

Career Tracks Police Officer

Where to start
What qualifications do you need
Career routes
Relevant training
How can NEC help

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Your future, your goals

Gain qualifications, start a career, change direction. Whatever your goal we'll help you achieve it.

At the National Extension College (NEC) we've been providing distance learning to help young people and adults learn to change their future for over 55 years. During that time, we've seen, on many occasions, how someone's life can be transformed by taking the right course at the right time.

Each year thousands of students, like you, from around the world, access our quality courses and expert tutor support to develop their knowledge and skills, and achieve their goals.

Some of our students need qualifications to go on to further or higher education. Some plan to take professional courses in areas such as teaching or healthcare and just need that essential GCSE or A level to make it happen.

Whatever your reason for studying, we look forward to welcoming you to NEC as a student.

This guide will give you an overview of how to embark on a career with the police, what qualifications you will need, and how NEC can help.

For more information on the courses we offer, visit our website **www.nec.ac.uk**.

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Are you thinking about a career as a police officer?

This NEC Career Tracks guide tells you about the routes into the profession and looks at the qualifications, qualities and skills you'll need, and how NEC can help you.

Why be a police officer?

Being a police officer is a challenging and fulfilling career from which you can expect a high level of job satisfaction. There's more to solving crime than walking the beat, going out on patrol or apprehending suspects. You'll be working on several cases at any one time and could be analysing evidence or data, preparing statements and reports, attending court, or supporting members of the public. Your reasons for wanting to join the police force will be unique to you. You may:

- ▶ be inspired to find out more after coming into direct contact with a police officer undertaking their duties
- ▶ want a career doing something that really matters and makes a real difference to people in your local area
- ▶ want a career that is highly rewarding
- ▶ want an opportunity to specialise in a particular area within your chosen career and to progress up the career ladder.

Police forces need people from a wide range of backgrounds and communities who offer a range of skills and experiences.

**Sounds like you?
Read on.**

Police officer as a career

From maintaining law and order to protecting the public and property to detecting, preventing and investigating crimes, countering the threat of terrorism and acting against anti-social behaviour in the local community, policing offers a broad and increasing choice of careers from officers working on the front line to support staff.

The government plans to recruit a significant number of officers into the police force by 2022. Rules now require new recruits to have a degree or to be studying towards a degree whilst working as a trainee police constable - this Career Tracks guide will tell you about the training and study routes available if you are thinking about a career with the police.



What qualifications, qualities and skills will I need?

If you want to work as a police officer you must already hold or be working towards a degree-level qualification.

You must:

- ▶ be aged 18 to 57
- ▶ be committed to serving your community
- ▶ be patient, have common sense, an ability to remain calm in stressful situations and to make decisions
- ▶ be sensitive and understanding, show empathy and treat people fairly and respectfully in a range of circumstances and potentially traumatic situations
- ▶ be mentally and physically fit - you'll need to be able to run reasonably quickly whilst carrying heavy equipment
- ▶ be able to undertake routine tasks on a computer or hand-held device.

You will need:

- ▶ to have lived in the UK for the previous three years (unless you have been serving in the British forces overseas)
- ▶ to be a British Citizen, or have indefinite leave to remain in the UK
- ▶ a GCSE (or equivalent in English language at grade 4 (grade C) or above
- ▶ excellent verbal communication and active listening skills
- ▶ leadership and negotiation skills
- ▶ an enhanced **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check**.

Knowledge of public safety and security may be an advantage, and a valid driving licence may also be required.

You will need to attend an assessment centre and pass an assessment including:

- ▶ an interview to explain why you want to join the police force and including some role play
- ▶ a written test
- ▶ a fitness test
- ▶ a medical examination and eyesight test.



Routes into a career in policing

A police force needs to represent the community it serves and traditional routes into the force are changing. The major change means you will need to have a degree-level qualification by the time you complete your probationary period with a police force. This change aims to attract more people into a career with the police by offering a range of different entry routes and ensuring that all new recruits are equipped with the skills they need for a career in modern policing.

