



Police Officer - uphold law and order through the detection, prevention and investigation of crime



Entry requirements:

It is possible to become a police officer both with or without a degree, although all entrants must pass standard police initial recruitment tests (fitness, medical and educational). There are no height restrictions or upper age limits for applications.

The requirements for becoming a police officer vary across police forces; some will ask that applicants hold a Certificate in Knowledge of Policing, have acceptable A levels, or have experience in a relevant role. It is recommended to contact your chosen police force in order to find out their eligibility requirements. While previous experience is not always expected, attendance at familiarisation events and involvement in local police work can be advantageous. Visible tattoos, debt problems and certain criminal convictions may prevent entry.

For graduates, the Police Now Leadership programme is open to candidates with a minimum 2.1 in any degree discipline and works with a number of forces across England and Wales. Applicants for the programme will be expected to undergo fitness checks and will be tested for substance misuse during the application process.

What you will do:

As a police officer you'll work in partnership with the communities you serve to maintain law and order, protect members of the public and their property, prevent crime, reduce the fear of crime and improve the quality of life for all citizens. You'll use a range of technology to protect individuals, identify the perpetrators of crime and ensure successful prosecutions against those who break the law.

The key priorities for the 45 police forces in the UK include:

- maintaining public order through combating organised crime
- countering the threat of terrorism
- acting against antisocial behaviour

Duties can include:

- interviewing suspected criminals
- taking statements
- writing crime reports
- dealing with paperwork
- gathering prosecution evidence
- giving evidence in court
- fostering good relationships with the public
- patrolling areas by foot and car
- making and processing arrests
- searching suspects
- responding to emergencies
- offering advice and reassurance to the public
- controlling traffic/crowds
- keeping the peace/mediating in tense situations

Skills required:

- effective communication skills, including tact and diplomacy for dealing with sensitive situations
- community focus
- a sense of personal responsibility, integrity and resilience
- problem-solving skills
- a confident and calm manner
- good literacy skills in order to accurately record details and write reports
- respect for diversity
- teamwork skills and the ability to work independently
- professionalism, honesty and trustworthiness
- sound judgement and a proper respect for confidentiality
- ability to act with resolve, tolerance and restraint.

You'll also need physical fitness in order to pass the job-related fitness test and medical assessment.

What you will earn:

- The starting salary for police constables in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is between £20,880 and £24,177, rising to £40,128 at the top of the scale - achievable after about seven years. In Scotland starting salaries are slightly higher at £26,037, rising to £40,878 after about ten years' service.
- The range of salaries for sergeants is £41,500 to £45,098.
- Inspectors can earn between £51,414 and £55,768 (£53,665 and £58,038 in London), rising to between £56,909 and £59,249 for chief inspectors (£59,175 and £61,509 in London).

Working hours, patterns and environment:

Full-time police officers complete an average of 40 duty hours per week, in eight hour shifts. However, since they provide a 24-hour public service, unsocial hours, shift work and emergency call-outs are a regular feature of the job. Regular shifts are not usually longer than ten hours, but overtime may be available and is paid at a higher rate.

Part-time working, job-sharing and flexible hours are available. Career breaks are possible after the probationary period.

Career path and progression:

Following successful completion of the probationary period, there are a variety of career opportunities available to police officers. The police force has a clearly defined rank structure for officers and there are opportunities to progress into more senior roles:

- police constable
- sergeant
- inspector
- chief inspector
- superintendent
- chief superintendent
- assistant chief constable
- deputy chief constable
- chief constable.