be on probation?

Rejoiners are subject to different probationary periods depending on the time out of force. Those who left policing less than one year before their reappointment as a police officer are subject to a six-month probationary period. Those who left policing more than one year before their reappointment, or who rejoin at a different rank to that which they previously served at, are subject to a 12-month probationary period. In all instances, chief officers have the discretion to extend probation as they see fit.

What is required of those returning at a higher rank?

Those who rejoin at a higher rank than the one they previously served at are required to sit, and pass, all the required exams for that rank. In addition, rejoiner members will be required to complete WBA and other identified requirements deemed appropriate. Rejoiner members who return at a higher rank serve at that rank from the point they are appointed and complete the requirements for that rank while on probation.

When will a rejoiner member know what is expected of them in terms of training and assessment?

The comprehensive evaluation of a rejoiner's professional development needs against the role profile will be completed by the recruiting force ahead of attestation, which takes place on appointment.

What happens if a rejoiner member fails to meet the required standard of one or more of the training or assessment components?

It is imperative that a rejoiner member can evidence their competence in rank/role and the purpose of any identified training or assessment is to provide this assurance. [Regulation 13 of the Police Regulations 2003](#) states that during his period of probation in the force, the services of a constable may be dispensed with at any time if the chief officer considers that he is not fitted, physically or mentally, to perform the duties of his office, or that he is not likely to become an efficient or well-conducted constable. Dismissal through Regulation 13 would also be the preferred course of action if a rejoiner member's performance during their probationary period does not meet the required standard, according to police regulations.

If a rejoiner member re-enters at a higher rank but fails to pass probation and leaves the service, can they reapply to rejoin the service at a later date?

Yes. Failure to achieve the required standard upon re-entry at a higher rank does not preclude a rejoiner member from applying to rejoin the service at a later date. This will be subject to the recruitment and forces' requirements at point of reapplication.

How much time should a rejoiner member be given to study between rejoining and taking the sergeant or inspector exam, if this is a requirement of re-entry?

To enable a rejoiner sufficient time to study for the sergeant or inspector exam, a period of at least six months should be afforded ahead of the exam date. Should a period of at least six months between rejoining and exam not be possible, the rejoining member must sit the exam at the first opportunity after an initial period of six months has passed. Rejoiner members would be expected to study for the exam in the same manner as a non-rejoiner member.

How much time should a rejoiner member be given to study between rejoining and taking the NIE, if this is a requirement of re-entry?

To enable a rejoiner sufficient time to study for the NIE, a period of at least 14 weeks should be afforded ahead of the exam date. Should a period of at least 14 weeks between rejoining and exam not be possible, the rejoining member must sit the exam at the first opportunity after an initial period of 14 weeks has passed. Rejoiner members would be expected to study for the exam in the same manner as a non-rejoiner member.

What happens if a rejoiner requiring the sergeant or inspector exam fails to meet the required standard at the first attempt?

Rejoining members should be afforded one opportunity to resit any required exam should they not meet the required standard at the first attempt. Should a rejoiner fail to meet the required standard for the exam at the second attempt, it will be for the chief officer to determine the resulting course of action.

What happens if a rejoiner requiring the NIE fails to meet the required standard at the first attempt?

Rejoining members should be afforded one opportunity to resit any required exam should they not meet the required standard at the first attempt. Should a rejoiner fail to meet the required standard

for the exam at the second attempt, it will be for the chief officer to determine the resulting course of action.

What happens if a rejoiner member fails to reach the required standard for WBA?

Should the WBA component not be successfully completed within the probationary period, the chief officer retains the ability to extend probation. Should a rejoiner fail to complete the WBA within their probation (or extended probation), it will be for the chief officer to determine the resulting course of action.

If a rejoiner member left the service and seeks to rejoin at a rank that does not have an existing established WBA or legislative exam, how will they be assessed?

The recruiting force will undertake a comprehensive evaluation of a rejoiner member's professional development needs. The recruiting force will dictate the additional assessment requirements for a rejoiner member, which will always involve WBA. It could also include assessment, such as a bespoke exam at superintendent level. It will be for the recruiting force to determine the most appropriate way to assess suitability to enter at that rank, and determine the assessment during probation.

What impact do the police constable entry routes have on those rejoining the service?

New starters to policing are required to attain specified educational qualifications prior to completion of probation. Rejoiner members at any rank are not currently required to attain these educational qualifications during their rejoiner probation.

Tags

Police recruitment