



**how2become**

# **A Police Community Support Officer (PCSO)**

**The Insider's Guide**

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# INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

Welcome to How2Become a Police Community Support Officer: The Insider's Guide. This guide has been designed to help you prepare for and pass the PCSO selection process. You will find the guide both a comprehensive and highly informative tool for helping you obtain a highly desirable career within the public sector.

The great thing about being a PCSO is that you are 'community centred'. Effectively this means that you will spend more time out in the community than your average Police Officer does. Working within the local community has many benefits. You get to act as the eyes and ears for the Police Service, and you also get to build some very special relationships, both with your work colleagues and also with stakeholders in the community. PCSOs do not have the same powers as a regular Police Officer. However, they are a crucial part of the crime prevention process and are an integral part of the Police Service team.

If you would like any further assistance with the PCSO selection process then we offer the following products and training courses via the website [www.how2become.com](http://www.how2become.com):

- How to pass the PCSO Role-Play DVD;
- How to pass the PCSO Interview DVD;
- PCSO online testing facility;
- 1 Day PCSO training course.

Finally, you won't achieve much in life without hard work, determination and perseverance. Work hard, stay focused, and you can achieve anything that you set your mind to.

Good luck and best wishes,

*The how2become team*

**The How2become team**

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **THE ROLE OF A PCSO**



Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) do a fantastic job in the community. Whilst opinion on their effectiveness has sometimes been divided, there is no doubting the requirement for a more visible presence from the police on our streets, and PCSOs serve that purpose very well. The emphasis for the UK Police Service is to 'engage' with local communities. This cannot be achieved by police officers alone, and therefore PCSOs play a pivotal role in acting as the link between communities and the force itself.

PCSOs are uniformed staff whose role is primarily to support the work of police officers. They assist the police in areas that need a certain level of police presence, but not necessarily the expertise of a trained police officer. An example of this would be in a predominantly rural location where crime is low, yet a presence is still required for situations such as anti-social behaviour and minor occurrences of criminal damage. Prior to the introduction of PCSOs, this kind of work would be the responsibility of the police officer. Whilst police officers will still become involved in these types of incidents when required, they are now free to carry out more effective tasks in line with their expertise and role.

PCSOs are more commonly involved in work such as:

- Providing a visible and reassuring presence within communities;
- Attending incidents of disorder, nuisance and antisocial behaviour;
- Dealing with community issues such as littering and dog fouling;
- Checking out abandoned vehicles;
- Gathering evidence through observation;
- Helping with missing persons enquiries;

- Speaking to young people who might be drunk and causing problems;
- Confiscating alcohol and tobacco;
- Crowd control and directing traffic at public events;
- Helping direct traffic at roadblocks or scenes of accidents;
- Assisting police with recording names and addresses or door-to-door enquiries.

PCSOs spend most of their time out on patrol, which is good news! Many jobs in the public sector require you to sit behind a desk in front of a computer for hours on end. Having the freedom and the ability to patrol on foot, or possibly also on a bicycle, is one of the major attractions of the role. You will usually work in pairs and you will get to meet many different people from the community in which you live. At all times you will have access to a dedicated police officer or sergeant who can provide you with support and guidance as and when required.

PCSOs do not have the same powers of arrest as police officers, although they do have the right to detain suspected offenders for up to thirty minutes until a police officer arrives. They carry radios so that they can communicate with police control rooms and other colleagues.

## **WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME A PCSO?**

- A confident, level-headed, positive and mature manner;
- Experience and willingness in dealing with difficult people and situations;

- To be sensitive, but thick-skinned;
- Good communication skills with regard to working with police officers;
- Good team-working skills;
- Stamina for long periods of foot patrol and shift work;
- Good communication skills to deal with all types of people, some of whom may be drunk, hostile or upset;
- Accuracy when completing paperwork;
- An appreciation of the confidential nature of police work.

## **WORKING HOURS AND CONDITIONS**

PCSOs usually work 37 hours a week, in a shift system, covering the hours between 8am and midnight, including weekends and public holidays. There are opportunities to work part-time and flexible hours.

PCSOs are often based at local police stations in the Community Safety department, but they spend the majority of their time out on patrol, usually on foot. They may be outside in all weathers. They are often sent out to patrol areas experiencing particular problems, such as estates where there has been a spate of car thefts or burglaries, or communities where there have been complaints about nuisance youths on the streets. They wear a high-visibility uniform, which is similar to a police uniform, and includes a hat. They may wear a protective vest, but do not carry items such as handcuffs or batons.

## **SALARY AND BENEFITS**

PCSOs enjoy a very reasonable salary and good benefits. These figures are only a guide, as actual rates of pay may vary, depending on the employer and where people live.

- A newly recruited PCSO earns about £18,000 a year (please check with your local force for exact pay rates).
- At the top of the scale they earn approximately £27,000 a year.
- Overtime and shift allowances may be available, although this varies between forces.
- Up to 25 days paid holiday per year.

**NOTE** Please check with your local force for exact pay scales and benefits as these do vary. You can also find out more about the role and the benefits at the website [www.policecouldyou.co.uk](http://www.policecouldyou.co.uk).

## **THE QUALITIES OF A PCSO**

The qualities of a PCSO are assessed throughout the duration of the selection process. If you are to have any chance of success then we urge you to learn these and match them at every stage. The qualities themselves are more commonly referred to as the 'core competencies'.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE**

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. 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.

## **OTHER IMPORTANT AREAS**

The quality of respect for race and diversity is something which is very important for a PCSO. This is no longer considered a 'core competency', it is now something that is assumed – a basic behavioural trait for all PCSOs to have. If you don't have this quality, then the police don't want you applying for the role. You must be capable of understanding other people's views and be able to take them into account at all times. This means sometimes challenging your own views and beliefs in order to see things from other people's point of view. Treating people fairly is crucial to the role. Both within the workplace and out in the community you will meet people who are different from you in terms of age, background, sexual orientation, gender, disability and religious beliefs. You must treat people with dignity and respect at all times. No form of bullying or harassment is ever accepted within the Police Service.

## **THE PCSO SELECTION PROCESS**

### **How and Where to Apply**

Before we venture into the actual PCSO selection process, let us take a look at how and when you can apply.

To begin with you need to see whether your chosen Police Service is recruiting PCSOs. This can be done by visiting the force's website or by contacting them by telephone or email. PCSO recruitment is usually carried out centrally although the UK Police Service does have a tendency to change their procedures. The most useful website for up-to-date recruitment information and contact details is as follows: [www.policecouldyou.co.uk](http://www.policecouldyou.co.uk)

Once you have established that your chosen constabulary

is recruiting, you need to obtain an application form. This can be done by visiting the website of the force you wish to apply for.

The PCSO selection process consists of the following format:

- Online Application Form, including CV submission;
- Telephone Interview;
- Assessment Centre;
- Fitness Test;
- Medical checks, security vetting and references.

The application form is the first stage of the selection process. Here the force will assess to see whether or not you meet the minimum eligibility requirements for the role, and also how you match the core competencies. The contents of application forms can vary from force to force. The reason for this is that the PCSO job description can vary depending on the requirements of each Police Service.

The form usually consists of five different sections as follows:

1. About you
2. About your employment
3. About your education and skills
4. Competency Assessment
5. Declaration

Providing that you follow the guidance notes that are contained within the form, the majority of the sections are relatively easy to complete. Read the form at least twice before completing it and look for important instructions such as 'Complete in Black Ink' or specific word limits when responding to the competency assessment questions.



Within a later section of the guide we will provide you with some crucial tips on how to complete the form accurately.

## **THE ASSESSMENT CENTRE**

If your application is successful, the police will invite you to their regional Assessment Centre, so that you can undertake the selection process. This involves a written test, an interview and two interactive role-plays.

Your performance will be measured against the set of skills identified as necessary for the role of PCSO, including the core competencies.

See the Assessment Centre section of this guide for more details on how to prepare for, and pass this stage of the process.

## **MEDICAL, SECURITY AND REFERENCES**

If you successfully pass the Assessment Centre, then you will be recommended for appointment subject to satisfactory checks on your security status, medical and fitness, and references. Please note that some constabularies require you to pass a fitness test, details of which now follow.

## **THE FITNESS TEST**

### **The Endurance Test**

The endurance test, also known as the 'multi-stage fitness test', 'bleep' or 'shuttle run' test, is often used by sports coaches and trainers to estimate an athlete's VO2 Max (maximum oxygen uptake). Apart from the Police, the test is also used by the Armed Forces, Emergency Services and Prison Service as part of their selection process but it is also

a great way to improve and monitor your own fitness level.

**Description**

The 'bleep' test involves running continuously between two points that are 15 metres apart. These 'shuttle' runs are done in time to pre-recorded 'bleep' sounds on an audio CD or cassette. The time between the recorded 'beeps' decreases after each minute and therefore the test becomes progressively harder with each level completed. The full test consists of approximately 23 levels but the actual PCSO endurance test only requires you to achieve 4 shuttles at level 5 to pass. Each level lasts approximately 60 seconds.

A level is basically a series of 15 metre 'shuttle runs'. The starting speed is normally 8.5 km/hr and then increases by 0.5km/hr with each new level.

To purchase the PCSO endurance test visit:  
[www.how2become.com](http://www.how2become.com)

## **The Dynamic Strength Test**

This test mimics a seated bench press action and a seated rowing action. You will be asked to perform 5 repetitions on both the push and pull aspects. The machine works out the average of your 5 repetitions and gives you a score.

You must push 34 kg and pull 35 kg to pass.

One of the most effective ways to prepare for this type of test is both by rowing (using a rowing machine) and carrying out bench press exercises. The reason why we recommend rowing during your preparation is that, apart from increasing your physical strength, it will also help prepare you for the endurance test.

Within the 'How to get PCSO fit' section of your guide we have provided you with some useful tips and exercises.

**IMPORTANT** Make sure you consult a medical practitioner prior to engaging in any strenuous physical exercise program.

## **Swimming Assessment**

Police Community Support Officers may be first on the scene at emergency situations, many of which involve water. Depending on the force that you are applying to join, you may be required to take a swimming assessment. The swimming assessment enables the force to identify if your swimming ability is adequate.

Please contact your local Police Service to establish whether you are required to take a swimming assessment.

During the next section of the guide we will provide you with 10 invaluable tips that will help you prepare effectively for the PCSO selection process. Whilst some of the tips appear to be obvious, it is these that most applicants fail to concentrate on and as a result they end up failing. Follow each tip carefully and implement them into your preparation strategy.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE TOP TEN INSIDER TIPS AND ADVICE**

**TIP 1****Be fully prepared and fully focused**

This is your opportunity to get yourself a well-paid, well-respected and secure career in the Police Service. Therefore, it is worth putting in the extra effort during your preparation.

When you are applying for any career, it is of vital importance that you prepare yourself fully. What we mean is that you do everything you can to find out what is required of you. Most people do not read the guidance notes on the application form and then they wonder why they didn't get through to the next stage. Make sure you read every bit of information you receive at least twice and understand what is required. Things in life do not come easy and you must be prepared to work hard.

Whenever you come up against hurdles or difficult situations and experiences, always try to look for the opportunity to improve yourself. For example, if you have applied to become a PCSO before, what have you done to improve your chances of success the second time around? Did you find out what areas you failed on, and if so, have you done anything about it?

We strongly urge you to use an action plan during selection. Put yourself out and make the effort to work on your weak areas. Make sure you set aside plenty of time to complete the application form. Make sure you work on your written communication skills and make sure you carry out mock interviews and role-play scenarios. Coupled with all of this, you should carry out a structured training programme during your preparation – regardless of whether or not you have to go through a fitness test. By keeping fit, your motivation levels will increase and so too will your ability to concentrate.

**TIP 2****Understand equality and fairness and respect diversity at all times**

Equality and fairness are crucial in today's society. We must treat each other with respect and dignity, and understand that people come from different backgrounds and cultures to ourselves.

Treat people how you expect to be treated – with dignity and respect. If you do not believe in equality, fairness and dignity then you are applying for the wrong job. PCSOs are role models and people will look to you to set an example in society. While the application process won't test you directly on your understanding, knowledge and application of equality and fairness issues (since it is assumed that you have these), any behaviour which indicates otherwise will see you immediately removed from the process. So, don't leave it to chance! Make sure you understand exactly what equality and fairness means and what it stands for.