Degree-level apprenticeship	Existing degree-holder	Pre-joining degree at university
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Apply direct to a police force. ▶ Follow an apprenticeship in <i>Professional Policing Practice</i>. ▶ Earn while you learn. ▶ On- and off-job training. ▶ Three-year course. ▶ On completion of your apprenticeship and probation you will gain your degree. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Apply direct to a police force. ▶ Follow a work-based learning programme. ▶ Earn while you learn. ▶ On- and off-job training. ▶ Two-year course. ▶ On completion of your probation you will gain a <i>Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Study before joining a police force. ▶ Complete a <i>Degree in Professional Policing</i> at university. ▶ Apply directly to the university and study at your own expense. ▶ Three-year course. ▶ On completion of your degree apply to a police force and follow a shorter, practically focused, on-job training programme.



Studying at university

If you plan to study for a pre-joining degree at university, check the **College of Policing website** for the list of universities who offer the *Degree in Professional Policing*. Universities set their own entry requirements so you should check with the university where you plan to study to find out what their entry requirements are. As a minimum you are likely to need three to five GCSEs at grade 4 (grade C) or above (or equivalent) including English, maths and possibly a science subject, and at least two A levels.

Applying directly to a police force

There are 45 police forces in the UK, 43 covering England and Wales plus Police Scotland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Each of these forces has its own recruitment rules and requirements. You should contact the force you plan to apply to and find out what you'll need. You can apply to any force regardless of where you live but can only apply to one force at a time.

Find out about the individual forces on their **websites**.

You can register for the **national police jobs and opportunities online event**, allowing you to see all force jobs and opportunities in one place.

If you plan to apply directly to a police force you can prepare your application by completing a *Certificate in Policing*. **Find out how this can support your application.**

Case study

From fashion to the police

Adelia grew up in a family where her dad was a police constable and her mum worked as a civilian administrator at the police station. When she was at school she had considered a career in the police and had looked at the preparatory course at her local college for students wishing to enter the uniformed public services, but decided instead to follow her passion for fashion and went on to study fashion and textiles at university. This led to becoming a buyer but when she was on maternity leave with her second child, she went back to thinking about her first idea of going into the police. She researched her options and realised that there were several routes available.

As she had been out of education for a while and had pursued largely arts subjects, Adelia decided that she would like to take the first step towards her new career by studying for an A level in psychology. Despite not being compulsory for a career in the police, she felt that it would give her a good background so she enrolled to study online with NEC. This meant that Adelia could balance her studies with parenthood, studying in the evenings when her children were asleep.

Encouraged by an A grade A level, Adelia felt ready to take the next steps towards her dream job. As an existing degree holder, she managed to apply direct to her local police force and is currently following a work-based learning programme. This allows her to earn while she learns and help support her young family.



Police Now Graduate Leadership Development Programme

The **Police Now** programme has been specifically developed to recruit and train graduates to be inspirational leaders and work as a neighbourhood police officer or trainee detective in vulnerable communities impacted by crime.

Career changers

Could you bring new perspectives, skills and experience to a role in your local police force? If you have the skills and experience, and a proven track record in leadership and management, you could apply for direct entry to a police force as an inspector or superintendent and use these skills to make decisions and take actions that will benefit your colleagues and local community.

Find all the information you need about joining the police force at:

- ▶ **College of Policing**
- ▶ **Joining the Police** - the government website for the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers

Police training across the UK

For both Scotland and Northern Ireland you must be 18 to begin training and probationary training lasts two years.

Police Scotland

Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI)



The essentials

GCSE Maths

Maths is an essential skill, that we use everyday, in all areas of our lives. From adding up a weekly shop, to working out how to decorate a room – maths enables us to find patterns and structure, and opens up a wide range of opportunities.

Our GCSE Maths online course is written by experts in the field. Well-structured materials covering topics – such as fractions, decimals and trigonometry – will enable you to gain confidence in basic mathematical skills, before progressing to more challenging areas.

GCSE English Language

Gaining a GCSE in English language is vital for future career progression and a minimum requirement for many further education courses. However, it's not just a 'means to an end', this course will help you develop your reading and writing skills, and enable you to communicate and express your ideas more effectively.

