



## Letter from the Chief Officer

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Bedfordshire Police's Special Constabulary.

Bedfordshire Police is proud to serve our communities and put their needs at the heart of our work. The Special Constabulary supports frontline policing in the county and deals with an ever increasing diverse range of activities.

Most recently, our Specials have joined the Operation Meteor team and are helping to disrupt nuisance biker activity in the county.

As a Special you will develop personally and professionally, combining your skills and experiences with the training that we offer. You'll learn skills which may help you in your current line of work or to gain employment.

I volunteer with the Special Constabulary alongside my day job and it is one of the most rewarding things I have done. I am privileged to work alongside some incredibly dedicated people already and I am looking forward to welcoming you to the team.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Clint Sharp'.

Clint Sharp  
Special Constabulary Chief Officer



## Letter from the Chief Constable

Special Constables play a vital role in helping to keep our communities safe. Through preventing and investigating crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and reducing disorder, Specials provide a much appreciated active presence in all areas.

As a Special Constable, you will be working for the benefit of the community. That is why we are keen to recruit people from all walks of life with a variety of life experiences and from a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, as we want our staff to understand the real issues and concerns facing those who live and work in our neighbourhoods.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Garry Forsyth'.

Garry Forsyth  
Chief Constable, Bedfordshire Police



## About Citizens in Policing

'Citizens in Policing' is the term used to describe the thousands of people across the UK who volunteer their time to support the police.

The role of the Citizens in Policing is vital – volunteers increase the capacity of the Bedfordshire Police bringing valuable skills and expertise to police teams, creating closer and more effective relationships with our communities, giving up their free time to volunteer in a variety of policing roles for various reasons.

"The contribution that volunteers make to the police service is staggering. Every day thousands of people across the UK give up their time to increase the capacity of police forces and bring vital skills. This is all about connecting policing to communities and communities to policing.

## Our Mission

At Bedfordshire Police, we currently have a strong Citizens in Policing Unit with passionate members of staff who support, coach and mentor the volunteering community.

In order to develop the Citizens in Policing Unit, we will undertake several activities which can be adopted to improve recruitment and retention rates within Bedfordshire Police.

It is our ambition to target volunteers with particular skills and experience to fulfil non-traditional volunteering positions. We will adopt a robust marketing strategy using multiple media platforms and the latest technologies to improve our reach.

Our force is currently supported by over 700 Citizens in Policing, with a strong Cadet force of over 120. In addition, we have 200 serving Special constables. It is our ambition to increase the Special Constabulary substantially over the next two years.

## Key Contacts

The Citizens in Policing Unit will be happy to help and answer any questions about the Special Constabulary, application process and training.

You can contact them via [CIP@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:CIP@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk).

## Eligibility

To apply for the Special Constabulary, you must be 18 years old and a British Citizen, an EC/EEA National or Commonwealth Citizen or a Foreign National with no restrictions to live and work in the UK.

Specific educational qualifications are not a requirement for this role.

If you have had any previous cautions or convictions please detail these on your application form. Dependent on the nature of the caution/conviction, a decision is made on a case by case basis, and all incidences should be disclosed.

Bedfordshire Police welcomes applications from candidates with disabilities and will do all it can to make reasonable adjustments.

Credit checks are made on all applicants and all debts will need to be discharged on application. If you have been declared bankrupt, you will have to have been discharged for five years before you are eligible to apply.

You do not need a driving licence at the time of submitting an application to become a Special Constable, but it is preferable if you do have one.

All applicants must be in good physical and mental health. If you pass the Assessment Centre you will attend a full medical with our Occupational Health Team. Please note that BMI will form part of the medical test and a score of 30 or under is the requirement.

You will be required to visit an optician to ensure your eyesight meets the standards required to become a Special Constable.

