

Information Booklet



Creating a safer
Cambridgeshire

Your journey to becoming a
Police Officer



Welcome Information

Policing is a 24/7 job, and will impact on your life like no other job. The role of a police officer is always unpredictable and every day is different. You will face members of the public who seek your help and will look to you for leadership in times of crisis and distress and you will make an impact on the lives of all the people you meet through the role you undertake.

Before you embark on an application form for the role of police officer, you must realise the implications the role will have on you. The role will affect when you can take annual leave, and sometimes you will be unable get the leave you want, for example for Christmas and family events. The role will test you physically as well as emotionally.

This information document is to help you to prepare for the application process. Please take time to read this sheet and explore the web sites <https://www.cambs.police.uk/> and www.joiningthepolice.co.uk, before you commence your application form.

You can also undertake a pre-application questionnaire, where you can check your eligibility and gain an understanding of the role of a police officer through <https://www.joiningthepolice.co.uk/is-policing-right-for-me>

The HR Service Centre will be happy to help and answer any questions. They can be contacted by calling 01438 757 777 or emailing iquery@BCH.police.uk

The Recruitment Process

Police Officer Selection Process

The selection process is designed to test the core competencies, deemed suitable for the role of a Police Officer which are constantly assessed during the selection process. The competencies are:-

- Decision Making
- Openness to Change
- Service Delivery
- Professionalism
- Serving the Public
- Working with Others

Stage One - Competency Based Application

You are required to complete an online, competency based application form. The application form will be assessed by trained assessors and you will be informed within 4 weeks of submitting your application as to whether you have been successful and will be continuing to stage 2.

Stage Two – National Online Assessment Centre

The College of Policing online assessment process is an online process for the recruitment of police constables. It is a series of stages containing exercises that test the key competencies and values that are important for police constables. The Competency and Values Framework (CVF) sets out the behaviours expected of everyone working in policing. You can find out more about the CVF here:

<https://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Development/competency-and-values-framework/Pages/Competency-and-Values-framework.aspx>

You will be invited to attend an online National Search Assessment Centre which is run by the College of Policing. The Assessment Centre will consist of the following assessments:

- Part 1 – Situational Judgement Test (SJT)
- Part 2 – Competency-based interview
- Part 3 – Written Assessment and Briefing Exercise

No prior knowledge of the role of a police officer or any policing knowledge is required to complete the exercises. Further information on the role profile of a police constable can be found here: <https://profdev.college.police.uk/professional-profile/police-constable/>

You will receive your results via email once all 3 parts are completed.

Detailed information on each stage will be provided to candidates prior to undertaking this stage of the process. Once successful you will move onto Stage Three.

Stage Three – In Force Interview

You will be invited to undertake an online Force interview which will assess your values and motivations to join Cambridgeshire Constabulary. If you are successful at interview, then you progress to Stage Four of the process.

Stage Four – Pre-Appointment Checks

- **Conditional Offer**

If you are successful following the selection process you will receive a conditional offer and we will start progressing your pre-appointment checks which includes; vetting, medical and references. Until these checks are complete you should not hand in your notice with your current employer.

- **Vetting**

At this stage you will be required to complete a recruitment vetting e-form which will ask more details about you and those you live with. It is important that you answer all questions honestly and provide additional details where required. The vetting checks usually take 4 weeks.

- **Medical**

Candidates will be provided with a work health questionnaire and an eyesight form that must be completed and sent directly to the Occupational Health Department. The work health questionnaire will need to be signed by your GP and the eyesight form by an optician. A full medical history must be disclosed as failure to do so may result in your application being rejected or employment terminated. **Please complete the questionnaire carefully and thoroughly – if in doubt, disclose it.**

The information provided in your form will be assessed by medical personnel which will provide an opinion on your medical suitability for the role. You will have to attend a medical appointment with the Occupational Health Unit.

Home Office Guidelines advise that if an individual with a history of mental health problems, e.g. depression, anxiety, PTSD, seeks appointment while still on medication any decision should be deferred until they have been off medication and remained well in a normally stressful environment for at least 24-months. BCH apply these guidelines. However, we will consider every case individually.

