**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Joining Durham Constabulary as a PCSO**

**Q – What is the Police Community Support Officer role?**

A – As a PCSO, you will perform one of the most demanding roles in the modern police force and you will be given the opportunity to inspire confidence in the community by undertaking a combination of the following:-

1. Attend incidents involving harassment, disorder, abandoned vehicles, public nuisance and anti-social behaviour with a problem-solving approach. Provide high visibility patrols throughout our daily duties & provide reassurance.

2. Work with people from all ages and backgrounds to support, guide and assist in their day to day lives reducing fear of crime.

3. Speaking to vulnerable people, who might be drunk or under the influence of substances, confiscating items such as alcohol and tobacco making every contact with the public count.

4. Contributing towards the management of some of the higher risk members living within our communities such as registered sex offenders, potentially dangerous people and repeat offenders gathering intelligence, updating systems and providing written reports where required

5. Dealing with bespoke community issues that affect people within your assigned Neighbourhood.

6. Leading, Influencing, and supporting wider Neighbourhood teams, partners and communities as the single point of contact around areas of high harm such as rural crime, County lines and Autism

7. Work as part of a local Neighbourhood team alongside police, specialists and partners to support the wider police demand.

8. Provide advice around crime prevention, engaging with partners and the community in the response to safer Neighbourhoods, with an emphasis on harder to reach vulnerable groups

9. Offering education to reduce the risks and inform the communities around current threats such as drugs and alcohol, child sexual exploitation, County lines and terrorism to enable them to reduce their own vulnerabilities but to also play a part in your response to such issues

**Q – What training will I be undertaking as a PCSO?**

A – You will be required to complete the new Police Community Support Officer training programme. The programme is designed to allow you to gain knowledge and understanding around your new role and putting this into an operational context. It will also provide you the opportunity to develop and enhance your professional as well as your personal skills to give you confidence to provide an effective and professional service to the public.

The PCSO curriculum has been set by the College of Policing forms the basis of a qualification - Level 4 HE Certificate in Community Policing Practice which is accredited by Northumbria University.

**Q – What training will I be given to deal with conflict situations?**

A – Although most of your time will be spend dealing with minor disputes you will also face more volatile situations, with agitated individuals or groups. We expect for you to be able to risk assess the situation and take the most appropriate action. In order to equip you for such eventualities we will teach you personal safety techniques and communication skills that can help manage the situation.

**Q – How long is the training?**

A – The programme is 12 months in duration and involves classroom-based learning, some self-study, workplace portfolio, and a community problem solving activity.

**Q – Do I need to successfully pass the qualification to become a PCSO?**

A – Yes, we will expect you to complete the programme and achieve the award before being confirmed in your role as a PCSO. You will be supported, by experienced police trainers and staff throughout the programme to ensure you be given opportunities to achieve the qualification.

**Q – Will I be awarded a qualification if I leave before the end of my probationary period?**

A – Yes, if you have successfully completed 60 credits of the programme you will be awarded a Certificate in Community Policing Support

**Q – Will I be paid whilst I am training to be a PCSO and studying?**

A – Yes, you will be paid throughout the period that you are training and studying for a Level 4 HE Certificate in Community Policing Practice. The starting salary is Scale 3 (£20,118),plus shift allowance of 12.5% and a 10.8% weekend working enhancement. However, after successful completion of the Level 4 HE qualification & your 12-month probationary period you will move to the Scale 4 salary band, starting £21,837 plus shift allowance of 12.5% and a 10.8% weekend working enhancement. This will rise incrementally

**Q – I don’t want to study for a Level 4, can I still join?**

A – No, the PCSO route into Durham Constabulary will now incorporate formal study to Level 4.

**Q – Will I need to pay tuition fees?**

A – The Level 4 HE Certificate in Community Policing Practice is fully funded by Durham Constabulary.

**Q – Will I have to attend University for lectures?**

A – No the learning is being delivered by qualified trainers and subject knowledge experts from the Durham Learning and Development team.

**Q – How often will I be expected to study?**

A – Your study will be ongoing over the 12 months of your probationary period.

**Q – Will I be formally assessed during the programme?**

A – Yes, you will be assessed by the means of knowledge checks, completing a knowledge workbook and demonstrating your skills on the job in an occupational competency portfolio as well as presenting on problem solving activity you will be involved in. This will lead to you obtaining the Level 4 qualification.