Tattoos are not acceptable if:

- They undermine the dignity and authority of the office of constable, are garish, numerous or particularly prominent
- They could cause offence to members of the public, colleagues and/or invite provocation. This would include tattoos that are; rude, lewd, crude, racist, sexist, sectarian, homophobic, violent or intimidating
- They display unacceptable attitudes towards women, minority groups, or any other section of the community, or alignment with particular groups that could be offensive to members of the community.

## Application and Recruitment Process

We look for Special Constables to demonstrate the seven core competencies listed below and the recruitment process will constantly assess for these traits.

The six competencies are:

- We deliver, support and inspire
- We are collaborative
- We are innovative and open-minded
- We analyse critically
- We take ownership
- We are emotionally aware

## **Stage One – Online Application**

You must complete the initial application form online. You may also be subject to preliminary vetting checks at this stage.

## **Stage Two – Shortlisting**

If your application form is shortlisted to progress to the next stage then you will be invited to an assessment centre.

## **Stage Three– Assessment Centre**

You will be invited to attend an Assessment Centre at one of the police buildings. The Assessment Centre will last for approx. half a day consisting of the following assessments:

- Job Related Fitness Test (Bleep Test)
- One Group Assessment
- One Observational Test

You must first pass the fitness test in the first instance to progress further through the assessment centre. If you do not pass the fitness test then you will be provided with feedback and advice and invited to attend a subsequent assessment centre.

You will need to complete all elements of the assessment centre successfully to enable you to progress to the pre-employment checks (vetting, references, medical).

### **DRESS CODE FOR ATTENDANCE AT THE ASSESSMENT CENTRE:**

You will be required to undertake a fitness test as the first stage of the assessment. Therefore, please arrive at the assessment centre dressed in training/sportswear with sensible footwear appropriate for jogging/running. Please do not wear fashion trainers, converse or plimsolls as you will not be permitted to participate in any part of the assessment centre.

### **Job Related Fitness Test**

You will be asked to complete the bleep test: running between two lines (approximately 15 metres apart) in time with a series of bleeps. If you arrive at the end line before the bleep sounds you need to wait for the bleep before resuming running, adjusting your speed.

The timing between bleeps is slow at first but becomes faster as the test progresses and it becomes more difficult to keep up with the required speed. You will run until you can no longer keep up with the set pace. You will need to reach a minimum level 5.4 to pass.

To prepare yourself and improve your stamina you should take part in sporting activities which last 30 minutes or more and get you out of breath such as football, netball or squash or activities which create a large aerobic demand such as jogging, cycling, swimming or rowing.

Try jogging for 20 minutes or more and as you improve, increase the distance covered in that time. Alternatively, jog a set distance from home and back again and try to reduce the time taken to cover the distance. You should exercise three times a week for 20 minutes but if you are not used to exercise, you should start with gentle sessions lasting no more than 15 minutes. Google 'Police Fitness Test' for examples on You Tube.

## **Stage Four - Training**

The Initial Learning for Special Constables (ILSC) is a training programme consisting of training in criminal law, legal powers, traffic offences, policies, procedures, communication and radio use, practical policing skills, IT systems, self-defence and first-aid.

Prior to undertaking any police patrol duties, you will undergo an initial training course. The course is currently delivered over an eight week period which will consist of classroom and computer based learning which cover many aspects of law and procedure. This will take place on a Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Your Personal Safety Training will be delivered on each Saturday during the course.

We are sometimes able to offer a three-week intensive course and the Special Constable Training Officers can provide more information on this course. Options can be discussed once you have successfully completed the Assessment Centre.

There is an attestation, at the end of training to mark the successful completion of the course.

After initial training and attestation you will have further training sessions as well as being out on patrol as a Special Constable. During your first two years you will be working towards the completion of your Police Action Checklist (PAC). The checklist consists of units which relate to arresting, searching and responding to incidents and needs to be completed before you can patrol independently.

Policing never stands still, so you are expected to keep yourself abreast of changing law, policy and procedure. There will be various duties and continued training events to assist with the ongoing changes.