In those applicants where there is a disclosure of current or historic mental health and the use of medication, a member of the Occupational Health clinical team will contact the applicant to discuss these disclosures in more detail, and, where relevant, request GP and/or specialist reports with the applicant's permission.

The information will then be discussed with the Force Medical Advisor and, where appropriate, the Force Psychologist to decide the next step.

Applicants who are currently on medication will not be accepted. The default position is that the application will be deferred until they are 24 months medication free.

For those applicants, who are less than 24-months medication free, the case will be reviewed by the FMA, taking into account any relevant specialist reports and psychological assessments. In certain specific or extraordinary circumstances, such as medication having been prescribed for what appears to be a one-off reactive episode of mental ill-health with no prior mental health history or where there is doubt about the validity of the diagnosis in the first place, an exception to the Home Office guidance might be made.

The Force has a duty of care and if an individual is likely to suffer a significant deterioration in their mental health as a result of carrying out the duties of a police officer then they are unlikely to be accepted.

- **References**

References will need to be obtained from all employers (paid or otherwise) covering a minimum of 3 years.

- **Fitness test**

You will be asked to run to and from along a 15-metre track 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 and adjust your speed. The timing between bleeps is slow at first but the bleeps become 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 of level 5.4 to pass.

- **Drug Testing and Biometrics**

As soon as Government distancing rules are relaxed a hair sample will be collected for drug testing purposes. You will also provide your fingerprints and a DNA swab will be taken from the inside of your cheek.

It is important you start working on your fitness as early as possible in the process as failure to pass this can lead to delay of appointment.

- **Final Offer**

Once all pre-appointment checks have been concluded and approved, and a start date agreed, a final offer and conditions of service will be issued. Candidates can now provide notice to their current employer.

- **Start date**

A number of intake dates are planned during 2020/early 2021 and we will allocate you to an intake following your success through the selection process. You will be notified nearer the time what your likely start date will be.

- **Probation**

You will be required to successfully complete a 2-year probation period.

- **Annual Leave**

As you will be unable to commence in role if you have any annual leave booked, please do not consider booking any annual leave until you have completed the selection process. At that time, you must discuss any annual leave that you have booked with the recruitment team as this may impact on your ability to commence in role as a Police Officer.

A guide to completing a competency based application form

This is a competency-based application form, so we'll be looking for evidence from your past actions, behaviours and experiences to see if you've got what it takes to become a Police Officer.

When you're filling out your application form there's 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. For instance, saying that you're '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. Please try and keep to one example for each competency and make sure you provide lots of in-depth detail.

We would suggest that you prepare your evidence on a word-processing package such as MS Office Word, and then cut and paste into the application form. Below you'll find some more helpful hints and tips.

Please remember to provide a specific example for each as the assessor will not be able to score if you generalise. Additionally, each question relates to different experiences, so therefore, please do not continue the example from question 1 through to question 4.

Toolkit

Use the acronym STAR to structure your story and provide one specific example for each of the questions:

- ST** A brief description of the **Situation/Task**
- A** Details of the **Actions** YOU took – use action verbs
- R** The **Results / Outcome** achieved

What is good evidence?

- Give specific examples explaining 'how' not 'what'
- Your evidence should directly correlate to the competency being assessed. Please ensure that you have read and understand the competency before providing your example
- Do not use multiple examples
- Avoid being vague or ambiguous.
- It is important to describe what part you played in the example provided.
- Although we want details, please avoid writing at length without saying anything important or adding value to your evidence.
- Be careful of statements –'it is important that we engage the community'... - the evidence should be around 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.

When writing about the results and outcomes remember to:

- Give clear examples
- Supply any facts or statistics that strengthen your answer
- Make sure you give a conclusion to your example, whether the outcome was good or bad.
- Consider what you may do different next time if the outcome was not positive.