**TIP 3****Understand the core competencies**

The PCSO core competencies form the fundamental requirements of your role. They identify how you should perform and are key to your role as a Police Community Support Officer. Read them and make sure you understand them. They are key to your success! Just like a house is built on solid foundations, the core competencies are the foundations of the role of a PCSO. If they are in place, then a PCSO will perform to a high standard.

Throughout the application process, you should concentrate on the core competencies, constantly trying to demonstrate them at every stage.

When completing the application form your answers should be based around the core competencies. The same rule applies to the interview and role-play exercises. Whenever you prepare a response you need to structure it around the core competencies. These are the first thing you should learn. Learn the core competencies and you will find that the remainder of your preparation will be far easier.

The core competencies cover a wide range of required skills and attributes including team work, customer focus, problem-solving and equality and fairness issues to name but a few.

This is the most important tip we can provide you with – Don't ignore it!

#### **TIP 4**

#### **Use keywords and phrases from the core competencies during your application form responses**

The majority of people who apply to become PCSOs will complete their application form without making an effort to match the core competencies. The person who has the task of assessing your form is looking to see how closely you match the assessable core competencies. In order to achieve this you should use keywords and phrases from the core competencies in your responses to the competency assessment.

Not only does this make the assessor's life a lot easier, it also ensures that you match the core competencies, something that is crucial to your success.

You can use this tip not only on the application form, but also during the report writing, role-play scenarios and the interview. It works to great effect!

**TIP 5****During the role play scenarios concentrate on delivering high quality customer service**

The role-play scenarios are probably the hardest part of the assessment centre. Many people find the role-plays a daunting process, which is why you should practise them prior to attending the assessment centre.

The purpose of the role-play scenarios is to assess how you interact with people during certain scenarios that are similar to the type you will encounter as a PCSO. If you can deal with these scenarios effectively, then you are more than likely going to be able to deal with them in real life as a PCSO.

Although 'customer focus' is only one of the role-play assessable areas, it is one that we urge you to demonstrate at all times. Customer focus essentially means concentrating on the customer, dealing with them in a sensitive manner, and making sure you listen to their needs and requirements. It will be your job to listen to the role-play actor during each scenario carefully, ask them relevant questions, and provide a suitable solution to the problem.

Remember that the Police Service is committed to delivering a high quality service. Focus on demonstrating this during the role-play scenarios and you will increase your chances of success.



**TIP 6****Learn the welcome pack before you go to the selection centre**

Prior to the selection centre you will be sent a welcome pack. Within the pack you will find details relating to the role you are required to undertake as part of the assessment. That role will normally be as a customer service manager at a fictitious retail centre. Needless to say, those candidates who read and absorb the welcome pack prior to their day have a greater chance of succeeding.

The role-play assessment is divided into two parts as follows:

- The preparation phase
- The activity phase

The two phases basically speak for themselves. The preparation phase is where you get yourself ready for the activity phase. This involves 5 minutes reading the welcome pack and also studying the scenario that you will undertake during the activity stage. The vast majority of candidates who attend the selection centre will not read the welcome pack or guidance notes until they sit down at the preparation phase. This is a huge mistake!

If you learn your role and responsibilities prior to the selection centre then you are halfway there. This will then give you plenty of time to prepare for the scenario, take notes and prepare yourself mentally. Remember that preparation is the all-important word!

## **TIP 7**

### **Be prepared to challenge inappropriate behaviour**

As we have mentioned, having respect for race and diversity is a very important part of being a PCSO. As a result, you need to be prepared to challenge, in an appropriate manner, any behaviour that is bullying, discriminatory or inappropriate.

You will be assessed against this important area throughout the selection process. In particular you may find that one of the role-play scenarios requires you to challenge the role actor due to their comments or actions. If you fail to challenge the inappropriate behaviour in the correct manner then you could fail the entire selection. The PCSO selection process will indirectly test your level of respect for race and diversity, by placing you in situations where you'll have to demonstrate this – without actually asking for you to do it.

## **TIP 8**

### **Don't stop until you achieve your goal**

If you don't reach the required standard at the first or subsequent attempts, don't give up. So long as you always try to better yourself, there is always the chance that you will succeed. If you do fail any of the stages look at the area(s) you need to improve on.

Did you fail the application form? If so then there are ways of improving. Don't just sit back and wait for the next opportunity to come along, prepare for it straight away and you'll increase your chances for next time.

Many people give up on their goals far too easily. Learning to find the positive aspects of negative situations is a difficult thing to do but a skill that anyone can acquire through

practice and determination. If you really want to achieve your goals then anything is possible.

During your preparation set yourself small targets each week. For example, your first week may be used to concentrate on learning the core competencies that are relevant to a PCSO. Your second week can be used to prepare for your written responses on the application form, and so on. If you get tired or feel de-motivated at any time during your preparation, walk away from it and give yourself a break. You may find that you come back to it re-energised, more focused and determined to succeed!

## **TIP 9**

### **Practise the role-play exercises with a friend or relative**

The role-play scenarios can be a daunting experience, especially if you've never done anything like this before. Whilst the Police Service will advise you to be yourself, there are ways in which you can prepare and subsequently increase your chances of success.

The way to prepare for the role-plays is to act them out in a room with a friend or relative. Within this guide you have been provided with a number of example role-play scenarios. Use these to practise with, and hone your skills in each area of the core competencies that are being assessed.

The only way that you will be able to understand what is required during the role-play exercises is to learn the assessable core competencies. For example, if you are being assessed against the core competency of service delivery, then you will need to demonstrate the following during each role-play scenario:

- Be professional and present an appropriate image in line with your brief and job description.
- Focus on the needs of the customer in every scenario.
- Sort out any problems as soon as possible and apologise for any errors or mistakes that have been made.
- Ask the customer whether they are satisfied with your actions or not. If they are not, then take alternative steps to make them satisfied if possible.
- Keep the customer updated on progress.

Doing all of the above, in addition to covering the other assessable areas, can be quite a difficult task. However, if you practise these skills regularly in the build up to your assessment then you will find it becomes easier and easier the more that you do.

## **TIP 10**

### **Practise a mock interview**

Mock interviews are a fantastic way to prepare for both the assessment centre and interview. They not only allow you to practise your responses to the questions, but they are fantastic for improving your confidence and overall ability.

During the build up to interviews, we recommend writing down a number of predicted interview questions, based on your research. You can then ask a friend or relative to ask you those questions, under formal interview conditions. This is an excellent preparation tool, and serves to get you prepared for the tension of the real thing.

Along with this, we also strongly recommend that you sit down in front of a long mirror and respond to the same set

of interview questions. Watch your interview technique. Do you slouch? Do you fidget and do you overuse your hands?

It is important that you work on your interview technique during the build up to the assessment centre and the final interview.

Do not make the mistake of carrying out little or no preparation, because you can be guaranteed that some of the other candidates will have prepared fully. Make sure you put in the time and effort and practise a number of mock interviews. You will be amazed at how confident you feel during the real interview.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

## INTRODUCTION

PCSO application forms vary from force to force. Regardless of the application form questions or format, there are a few fundamental principles that you need to follow whilst completing the form and these will be covered within this section of the guide.

It is important that you set aside plenty of time to complete the form correctly in order to give yourself every opportunity of success. In order to assist you in the completion of your application form we have provided you with a step-by-step guide. Please read each of the following tips very carefully.

### TIP 1

**Before you complete the application form, read it thoroughly and at least twice**

Make sure you focus on the guidance notes in particular. This is important, as there are normally some important instructions to follow. For example, some forms request that you complete them in 'black ink'. If you complete them in blue or a different colour, then your submission will be rejected.

Being able to follow simple instructions is fundamental to the role of a PCSO.

### TIP 2

**Read the job description/person specification prior to completing the form**

This is very important, as you will be assessed on your ability to match this during each stage of the selection process. The job description/person specification is sometimes split into two areas, these being the 'essential' criteria and the 'desirable' criteria.

Obviously, you must ensure that you meet the 'essential' criteria at each stage of the process in order to demonstrate that you have the potential to perform the PCSO role. The 'desirable' criteria do not necessarily have to be met, however, the more 'desirable' criteria you can meet the higher your chances of success will be.

Before we move on to tip 3, let us take a look at an example of the 'essential criteria' that are used to assess a PCSO application form.

**Essential Knowledge and Experience - Experience of working effectively as part of a team.**

In this particular example, the above 'essential' criterion forms part of the application form assessment. Therefore, when completing the form you will be asked a question that allows you to demonstrate your ability to meet this criterion. An example question that could be used to assess the above criterion is as follows:

**A key part of Police Community Support Officers' work involves recognising the benefits and importance of working in teams to achieve goals. Tell us about an occasion where you were working as part of a team in order to achieve a collective goal.**

When responding to this question it is vitally important that you provide a suitable example of when you have worked as part of a team in order to achieve a collective goal. Do not make the mistake of telling them how you *would* work in a team, but instead provide an example of where you *have* worked as part of a team and what your role was within that team.

The key to completing the application form correctly is to make sure that you meet the assessment criteria. Many



people do not read the job description/person specification and, therefore, run the risk of failing this important stage.

### **TIP 3**

#### **Use relevant examples when answering the questions**

The PCSO Application Form will pose a number of questions that are designed to assess your ability to meet the person specification. Before responding to each question read it thoroughly first. What is the question asking you to do? Take a look at the following sub-question:

#### **Tell us exactly what you did to try to sort out their problem, and why you did it.**

The above question is asking for two things:

- *What* you did
- *Why* you did it.

Therefore, your response should be relevant to both parts of the question.

Here is an example of how this question might be answered. The ‘what’ part of the question is in the first sentence and the ‘why’ part of the question in the second.

*‘Immediately I tried to defuse his anger by telling him that I fully understood his situation and that I would feel exactly the same if I was in his position. I promised him that I would resolve the situation and offered him a cup of tea or coffee whilst he waited for me to address the problem. I took this action because I feel that it is important to deliver a high level of customer service in my role. I enjoy making customers happy and resolving their problems.’*

## **TIP 4**

**When answering the questions make sure you write neatly, using the correct grammar, and that you keep within the allocated 'word count'**

Most of the PCSO person specifications will require you to have the ability to produce accurate written information and demonstrate a high level of attention to detail.

Therefore, it is important that your application form is completed accurately and in a professional manner. Try photocopying the form before you complete it and fill in a 'rough' copy first to allow for any mistakes. Many of the questions will ask for a maximum number of words. Do not go over the allocated number of words as this may affect the scoring.

The best way to check for the correct number of words is to use the 'Word Count' tool in Microsoft Word on your computer. Open up Microsoft Word and type in your response. Then go to Tools/Word Count and this will tell you how many words are in your response.

This is a fast and effective way of ensuring that you stick to the allocated word count.

## **TIP 5**

**Match the core competencies**

The PCSO core competencies form the basis of the role and they also form the basis of the assessment criteria. This means that throughout the selection process you will be assessed against these continuously. The core competencies will vary slightly from force to force. When completing the application form we suggest that you keep a copy of the core competencies next to you so that you can constantly refer to them when responding to the questions.

On the following pages we have provided you with a number of sample responses to the more common PCSO application form questions. We have provided you with a brief explanation to each question before providing a sample response. Please note that the sample responses are for demonstration purposes only. It is important that your responses are relevant to you and your own skills, knowledge and experience.

## **SAMPLE APPLICATION FORM QUESTION RESPONSES**

### **Question 1**

**It is very important that Police Community Support Officers deliver an excellent service and actively develop good working relationships with members of the public.**

**Please tell us of an occasion when you had to deal with someone who was not satisfied with the way they had been treated. If possible, give an example that extends over a period of time and where your involvement went beyond just giving advice.**

**i) Describe the situation clearly and the reason why you think they were not satisfied.**

This is a question with four parts. When answering this question, do not make the mistake of telling them how you *would* deal with such a situation, but instead explain how you *have* dealt with this type of situation in the past.