Studying GCSE English Language online is a flexible way to gain key skills, that you'll use in all aspects of your life. Supported by a personal tutor, you'll explore the use of words in different contexts and gain a deeper understanding of the power and influence of the spoken and written word.

Q & A: Working as a police officer

1. How much do police officers earn?

The average police constable works 37-40 hours per week on a shift pattern covering 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Find out about salary expectations on the **Police Federation** website.

2. What do police officers do day-to-day?

Your work could be physically or emotionally demanding. Depending on your role you may be:

- ▶ responding to a call for help from a member of the public
- ▶ investigating crimes and offences, gathering and assessing evidence
- ▶ participating in raids and searches
- ▶ protecting a crime scene
- ▶ making an arrest, interrogating a suspect and preparing statements, crime reports and case files
- ▶ interviewing and gathering statements from victims and witnesses
- ▶ giving evidence in court
- ▶ controlling traffic and crowds at public events and gatherings
- ▶ attending road traffic and other accidents
- ▶ enforcing traffic legislation or attending vehicle checkpoints
- ▶ working in your local community to provide members of the public with advice on personal safety and crime prevention
- ▶ dealing with lost and found property
- ▶ identifying a deceased person
- ▶ using a range of equipment and technology to conduct investigations, protect people, identify suspects and uphold the law.

3. Where do police officers work?

You could work at a police station - many roles in the police force are largely office-based, or out on patrol - by foot, on a bicycle or in a vehicle. You may work outside at all times of year and in all weathers.

4. What administrative tasks do police officers do?

You'll need to keep accurate records and complete administrative procedures for the cases you are working on.

5. Which other organisations and professionals do the police work with?

As a police officer you'll work with the other emergency services - the fire service, ambulance service and coastguard, members of the criminal justice system, local businesses and community groups, local authorities, schools, local NHS services, social services and mental health organisations.



Job prospects and career progression

As a result of the government's plan to recruit 20,000 police officers by 2022, every police force in England and Wales is recruiting new officers in order to meet targets for which they will be accountable to a new National Policing Board.

In addition to helping to cut crime, the recruitment of more police officers aims to increase the diversity of people who work for the police force and to reflect new types of crime - including cybercrime. Tackling cybercrime and protecting vulnerable people are key parts of all police training programmes.

At the end of your training and probationary period, you'll be able to decide whether you want to specialise in a particular area of policing. You could choose to work in:

- ▶ Criminal Investigation Department (CID)
- ▶ Anti-fraud
- ▶ Drugs or firearms
- ▶ Counter-terrorism
- ▶ Road traffic
- ▶ Air support
- ▶ Mounted police
- ▶ Underwater search
- ▶ Dog-handling
- ▶ Biometrics (a person's physical and behavioural characteristics) or a specialist forensics role.

Once you become more experienced you may be able to apply for promotion and become a sergeant, inspector or chief inspector.

You may decide to continue to seek promotion and progress your career to superintendent, chief superintendent, assistant chief constable, deputy chief constable, or chief constable. Or you may decide to move into a training and recruitment role. In some forces there may be accelerated or fast-track promotion schemes available.

Related roles

Special constable - support the work of your local police force by volunteering as a special constable. Once you've completed your training you'll have the same powers as a regular police officer, carry out frontline work and wear a similar uniform.

Police community support officer (PCSO) - a paid role working on the front line in neighbourhood policing schemes. PCSOs deal with minor offences and crime prevention but don't have the same powers as a regular police constable. You could work as a PCSO to gain some experience before applying to train as a police officer.

Non-frontline roles - there are many support roles in the police force including call handler, front counter personnel, analyst or librarian. Find out more.

British Transport Police - the national police force for the railways, underground and metro systems. More information can be found on the British Transport Police website.

Did you know?

If you choose to join the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) you will have the title 'detective' added to your rank, e.g. 'Detective Constable'. Detectives work alongside uniformed colleagues on serious or complex crime investigations and specialist investigations. This could include robberies, drugs and firearms offences, domestic violence, cybercrime, counter-terrorism and national security, serious assault, homicide, fraud, public and child protection.