Avoid jargon, words and phrases which are (or can be construed as) misleading or ambiguous such as:

- 'be aware of'
- 'have an awareness of'

Finally:

- Provide the context for your example in a brief opening summary.
- Remember to refer to the competencies below when considering your example.
- Does your example flow? It is difficult for the assessor to mark your application if your example does not follow a logical format.
- Does your example make sense? Remember that the assessor does not know you or the background to your examples, so you need to ensure that you provide context and that your example is well structured.

Police Officer Competencies

Serving the public
Demonstrates a real belief in public service, focusing on what matters to the public and will best serve their interests. Understands the expectations, changing needs and concerns of different communities, and strives to address them. Builds public confidence by talking with people in local communities to explore their viewpoints and break down barriers between them and the police. Understands the impact and benefits of policing for different communities, and identifies the best way to deliver services to them. Works in partnership with other agencies to deliver the best possible overall service to the public.
Openness to change
Positive about change, adapting rapidly to different ways of working and putting effort into making them work. Flexible and open to alternative approaches to solving problems. Finds better, more cost-effective ways to do things, making suggestions for change and putting forward ideas for improvement. Takes an innovative and creative approach to solving problems.
Service delivery
Understands the organisation's objectives and priorities, and how own work fits into these. Plans and organises tasks effectively, taking a structured and methodical approach to achieving outcomes. Manages multiple tasks effectively by thinking things through in advance, prioritising and managing time well. Focuses on the outcomes to be achieved, working quickly and accurately and seeking guidance when appropriate.
Professionalism
Acts with integrity, in line with the values and ethical standards of the Police Service. Takes ownership for resolving problems, demonstrating courage and resilience in dealing with difficult and potentially volatile situations. Acts on own initiative to address issues, showing a strong work ethic and demonstrating extra effort when required. Upholds professional standards, acting honestly and ethically, and challenges unprofessional conduct or discriminatory behaviour. Asks for and acts on feedback, learning from experience and developing own professional skills and knowledge. Remains calm and professional under pressure, defusing conflict and being prepared to step forward and take control when required.
Decision making
Gathers, verifies and assesses all appropriate and available information to gain an accurate understanding of situations. Considers a range of possible options before making clear, timely, justifiable decisions. Reviews decisions in the light of new information and changing circumstances. Balances risks, costs and benefits, thinking about the wider impact of decisions. Exercises discretion and applies professional judgement, ensuring actions and decisions are proportionate and in the public interest.
Working with others
Works co-operatively with others to get things done, willingly giving help and support to colleagues. Is approachable, developing positive working relationships. Explains things well, focusing on the key points and talking to people using language they understand. Listens carefully and asks questions to clarify understanding, expressing own views positively and constructively. Persuades people by stressing the benefits of a particular approach, keeps them informed of progress and manages their expectations. Is courteous, polite and considerate, showing empathy and compassion. Deals with people as individuals and addresses their specific needs and concerns. Treats people with respect and dignity, dealing with them fairly and without prejudice regardless of their background or circumstances.

What does the application form cover?

Cautions and convictions, Previous addresses, Tattoos, Language skills, Employment, References, Previous Applications, Secondary/Further education, Current/most recent university education, Equal Opportunities

The Competency Based Questions

Part 1

Professionalism

Q1. Please describe a specific occasion when you have intervened to take control of a situation

- Why was it necessary to intervene in the situation?
- What did you do to take control of the situation?
- What did you consider when intervening in the situation?
- What was particularly good or effective about how you intervened to take control of the situation?
- What difficulties did you experience and how did you overcome them?

Working with others

Q2 Please describe a specific occasion when you have encouraged a person to view an issue more positively

- Why was it necessary to encourage the person to view the issue more positively?
- How did you encourage the person to view the issue more positively?
- What did you consider when encouraging the person to view the issue more positively?
- What was particularly good or effective about how you encouraged the person to view the issue more positively?
- What difficulties did you experience and how did you overcome them?

Decision Making

Q3. Please describe a specific occasion when you have considered a number of options before making a decision

- Why was it necessary to consider a number of options before making the decision?
- What did you consider when identifying the options?
- What did you consider when making the decision?
- What was particularly good or effective about how you identified the options and made the decision?
- What difficulties did you experience and how did you overcome them?