Try to include a situation where you had to contact the person more than just once, maybe to reassure them and check that they were now satisfied. A good response to this type of question would be describing where you have dealt with someone's complaint and gone out of your way to

make the situation right for them. This part of the question asks you to describe the situation clearly before stating why you think they were not satisfied. Take a look at the sample response.

### **Sample Response**

*'Whilst working as a sales person, I was approached by a dissatisfied customer. He explained to me that he had recently purchased a pair of trainers for his daughter. When she tried them on she noticed that one was a size 6 and the other a size 7.'*

*Understandably he was not happy with the service he had received. The reason for his dissatisfaction was that his daughter had been let down and as a consequence he then had to travel back into town to sort out a problem that should not have occurred in the first place. The problem was caused by poor customer service and it was important that I resolved the issue for him.'*

### **ii) What exactly did you do in response, and why?**

During this part of the question you are asked to explain what you did and the reasons why you took this course of action. Remember that part of the PCSO role is to deliver excellent service and also to develop good working relationships with members of the public, therefore your response should reflect your ability to do this. Take a look at the sample response.

### **Sample Response**

*'Immediately, I tried to defuse his anger by telling him that I fully understood his situation and that I would feel exactly the same if I was in his position. I promised him that I would resolve the situation and offered him a cup of tea or coffee while he waited for me to address the issue. I took this action*

*because I feel that it is important to deliver a high level of customer service in my role. I would not have been happy if I had been in the same situation so I was keen to put it right for him. I enjoy making customers happy and resolving their problems.'*

**iii) How did you know that the person was satisfied with your response?**

This part of the question is designed to see whether you successfully resolved the issue to the satisfaction of the person(s) concerned. When someone is satisfied with the way a complaint or issue has been dealt with, they will normally express both visual and verbal signs of satisfaction. They may smile, appear to be happy, tell you that they are satisfied or even thank you for the way that you have dealt with the problem.

When responding to this question, try to include both visual and verbal indicators that the person was satisfied. Take a look at the following sample response.

**Sample Response**

*'I could detect a change in his behaviour as soon as I explained that I sympathised with his situation. The tone in his voice became less agitated and he was now smiling so I took advantage of this situation and tried even harder to turn his bad experience with us into a positive one. When I offered him a refund, along with the replacement of the running shoes, his attitude changed again, but this time he appeared to be very satisfied. He then informed me that he would continue to shop with us despite the initial experience and thanked me for the way that I had dealt with his complaint.'*

**iv) What if you hadn't acted as you did? What do you think the likely outcome would have been?**

This part of the question is designed to see if you have the ability to understand how important excellent customer service is. If PCSOs deliver poor customer service then this is detrimental to the Police Service and does nothing but deteriorate public relations. As a PCSO, you will need to understand why it is important to deliver an excellent service and this part of the question assesses your understanding of this. Now take a look at the sample response provided.

*'To begin with, I believe the situation would have become even more heated and possibly untenable. His anger or dissatisfaction could have escalated if my attempts to defuse the situation had not taken place. I also believe that we would have lost a good customer and, therefore, lost future profits and custom for the company. There would have been a high possibility that the gentleman would have taken his complaint higher, either to our head office, trading standards or the local newspaper. Customer service is important and we need to do everything we can (within reason) to make the level of service we provide as high as possible.'*

This type of question assesses your ability to work with people from all backgrounds and, in this particular instance, there are two parts to the question. Remember to answer the question based not on how you would act in this type of situation but, instead, on how you have acted. Now take a look at the following sample response.

**Sample Response**

*'Whilst working as a sales assistant at a local supermarket, I was approached by a work colleague who was from a different background. He told me that he needed to pray whilst he was at work and he asked me if I would mind*

*covering for him on the checkout whilst he did this. I agreed to do this for him and every time he wanted to go off and pray I would stand in for him on the checkout. We differed in terms of our religious backgrounds and beliefs and, whilst I fully respect religion, I do not pray at all, whereas this was an integral part of his life.'*

**ii) How did you adapt your behaviour to interact with the other person and show you understood how they may have felt?**

During this part of the question try to demonstrate how you went out of your way to help them. It is important that you show the assessor that you are capable of supporting the person and being sensitive to their needs where appropriate.

**Sample Response**

*'I adapted my behaviour by making myself available for him whenever he needed me. I told him that I would cover for him at any time and that it was not a problem at all. I wanted to make him feel at ease about the situation, as he appeared to be slightly apprehensive about asking me. I assured him that it was no problem at all and that I understood how important it was for him to pray during the day. I adapted my behaviour by making sure I was available whenever he wanted to pray. I also gave him my mobile phone number and told him to text or call me if he couldn't find me in the supermarket. That way he knew that he could get hold of me if he needed to.'*

**Question 2**

**It is vital that Police Community Support Officers act responsibly and to a high standard within their role, regardless of their perception of the importance of the task.**

**Tell us about an occasion when you were asked to carry out a repetitive or very basic task.**

**i) What was the situation and why did the task need to be carried out?**

There are three parts to this particular question and they are designed to see if you have had any experience of carrying out repetitive or basic tasks. Many people become bored or agitated when carrying out mundane or tedious tasks. The role of the PCSO will sometimes involve repetitive work and the Police want to know that you have the ability to perform these tasks to a high standard, as and when required. When responding to the questions try to come across in a positive manner and provide a suitable example of where you successfully carried out and completed such a task. Now take a look at the following sample response.

**Sample Response**

*'Whilst working in my previous job as an administrative clerk for a production company, I was asked to send out 5,000 leaflets to different clients and customers. The task involved folding the leaflets, placing them in the envelopes and attaching stamps. The task was extremely repetitive and time-consuming. In total it took me 2 weeks solid work to complete the 5,000 requested. The task needed to be carried out so that the company could promote a new product that it was selling. This was a cost effective way of promoting the product.'*

**ii) How did you stay focused on the task?**

When responding to this question, make sure you provide evidence of your organisational and motivational skills. Try to demonstrate an understanding of the 'bigger picture' and that mundane tasks are just as important as the interesting



ones when it comes to delivering a high quality service to the public.

### **Sample Response**

*'I broke down the task into manageable portions. I ensured that I completed at least 500 every day of the week and took small five-minute breaks every half hour. By the end of the two weeks I would have completed the allocated 5,000. I realised the importance of the task and that it was essential for the business to promote its product. The company employ me and, in order for me to remain in employment with them, they need to sell their products and generate revenue. I am a highly self-motivated person and I do not mind repetitive tasks.'*

### **iii) How did you ensure the task reached a satisfactory conclusion?**

As a PCSO you will be trusted to work on your own and check that each task you carry out is done correctly. The most effective way to do this is to approach the task in an organised and methodical manner, checking everything that you do. When responding to this type of question, demonstrate a level of self-discipline and a keen eye for detail.

### **Sample Response**

*'I carried out the task methodically and in an organised manner. I maintained a list of addresses and crossed them off as each envelope was posted. This way I was able to keep a record of the ones I had completed and the ones that I still had to send off. Once I had completed the task, I randomly selected one customer from every fifty. I telephoned each one to check whether they had received the leaflet or not, and this allowed me to assess my own performance to see if I had completed the task correctly.'*

### Question 3

**A key part of Police Community Support Officers' work involves recognising the benefits and importance of working in teams to achieve goals.**

**Tell us about an occasion where you worked as part of a team in order to achieve a collective goal.**

**i) Describe the situation and the collective goal you were aiming to achieve.**

Team work is a very important part of the PCSO's working life, as he or she will need to be able to work comfortably in a team environment. These questions are designed to assess your ability to work in this way. When responding to this question ensure you provide an actual example of where you have worked as part of a team to achieve a common goal.

Take a look at the following sample response and see how the team worked effectively to achieve the common goal of building four houses in a short space of time.

#### **Sample Response**

*'In my previous job I worked as a bricklayer on a local building complex. I worked with four other bricklayers and three labourers. We were presented with a difficult team task that required us to work together and build four new homes in a very short space of time and under considerable pressure. The previous bricklayers had failed to complete the work to a satisfactory standard. The collective goal was to professionally build the four houses in a one month period, often working around the clock to meet the deadline.'*

**ii) Describe your role in the team and how you worked with others.**

Your role as a team player includes carrying out your job professionally and competently, communicating with other team members, and also providing support where needed. Try to include these three elements in your response.

**Sample Response**

*'My role in the team was to lay bricks at the gable end of each house, working alongside one of the labourers who would supply the cement and bricks. It was important that I carried out my role competently, professionally and on time. The other bricklayers built the other sides of the house and we had to work at the same pace to ensure the house was constructed evenly. We constantly communicated so that we knew what we were all doing and the progress that we had made so far. I also provided support to the other team members.'*

**iii) What challenges did you and the team encounter?**

Every team comes up against challenges. It's what you do about those challenges that is the important factor. When responding to this question, provide evidence of how you overcame the challenges in order to complete the task.

**Sample Response**

*'The main challenges were in relation to time and the inclement weather conditions. The company that we worked for wanted the task completed in a very short space of time so we had to work very long days, often with short breaks. We stayed motivated by talking and focusing on the end goal. We were building the houses during the winter months so the weather was not that great either but we were always focused on the task.'*

**iv) How did working as part of a team overcome this?**

*'We all stayed motivated right until the end goal was achieved. By talking to each other throughout the task and keeping everyone informed of our progress we were able to build up a strong team spirit. We all decided that one person should supply the hot soup each day whilst another person supplied the hot drinks in order to keep our energy levels up. Everybody had a role to perform and we weren't going to let each other down. By staying focused on our ultimate aim we were able to successfully achieve the task, much to the delight of the foreman.'*

**Question 4**

**It is important that anyone applying to be a Police Community Support Officer is motivated and fully understands the role.**

**i) What do you think you will be doing, day-to-day, as a Police Community Support Officer?**

Well, there is only one way to fully understand the role of the PCSO, and that is to read about it. Your first port of call should be your recruitment literature.

Here you will find many useful facts about the PCSO role. Try to learn the different types of jobs that a PCSO carries out, such as high-visibility, uniformed foot patrols, engaging with youths, preserving crime scenes, and interacting with schools to name but a few. Also, learn about the working hours/conditions and any information that provides an insight into a typical working day of a PCSO. You will also find some very useful contact information in the Useful Contacts section of this guide to help you research the role of the PCSO. Now take a look at the following sample response to this question.

**Sample Response**

*'As a PCSO I will be assisting the police in areas that need a certain level of police presence, but not necessarily the expertise of a trained police officer.*

*I will be giving a valuable service by providing a visible and reassuring presence within the community. I will attend incidents of disorder, nuisance and antisocial behaviour and, also, I will be dealing with community issues such as littering and dog fouling. Other tasks involve checking out abandoned vehicles, gathering evidence through observation, helping with missing persons enquiries and speaking to young people who might be drunk and causing problems. I would spend most of my time out on patrol, usually on foot or possibly on a bicycle.'*

**ii) Please explain why you would like to become a Police Community Support Officer, and what you think you can contribute.**

Only you will know the reasons why you want to become a PCSO. However, if it is to chase and catch criminals then you may wish to think twice before you apply. Before you answer this question, be fully aware of the PCSO role for the force that you are applying to. You should have a keen desire to serve the community and make a difference by interacting with the members of that community. Visit the website of the force that you are applying to join (see the Useful Contacts section) and read their vision or mission statement.

The second part of this question relates to what you think you can contribute. Be positive and upbeat in your response and put yourself across in a positive manner. Take a look at the following sample response for some useful hints and tips.

**Sample Response**

*'I would like to become a PCSO so that I can help my community. I enjoy working with people from all backgrounds and I believe that I could offer a professional and helpful service to members of the public. I believe that I would get a great deal of job satisfaction from helping others and acting as the important link between the community and the Police. I am a very good team player and always perform my tasks diligently and reliably. I understand that I would possibly have to get involved in a range of difficult situations and I am prepared for this. I have great communication skills and believe that I can talk to people in a calm and reassuring manner. I am physically fit and have the stamina for long periods of foot patrol when required. Finally, I fully appreciate the importance of the confidential nature of this work and can be relied upon to perform to a high standard at all times.'*

**Question 5**

**It is essential that PCSOs act without being told and strive to do an excellent job.**

**i) What was the situation and why did you feel the need to take the initiative?**

**ii) Exactly what did you do?**

When responding to questions of this nature you must provide an example of where you have gone out of your way to do a professional and competent job. If you can demonstrate that you have gone above and beyond what is normally required then even better. Take a look at the following sample response.