**Q – Is it all classroom study? How will I learn the practical elements of the PCSO role?**

A – No, there will be lots of practical training and ‘on the job’ development too. We will also provide as much support as you need to achieve the required outcomes.

**Role of PCSO**

**Q – What professional standards are PCSOs held to?**

A – A PCSO is expected to maintain and demonstrate a high standard of ethical behaviour, both while at work and off duty. They are guided by a code of ethics which the force will expect any candidate to understand and adhere to.

The Code of Ethics is a supportive, positive, everyday decision-making framework and is a constant reinforcement of the values and standards policing is proud of.  It is intended to encourage personal responsibility and the exercise of professional judgement; empowering everyone in policing to ensure they always do the right thing.

If the public doesn't have the confidence to trust the police to be fair, act ethically and in their best interests, they are less likely to assist the police in upholding the law.

For further details please go to: <https://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Ethics/Ethics-home/Pages/Code-of-Ethics.aspx>

**Q – Will I be expected to work shifts?**

A – Yes, PCSOs work on a rota system which includes both day and late shifts, including weekends and public/bank holidays.

**Q – When can I take holidays and time off work?**

You will not be able to book any time off during the initial training course which is approximately 4 weeks, except public and bank holidays and weekly rest days.

You are entitled to 26 days paid annual holiday, rising to a maximum of 31 days after 5 years continuous service.

**Q – Can I work part time?**

A – You will have to work full time during the first 7 months of your yearlong probation, but you can apply for part time working once this is completed. It should be noted there is no guarantee of part time working being granted in particular roles requests are considered on an individual basis.

**Q – How will you accommodate my religious beliefs?**

A – We welcome applicants from all religions and alterations can be made to the uniform to accommodate some religious requirements – for example it is possible to wear a hijab; or the headgear may be replaced with a Sikh turban. We also consider the needs of individuals with regards to time off and bank/public holidays.

**Q – Can I choose where I work?**

A – No, you will need to be prepared to work across the Durham Constabulary area including Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Consett, Crook, Durham, Darlington, Ferryhill, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Stanley (Not all locations/posts will be available on appointment).

**Q – I live outside of County Durham; can I still apply?**

A – Yes, we welcome applications from outside the force area. However, please consider that you will need to be prepared to work across all locations within Durham Constabulary.

**Q – Once I have passed my probation, are there opportunities for career development and promotion?**

A – Although there is no rank structure for PCSOs, you will be supported to develop throughout your career.

**Q – Will I have to deal with confrontation?**

A – Yes, you will encounter stressful situations that include dealing with confrontation. We will provide you with extensive training and support you to be ready to handle these.

**Q – What benefits does Durham Constabulary offer?**

A – There are many benefits, these include:

* obtaining a Level 4 qualification
* receive extensive training and development throughout your career
* have access to a generous pension scheme
* can work with a wide range of policing departments
* a minimum of 26 days paid annual holiday, rising to a maximum of 31 days after 5 years continuous service.
* access to additional schemes such as childcare vouchers, employee assistance programme and lifestyle discounts

**Eligibility**

**Q - What are the basic eligibility requirements?**

In order to pass the initial sift you must pass the following: -

* Age 18 years or older at the point of confirmation
* No tattoos on face, neck or hands
* No Couty Court Judgements (CCJs)
* Eligible to work in the UK
* Not a member of the British National Party, Combat 18, National Front or similar organisation
* Full driving licence for motor car, at the point of application
* 4 ‘O’ levels/ GCSEs including English Language or Literature (Grade A, B, or C) or a recognised equivalent qualification.
* Have indefinite leave to work and live in the UK and be free from any restriction. Any successful candidate will be asked to provide evidence of this.

**Q – Are there any age restrictions in order to apply?**

A – You will need to be at least 18 to apply to be a PCSO and the normal pension age applies.

**Q – I am nearly 18, can I apply?**

A – Yes, however must be 18 at the point of joining.

**Q – Are there height restrictions?**

A – No, there is no minimum or maximum height requirements

**Q – Do I need to hold a full driving licence?**

A – As you will be expected to respond to incidents across Durham Constabulary force area you will need to hold a full driving licence at the point of application. You cannot be waiting for your driving test. You will also be required to pass a basic Driving Assessment prior to any offer of appointment being confirmed.