Service delivery

Q4. Please describe a specific occasion when you have had to manage your time effectively in order to complete a task

- Why did you have to manage your time effectively in order to complete the task?
- How did you manage your time effectively in order to complete the task?
- What did you consider to make sure you completed the task?
- What was particularly good or effective about how you managed your time?
- What difficulties did you experience and how did you overcome them?

Q5. Tell us why you want to become a police officer (50 words)

Q6. Tell us why you have applied to your chosen police force. (35 words)

Q7. Tell us in some detail what tasks you expect to be undertaking as a police officer. (70 words)

Q8. Tell us what effect you expect being a police officer to have on your social and domestic life (45 words)

Q9. What preparation have you undertaken before making this application to ensure you know what to expect and that you are prepared for the role of police officer? (35 words)

Q10. If you have previously applied to be a Police Officer, Special Constable or Police Community Support officer, what have you done since your last application to better prepare yourself for the role of police officer? (35 words)

Details of the Eligibility checks

If you have any questions about any of the elements listed below, please do not hesitate to contact us. The HR Service Centre will be happy to help and answer any questions.

They can be contacted by calling 01438 757 777 or emailing iquery@BCH.police.uk

You are also encouraged to complete the self-selection questionnaire available via the College of Policing website

Age Requirement for Police Officers

Candidates who have attained the age of 18 years may apply. There is no upper age limit for appointment, but the compulsory age of retirement is 60 years. As a new recruit you will have a 2 year probation and therefore we would seek a reasonable return on investment.

Previous Applications

Previous applicants can re-apply six months after receiving their letter of rejection from a police Force. Applicants can only apply directly to one police force at a time. If you fail the process with Bedfordshire, you will be unable to transfer your National Online Assessment results to Cambridgeshire or Hertfordshire.

Disability

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination, victimisation or harassment in employment, including at recruitment stage. If you have a disability we will make adjustments where it is reasonable to do so. Please provide any additional information about your disability and details of any reasonable adjustments that you think you may need to complete any part of the process.

Disability is defined as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

If you have a learning difficulty and require reasonable adjustments in completing the application form, please contact the force.

Nationality

Applicants should be UK or commonwealth citizen with a right of abode in the UK. If you're not a UK citizen, member of the EEA or a Swiss National, you must have a visa entitlement to live and work in the UK.

All applicants must usually have been resident in the UK during at least the preceding 3 years at the time of application. Some roles may require a longer period.

Medical

- **Eyesight**

You will need to be able to read down to the 7th line or further (equates to 6/6), with both eyes, corrected if necessary, and read down to the 4th line or further (equates to 6/12) with either the left or right eye. You also need at least 120 degrees horizontal field of vision. Abnormal colour vision may be acceptable in some cases, but those that can only see in black and white will be rejected.

- **Body Mass Index (BMI) Check**

The healthy weight range is based on a measurement known as your body mass index (BMI). This can be determined if you know your weight and your height. The actual calculation is your weight (in kilograms) divided by your height (in metres) squared. Guidance and easy to use charts on how to calculate your BMI can be found via the following link.

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm

The NHS advises that a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 suggests a normal healthy weight. This means your body is not a risk of weight-related disease. Inaccuracies in BMI can occur if you are athletic or very muscular as this can give you a higher BMI even if you have a healthy level of body fat. In these cases as part of the recruitment process, we will be able to provide a simple test to assess the percentage of your body fat. BMI standards for Police Officers are set by the Home Office. The current Home Office Circular 59/2004 outlines this as between 18 to 30. Applicants who do not meet this standard may find their application delayed and/or will not be appointed.

- **General Health Check**

This is a range of tests including blood pressure, urinalysis, hearing test and lung function test. The following is the link to the Home Office standards we use: <http://policerecruitment.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/hoc-59-2004.html>

You must have good fitness levels: you need to achieve 5.4 on a bleep test. 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. You can also make rapid improvements by engaging in activities which create a large aerobic demand such as jogging, cycling, swimming and towing. Try jogging for 20 minutes or more and as you improve try to 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.