**Sample Response**

*'Whilst working in my previous role as a retail sales assistant, the manager had gone out to lunch and it was during this period that the fire alarm began to sound. It was the week before Christmas and the shop was very busy. Everybody was ignoring the alarm and I decided to take the initiative and asked everybody to evacuate the shop for their own safety. The alarm has gone off in the past, but the normal manager usually lets people stay in the shop whilst he finds out if it's a false alarm. This was a difficult situation because the shop was very busy, nobody wanted to leave and the other shop assistants were disagreeing with me in my decision to evacuate the shop. Some of the customers became irate as they were in the changing rooms at the time. I decided to take the initiative because I felt that the safety of the customers was a priority.'*

**ii) Exactly what did you do?**

*'I shouted at the top of my voice that everybody was to leave the shop immediately, even though the sound of the alarm was reducing the impact of my voice. I then told one of the other assistants to dial 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade. I asked the other shop assistants to walk around the shop and tell everybody to leave whilst we investigated the problem. Eventually, after I kept persisting, everybody began to leave the shop. I went outside with the other members of staff, took a roll call, and waited for the Fire Brigade to arrive.'*

## Question 6

**Please tell us about any other skills you have such as driving or language and/or any voluntary or community activities you have been involved with, including relevant activities to support your application.**

This question is relatively easy to respond to, providing that you have the relevant skills and experiences. It is important to provide evidence of community/voluntary work if possible. If you do not have any experience in this area, then why not consider arranging a charity event in your local area. You could arrange a sponsored run, swim or car wash in aid of a local good cause. Alternatively, why not dedicate one hour a week to working in a local charity shop? Being able to demonstrate experience of voluntary or community work will gain you higher scores.

### Sample Response

*'I have held a full clean UK driving licence for 7 years. Whilst I do not speak any additional languages, I am an excellent communicator and can respond to the needs of the community. I have regularly been involved with charity work at a local school and have helped to raise funds by organising two summer boot fairs. In total we managed to raise £1,500 for good causes in the area. I am a very fit and active person and I visit the gymnasium 3 times a week. Earlier this year, I ran the London Marathon for the first time and managed to raise £700 for a local hospital charity. Finally, I have a lot of experience of working under pressure and working as part of a team. I feel comfortable working with people from all backgrounds and believe that the skills I already possess would help me to make a competent and professional PCSO.'*



## **FINAL TIPS FOR CREATING A STRONG APPLICATION**

- Read the guidance notes carefully and followed EVERY instruction. Make the effort, and you will be rewarded.
- Follow the guidance notes at all times.
- Check your spelling, grammar and punctuation. You will lose marks if you don't.
- Before you submit your form get someone to check over it for you. Don't get someone who is going to say it's good just to please you. You need constructive feedback not praise.
- If you are sending your application form by post, send it recorded delivery. You don't want your form to go missing!

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **ABOUT THE PCSO ASSESSMENT CENTRE**

## INTRODUCTION

Once you have successfully passed the Application Form stage of the process you will be invited to attend a Regional Assessment Centre. Different constabularies have different ways of assessing you, both at the assessment centre and before you attend. Some constabularies may ask you to complete a written assessment before you even turn up to the centre, or in order to obtain an invite. In this chapter, we'll give you some top tips on how to pass written PCSO assessments, along with the other exercises.

The Assessment Centre's location will vary from force to force but you will be provided with details, times and location before you attend. Make sure you know exactly where your venue is and don't be late!

This Centre will provide the Police with information regarding your suitability for recruitment into the Police Service as a PCSO. The Selection Centre tests are usually conducted over a period of three to four hours and you will either attend in the morning or in the afternoon. For the Selection Centre you will be required to take a number of important documents with you to confirm your identification to the Police, including:

### **A full 10-year passport or TWO of the following:**

- British Driving Licence;
- P45;
- Birth Certificate: issued within six weeks of birth;
- Cheque Book and Bank Card with three statements and proof of signature;
- Card containing a photograph of yourself;
- Proof of residence, e.g. Council Tax, Gas, Electricity, Water or Telephone Bill.

Make sure that you read the information given to you and take along the relevant documents as if you do not then you won't be able to continue with the day.

Within this section of the guide we have provided you with as much information as possible to try to cover every eventuality. Please bear in mind that not all of the information will apply to you and it is important that you take the time to choose which information is applicable.

In the majority of cases the PCSO Assessment Centre tests follow a similar format as those for a regular Police Officer, with the exception that there will only be two interactive Role-Plays.

The most important thing to remember at the Assessment Centre is that you will be assessed against the Core Competencies that have been defined for your particular PCSO role.

## **WHAT IS INVOLVED AT THE SELECTION CENTRE?**

At the assessment centre you will be required to undertake two 20-minute written exercises, two interactive/role-play exercises and a competency-based interview, this is the national standard, however some Police services include extra criteria such as Numerical and Verbal reasoning. Always check with the service you are joining for the exact assessment tests you will likely face on the day.

In the written and interactive exercises, you will have to assume a fictitious role and deal with two scenarios. During the interview you will be asked questions about how you have dealt with situations in your past. We have provided

you with in-depth information to help you pass this stage in the Interview section of this guide. Before you attend the centre you will be given an information pack and you must read and familiarise yourself with all of its content. Now let's take a look at the written tests and how you can prepare for them.

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# **CHAPTER 5**

## **ASSESSMENT CENTRE – THE WRITTEN EXERCISES**

## THE WRITTEN EXERCISES – REPORT WRITING

During the assessment centre you will be asked to take two written exercises. These will require you to create an **Incident Report Form**, based on the information given during the exercise. The following is an overview of the two exercises that you will have to carry out:

**Written Exercise One.** In this exercise, you will need to deal with a customer. The customer will be writing in to complain about how an incident was dealt with by your centre's security guard. You will be given 7 different sheets of paper, each containing a different take (from different witnesses) on the incident. Normally one of these will be from the security guard, detailing his view. You may or may not also be given CCTV based evidence (in written form) to look over. All 7 witness reports will differ, and therefore there will be discrepancies.

Your job is to write down the facts of the case, and at the end, make a recommendation about what should be done.

**Written Exercise Two.** In this exercise, you will watch a 12 minute DVD of an interview between a witness to an incident at a shopping centre, and the security staff working at the centre. You will be allowed to take notes during the screening, but there will be no pauses or breaks, and therefore you will need to take down as much important information as possible whilst watching the DVD. Your job is to take down all of the facts, and construct this into an incident report form, all whilst watching the DVD.

When you create a written report, the assessor is looking for a well-structured piece of writing that is logical and relevant. You should demonstrate a good use and understanding of

grammar, and aim to make zero spelling or grammatical errors. **This is extremely important.** You also need to make sure that your handwriting is neat and tidy, as this could reflect badly with your assessors.

The biggest factor in passing or failing this assessment, is your attention to detail. You cannot afford to miss key pieces of evidence or facts of the case, as you will be penalised for this. A great way to practice for the first exercise in particular is to look at a magazine or newspaper which reports on a particular event. Take a pen and paper, look through the story and then try to write down the key facts about the case.

The written report is an area of the police officer assessment process that many people do not think they need to practice. They use their preparation time before their assessment date predominantly looking at the role-plays and the interview. The written report can actually gain you the highest percentage of marks out of all the assessment tests. This could mean the difference between a pass and a fail.

## **WHAT IS AN INCIDENT REPORT FORM?**

An Incident Report Form refers to a written summary of the facts of the incident. For example, what clothes the suspect was wearing, the consequences of the crime, what was stolen and what time the incident occurred. As we have mentioned, you should aim to take a structured approach to your report, which quickly relays the factual details of the incident and does not give any irrelevant information.

On the following page, we have provided you with an example of what you might expect to see in the two written exercises.



## INCIDENT REPORT FORM: EXERCISE 1

Take a look at the following passage, and then construct an incident report form based on what you read.

*At 21:17 on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 2015, a man was seen running away from Al's Pizza Restaurant, down Ficsire Lane. A witness reported seeing the man leap over a garden fence, disappearing from view. At 21:19, the fire service were called to the restaurant, as the entire left hand side wall of the building had gone up in flames. Unfortunately, this resulted in 3 fatalities, and a further 2 people were taken to hospital with serious injuries. Further investigation has revealed that the fire was a result of arson. The owner of the restaurant has revealed that he is devastated by the impact of the blaze, and has apologised sincerely to the families who have been impacted.*

*The witness in question was named Norris. He has white hair, glasses and a goatee beard. He works at the local confectionary shop and was just closing up for the night, when he noticed the man running away down the street. Norris described the man as having short blonde hair, with a fringe over his eyes, wearing red tracksuit bottoms and a green sweatshirt. He believes that the man was 5 ft 7 in height and wore glasses. Norris claims that he would have tackled the man himself, but he has a bad hip and has just come out of surgery. Therefore, he could not chase the man.*

*Norris claims that he shouted after the man, but the individual did not respond. When he went to look over the fence, at house number 94, the man had gone. At the scene, a can of petrol was found, along with a lighter and an old bus receipt. The taxi station next door to the restaurant closed down 2 days ago, after the owner went bankrupt.*

## HOW TO ANSWER THIS

As we have mentioned, the best way to answer this type of question is to carefully go through the passage, and make sure that you are clear on what is relevant and what is irrelevant. For example, looking at the passage, you should be able to notice that how the witness looks is entirely irrelevant. For this reason, you shouldn't include such information in your report, and you will be penalised for doing so. Think only about what matters to the case. Essentially, all you are being asked to do is summarise the key facts. Providing you are observant, this shouldn't be too difficult.

Now, take a look at our sample Incident Report Form, based on the passage:

### Sample Response

*The following has been written in response to the incident that occurred at 21:17 on the 24th August 2015, at Ficshire Lane.*

*The incident in question surrounds a fire that took place at Al's Pizza Restaurant. At 21:19, the fire service were called to tackle a blaze that had engulfed the entire left hand wall of the building. Unfortunately, this incident resulted in 3 deaths, and 2 further people being taken to hospital with serious injuries. An investigation into the incident has revealed that the fire was a result of arson. Therefore, a criminal investigation needs to be launched.*

*To add to the criminal investigation, we have the testimony of a shop worker who was walking home past the scene of the crime. He claims to have seen a man with short blonde hair and a fringe over his glasses, running away from the scene. The man was wearing red tracksuit bottoms and a green*

*sweatshirt, and was 5 ft 7 in height. When the witness called out to him, he was ignored. The man jumped over a garden fence and then escaped from view. This man is high priority and needs to be questioned immediately by the police.*

*Evidence found at the scene included a can of petrol, a lighter and an old bus receipt.*

Now that you've seen how to tackle this type of question, take a look at the question below, and try to construct your own response based on the passage:

## **INCIDENT REPORT FORM: EXERCISE 2**

*On the afternoon of 14th May 2015, police were called to an incident at a house in West Ficshire. They entered the premises at 17:17, to discover a crying child, blood on the floor and a woman locked in a bedroom. The child was the person who had called the police. He claims that his father, John Jacob, assaulted his mother after an argument. John Jacobs is a car engineer who runs his own business in South Ficshire. He has been in charge of the company for 4 years, after previously working in sales administration. The boy claims that his mother locked herself in the bedroom, after a punch to the jaw left her bleeding heavily. The boy's mother is named Mary Jacob, and works at a sewing factory. After unlocking the bedroom door, Mary Jacob corroborated her son's account of events.*

*The police also decided to interview the Jacobs' next door neighbours. The neighbours are named Mary-Sue Smith and Jonathon Smith. Mary-Sue works at a publishing firm, and Jonathon works as a housing developer. Mary-Sue has short white hair and walks with the aid of a cane. She claims that she heard violent shouting from next door, followed by*

*the sound of a woman begging a man not to hit her. She then heard a bedroom door slam, followed by the front door opening and a car screeching away outside. She told the police that John Jacob drives a red Aston Martin, with the number plate PPY 727Z.*

*Mr Jacob has not been seen since the incident, and is wanted by the police.*

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**Sample Response**

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## **INCIDENT REPORT FORM: EXERCISE 3**

As we have mentioned, during the first part of the written exercise, you will be given statements from various witnesses to an incident. The above exercises should have given you a good idea of how to answer this. Now, let's look at an exercise which contains direct statements from witnesses. Read through the below information and then have a go at answering the question.

