



# Ways into policing

A guide to entry routes



## A police service where everyone is welcome

For the police service to serve this country effectively, we need to recruit outstanding officers from a broad range of backgrounds. People who represent and reflect the communities we serve. People who bring a diversity of experience, opinion and perspective.

This is why we have several routes into policing – to make policing open to as many candidates as possible. The route you choose will depend on several factors, from the qualifications you already have, to which entry routes are offered by the force you want to join.

This guide is designed to help you explore the different ways into policing and choose the best option for you.

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# Entry routes - an overview



**Pre-join Degree in Professional Policing**

- Three-year degree course to learn theory behind policing
- Completed *before* applying to join police

[More about the Pre-join Degree](#)

**Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship – PCDA**

- Three-year apprenticeship
- Learn while you earn

[More about PCDA](#)

**Initial Police Learning and Development Programme – IPLDP AKA ‘Traditional Entry’**

- Two-year training programme
- Learn while you earn

[More about IPLDP](#)

**Degree Holder Entry Programme – DHEP**

- Two-year training programme
- Combines work-based and off-the-job learning

[More about DHEP](#)

**Detective Degree Holder Entry Programme – Detective DHEP**

- Two-year training programme with investigative perspective
- Combines work-based and off-the-job learning

[More about Detective DHEP](#)

**Volunteering as a Special Constable**

- Find out what it’s like to be a police officer before you apply
- Same training as regular paid officers

[More about volunteering](#)

**Police Now Graduate Programmes**

- Two-year national leadership development programmes
- Salaried on-the-job training

[More about Police Now](#)

**Entry for Professional Policing Degree Holder**

- Apply to chosen police force within 5 years of graduating
- Learning is put into practice and assessed during two-year probation period

[More about applying with a Professional Policing Degree](#)

Main options
  Don't currently have a degree?
  Already have a degree?
  Other options



# Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship – PCDA

The PCDA is an exciting mixture of practical on-the-job learning alongside academic theory and knowledge.

You'll be a police officer from your first day on the job, and you earn while you learn.

It normally takes three years, with the option to specialise in your third year.



### Suitable for:

- Candidates who don't yet have a degree



### Entry criteria:

- A level (or equivalent) in at least two subjects
- Competence in written and spoken English



### Qualification you'll gain:

- Level 6 Degree in Professional Policing Practice

## Who's recruiting?

Want to see who's recruiting through this entry route?

Want to see which entry routes your chosen force has open right now?

Check out the national police recruitment site to see [who's recruiting](#).



# Initial Police Learning and Development Programme – IPLDP AKA ‘Traditional Entry’

This is the original route into the police service. It’s gradually being phased out, but some forces still offer it.

You join your force and undertake a two year training programme.

Once you’ve successfully completed your probation, you become a confirmed police constable, ready for duties.



### Suitable for:

- Candidates who don’t yet have a degree



### Entry criteria:

- A level (or equivalent) in at least two subjects
- Competence in written and spoken English



### Qualification you’ll gain:

- Level 3 Qualification in Professional Policing Practice

## Who’s recruiting?

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Want to see which entry routes your chosen force has open right now?

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# Pre-join Degree in Professional Policing

This is an academic, knowledge-based degree, based on the national curriculum for the police constable role.

It's a two or three year university degree course where you'll learn the theory behind policing.

Study is self-funded and you need to complete the degree before applying to join the police.

Some universities offer complementary Special Constable opportunities so you get the chance to gain some practical experience.



### Suitable for:

- Candidates who don't yet have a degree
- People who want to focus on study full time, instead of combining study with paid police work



### Entry criteria:

- Varies – please check directly with your chosen university



### Qualification you'll gain:

- Level 6 Degree in Professional Policing Practice

## Who's recruiting?

Check out this [list of universities licensed by the College of Policing to offer this degree.](#)



# Degree Holder Entry Programme – DHEP

If you already have an undergraduate degree in any subject, you can join the police and follow a work-based programme supported by off-the-job learning.