## **More information**

### **Vetting**

Following successful completion of the Assessment Centre, you will be required to complete a recruitment vetting e-form which will ask more details about you and those you live with. You will also be required to undertake biometric vetting, which involves your DNA and fingerprints being obtained.

### **Medical**

Candidates will be provided with a Work Health Questionnaire that must be completed and sent directly to the Occupational Health Department. A full medical history must be disclosed as failure to do so may result in your application being rejected. Please complete the questionnaire carefully and thoroughly – if in doubt, disclose it.

## **A Guide to the Application Form**

This is an online application form to assess your suitability to be considered for the role of Special Constable. We will be seeking evidence of your understanding of the role and how you can provide Bedfordshire Police with the skills required, drawing on your past actions, behaviours and experiences to see if you've got what it takes to be a part of Bedfordshire's Special Constabulary.

When you're filling out your application form, there is one thing that you need to remember – we don't know you. Make your talents shine through by writing clear answers, backed up with lots of examples. Saying that you are 'hard working' or 'a good communicator' isn't enough. Instead tell us a structured story and

provide details on the specific competency that relates to the question. Reading the question carefully should ensure that your answers are relevant and to the point.

Last but not least, we will check your application for spelling and grammar errors and, if you have more than 10, it will automatically fail. Make sure this doesn't happen to you by using the spelling and grammar check on your computer or asking someone to read your application through. We would suggest preparing your evidence on a word-processing package such as MS Word and then cut and paste into the application form once you have double checked it.

You can use examples from your work or social life, or of situations you have come across it does not have to be police orientated but does need to demonstrate the qualities we look for.

## What is good evidence?

- Give specific examples explaining 'how' not 'what'
- Do not be vague or ambiguous
- Do not use multiple examples – one or two good examples is better than several weak ones
- Describe what part **you** played in the example you provide, for example: "I broke down barriers of mistrust", is no good. Explain **what you did**, for example: "I broke down the barriers of mistrust between \*\*\*\*\* by explaining the support offered and asking what else \*\*\*\*\* needed."
- Be careful of statements. Rather than saying "it is important that we engage the community" you should evidence how you are engaging the community
- Demonstrate your awareness of the various factors that needed to be taken into account during the situation you're writing about

## What else does the application form cover?

### Cautions and convictions

Convictions or cautions will not necessarily preclude you from appointment. It will depend on their nature and the circumstances of the offence. Failure to disclose convictions or cautions will, however, result in your application being refused.

You must declare all convictions for any past offences, formal cautions by the police (including cautions as a juvenile i.e. under 18) and any bind-overs imposed by any court. You should include traffic convictions such as speeding, drink-drive offences, fixed penalties for motoring or disorder offences, anti-social behaviour orders, street cannabis warnings and any appearances before a court martial.

You must also declare any charge or summons currently outstanding against you. You must include spent convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (by virtue of the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975) or any involvement with civil, military or transport police.

You must also declare if you have ever been involved in any criminal investigation whether or not this led to prosecution (either of yourself or others). Some applicants do not declare information that they believe is no longer held on record, however our enquiries will reveal incidents from long ago and failure to disclose these will lead to your application being rejected. If you have any doubts, include the details and let us decide whether they are relevant.

### Previous addresses

Please provide all addresses where you have lived in the past 5 year period.

### Tattoos

You will be asked to provide pictures of any tattoos that are visible.

### Language skills

Provide details of any languages that you speak.

### Safeguarding employment screening

Under Section II of the Children's Act, we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and expect all staff to share this commitment. We promote safer employment standards and applicants must be willing to undergo screening in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults and children appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

### **Membership of BNP (British Nationalist Party) or Similar**

Details of any involvement, or association with any political organisations that you have.

### **Business interests**

Declare if you have your own business or are a director of a business.

### **HM Force – previous service**

Any employment in any of the armed services.

### **Details of current and previous employers**

Provide at least two references.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **You're only a Special – you can't arrest me!**

A Special Constable holds the same powers and privileges as a regular officer and is entitled to arrest someone in exactly the same way.