*An incident has occurred at Ficshire shopping centre. One of the customers had written in to complain that a security guard behaved aggressively towards her, and tried to steal her bag. Below are 3 witness statements from the event. Read through them carefully and lay out the facts in an incident report form, before giving a brief recommendation on what the next steps should be.*

### **Witness 1**

My name is Henry, and this is what I saw:

At 15:00 today, I was walking out of the sports shop in the Ficshire shopping centre. I'd been there to pick up a new pair of white trainers, which I was going to wear to my friend's birthday party. I'd put them on when I left the shop, because I was fed up of wearing my dad's shoes. As I walked past the escalator, I stopped to look at a sign which was posted on the wall. The sign was talking about achieving justice for a gorilla at the local zoo, which had just been euthanized. I'd read about the story in the local newspaper, but didn't realise it was a big deal. Anyway as I stopped to study it, I noticed two people arguing right next to me. One of them was the local security guard. In his hand, he was holding a pink handbag. He was arguing with a blonde girl, who was

claiming that she didn't steal the bag and wanted it back from him. The girl was wearing a blue dress, with white socks and black slip on shoes. I'd say she was quite tall, about five foot 7 or 8, but there was a pretty girl behind her who had brown hair and green eyes; so I wasn't paying too much attention. The security guard didn't seem to believe the girl, and was holding the bag at arms' length. Eventually she started getting really angry and when he radioed for assistance, she smacked him right in the face, from out of nowhere! The girl with brown hair screamed. He dropped the bag and the blonde girl ran off with it. I went over to the security guard to help him, even though really I just wanted to talk to the brown haired girl, and then left the shopping centre at 15:15.

## **Witness 2**

My name is Gemma, and this is what I saw:

At 10 past 3 in the afternoon, I was coming up the escalator to the second floor of the shopping centre. I'd been shopping for some premium dog food, for my two German Shepherds, when I noticed two people arguing. One of the people, the security guard at the shopping centre, was shouting at a girl with blonde hair, in a blue dress. I noticed that she had breadcrumbs all over the front of her dress, and heard her say that her name was Katie. She was about 5 ft 7 in height. There was a girl standing behind her who I used to know from school, and didn't really like very much. I was trying not to make eye contact with her but I definitely think she saw me, even though she was on her phone. Her hair is brown now but it used to be blonde. It looks awful! The blonde girl was politely asking for her pink bag back, and claimed that there had been a mistake. The man just kept shouting

at her, and was very aggressive. Eventually, Katie got very frustrated. She punched him in the face, and then ran off with the bag; past the big gorilla sign hanging on the wall. I hadn't noticed that sign before but as someone who goes to the zoo, I was really upset to hear the gorilla had been euthanized. I then left the shopping centre at half past 3.

### **Witness 3**

My name is Josh, and this is what I saw:

At 5 past 3 in the afternoon, I was shopping with my girlfriend in a local handbag store, *Handbags Rock*. We were looking for a cheap handbag for my Mum's birthday. I didn't know what to pick so I'd brought her along to help me out. We had been arguing over the prices all day. I felt that \$50 was far too much for a handbag, but she thought we should be spending much more. While arguing, we were stood next to a fairly tall girl in a blue dress, who kept glancing over at the security staff. She was eating a sandwich. At one point she dropped the sandwich, but quickly picked it up again off the floor and resumed eating it. I was studying a nice cheap red handbag; when to the shock of both me and my girlfriend, the blonde girl snatched a handbag off the shelf and ran out of the shop! We couldn't remember if the handbag was red or pink, but we were surprised that no alarms went off. Luckily, a security guard noticed it, and quickly ran after her. He didn't seem very fast though. We dashed outside to see what was happening, and after a few moments of searching, saw the security guard lying on the floor with a bloody nose. The girl was nowhere to be seen. The guard was helped to his feet by a strange looking boy in white trainers, who informed us that a blonde girl had punched him. He kept trying to get the attention of another girl, on the other side of



the escalator. It wasn't working. We went directly over and offered to give a statement.

## **HOW TO ANSWER THIS**

When answering this question, you need to take the same approach that we did in the first two questions, whereby the report was written out in clear paragraphs and sentences. At all times, make sure you are paying close attention to the facts. Your recommendation at the end of the exercise counts for only a small proportion of the mark. Do not use information which isn't evident from the passage, and don't include irrelevant details (inserted to throw you off) for example including the fact that Josh thinks \$50 is too much for a handbag, or that there was a gorilla sign on the wall.

**Below we have included a list of facts from the extract, in a bullet point list. Use textbox below the list to turn these into an incident report form, similar to the previous exercises.**

- The incident in question occurred between 10 past 3 and quarter past 3, on the second floor of the Ficshire Shopping Centre, at the top of the escalator.
- A girl, named Katie, was accused by a security guard of stealing a pink handbag from the store *Handbags Rock*.
- The girl was wearing a blue dress, with white socks and black slip on shoes. She had been eating a sandwich and had breadcrumbs on the front of her dress. She had blonde hair and was five foot 7 in height.
- After an argument with the security guard, Katie punched the guard and ran off with the dress. It is not clear whether the security guard behaved aggressively, but it

is certain that Katie did behave aggressively in striking him.

- My recommendation would be to examine the CCTV footage of this incident carefully. There should be CCTV both in the shop and in the shopping centre where the alleged incident took place. This will allow us to examine whether the customer did actually steal the bag (in which case her complaint is unfounded) and then take criminal action against her.

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## VISUAL EXERCISE

The second half of this exercise will be more challenging, and will require you to recognise visual evidence. You will be shown a DVD of an interview between a witness to an incident, and a shop assistant/employee of an effected organisation, and will then be required to create an Incident Report Form based on what was said in the video.

Where the first exercise will challenge you on what it was you read, now you will be challenged on your ability to **listen**. Similarly to the first task, you need to be able to distinguish relevant information from irrelevant, and construct a well written report. The purpose of this exercise is for the assessors to determine whether you are someone who can work accurately under pressure, who will not allow any preconceived judgements or opinions to get in the way of good police work.

Here are some things to look out for during the visual exercise:

- Pay close attention to what the person being interviewed is saying. You will not be given a second watch of the DVD, and therefore you need to glean as much detail from the first watch as possible.

- Watch out for any discrepancies or contradictions. Remember that not all witnesses are reliable, sometimes the witness may contradict themselves. In your report form, you will be given a space for further notes, where you can mention this; however the main body of the report form should only consist of facts.

- Remember that not every witness will be clear in what they are saying. People speak in a variety of different ways, and come from a variety of different backgrounds. You need to

try as hard as possible to understand **everyone** who is being interviewed. At times, the interviewer in the DVD should make this easier for you by clarifying certain things.

-This exercise will test your perception of individuals. Remember that police officers are unbiased and never discriminatory. You should treat every single person that you meet in a fair and positive manner.

-Remember that the aim of this exercise isn't to find out whether someone is lying, it's to find out the truth. The people being interviewed aren't suspects, they are witnesses.

Now, take a look at our sample exercise below. The following is a **transcript** of an interview. During the real exercise, you will be required to physically watch a video.

### INCIDENT REPORT FORM: EXERCISE 3

The following is a transcript between a shop manager and a witness to an incident that occurred on Ficshire Lane, on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

The shop manager is named Mr Rodgers, who owns *BuyYourThings* and the employee is Lucas Hill.

.....

**Mr Rodgers:** Thank you for taking the time to see me, Mr Hill.

**Lucas Hill:** No problem, happy to help.

**Mr Rodgers:** Now, I understand that you were the witness to a shoplifting incident earlier today, at *BuyYourThings*. Is that right?

**Lucas Hill:** That's right.

**Mr Rodgers:** Can you tell me what you saw?

**Lucas Hill:** Well, at the time I was walking my dog. We took a stroll around Silverdale and I then got home at 12:00. I then headed to the University, where I sell pizza for charity. On my way to the University, I passed your shop. I've been in once or twice before, to pick up some things for my wife. I noticed a man in a hood hanging around suspiciously outside the door. He seemed anxious and was concealing his face. Then, he dashed into the shop. A few seconds later I heard an alarm go off and he ran back out of the door with several items under his arm, jumped into a blue getaway car down the street and was gone.

**Mr Rodgers:** Do you know what time the man ran into the shop?

**Lucas Hill:** Ummmm...I would say 12 o'clock but that would be quite illogical, since that's what time I got home. I imagine that I left home at about 20 past 12, so I'd say about half past 12.

**Mr Rodgers:** Did you notice what items the man stole?

**Lucas Hill:** I didn't see anything, since he had several things concealed under his shirt and in his navy tracksuit bottoms, but I know that he definitely had a box with a phone in it in his hand. I recognised the logo. That's all though.

**Mr Rodgers:** What about the getaway car?

**Lucas Hill:** I believe it was a red ford fiesta.

**Mr Rodgers:** Right. And did you catch any glimpse of the man's facial features?

**Lucas Hill:** Not really. He was quite short, probably a good 2 inches shorter than me...and I'm 5 ft 8. So he was probably about 5 ft 4, or 5 ft 5.

**Mr Rodgers:** Any distinguishing facial qualities?

**Lucas Hill:** Oh yes...I was quite surprised because he was clean shaven and for some reason I always thought of most criminals as having beards.

**Mr Rodgers:** You said that he was wearing a hoodie. Did it have a logo on it, or a particular colour? What about his shoes?

**Lucas Hill:** He was wearing white trainers...the hoodie was black and had a red logo in the chest area.

**Mr Rodgers:** What happened after the man had escaped from the shop?

**Lucas Hill:** Well, the first thing I did was rush into the shop to check that everything was okay. The manager at the time, Wendy, was on the phone to the police. Some of the shop shelves and displays had been knocked down in the confusion and there was also some glass on the floor. I immediately set about assisting the shop employees with tidying up the floor.

**Mr Rodgers:** Did any of them say anything to you about the robbery?

**Lucas Hill:** Erm...I'm not sure, why?

**Mr Rodgers:** When an incident such as this occurs, it's important for us to make certain that nobody inside our establishment was involved.

**Lucas Hill:** No, I don't think so. Or at least, nobody said anything incriminating to me. We just chatted generally about tidying up, and they all made sure to thank me once I left.

**Mr Rodgers:** Thank you for providing me with all of that information, Mr Hill. As you can guess, the thieves have taken a significant amount of valuable items.

**Lucas Hill:** Yes, I can imagine that the laptop he stole was quite expensive...

**Mr Rodgers:** Very. If we need further information, we might contact you again. Are you okay with this?

**Lucas Hill:** Sure, no problem.

## How to answer this

Just as we did in the first exercise, you should take a structured approach to answering this question. Make sure that you establish what facts are relevant, and what facts are irrelevant. For example, we don't need to know that Mr Hill was walking his dog earlier in the day, but we do need to know what he was doing at the time, or what the suspect was wearing. These are **key facts** and are very important to your report.

Now, take a look at our sample response to this question.



## SAMPLE RESPONSE

*The following has been written in response to the burglary incident that occurred at BuyYourThings, at 12:30 pm, on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015.*

*On the day in question, Lucas Hill (the witness) was walking to work. On his way through Ficshire Lane, he claims to have noticed a suspicious looking character hanging around outside the shop named BuyYourThings. He describes this character in the following way:*

*-Male, approximately 5 ft 5, clean shaven, wearing blue tracksuit bottoms, a black hoodie with a red logo and white trainers.*

*Mr Hill claims that as he walked past the shop, the man ran into the premises, and a few seconds later emerged with several items of value. Mr Hill did not see many of these items, as they were concealed within the man's clothing. However, he claims to have recognised a box containing a phone, and later a laptop. It is notable that Mr Hill contradicts himself on this point, as he earlier states that the only item he saw was the box containing the phone.*

*Mr Hill then states that the man escaped from the scene in a Blue Ford Fiesta. However, he also contradicts himself on this point, later describing the car as red.*

*The result of this crime was that several high value items were stolen, and there was significant damage to the shop. Both Mr Hill and Mr Rodgers note that shelves were damaged, shop displays were knocked over and glass was smashed during the robbery. Along with the psychological impact of the crime, and the theft, this amounts to a criminal offence.*

*Now that you've seen how to go about tackling this type of exercise, have a go at the sample exercise below.*

## INCIDENT REPORT FORM: EXERCISE 4

The following is a transcript of a conversation between a restaurant owner, and a witness to an incident that occurred on the 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2014.

