

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION SHEET FOR POLICE OFFICER APPLICANTS

[REVISED JUNE 2009]

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

To supplement the valuable guidance provided in your Home Office pack, we have also detailed some further questions that potential applicants to Dorset regularly ask. However, we would point out that some information contained in the Home Office pack and corresponding PoliceCouldYou website is not relevant to Dorset and that all processes/policy advice are constantly under review and subject to possible change(s).

How tall and fit do I have to be?

There are no minimum or maximum height restrictions but your weight must be proportionate to your height. You must also meet current Home Office fitness medical and eyesight standards, information on which is held on the Home Office website www.policecouldyou.co.uk.

What happens if I have a driving or criminal conviction?

You must have either a current, full valid or provisional driving licence to drive manual vehicles and have no more than three endorseable traffic convictions (including fixed penalty) within the previous five years (and for offences on different dates). Equally, you must not have received a driving conviction in the last ten years for drink/drugs driving or reckless/ dangerous driving. Additionally, applicants will be rejected if they have convictions for driving without insurance, failing to stop after an accident or driving whilst disqualified within the last five years. Two or more convictions for regulatory offences such as failure to renew vehicle excise licence in the last five years will also lead to rejection.

Holders of 'provisional' licences must if applying to Dorset Police obtain a full driving licence in their own time and expense and by the end of week 33 of the probationary period. A failure to obtain a full licence may result in an officer not being confirmed for independent patrol. Ultimately, an officer may also be discharged under Police Regulations if they fail to obtain a full licence although each case will be considered on its individual merits.

Please use 'Your other activities' box under Section 3 of your application to confirm your licence type and number.

The criminal convictions criteria defined by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) vetting policy and Home Office circulars are used to assess each application on an individual basis. Eligibility will depend on the nature and circumstances of the offence. It is not possible to set out a full list of convictions that will preclude a person from becoming a police officer or member of the Special Constabulary. Each case will be considered on its own merits, and if the offence is deemed sufficiently serious a person will be rejected irrespective of age at time of offending. There may be circumstances where an individual does not fall within the criteria but whose suspected involvement in crime, or criminal associations make an offer of employment inappropriate.

Candidates **MUST** declare on their application form ANY conviction/caution, reprimand, warning etc even for a juvenile offence or any involvement whatsoever with the police. All applicants are encouraged to provide supplementary information, if appropriate. It will not be possible to process applicants with pending charges/summons until the outcome of any court appearance is known.

All applicants should be fully aware that if discretion is applied they will be required to disclose ALL previous convictions, cautions etc on every occasion that they submit a statement of evidence in a criminal case. In some instances the nature of the conviction may render an officers evidence of little value to the prosecution if, on disclosure to the defence, it is raised in cross-examination. Therefore, such an occurrence could undermine the integrity of the evidence, the officer and Dorset Police. In relation to convictions, we would strongly recommend you visit the Home Office website www.policecouldyou.co.uk.

What security checks are conducted and will my family be similarly checked?

For all applicants and their families/immediate associates, comprehensive local and national/international (if appropriate) security checks are completed. Applicants **must** advise family members etc that security checks will be carried out on them. However, the results of all such enquiries will not be disclosed. Please ensure that you fully and accurately complete every field in this section of your application; in addition to your previous addresses. Please do use the continuation sheet if necessary.

As I have got children, I am not sure it is a career for me?

An important consideration for every applicant is that you **WILL** have to work shifts as a police officer, covering a 24-hour period. There are many different shift patterns but generally they cover 8-10 hours Monday to Sunday (earlys, lates and nights) incorporated with rest days. Upon completion of a two-year probationary period, unpaid career breaks of between three months to five years are also currently available. Additionally, Dorset Police has several family-friendly policies such as a generous maternity leave scheme, paternity leave, child-care vouchers as well as part-time working which is also available in the probationary period.

Whilst on probation you must work at least 24 hours per week (or 1,248 hours per year). However, initial training must be completed on a full-time basis (approximately first 31 weeks). Salary, leave entitlement etc would be calculated on a pro-rata basis. If you decided to apply as a part-timer it would be really helpful if you indicated your intentions ideally on the application form or at the earliest opportunity. Importantly though, a request to work part-time will not affect or influence your application in any way, as a decision will be solely based on your evidenced application and subsequent performance over various assessments.