However, if you have a disability and you can drive an automatic vehicle, reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate.

**Q – I have a criminal conviction or caution - can I still work for the police?**

A – This will depend on the nature of the conviction or caution. You will need to provide full details to assist our vetting department in making a decision, via the applications process.

PLEASE NOTE: applicants must declare all convictions and cautions. Failure to declare certain details will seriously undermine an individual’s integrity and credibility and is likely to prevent them from appointment, regardless of the nature / seriousness of the incident.

**Q – I have previously been arrested but not charged - do I still need to declare this?**

A – Yes, you must declare if you have ever been subject of a criminal investigation whether this led to a prosecution or not. Failure to make such declarations will lead to your application being rejected.

**Q – Do I need to declare motoring offences?**

A – Yes, you must declare all offences including penalty notices. Your application will not be automatically rejected for minor offences; consideration will be given to repeat offending, behaviour, age, the actual offence committed and length of time since the offence.

**Q – I have a relative who has convictions - can I still apply?**

A – Yes. If your friends or family members have convictions, this must be disclosed. Your application will not be automatically rejected; consideration will be given as to how close the association is and the level of criminality involved etc.

**Q – Can I apply if I have been bankrupt?**

A – Yes, you can apply but only if it is three years after the bankruptcy debts have been discharged.

**Q – Can I apply if I have a County Court Judgment (CCJ)?**

A – Yes – You can apply; however, each application is assessed individually, and you could be refused vetting.

**Q – Can I apply if I have an Independent Voluntary Agreement (IVA)?**

A – Yes – You can apply; however, each application is assessed individually, and you could be refused vetting.

**Q – Can I continue with my other business interests?**

A – You must declare any other employment for hire or gain, or any other business interests that you intend to maintain, when you apply to become a police constable. A decision on your eligibility will be made based on all the information provided during the recruitment and selection process, and whether your business interests are compatible with performing the role of a police officer.

This also includes if you, or one of your close relatives, holds a license or permit relating to alcohol licensing, refreshment houses or betting and gaming or regulating places of entertainment in the force area.

**Q – I am involved in politics, is this OK?**

A – Police staff are not permitted to take an active part in politics.

**Q – Are there any restrictions on hair style and colour?**

A – Yes, when you begin your training you will be required to adhere to nationally set appearance standards. Hair should be worn so that it is cut or secured above the collar and ears and is neat and tidy. Extreme and vivid hair colour in unnatural colours is not permitted.

**Q – I have a tattoo can I still apply?**

A – We know some people like to express themselves with body art. However, anyone who has a tattoo and / or piercing which could be reasonably interpreted as offensive to any religion or belief, or is in any way discriminatory, violent or intimidating, will not be accepted. In line with the College of Policing’s national guidance we will carefully consider the size, nature and prominence of visible tattoos and piercings to determine if they are acceptable.

If you have a tattoo on your **arms, face, neck or hands** you will be required to submit photos with your application. We will assess all photos to ascertain if they are acceptable.

**Q – I have dyslexia, will reasonable adjustments be made for me?**

A – Adjustments such as more time to complete assessment centre exercises, ICT provision/aides to complete studies, and workplace adaptations can be made to ensure those with dyslexia are not put at a disadvantage. Adjustments will depend on the degree of your dyslexia which should be confirmed in a report by educational psychologist. We ask any successful candidates that would like adjustments to be considered to provide this report at their own cost.

**Application and Qualifications**

**Q – How long does the selection process take? Can I choose when I start?**

A - The process length varies – we strive to complete the process within 5/6 months. The process includes:

1. Completion of an on-line form
2. Assessment Day with Interview
3. Medical appointment, driving assessment and Biometric vetting
4. Pre-employment checks including fitness test, medical, references and vetting

Once your checks are complete, we will generally offer you the next available start date considering your notice period. There may be the opportunity to delay this by a short time.