The restaurant owner is named Ramshad Siddique, and the witness is named Alicia Brooks.

.....

**Ramshad:** Thank you for agreeing to see me, Mrs Brooks.

**Alicia:** No problem, I hope I can help.

**Ramshad:** As you know, there have been a spate of recent graffiti incidents in foreign restaurants around the town.

**Alicia:** That's right.

**Ramshad:** I'm led to believe that you witnessed somebody defacing our property an hour ago?

**Alicia:** I believe so, yes.

**Ramshad:** Can you tell me exactly what you saw?

**Alicia:** Well, I work in the jewellers down the road, and walk past your restaurant on my way home for lunch. I was on my way back when I saw somebody with their back to me. I could immediately smell fresh paint, and what sounded like a spraying noise. Upon closer inspection, I realised that the individual with their back to me was spray painting the front of your restaurant window, with what looked like offensive words.

**Ramshad:** And what did you do next?

**Alicia:** Well, I was quite torn. If I confronted the person, they might react aggressively, but if I stood back and let them continue then I would be allowing them to break the law. I decided to speak up. Unfortunately, I barely had a time to get out a full sentence before the person dropped their spray paint, pushed me out the way and ran away down the street.

**Ramshad:** Were you hurt? And did you catch a glimpse of their face?

**Alicia:** No, I was a little shaken but not hurt. I did get a good view of their face actually, yes. It was a teenage boy, no more than 14 or 15 years old I'd say. He had brown hair, green eyes and a piercing in his left ear.

**Ramshad:** Can you tell me what he was wearing?

**Alicia:** He was dressed in black, from head to toe...although his front and trousers were absolutely covered in red spray paint.

**Ramshad:** That's very useful information. Did the boy say anything to you?

**Alicia:** He swore when he saw me. He had a distinctive Scottish accent...very gruff.

**Ramshad:** Right, and as you say this was an hour ago?

**Alicia:** Yes, at 13:15. I was going to call the police but I thought it would be better to wait for you to get back to survey the damage.

**Ramshad:** Unfortunately this is not the first such incident. An individual with a similar description has been defacing our property before, but we've never been able to catch them. Luckily now we've got the dropped can of spray paint to use

as evidence.

**Alicia:** The person in question was wearing gloves, so you might struggle to get fingerprints.

**Ramshad:** Ah, that's a shame. I'm sure it will be useful though. Did you see anything else that you think might be useful? And would you be willing to testify against this person if we took the issue to the police?

**Alicia:** No, that's all I saw, but yes I'd be very happy to testify if necessary.

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**Sample Response**

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## **FINAL TIPS FOR PASSING THE WRITTEN EXERCISES**

- In the build-up to your assessment, practise plenty of report writing.
- Improve your spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Do not use words that you find hard to spell.
- Make sure your handwriting is neat, tidy and legible.
- Do not spend too long reading the documentation and paperwork that you are provided with. You need to allocate sufficient time to write your report or letter.

When creating your written report or letter, use the documentation provided to make suggestions as to how the situation could be improved or addressed.

We would also strongly recommend that you state the reasons why you have chosen that particular course of action.

Where appropriate, deal with the issue in a constructive manner and always use correct spelling and grammar.

# **CHAPTER 6**

## **ASSESSMENT CENTRE - Numerical & Verbal Reasoning Test**

## **SAMPLE VERBAL AND NUMERICAL REASONING TESTS**

As previously mentioned the national standard for PCSO assessment test criteria consists of two 20-minute written exercises, two interactive/role-play exercises and a competency-based interview. However some Police services add extra criteria, to assess a candidates suitability for the role, these can include Numerical and Verbal Reasoning tests. For clarification please check with the service you are applying to join for the exact assessment tests you will face.

To assist you in preparation of these tests, please see sample tests below.

### **Verbal Reasoning Question number 1**

A fire has occurred in a nightclub belonging to Harry James. One person died in the fire, which occurred at 11pm on Saturday night. The club was insured for less than its value.

QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?

1. The fire occurred at 1100 hours.
2. A relative of Harry James was killed in the fire.
3. If the insurance company decide to pay out for the fire, Harry James stands to make a profit.
4. The fire was caused by arson.
5. The club was not insured at the time of the fire.

### **Verbal Reasoning Question number 2**

An accident occurred on the M6 motorway between junctions 8 and 9 southbound at 3pm. The driver of a Ford Fiesta was



seen to pull into the middle lane without indicating, forcing another car to veer into the central reservation. One person suffered a broken arm and was taken to hospital before the police arrived.

#### QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?

1. The accident was on the M6 motorway on the carriageway that leads to Scotland.
2. The driver of the Ford Fiesta was injured in the crash.
3. The central reservation was responsible for the accident.
4. The police did not give first aid at the scene.
5. The accident happened at 1500 hours.

### Verbal Reasoning Question number 3

A man of between 30 and 35 years of age was seen stealing a car from outside Mrs Brown's house yesterday. He was seen breaking the nearside rear window with a hammer before driving off at 40 miles per hour. He narrowly missed a young mother who was pushing a pram.

#### QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?

1. The man who stole the car was 34 years old.
2. He stole Mrs Brown's car.
3. The young mother who was pushing a pram was injured.
4. He used a hammer to smash the windscreen.
5. When he drove off he was breaking the speed limit.

## **Verbal Reasoning Question number 4**

A shopkeeper called Mr Smith was seen serving alcohol to a girl aged 16.

The girl had shown him fake ID, which was a driving licence belonging to her sister. The incident occurred at around 11.30pm on a Wednesday evening during December.

QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?

1. The girl is old enough to purchase alcohol from Mr Smith.
2. The girl purchased the alcohol for her sister.
3. The girl's sister had given the driving licence to her.
4. Mr Smith will receive a custodial sentence for his actions.

## **Verbal Reasoning Question number 5**

Following a bank robbery in a town centre, 6 masked gunmen were seen speeding away from the scene in a black van. The incident, which happened in broad daylight in front of hundreds of shoppers, was picked up by CCTV footage. Police are appealing for witnesses. The local newspaper has offered a £5,000 reward for any information leading to the conviction of all the people involved.

QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?

1. The car in which the gunmen drove off was a black van.
2. Someone must have seen something.
3. The incident was picked up by CCTV cameras.

4. The newspaper will pay £5,000 for information leading to the arrest of all of the men involved.
5. Police are not appealing to members of the public for help.

### **Verbal Reasoning Question number 6**

A factory fire at 'Stevenage Supplies' was arson, the police have confirmed. A man was seen running away from the scene shortly before the fire started. Earlier that day a man was sacked from the company for allegedly stealing money from the safe. The incident is the second one to occur at the factory in as many months.

QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?

1. Police have confirmed that the fire at the factory was arson.
2. The man who was seen running away from the fire was the man who started it.
3. One previous 'fire-related' incident has already occurred at the factory.
4. The man who was sacked from the factory may have started the fire.

### **Verbal Reasoning Question number 7**

At 1800 hours today police issued a statement in relation to the crime scene in Armstrong Road. Police have been examining the scene all day and reports suggest that it may be murder. Forensic officers have been visiting the incident and inform us that the whole street has been cordoned off

and nobody will be allowed through. Police say that the street involved will be closed for another 18 hours and no access will be available to anyone during this time.

#### QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?

1. Police have confirmed the incident is murder.
2. Forensic officers have now left the scene.
3. The road will be open at 12 noon the following day.
4. Although the street has been cordoned off, taxis and buses will be given access.
5. Forensic officers will be at the scene all night.

#### Verbal Reasoning Question number 8

Mrs Rogers telephoned the police at 8pm to report a burglary at her house in Gamble Crescent. She reports that she came home from work and her front bedroom window was open but she doesn't remember leaving it open. She informs the police that her jewellery box is missing and also £40 cash, which was left on the kitchen table. She came home from work at 5pm and left again at 7am in the morning. No other signs of forced entry were visible.

#### QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?

1. The burglar made his/her way in through the bedroom window.
2. The burglar took the jewellery and £40 cash before leaving.
3. Mrs Rogers was away from the house for 10 hours in total.

4. Mrs Rogers may have left the window open herself before leaving for work.
5. There were other visible signs of forced entry.

### **Verbal Reasoning Question number 9**

The local bank was held up at gunpoint on Monday the 18th of September at approximately 4pm. The thieves used a black motorcycle to make their getaway. The following facts are also known about the incident:

- Two shots were fired.
- There were 12 staff members on duty at the time of the raid.
- The alarm was raised by the manager and the police were called.
- The cashier was ordered to hand over a bag of money containing £7,000.
- The thieves have not yet been caught.
- Police are appealing for witnesses.

#### **QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?**

1. The thieves have been caught.
2. The cashier raised the alarm.
3. The cashier was shot.
4. Two people were injured.
5. The bank was open for business at the time of the robbery.

## Verbal Reasoning Question number 10

A father and son were found dead in their two-bedroom flat in Sparsbrook on Sunday evening. They had both been suffocated. The following facts are also known:

- The victims were identified by the police as Mark Webster, 16 years old, and his father, Thomas Webster, 39 years old.
- Thomas was in debt to the sum of £37,000.
- Two men were seen leaving the house at 4pm on Sunday afternoon.
- Two men were seen acting suspiciously in the area on Saturday evening before driving off in a Brown Ford Escort car.
- Thomas had previously contacted the police to express his concerns about his safety following threats from his creditors.
- The house had not been broken into.

### QUESTIONS – TRUE, FALSE OR IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY?

1. The people Thomas owed money to could have been responsible for the deaths.
2. The two men seen leaving the house were not responsible for the deaths of Mark Webster and Thomas Webster.
3. The house had been broken into.
4. Neighbours reported two men acting suspiciously in the area on Saturday evening.
5. The people responsible for the deaths drove off in a brown Ford Escort car.

## ANSWERS TO VERBAL REASONING QUESTIONS

### Question 1

1. False
2. Impossible to say
3. False
4. Impossible to say
5. False

### Question 2

1. False
2. Impossible to say
3. False
4. True
5. True

### Question 3

1. Impossible to say
2. Impossible to say
3. False
4. False
5. Impossible to say

### Question 4

1. False
2. Impossible to say
3. Impossible to say
4. Impossible to say

### **Question 5**

1. True
2. Impossible to say
3. True
4. False
5. False

### **Question 6**

1. True
2. Impossible to say
3. Impossible to say
4. True

### **Question 7**

1. False
2. Impossible to say
3. True
4. False
5. Impossible to say

### **Question 8**

1. Impossible to say
2. Impossible to say
3. False
4. True
5. False



**Question number 9**

1. False.
2. False.
3. Impossible to say.
4. Impossible to say.
5. Impossible to say.

**Question number 10**

1. True.
2. Impossible to say.
3. False.
4. Impossible to say.
5. Impossible to say.

**NUMERICAL REASONING TEST:**

**1.** A wallet has been found containing one £20 note, five £5 notes, a fifty pence coin and three 2 pence coins. How much is in the wallet?

Answer

**2.** Subtract 200 from 500, add 80, subtract 30 and multiply by 2. What number do you have?

Answer

**3.** A multi-storey car park has 8 floors and can hold 72 cars on each floor. In addition to this there is also allocation for 4 disabled parking spaces per floor. How many spaces are there in the entire car park?

Answer

**4.** A man saves £12.50 per month. How much would he have saved after 1 year?

Answer

**5.** If there have been 60 accidents along one stretch of a motorway in the last year, how many on average have occurred each month?