Following success at the national online assessment, 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.

Tattoos

Tattoos which are offensive, garish, prominent or numerous are not acceptable. Please supply photos, measurements and explain any symbols of any tattoos along with your application.

Financial Vetting

If you are struggling with debt, you may still be able to apply. You just need to supply us with evidence of your ability to manage your debts successfully. However, if you have any outstanding county court judgments or you are an undischarged bankrupt, or have been declared bankrupt within the past 3 years, then you are automatically ineligible.

Cautions/Convictions

If you have had any previous cautions or convictions please detail these on your application form. Each application will be judged on a case by case basis; however it is essential that you disclose all previous cautions or convictions, regardless of whether you believe they are relevant.

Driving Licence

Due to the cancellations of driving lessons and testing during Covid-19 candidates can start in the role before having a full manual driving licence. However, all applicants MUST have a full UK Driving Licence at the time of completion of the probationary period otherwise their service can be terminated.

Business Interests

Unless the Chief Officer decides otherwise, you will not normally be eligible for appointment as a Police Officer, if you have any of the following business interests:

- You hold office or employment for higher gain (other than a Police Officer) or you carry on any business.
- Your spouse or any other relative living with you keeps a shop or similar in the area of the Police Force in question.
- You, your spouse or any relative living with you holds or has financial interest in any license or permit relating to liquor licensing, refreshment house, or betting and gaming or the regulation of places of entertainment in the area of the Force in question.

Reasonable Adjustments

We welcome applications from candidates with disabilities and will give full consideration to reasonable adjustments required either throughout the recruitment and selection process and, if successful, in the role of Police Officer.

How can we support you through your application?

Shadow an officer for a shift (Op Insight)

These patrols are designed to provide an insight into the Constabulary and the many roles that are available. This may be as a Community Support Officer, Special Constable, Volunteer or Police Officer. Prospective candidates are able to accompany a member of our workforce carrying out their duty. Officers and staff are matched with candidates to enable questions to be answered around work and home life balance, culture and their experiences as a frontline police officer or a member of Cambridgeshire Constabulary staff.

To apply click on the following link www.cambs.police.uk/equalopps. Click onto 'Recruitment Events and job shadowing on the right hand side of the page. Here you will find a short synopsis about shadowing and the application form.

The Buddy Scheme

Prospective candidates are paired with serving Police Officers or members of staff who will be a point of contact for guidance and confidence building. This includes an opportunity to find out more about the job role, address any concerns an individual may have and to signpost and provide confidential support. Although any candidate, irrespective of their race or ethnicity, can request a buddy, the scheme is particularly looking to meet the needs of BME candidates. The Buddy Scheme Coordinator will endeavour to find a suitable match for the buddy relationship, based on the information and requests provided. Although it cannot be guaranteed that all requirements will be matched, a 'best fit' approach will be taken wherever possible.

To request a Buddy please e-mail Buddyscheme@cambs.pnn.police.uk

Assistance workshops

These are bespoke workshops which are held periodically in conjunction with Recruitment drives and are designed to support and signpost candidates. We will share top tips, on-line tools, knowledge and best practice to build confidence. Preparation is key. We offer an Application Form, SEARCH Assessment Centre & Final Interview workshops.

The Access Course

This course is designed to give individuals the chance to meet officers from a wide range of roles within our Force. You will receive tips on how to succeed at the different stages of our recruitment process. The course will also give applicants the opportunity to visit different departments. You will get a better understanding of how the Force operates and what we value. The Access Course is a voluntary course that usually takes place on a Wednesday evening (7 pm till 8.30 pm) for nine consecutive weeks. The majority of the course is held at our Headquarters in Huntingdon. The Access Course is open to people from all backgrounds who meet our essential criteria. However, minority ethnic communities, including White non-British, are currently under-represented within the Force and are particularly encouraged to apply.

On average we hold 4 courses per calendar year. Please visit our website to apply.

Good Luck!