If you are considering schooling in the east/west of the County, you may wish to contact the Education Office at Dorchester on 01305 224405 or visit their website at www.dorset-cc.gov.uk-sis for full details of schools in that area. Alternatively, the Poole area contact number is 01202 261936 (website www.boroughofpoole.com) and Bournemouth is 01202 456198 (website www.bournemouth.gov.uk).

I haven't got many qualifications so I can't apply?

There are no specific formal academic qualifications needed to become a police officer although you will need to satisfactorily complete various written selection tests and fully understand that you will be consistently required to undertake regularly report writing, take witness statements etc. In today's modern policing, this also involves the regular use of IT systems, so whilst IT skills are not currently tested even a basic understanding will certainly help if you are successful and join us. However, what is perhaps as important are your personal skills/qualities and experience of life so

that you can deal with potentially difficult and sometimes confrontational situations in a calm, objective and professional manner. Applicants will be requested to produce original certificates of degree qualifications/professional membership during the selection process.

My English skills are not very good, what can I do?

ESOL courses (English for Speakers of Other Languages) are available through local further education colleges or Job Centre Plus for people who speak English as a second language or have a poor standard of English. The majority of ESOL courses are offered free of charge.

Is it correct that I have to provide a DNA sample?

Yes you will be required 'upon appointment' (not before) to provide a sample of DNA on a mouth swab to ensure that your DNA can be eliminated at the scene of a crime in the same way as fingerprints which will also be taken.

When will you contact my previous/current employer?

Personal references are only requested in exceptional circumstances. Previous and current employer's references including references from educational bodies/overseas employment etc will normally only be sought for those applicants successful at the Assessment Centre stage unless we receive your earlier permission, or have justifiable reason to request them earlier in the process.

As a general rule, employment references will cover a minimum continuous period of 12 months up to a maximum of 10 years prior to application. Applicants, if dismissed/sacked from previous employment, are obviously encouraged to be honest and also to provide supplementary information using either the main application form or continuation sheet. In such cases these references will be routinely requested, even if outside of the ten year rule and normally at the papersift stage.

What other benefits are there?

A new Police Pension Scheme was introduced on the 6th of April 2006. Officers will contribute 9.5% of their salary and are able to take their pension after 35 years. It is also possible to transfer previously accrued pension to the police pension scheme, but clearly their values may not be equal. More detailed pension advice is given to successful applicants on induction training. However, detailed information can be found under the home office website:- <http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/human-resources/police-pensions/2006-pension/> A range of other benefits are available such as savings plans, discount car/house insurances, mortgages etc in addition to 22 days leave rising, depending on length of service, to 30 days for federated ranks (Constable to Chief Inspectors)

Will I receive a monthly accommodation allowance and am I entitled to police accommodation?

As a result of a Regulation change on 1 September 1994, applicants to Dorset Police are no longer entitled to accommodation free of rent or a monthly housing/rent allowance.

What is the cost of rented or privately owned accommodation in Dorset, where can I live and what checks are necessary?

It is vitally important that you fully consider and research any variations to your current cost of living and crucially *before* submitting an application. Naturally, rental and housing prices vary

considerably across the Force area and certainly when compared nationally. If you require details of rented accommodation and privately available properties in Dorset you will need to make your own enquiries. You may also wish to visit a specific police website www.accommodation.police.uk which offers some very practical advice and useful links to other relevant websites.

You will be required to reside within a reasonable travelling distance of any posting and ideally an officer's single journey time to work should not be excessive. It will also be advisable, if you are looking to secure accommodation in the Force area, that you locate yourself in a central position to allow for convenient travelling.

All accommodation must be assessed for its suitability and confirmation of your accommodation will be required during your initial training. Whilst a request to live in a particular location cannot ultimately be refused, the assessment is to ensure that any potential and avoidable problems identified at the time are made known to you.

If successful, where am I likely to be stationed in Dorset?