Find out more

Professional bodies

- ▶ **College of Policing** - The professional body for everyone who works for the police force in England and Wales, the College of Policing provides people who work in policing with the necessary skills and knowledge they need to create and sustain a model of policing that is admired worldwide.
- ▶ **Police Federation of England and Wales** - The staff association for police constables, sergeants and inspectors, with over 119,000 members. The PFEW represents and promotes the interests and welfare of its members and supports them to achieve the required professional standards.
- ▶ **British Association for Women in Policing** - The British Association for Women in Policing raises awareness and understanding of issues affecting women police officers and supports the diverse role that they play in the police force.
- ▶ **National Black Police Association** - The NBPA takes forward initiatives for the progression of minority officers and staff within the police forces of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- ▶ **National Association of Muslim Police** - A national association providing support, advice and guidance to police officers, special constables and PCSOs.

Other professional organisations that support police officers include:

- ▶ **National Disabled Police Association**
- ▶ **National Transgender Police Association**
- ▶ **Gay Police Association Scotland**

Volunteering

- ▶ **Special Constable** - Volunteering for four hours a week or more and learn about a career in the police force before committing yourself to a full-time role. Over 10,600 people currently volunteer as a special constable (Home Office, July 2019). Find out more.
- ▶ **Police Cadet** - Young people aged between 13 and 18 can volunteer as a police cadet and support events and policing initiatives in their local community. You'll learn about policing at the same time as having exciting experiences, developing skills, and gaining an insight into a career in the police force. Find out more.
- ▶ **Police Support Volunteer (PSV)** - Over 8,000 people work as police support volunteers (Home Office, July 2019). Once you have been vetted you can work within any department in your local police force. You could be assisting with tasks from manning the police station front counter to undertaking administrative work. You may work directly with local people affected by crime, or you could offer your professional skills in things like marketing or social media. Find out more.

If you are interested in volunteering in a policing role, more information about the variety of roles available on the **Citizens in Policing** website.

How NEC can help you fulfil your ambition to work in the police

Essential GCSE qualifications

If you plan to study for your career with the police via the pre-degree route at university, you'll need maths, English language and possibly a science to be eligible. You're also likely to need English language if you are applying directly to the police force.

Click below for information about studying these essential GCSE qualifications with NEC:

GCSE Maths

GCSE English Language

All GCSE and IGCSE courses

Qualifications gaps

If you are planning on studying at university and are short of a qualification, or would like to improve your grade, NEC can help:

All A levels

Distance learning is flexible

Learning to fit your lifestyle:

- ▶ Download and print the course materials and study wherever you are.
- ▶ Read an ebook on your daily commute.
- ▶ Watch a video or listen to a recording on your mobile phone or tablet.

Course fees

NEC course fees cover:

- ▶ all course materials
- ▶ tuition by a personal tutor who is a subject specialist
- ▶ online diagnostic exercises and assessments
- ▶ quizzes, videos, ebooks, and webinars.

Whatever subject you want to study, you can sample our course materials before you sign up. When you've made your choice, you can enrol at any time and start studying when it suits you.

Visit www.nec.ac.uk to find out more.

About NEC courses

- ▶ NEC courses are designed by teachers, examiners and distance learning experts, so you can be certain that they cover the curriculum and are designed for independent study.
- ▶ NEC courses are delivered online through **learn@nec** our online learning platform, so you can study at a time and place to suit you and be part of a national community of people studying with us.
- ▶ As an NEC student, you will have a personal tutor who is a qualified subject expert to support you in your studies, giving you feedback on assignments and preparing you for your exams.



Disclaimer: the information in this Career Tracks was up-to-date when it was published in January 2020. If you are thinking of a career as a police officer, you are advised to make direct contact with the organisations cited here or call our Course Advice Team on 0800 389 2839.

Career Tracks

NEC's Career Tracks provide an insight into the most popular career choices made by our students. As well as information on the qualifications you need for your chosen career, entry routes and training, NEC Career Tracks look at the personal qualities you will need and list websites where you can find out more.

