

Leadership training for special constabulary sergeants

Delivering a three-day special sergeants course that is mandatory for all aspiring sergeants in South Yorkshire special constabulary.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Diversity and inclusion Ethics and values Leadership, development and learning Operational policing Organisation including workforce
Organisation	South Yorkshire Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2021/22 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of South Yorkshire Police
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Key details

Partners	Police Education
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	November 2012
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

- To develop the skills of volunteer supervisors.
- To develop the knowledge and understanding of the officers of how to effectively manage individuals and situations.
- To ensure the officers are clear on their role and responsibilities and expectations of the force.

Intended outcome

- To provide highly skilled and motivated volunteer supervisors.
- To encourage individuals to learn about their role and responsibilities and how they work alongside the other force workforce.
- To reduce performance or standards related issues and complaints against special constabulary sergeants.
- To improve the retention of trained staff.

Description

South Yorkshire Police is committed to training its volunteers. The three-day special sergeants course was introduced in 2012 and is mandatory for all aspiring sergeants. This course delivered by qualified trainers that are also members of the special constabulary. Importantly, the content is in line with that being delivered to regular sergeants. However, the content slightly differs due to the conditions and regulations for special constables.

The course is delivered by a chief officer and a special chief inspector who are a part of the force's learning and development team. The trainers have a minimum of the Level 3 Award in Education and Training.

The course content is delivered face-to-face in one day sessions over three weekends to take account of the availability of the volunteers. The face-to-face approach was more suitable than online delivery that took place during Covid-19 pandemic, as the delegates were more forthcoming with asking questions and sharing their experiences.

Current content includes:

- the role of the special sergeant
- how to manage individuals and situations as a special sergeant
- administration
- wellbeing
- coaching and mentoring.

The course consists of the following itinerary:

- day one is focused on coaching and mentoring
- day two is around expectations of the role and the fundamentals of leadership
- day three focuses on wellbeing and performance management.

Special constables are required to complete this training before taking on any acting sergeant role.

There is no delivery cost to force, except for printing the material and lighting. Special constables can also claim any costs for mileage.

Overall impact

Since 2012, over 250 special constables have successfully completed the training. Initially, the course was rolled out to the Basic Command Unit and within a year this had been extended to the whole force. The training is now incorporated within the force's policy.

Positive feedback has been received around people understanding what is expected of them prior to taking on the special sergeant role. Some have given feedback that after attending the training, they have realised the role is not suitable for them, due to having a better understanding of the expectations prior to acting up.

The training has been viewed by a number of other forces such as: West Yorkshire Police, Durham, Merseyside, Derbyshire and Gloucestershire.

Learning

The following learning recommendations have been made:

- the content must be in line with that given to regular officers but also include content that is specific to the special constabulary
- training must be seen and embedded as part of learning and development function
- the credibility of the trainers is essential to delivery of the course
- the training must be delivered in a way that is flexible to take account of the availability of volunteers
- it is essential that there is trust and effective relationships between the delivery team, learning and the development team
- course content cannot stagnate and needs to be continually reviewed and updated

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