You must fully appreciate that you may be posted anywhere in the County in accordance with current policy. However, your initial posting will be to a Professional Development Unit for a period of 8 weeks. These are situated at Bournemouth, Poole, Ferndown or Weymouth Police Stations.

What happens if I have a current application with another force?

We are currently not accepting transferred applications from other forces. Should this change our website will be updated.

What is the selection process?

The selection procedure for Dorset and indeed the whole Police Service is continually under review. However there are basically four stages – application/paper sift, assessment centre, fitness and finally a full pre-employment medical.

Stage One – Application and Papersift

Once you have submitted an application form it will go through a rigorous initial paper sift. The application form has been designed for use as a sifting measure ahead of more extensive assessment procedures. The form is designed to obtain real evidence of the qualities you already have or may develop to enable you to carry out the role of a police officer.

The 'Competency Assessment' section is particularly important and you will need to read very carefully the guidance notes and give considerable thought before providing your answers. You are only permitted to use the space provided.

Stage Two – Assessment Centre

You will, over one day, undergo four interactive exercises, two written exercises, Verbal Logical and Numerical Reasoning Tests and a structured one-to-one interview. In the various interactive/written tests you will be assessed against seven competencies, which are linked to your original application form and also post assessment/training development.

These are specifically Effective Communication, Community and Customer Focus, Personal Responsibility, Respect for Race and Diversity, Team Working, Problem Solving and Resilience.

If you are successful through initial paper sift and allocated an assessment centre, you will importantly receive far more detailed information on this element.

Stage Three - Job Related Fitness Test (JRFT)

The overall assessment of a candidate's physical fitness is currently established by way of a two component testing procedure and will be scheduled to take place approximately 8 weeks prior to your proposed appointment date.

The components of the JRFT are:

1. Test of Cardiovascular and Respiratory (Endurance)
2. Test of Dynamic Strength (Upper Body).

You will be required to successfully complete both elements on an official test day. A candidate has a maximum of 3 attempts, normally with a period of up to 6 weeks between tests, to allow for training and improvement to be allowed. If a candidate fails all attempts they will not be eligible to apply again to a force for a period of six months. If selected for appointment applicants to Dorset will be encouraged to achieve a higher level [8.1 minimum] in the endurance element. Your fitness will also be regularly reviewed during your probation. Failure to satisfactorily maintain your fitness levels may result in your service being dispensed with under Police Regulations.

If you have a disability that you believe would prevent you from undertaking or passing this test, reasonable adjustments, in the form of an alternative testing method can be considered to establish your fitness to undertake the role of a Police Officer/to undertake Personal Safety Training whilst in the role. If this applies to you, please now make contact with the HR Service Support Manager on the above number to discuss this matter further. You will, as an initial step, be required to provide us with details of adjustments that you believe we could consider, further consultation will take place with the Force Medical Officer and Fitness Training Officer in this respect.

An explanation of each of the procedures is detailed in the guidance on the Job Related Fitness Test for Police Recruitment booklet contained in your pack and also on the Home Office website.

NB. The grip strength measurement test has been discontinued with effect from August 2004.

Stage Four – Medical

Successful applicants through final assessment will be required to undertake a full pre-employment medical where you will be assessed by our Occupational Health provider and against existing Home Office Medical Standards.

Medicals will take place approximately 8-12 weeks prior to you proposed appointment date. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was extended to police officer recruitment in October 2004 and makes it unlawful to automatically exclude any applicant with a disability. Therefore, it is only possible to assess your medical suitability/ possible reasonable adjustments etc after it has been decided that you meet the basic requirements of the job. In some cases, it may be recommended that you are not fit to join the Police Pension Scheme or equally, are restricted in applying for specific posts following the completion of your probationary period. However, each case is considered on its individual merits. As part of the medical process, you will be given an opportunity to see copies of GP notes if required. If you take up this opportunity, please be aware that delays could occur.

What happens if I am unsuccessful in one or any of these stages?

Firstly, if you are unsuccessful in either the paper sift or the assessment centre stage a new full application will only be reconsidered after 6 months from your rejection date letter although the reapply rules are continually under review.