Answer

**6.** Out of 40,000 applicants only 4,000 are likely to be successful. What percentage will fail?

Answer

**7.** What percentage of 400 is 100?

Answer

**8.** Malcolm's shift commences at 0615 hours. If his shift is 10.5 hours long what time will he finish?

Answer

**9.** If Mary can bake 12 cakes in 2 hours how many will she bake in 10 hours?

Answer

**10.** If there are 24 hours in the day. How many hours are there in one week?

Answer

**11.** Susan has 10 coins and gives 5 of them to Steven and the remainder to Alan. Alan gives 3 of his coins to Steven who in turn gives half of his back to Susan. How many is Susan left with?

Answer

**12.** Add 121 to 54. Now subtract 75 and multiply by 10. What is the result?

Answer

**13.** Ahmed leaves for work at 8am and arrives at work at 9.17am. He then leaves work at 4.57pm and arrives back at home at 6.03pm. How many minutes has Ahmed spent travelling?

Answer

**14.** A car travels at 30 km/h for the first hour, 65km/h for the second hour, 44 km/h for the third hour and 50 km/h for the fourth hour. What is the car's average speed over the 4-hour journey?

Answer

**15.** Your friends tell you their electricity bill has gone up from £40 per month to £47 per month. How much extra are they now paying per year?

A	B	C	D	E
£84	£85	£83	£86	£82

**16.** A woman earns a salary of £32,000 per year. How much would she earn in 15 years?

A	B	C	D	E
£280,000	£380,000	£480,000	£260,000	460,000

**17.** If a police officer walks the beat for 6 hours at a pace of 4km/h, how much ground will she have covered after the 6 hours is over?

A	B	C	D	E
20km	21km	22km	23km	24km

**18.** It takes Malcolm 45 minutes to walk 6 miles to work. At what pace does he walk?

A	B	C	D	E
7 mph	4 mph	6 mph	5 mph	8 mph

**19.** Ellie spends 3 hours on the phone talking to her friend abroad. If the call costs 12 pence per 5 minutes, how much does the call cost in total?

A	B	C	D	E
£3.30	£4.32	£3.32	£4.44	£3.44

**20.** A woman spends £27 in a retail store. She has a discount voucher that reduces the total cost to £21.60. How much discount does the voucher give her?

A	B	C	D	E
5%	10%	15%	20%	25%

**21.** A group of 7 men spend £21.70 on a round of drinks. How much does each of them pay if the bill is split evenly?

A	B	C	D	E
£3.00	£65.10	£3.10	£3.15	£3.20

**22.** 45,600 people attend a football match to watch Manchester United play Tottenham Hotspur. If there are 32,705 Manchester United supporters at the game, how many Tottenham Hotspur supporters are there?

A	B	C	D	E
12,985	13,985	12, 895	12,895	14, 985

**23.** The police are called to attend a motorway accident involving a coach full of passengers. A total of 54 people are on board, 17 of whom are injured. How many are not injured?

A	B	C	D	E
40	39	38	37	36

**24.** A car journey usually takes 6 hrs and 55 minutes, but on one occasion the car stops for a total of 47 minutes. How long does the journey take on this occasion?

A	B	C	D	E
6 hrs 40 mins	5 hrs 45 mins	7 hrs 40 mins	7 hrs 42 mins	6 hrs 42 mins

**25.** There are 10 people in a team. Five of them weigh 70 kg each and the remaining 5 weigh 75 kg each. What is the average weight of the team?

A	B	C	D	E
72.5 kg	71.5 kg	70.5 kg	72 kg	71 kg

## ANSWERS TO NUMERICAL REASONING QUESTIONS

1. £45.56
2. 700
3. 608
4. £150
5. 5
6. 90%
7. 25%
8. 1645 hours or 4.45pm
9. 60 cakes
10. 168
11. 4
12. 1000
13. 143 minutes
14. 47.25 km/h
15. A. £84
16. C. £480,000
17. E. 24km
18. E. 8mph
19. B. £4.32
20. D. 20%
21. C. £3.10
22. D. 12,895
23. D. 37
24. D. 7 hrs 42 minutes
25. A. 72.5 kg

# **CHAPTER 7**

## **ASSESSMENT CENTRE THE ROLE-PLAY EXERCISES**



During the PCSO selection centre you will be required to undertake 2 role-play exercises. Most candidates are very nervous about the role-play exercises but there really is no need to feel like this providing you remember to remain calm and focus on the core competencies.

Prior to the role-play exercises you will be provided with a very thorough brief. This is an ideal time to ask any questions that you may have.

The exercises take the following format:

### **Preparation phase (5 minutes)**

During the preparation phase you are allowed 5 minutes in which to read all of the information provided. During this time you will be required to sit at a desk immediately outside the role-play room.

Here, you will read all of the information provided and you will be permitted to take notes on the subject matter in order to assist you.

During the 5 minutes preparation phase it is important to read all of the facts. What are the main issues surrounding the incident? What are the company policies that relate to the incident? What levels of customer service are expected?

Once the 5 minutes of the preparation phase are over you will then go into the activity phase of the role-play.

You will be permitted to take your notes into the role-play and make reference to them but you will not be able to take any writing implements with you.

### **Activity phase (5 minutes)**

When you walk into the room there will be a role-play actor and also at least one role-play assessor. Do not worry about

the assessors but try to focus on the task in hand. During the role-play activity the assessor will normally be sat down throughout the whole duration of the exercise.

The type of scenario that you may be presented with is as follows:

## **ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 1**

You are the customer services manager for a fictitious retail centre. A lady has made a complaint about an incident that occurred two weeks ago. Six youths barged into her and her daughter whilst they were leaving a shop, leaving them shocked and shaken. The lady states that the youths were drunk and acting in a yobbish manner.

During the role-play exercise it is important to assume the role of the customer services manager and deal with the situation efficiently and effectively. You will need to establish the facts of the incident and take the necessary course of action as required. For example, the above sample scenario will require you to be sensitive, considerate and understanding whilst providing a solution to the problem. You will need to ask questions about the incident and make suggestions as to how you might resolve the issue for them.

We have now provided you with a number of questions and comments that could be used by a candidate who has to deal with this scenario.

## **ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 1 – SAMPLE RESPONSES**

*'Good afternoon, I am the customer services manager and I am here to help you. Could you please start off by telling me*

*what the problem is?’*

*‘That must have been very distressing for you?’*

*‘How are you now and is your daughter okay following the shock of the incident?’*

*‘I can assure you that we will do all that we can to resolve the issue and I will take personal responsibility for ensuring this happens.’*

*‘Can you tell me what the youths looked like, where they were and at what time the incident occurred?’*

*‘In order to resolve the issue I will take a look at the centre’s CCTV cameras to see if we can spot the youths. In the meantime I will keep you informed as to any progress and can only apologise for the distress that has been caused.’*

*‘I can assure you that the centre will not tolerate such behaviour and the matter has been brought to the attention of the Police.’*

*‘Are you happy with my actions and is there anything else I can do to help?’*

You will see from the above responses that the candidate is totally focused on the customer at all times. Let’s take a look at how he meets the core competencies:

**‘Good afternoon, I am the customer services manager and I am here to help you. Could you please start off by telling me what the problem is?’**

During this opening statement he introduces himself and reassures the customer that he is here to help her. This demonstrates good customer focus. He then goes on to ask

his first question, which is designed to gather information, which in turn will allow him to make good decisions. Whilst the customer responds to the question it is important that he demonstrates effective listening skills by nodding his head and generally looking interested and concerned.

**‘That must have been very distressing for you?’**

Whilst this is only one sentence it is designed to demonstrate that the candidate is totally focused on the customer and is concerned for her welfare.

**‘How are you now and is your daughter okay following the shock of the incident?’**

By making reference to the customer’s daughter the candidate is demonstrating a good level of understanding of the incident. Again, this demonstrates good customer focus.

**‘I can assure you that we will do all that we can to resolve the issue and I will take personal responsibility for ensuring this happens.’**

During this statement the candidate demonstrates the core competency of service delivery.

**‘Can you tell me what the youths looked like, where they were and at what time the incident occurred?’**

The candidate is now starting to gather evidence so that he can problem solve.

**‘In order to resolve the issue I will take a look at the centre’s CCTV cameras to see if we can spot the youths. In the meantime I will keep you informed as to any progress and can only apologise for the distress that has been caused.’**

The candidate is demonstrating effective communication

and is keeping the customer updated on what he intends to do. He apologises for the distress caused, which in turn demonstrates good customer focus.

**‘I can assure you that the centre will not tolerate such behaviour and the matter has been brought to the attention of the Police.’**

During this statement he is demonstrating his awareness of the centre’s policy relating to bullying and harassment. Without this knowledge, which has been gained by reading the policy, he would not be able to provide a suitable solution to the problem.

**‘Are you happy with my actions and is there anything else I can do to help?’**

The candidate now confirms that the customer is satisfied, thus demonstrating once again a good level of customer service.

Now that you are starting to gain an understanding of what is required during the role-play exercises, take a look at the following tips, which will help you to gain higher scores.

## **TIPS FOR PASSING THE ROLE-PLAY EXERCISES**

- Read all of the information thoroughly during the 5 minutes preparation phase. Take notes that are concise and relevant. For example:
  1. What is the centre’s policy on drinking alcohol?
  2. What is the centre’s policy on customer service?
  3. What is the centre’s policy on fairness and equality?

- Once you have read all of the information and compiled your notes, prepare yourself for the activity phase.
- Remember to stay calm, be polite and courteous at all times and do not get defensive or angry.
- Ask probing questions in order to establish the facts.
- Tell the person/people making the complaint what the centre's policy is regarding the issue.
- Reassure them if necessary and tell them what your plan of action is in order to resolve the issue.
- Tell them that you will keep them informed of all progress.
- Use keywords and phrases from the core competencies when communicating with the role-play actor. For example – *'I will take personal responsibility for resolving this issue.'*
- Challenge any behaviour that is either discriminatory or inappropriate, but never lose your temper or become confrontational.
- Ask them if they are satisfied with your actions so far and if there is anything else you can do to help them.

Now take a look at the sample role-play exercises that we have provided on the following pages. How would you deal with them? Following each sample scenario we have provided you with a box to make notes. Use the box provided to make notes on how you would deal with the scenario in line with the core competencies.

## ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 2

You are the customer services manager for a fictitious retail centre.

A special needs carer has made a complaint stating that Mary (the girl he cares for) was recently treated unfairly by a security guard at the centre when she informed him that she had lost her purse.

Allegedly, the security guard refused to search for Mary's purse.

The security guard states in his report that this is the third time Mary has complained about losing her purse when all the time it was in her handbag.

The carer is angry and wants the security guard to be investigated.

### **Suggestions for dealing with the scenario**

- Remember to focus on providing a high level of service at all times.
- Ask the carer if Mary is OK and whether you can do anything to reassure her.
- Apologise for the poor level of customer service.
- Ask plenty of questions in order to establish the facts. Where/when did the incident occur? Is there a description of the security guard? What did he say or do?
- Make use of the facilities at the centre in order to gather more information, e.g. CCTV cameras.

- Inform the carer that any form of bullying, harassment or inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated at the centre in accordance with the policy.
- Provide a suitable solution to the problem. You may wish to consider re-training for the security guard if it transpires following your investigation that he is guilty of the alleged inappropriate action.

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**ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 2 – YOUR NOTES**

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## ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 3

You are the customer services manager for a fictitious retail centre.

A member of staff would like to speak to you regarding an incident of alleged bullying. He claims that over the last three months another member of staff has been making inappropriate comments relating to his sexual orientation.

He is very upset about the incident and wants you to sort it out.

You are to gather the facts and decide on the most appropriate course of action to take.

### **Suggestions for dealing with the scenario**

- Remember that no form of bullying or harassment is tolerated.
- During the preparation phase, read the equality policy. Make sure you make reference to it during the activity phase. For example:

*'I understand that this must be extremely distressing for you. I can assure you that no form of bullying or harassment will be tolerated at this centre. The equality policy states...'*

- Demonstrate a level of empathy when dealing with the situation. The core competency of 'service delivery' is still relevant in scenarios where you are dealing with employees of the centre.
- Make sure you ask appropriate questions and gather the facts about the alleged incident. When did this/these

incident(s) occur? Who is the alleged guilty person? What exactly was said? Has the person challenged the alleged offender or asked them to stop?