**Q – Will the applications process be adapted in any way given the current restrictions around COVID-19?**

Yes, so far as is possible we are business as usual, however under these uncertain times the force may be required adjust our approach and in these circumstances, you will be informed of any changes

**Q – What qualifications do I need to apply to the PCSO programme?**

A - In addition to the general requirements to join as a PCSO with Durham Constabulary, applicants for the programme are required to have the following:

4 ‘O’ levels/ GCSEs including English Language or Literature (Grade A, B, or C) or a recognised equivalent qualification.

**Q – Do I have to have the level two qualification in English and / or Maths?**

A – you do not need to have a Level 2 Maths qualification to become a PCSO, but you are required to have English, GCSE A – C, 4 – 9, or equivalent. If you **do not** have the necessary English qualification, you will not pass the initial sift and your application will not progress any further

**Q – I don’t have the certificates for my qualifications - is this OK?**

A – You will need to evidence your qualifications on your application, and we require you to send a **copy** of your certificates.  If you are unable to locate your certificates please visit [www.gov.uk/replacement-exam-certificate](http://www.gov.uk/replacement-exam-certificate) for information on how to request duplicates or an accepted ‘certified statement of results’. ***These must be provided at application stage. If you are having to apply for copies, we will make allowances and they must be provided if you are invited to assessment center/ interview***

**Q – I’m waiting for the results of my qualifications - can I still apply?**

A – No, currently Durham doesn’t accept predicted grades and would require evidence of you passing your course.

**Q – I’ve previously applied to be a PCSO in Durham Constabulary or another force - can I reapply?**

A – Yes, there is no time frame in which you need to wait until you can re-apply for the role of PCSO.

**Q – I have applied to become a PCSO / other police staff role – is that OK?**

A – Yes you can have other live applications with Durham Constabulary, or another force. However, as the applications progress you will need to decide on which you would like to take further.

**Q – I have a student visa - is that sufficient for me to apply?**

A – No – international students are not able to apply.

**Q – Will you apply for a working visa for me?**

A – No - you would need to have status of indefinite leave to remain and work in the UK to apply.

**Q – I already work as Police Staff in Durham Constabulary, or another force, is the process the same for me?**

A – Yes, the recruitment and selection process is consistent for all.

**Q – What does the Assessment Centre involve?**

A – If you are successful at the application form stage, you'll be invited to attend an assessment along with other successful candidates, where you will be asked to undertake a series of assessment exercises followed by an individual interview. These will be held at Durham Police Headquarters, Aykley Heads, Durham.

**Q – Can I claim expenses for attending the fitness test and medical?**

A – We are not able to reimburse you for any expenses incurred as part of the recruitment process.

**Q – What is biometric vetting and what happens to the samples I give?**

A – Biometric vetting checks will be undertaken on those candidates who have reached the stage of being considered suitable and are undergoing pre-employment checks. A fingerprint and DNA sample will be taken, and checks made against the appropriate databases. The purpose of the searches is to determine whether:

* The individual has come to police attention
* If so, whether that was under the identity being used for the application; and
* If the individual is linked to any outstanding crime scene marks or stains

Only one set of fingerprints and DNA sample will be required. If subsequently appointed, these samples will be retained on the respective police database for elimination purposes. For those not appointed, their fingerprints, DNA sample and DNA profile and all copies and records will be destroyed.

**Q – How will you contact me through the process?**

A – Applications will not be acknowledged, and if you do not hear from us within six weeks you can assume that you have been unsuccessful. Should this be the case we would like to thank you for your interest in this post.

However, if are successful we will generally contact you via e-mail. If we need to reach you quickly, we may give you a call. Invitations to assessment will be sent via email. It’s important that you provide us with your correct details and update us if anything changes. It is important that you regularly check your spam or junk folder also.

**Q – How do I contact Durham Constabulary if I have any questions about my application?**

A – Please read through the information on our recruitment pages and these FAQs. If you are unable to find the answer to your question, please email human.rescources@durham.police.uk and add **‘PCSO Application – General Query’** to the subject line.

Please remember the process does take some time to complete and we are unable to provide feedback on progress of your application. However, we will keep you updated at key points in the process.

If you have reviewed the information at our website <https://www.durham.police.uk/Join-us/Pages/default.aspx> and the above FAQs and have been unable to find the information you require please contact the recruitment team via human.rescources@durham.police.uk and add ‘**PCSO Application – General Query**’ to the subject line.