In relation to the JRFT, whilst remembering that it is necessary to satisfactorily complete both elements on an official test day, for those unsuccessful applicants at the first attempt, you will have a maximum of 3 attempts, normally with a period of up to 6 weeks between tests, to allow for training and improvement to be allowed. If a candidate fails all attempts they will not be eligible to apply again to a force for a period of six months.

Medically, each case is considered individually by our independent Occupational Health providers and against existing Home Office Medical Standards. There are currently no formal reapply rules for unsuccessful applicants at this stage.

If you are unsuccessful at any stage or ultimately decide the regular constabulary is not for you, you may wish to consider joining the Police Staff, vacancies of which are regularly advertised on our website or alternatively the volunteers or Special Constabulary, both of which are unpaid. Clearly, none of these options could guarantee future success if you choose to reapply for the regulars.

In line with Home Office advice all applicants should be fully aware that the Chief Constable retains the right to reject an application at any stage of the process without giving a specific reason.

What happens if I am successful?

If successful through all stages, you may be considered with other successful candidates for allocated intake dates. Importantly, the Force retains the right to select the highest scoring candidates from assessment centres and this practice is generally applied. Therefore, there is a possibility that some candidates who have met the minimum level at assessment may be placed on a 'reserve list' or may not be selected for this recruitment campaign. If the latter applies, in line with Home Office advice, such candidates can be referred to other Forces, although there can be no guarantee that Dorset Police or any other Force(s) can ultimately secure you an appointment date. In such cases, applications will remain live for a maximum of 12 months. If you are not formally offered an appointment date with Dorset Police then it will be necessary to complete a fresh application and again, undertake the full selection process.

If your application is held on a reserve list, due to timescales, your application can be subject to additional security/financial checks, current and previous references, if not already sought and no adverse issues arising.

How long is the process and if successful, when am I likely to start?

Dorset Police currently operates a continuing process of assessing new applicants, from assessment centres which are normally held in response to Force requirements, and are subsequently linked to specific intake dates. However, both the timescale and recruitment process/schedule is subject to possible changes.

The full recruitment process for new recruits does fluctuate but can take anything upwards of 6-9 months from application through to assessment centre and normally intakes are scheduled every three months. Details of current vacancies are held and regularly maintained on the Home Office website.

What training is available?

Constables are appointed on two years probation and during this time you will undergo an extensive programme of training which will prepare you for operational duties.

How long is my training?

You will be under training and assessment for two years. Some of your training will be classroom based, some practically based and some undertaken in the operational environment. You can expect to be supported and assisted by trainers, tutors and assessors throughout your probationary period. You will receive a variety of general and specialist training on topics such as equal opportunities, diversity, first aid, self-defence, interview techniques etc.

The High Potential Development Scheme gives outstanding applicants to the police service the training, support and opportunities you need to take your career to the top. Because the High Potential Development Scheme is open to all serving officers, even if you are not successful upon recruitment, you will have further opportunities to apply to the scheme once you have joined the police. Information Booklets on the HPDS Scheme are available from the recruitment office upon request.

Where will my training take place?

Training for Dorset Police students is non residential. This means that you will be able to live at home throughout the course and will be able to spend evenings and weekends with your family and friends. Your first two weeks will be spent at Dorset Police Headquarters, near Wool, undertaking an Induction phase. This is followed by three weeks of community involvement which includes a community placement with a host organisation in the community. The next nineteen weeks are at a purpose built training facility at Bournemouth Divisional Headquarters, including an attachment to the Division where you will be posted. After successful completion of the 24 week course, you will then move on to the Professional Development Unit (PDU) of your Division.

How will I be assessed during my training?

By the time your probationary period is complete you must be competent to work independently as a patrol officer. This means you will need to be assessed against the skills attitudes and behaviours laid down for that role. There are also underpinning knowledge requirements. You will be assessed by examination, by observation and by professional discussion. You will also be required to complete a portfolio of evidence which supports your achievement of competence to carry out your role. This form of assessment will form the basis of your career long learning.

Whilst on training will I be expected to do any work at home?