This route normally takes two years, and you get the opportunity to focus on a specialist area of study: Investigation, Intelligence, Community, Roads or Response policing.

The length of time on probation is reduced on this programme because you don't need to complete another degree.



### Suitable for:

- Candidates who already have a degree in any subject (other than a Professional Policing Degree)



### Entry criteria:

- Level 6 Degree



### Qualification you'll gain:

- Level 6 Post-Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing Practice

## Who's recruiting?

Want to see who's recruiting through this entry route?  
Want to see which entry routes your chosen force has open right now?  
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## Detective Degree Holder Entry Programme – Detective DHEP

Like the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP), this two-year programme combines work-based and off-the-job learning. But as you'd expect, learning is biased towards an investigative perspective.

It's a more intense programme, as you need to successfully complete the National Investigators Examination and meet PIP2 assessment criteria in order to become a Professionalising Investigation Programme Level 2 (PIP2) accredited detective. You'll also achieve a Level 6 Post-Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing Practice.



### Suitable for:

- Candidates who already have a degree in any subject (other than a Professional Policing Degree)



### Entry criteria:

- Level 6 Degree



### Qualification you'll gain:

- Level 6 Post-Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing Practice

### Who's recruiting?

Want to see who's recruiting through this entry route?

Want to see which entry routes your chosen force has open right now?

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## Police Now Graduate Programmes



Both two-year award-winning programmes are national and focus on developing leadership skills, offering a structured route into policing.

They offer salaried, on-the-job training, so you'll start as a fully warranted police officer from day one. After completing the two years, you'll have a Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing Practice, as well as leadership skills for life.

You can choose from two programmes:

- **The National Graduate Leadership Programme** – learn to become a leader in neighbourhood policing
- **The National Detective Programme** – gain core policing skills for modern investigative work



### Suitable for:

- Candidates who already have a degree in any subject (other than a Professional Policing Degree)



### Entry criteria:

- Undergraduate degree – 2:1 or above



### Qualification you'll gain:

- Level 6 Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing Practice

Want to know more?

[Visit the Police Now website.](#)



## Entry for Professional Policing Degree Holder

Once you've graduated with a degree in professional policing, you'll need to apply to join your chosen police force as a probationary police constable. To do this, you must:

- apply within five years of your graduation date
- meet all of the recruitment criteria for the particular force

During your two-year probation period, you'll undertake further practice-based learning and assessment, demonstrating your competence in the police constable role.



### Suitable for:

- Candidates who already have a Professional Policing Degree



### Entry criteria:

- Level 6 BSc (Hons) Degree in Professional Policing Practice

### Who's recruiting?

Want to see who's recruiting through this entry route?

Want to see which entry routes your chosen force has open right now?

Check out the national police recruitment site to see [who's recruiting](#).



## | Volunteering as a Special Constable

This is a great option if you'd like to find out what it's like to be a police officer before you apply.

As a Special Constable – or 'Special' – you'll experience frontline policing with full policing powers. You'll wear an almost identical uniform, carry the same equipment and receive the same training as regular paid officers.

While volunteering doesn't guarantee entry as a full time police officer, it will give you valuable skills and experiences if you later choose that path.



### Suitable for:

- People with or without a degree
- Those who want to see if policing is right for them before applying to join as a paid police officer



### Entry criteria:

- Varies – please check with your chosen force
- Must be able to commit to a minimum of four hours per week / 16 hours per month



### Good to know:

- Some forces offer an entry route specifically for people who are already Special Constables – please check with your preferred force. If your chosen force doesn't offer a dedicated entry route for existing Special Constables, you can still apply through another relevant entry route.

### Want to know more?

Get in touch with your preferred force to find out what volunteering opportunities they have on offer.



### 1. Qualifications

### 2. Policing experience