### **What is the difference between a Special and a PCSO?**

PCSOs provide a neighborhood police presence and play a key role in helping to find solutions to community issues like anti-social behavior. Special Constables are volunteers who have exactly the same powers as police officers.

### **How old do I have to be to become a Special?**

Anyone over 18 years can apply to join the Special Constabulary and Bedfordshire Police welcomes all suitable applicants from all walks of life, gender, ethnicity and age groups.

### **Do you only want young people to volunteer as Specials?**

No, there is no upper age limit to join the Specials but you must be able to pass the fitness test. Specials bring valuable life experiences, new skills and fresh perspective into the force and the more varied the backgrounds of our Specials, the more diverse our workforce will be.

### **Do you have to be really fit to join the police?**

While you need a good level of fitness, you do not need to be an athlete. We will advise you on the fitness requirements and assist with guidance to enable you to achieve these where necessary.

### **How much time do I need to volunteer?**

Special Constables are asked to commit a minimum of 16 hours a month to the role. Some Special Constables enjoy it so much that they work more hours than this – some work up to twelve hours on a shift, in line with the colleagues they are teamed up with.

### **How do you fit volunteering in alongside your job and other regular commitments?**

Specials work a variety of shifts – early, late and nights - to fit in with their other life roles. With the nature of police work, there is always something for a Special to do, no matter what the day or time!

### **Do you have to be tall to join the police?**

There are no height restrictions in place for either Special Constables or regular officers.

### **If you don't have any qualifications, can you join the police?**

You don't need any formal qualifications to join the Special Constabulary but you do need to be able to stay calm in a crisis and be able to resolve disputes sensitively and appropriately. We are looking for problem solvers who can treat the public and their colleagues with respect and courtesy.

### **Do the police allow turbans or other religious clothing?**

The police service respects individuals' religious or cultural needs, including the wearing of turbans whilst on duty. We also try to accommodate other religious clothing.

### **Do the Police only want to employ white English people?**

To be a Special Constable you must be a British citizen, EC/EEA national, Commonwealth Citizen or a foreign national with no restrictions on your stay in the UK and can be from any ethnic background. We also need to verify your personal background for the minimum of three years preceding your application.

We are always keen to welcome people from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds to Bedfordshire Police, particularly if you have specific cultural knowledge or language skills.

### **Can I apply if I have any previous convictions or cautions?**

Yes, each application will be judged on a case by case basis but it is advisable to disclose as much information as possible.

### **What do you get to do as a Special?**

As a Special Constable, you will do everything on shift that a regular police officer would do. Specials assist with everything from helping to keep our town centers safe during busy weekend periods, to policing major events like Luton Carnival.

### **How can you progress as a Special?**

There is a full rank structure in place in the Special Constabulary. Becoming a Special opens up a world of opportunities, and you can move into Specialist areas such as the Roads Policing Unit, Dog Handling, Football Unit and Airport Unit.

### **What about my medical history and my eyesight?**

If you are successful at our Assessment Centre, you should disclose any medical information to the Occupational Health team which will be able to offer recommendations and advice. It's recommended that you disclose as much information as possible.

## **Key Information**

You **must** arrive 30 minutes before the stated time and at the place instructed in your invitation email.

Please ensure you know where the Assessment Centre is (It will be one of these two locations)

1. Halsey Road Police Station, Kempston, Bedfordshire, MK42 8AX
2. Bedfordshire Police Headquarters, Woburn Road, Kempston, Bedford, MK43 9AX

Candidates who arrive late will not be permitted entry and it may be some time before you receive another Assessment Centre date.

Please remember to bring a form of your ID with you we will accept a valid photo-card, (full or provisional) driving licence or full UK passport or EEA Passport.

The Assessment Centre will follow a strict timetable and on arrival you will be given a full brief about the day. You will then proceed to the first element of the Assessment Centre. A member of the Citizens in Policing team will remain with the group throughout the Assessment Centre to assist with any questions or issues you may have.