Dorset Police believe that individuals are responsible for their own learning and development. You are very likely to have to do some reading in your own time to ensure that you have knowledge of subject matter which will allow your trainers to develop a better understanding. You will be able to manage this studying in a way that best suits your lifestyle.

What do I do for refreshments on training?

Training at Headquarters and on Division is not residential and meals will be met at your own expense. There are no canteen facilities available so you should bring a packed lunch or be prepared to buy food from one of the many catering establishments nearby. Refreshments i.e. tea and coffee will however be provided.

Where can I park whilst training?

Parking facilities at the Bournemouth site are severely restricted. This situation is not likely to improve. Where possible you should travel by public transport, car share with your colleagues or park away from the site and complete your journey on foot.

Is accommodation available during training?

Your training is non-residential. Dorset Police staff are responsible for their own living arrangements and can live anywhere in the county (and sometimes beyond) provided they are able to report for duty on time anywhere in the county.

What will my training working hours be?

Whilst undertaking your initial training, your normal hours will be 0800 to 1600 with a 45 minute break for lunch. You will however work some late shifts 1400 – 2200 and potentially some weekends. When you go on your tutorship, you will work a rotating shift pattern covering the period 0700 – 0300. Once you achieve independent patrol status, you will work a full 24 hour rotating shift pattern. This varies from division to division and you will receive more detail closer to the time.

What are the opportunities for progression?

Once you have successfully completed your two-year probationary period, you are eligible to sit the Sergeant's promotion examination or equally be considered for a specialist post. This is achieved through a mixture of examinations and attachments/experience. There is a requirement to also sit interview boards.

A High Potential Development Scheme (HPDS), which offers a fast track route through the ranks, is available to both new recruits and serving officers. The aim of the HPDS is to create an open, fair and equal development system with the capability to attract and identify the highest calibre future leaders of the service. At the same time the scheme provides a flexible framework enabling development in the most effective and efficient manner, both for the individual and the service. National Assessment Centres for the new scheme will take place three times a year. For further information or an application form please contact the HPDS Central Office on 0207 273 3353.

What other help is available?

Clearly it is not possible to cover every aspect of the Police Service as a career in just a few lines and you may have other pertinent questions to ask for example....how do I cope with shifts, will it affect my family and social life, how much paper/computer work is really involved, how confrontational is policing and what subsequent self-defence training am I given, what really are the opportunities for progression etc, etc.... therefore, please do not be afraid to speak to officers whilst they are out on patrol or even pop into your nearest police station, it is far better to ask any questions now than on your first day!! All applicants to the Regular Constabulary who are successful at the paper sift stage will also be encouraged to undertake a full operational tour of duty under the 'Patrol Observers Scheme'.

What if I'm still not sure policing is for me?

Dorset Police also recruits Special Constables, Volunteers (both unpaid) and Police Staff throughout the year, all of which, but especially Specials, provide a very useful and practical insight into modern day policing, although clearly does not guarantee future success at the application/assessment stages.

If you ultimately decide that a uniformed career is not for you but you still want to make a difference in making your community a safer place, then why not consider joining as a Police Staff member. A quick visit to our website (select Careers/Join Us) will give you a great idea of the many opportunities on offer including Police Community Support Officers. This website is updated on a regular basis.

If you have any queries or require further information then please contact the number listed below (office hours are 0840 to 1700 Monday to Thursday and 0840 to 1540 every Friday, with the exception of Bank Holidays).

01305 223794

Alternatively, you can visit our website at www.dorset.police.uk or the Home Office site at www.policecouldyou.co.uk.

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USEFUL CONTACTS

British Association for Women in Policing
(BAWP)
PO Box 999
Camberley
GU15 9AL
Tel:
Website: www.bawp.org
Email: coord@bawp.org

Gay Police Association
BM GPA
London
WC1N 3XX
Tel: 07092 700000
Fax: 07092 700100
Website: www.gay.police.uk
Email: info@gpa.police.uk

Disability Discrimination Act
Website: www.disability.gov.uk

Association of Police Authorities
Website: www.apa.police.uk

Police Federation
Website: www.polfed.org

NPIA – National Policing Improvement Agency
Website: www.npia.police.uk