- Follow the steps that are provided in the equality policy when making your decision.

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### **ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 3 – YOUR NOTES**

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## ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 4

You are the customer services manager for a fictitious retail centre.

A member of the public wants to see you regarding an issue that occurred at the centre recently. She claims that, despite the centre having 200 parking spaces for disabled badge holders, ordinary members of the public are using the parking spaces without a permit.

Just the other day she had to park in a space 200 yards from the entrance and she is not happy about it.

You are to gather the facts of the alleged incident and deal with it in an appropriate manner.

### **Suggestions for dealing with the scenario**

- Read the welcome pack thoroughly before you attend the assessment centre. This will give you details relating to this type of scenario.
- If the centre is at fault then you must admit it and apologise for the poor level of customer service.
- Show a level of empathy and understanding by saying something like:

*'I understand that this must be very inconvenient for you. I apologise unreservedly for this incident. I can assure you that steps will be taken to improve this situation and I will take personal responsibility for making sure that improvements are made.'*

- Make sure you ask appropriate questions and gather the facts about the alleged incident. When did the incident occur? Has this been a regular thing?
- Remember to make use of the facilities that are available

to you at the centre. You may decide to use the CCTV cameras in order to find out who has been using the car parking spaces illegally.

- Your resolution might involve carrying out an internal investigation to assess why this incident has occurred. If you do this, be sure to tell the lady that you will keep her informed of any progress.
- In order to prevent the incident from occurring again, you may decide to ask a security guard to carry out hourly checks in the car park in order to keep the spaces available for disabled users.

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**ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 4 – YOUR NOTES**

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## ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 5

You are the customer services manager for a fictitious retail centre.

A member of the public wants to see you about an incident that has just occurred at the centre. Whilst shopping, his daughter disappeared from his side and he is extremely worried and distressed.

He wants you to find her as soon as possible.

You are to gather the facts of the incident and deal with it in an appropriate manner.

### **Suggestions for dealing with the scenario**

- This type of situation assesses your ability to remain calm, yet act quickly and decisively. As you can imagine, the role actor will be acting in a distressed manner and it will be your job to calm them down so that you can establish the facts and make the correct decision. It is crucial that you provide a very high level of customer service.
- Once you have calmed the customer down you will need to quickly gather the facts. This might include details relating to his daughter's appearance, what she was wearing, where she was last seen, what shops she likes at the centre, where he thinks she may have gone etc.
- Once you have gathered the facts you may decide to:

Make a tannoy announcement asking the girl to make her way to the nearest customer services desk;

Inform all members of staff that the girl is missing, provide them with a description and ask them to search for her;



Inform the Police immediately so they can assist in the search;

Post a security guard at each exit to prevent the girl from leaving the centre and wandering off onto the dangerous roads.

- Throughout the activity phase make sure you sympathise with the customer and provide a high level of customer service. For example:

*'I understand that this must be very distressing for you sir but I can assure you that we will do everything we can to find her quickly, and return her to you both safe and well.'*

## **ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 5 – YOUR NOTES**

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## ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 6

You are the customer services manager for a fictitious retail centre.

One of the centre store managers wants to see you about a gang of youths who are standing outside his shop behaving in an antisocial manner, swearing and obstructing customers from entering his shop.

He is very annoyed at the situation and is losing money because potential customers are not allowed to shop in comfort without feeling threatened.

### **Suggestions for dealing with the scenario**

- To begin with you should study the 'OPERATIONS' information and the 'CODE OF CONDUCT' information in the Welcome Pack. What do they say that possibly relates to the above scenario? Is this kind of behaviour tolerated? Can people who behave in such a manner be escorted from the centre and should the police be involved? Can you involve the security staff or use the CCTV cameras to provide the police with evidence?
- Remember that the manager is annoyed at the situation and therefore you may have to defuse a confrontational situation in the first instance. Remember to be firm but stay calm and never become confrontational yourself.

## **ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 6 – YOUR NOTES**

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## ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 7

You are the customer services manager for a fictitious retail centre.

A customer would like to see you about an issue surrounding a dog that is in the shopping centre. She is very annoyed that a dog has been allowed to enter the shopping centre and wants to know what you are going to do about it.

The dog is an 'assistance dog' for a visually impaired customer.

### **Suggestions for dealing with the scenario**

- To begin with you should study the 'OPERATIONS' information, the 'CODE OF CONDUCT' information and the 'EQUALITY POLICY' statement relating to the centre. What do they say that possibly relates to the above scenario? Are 'assistance dogs' permitted? If the answer is 'yes' then the person may not have any grounds for complaint. However, it is important to listen to the complaint before responding in a calm but firm manner.
- Remember to be confident/resilient in your handling of the situation and refer to the policy of the centre for such issues. Do not get drawn into personal opinions but stick to the code of conduct for the centre and apply it accordingly.

## **ACTIVITY PHASE EXAMPLE SCENARIO 7 – YOUR NOTES**

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## **FINAL TIPS FOR PASSING THE ROLE-PLAY SCENARIOS**

- Learn the welcome pack prior to attending the assessment. This will allow you to focus on the scenario and how you intend to deal with it during the preparation phase.
- Always remain calm during every scenario. Never lose your temper or become confrontational. If you do, you will probably fail.
- Try to deal with the role actor in a sensitive and considerate manner.
- It is vital that you challenge any behaviour that is either bullying or inappropriate. Make reference to the equality policy during incidents of this nature.
- Use the information contained within the welcome pack to deal with all situations. There are things there to assist you such as CCTV cameras, a Police station and a tannoy system to name just a few.
- Focus on providing a high level of customer service at all times.

# **CHAPTER 8**

## **ASSESSMENT CENTRE - THE INTERVIEW**



## INTRODUCTION

The PCSO interview forms part of the assessment centre. It is different to that of a 'normal' job interview in the fact that it assesses your ability to meet a number of core competencies. The interview panel will normally comprise of one or two people and the interview will consist of two **competency-based questions**, plus **two motivations and values questions**. It will last for 20 minutes in total. In this chapter, we'll show you how to tackle these types of questions!

The interviewer(s) will be dressed in civilian clothes and will be either serving or retired Police Officers or qualified assessors who are not part of the Police Service. Prior to the interview it is essential that you come up with a number of different scenarios that you have experienced, either at work or in your social/personal life, which are based around the assessable core competencies.

The interview is relatively relaxed and is designed to get the most out of the candidate. The interviewer may ask 'probing' questions that are designed to get the information out of you. For example, you may be asked the following initial question:

'Give a scenario when you have had to be considerate to someone else's feelings.'

Further probing questions to this question might be:

'How did they feel?'

'How did you feel at the time?'

'Why did you take this course of action?'

'What was the outcome?'

Before we provide you with a number of sample interview questions and tips on how to answer them, we think it is important to explain how important interview 'technique' is. The majority of candidates will spend all of their time preparing their responses to the interview questions. As a result they will tend to neglect the important area of technique.

Interview technique is basically how you present yourself at interview. Let's take a look at the difference between a 'good' applicant and a 'poor' applicant.

### **A Good Applicant**

A good applicant is someone who has taken the time to prepare. They have researched both the Police Service they are applying to join and also the role that they are being interviewed for. They may not know every detail about the organisation and the role but it will be clear that they have made an effort to find out important facts and information. They will be well presented at the interview and they will be confident, but not over confident. As soon as they walk into the interview room they will be polite and courteous and they will sit down in the interview chair only when invited to do so. Throughout the interview they will sit upright in the chair and communicate in a positive manner. If they do not know the answer to a question they will say so and they won't try to waffle. At the end of the interview they will ask positive questions about the job or the organisation before shaking hands and leaving.

### **A Poor Applicant**

A poor applicant could be any combination of the following. They will be late for the interview or even forget to turn up at all. They will have made little effort to dress smartly and they will have carried out little or no preparation.

When asked questions about role they will have little or no knowledge. Throughout the interview they will appear to be unenthusiastic about the whole process and will look as if they want the interview to be over as soon as possible. Whilst sat in the interview chair they will slouch and fidget. At the end of the interview they will try to ask clever questions that are intended to impress the panel.

Earlier on in the guide we made reference to a 'mock interview'. We strongly advise that you try out a mock interview before the real thing. You'll be amazed at how much your confidence will improve. All you need to do is get a friend or a relative to sit down with you and ask you the interview questions that are contained within this guide. Try to answer them as if you were at the real interview. The more mock interviews you try, the more confident you'll become.

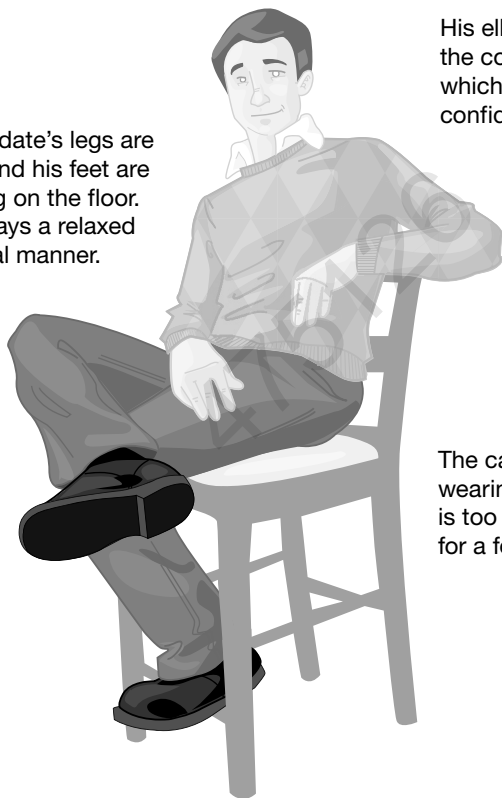
### **Improving Interview Technique**

How you present yourself during the interview is important. A candidate could give excellent responses to the interview questions but if they present themselves in a negative manner then this can lose them marks.

Take a look at the following diagrams, which indicate both poor technique and good technique.

## POOR INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

The candidate's legs are crossed and his feet are not resting on the floor. This displays a relaxed and casual manner.



His elbow is resting on the corner of the chair, which indicates an over-confident attitude.

The candidate is wearing jeans and is too casually dressed for a formal interview.

**The candidate appears to be too relaxed and casual for an interview.**

## GOOD INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

The candidate is smiling and he portrays a confident, but not over-confident manner.

The candidate is dressed wearing a smart suit. It is clear that he has made an effort in his presentation.

His hands are in a stable position, which will prevent him from fidgeting. He could also place his hands palms facing downwards and resting on his knees.

He is sitting upright in the interview chair with his feet resting on the floor. He is not slouching and he portrays himself in a positive manner.



In the build-up to your interview practise a few mock interviews. Look to improve your interview technique as well as working on your responses to the interview questions.

On the following pages we have provided you with a number of sample questions and also probing questions to assist you during your preparation. You will also note that we have provided a sample response to each question. It is important not to use these responses during your interview, but instead use them as a basis for your own preparation.

Please note that the questions we have provided are not guaranteed to be the ones you will encounter during your interview. The Police Service does change the assessable core competencies from time to time. However, if you follow our advice and create a strong response for every core competency prior to the interview then your chances of success will increase greatly.

## **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTION BASED AROUND THE CORE COMPETENCY OF PROFESSIONALISM.**

**Question – Please provide an example of where you have taken responsibility to resolve a problem?**

*“After reading an appeal in my local paper from a local charity I decided to try to raise money for this worthwhile cause by organising a charity car wash day at the local school during the summer holidays. I decided that the event would take place in a month’s time, which would give me enough time to organise such an event. The head teacher at the school agreed to support me during the organisation of the event and provide me with the necessary resources required to make it a success.*

*I set about organising the event and soon realised that I had made a mistake in trying to arrange everything on my own, so I arranged for two of my work colleagues to assist me. Once they had agreed to help me I started out by providing them with a brief of what I wanted them to do. I informed them that, in order for the event to be a success, we needed to act with integrity and professionalism at all times. I then asked one of them to organise the booking of the school and arrange local sponsorship in the form of buckets, sponges and car wash soap to use on the day, so that we did not have to use our own personal money to buy them. I asked the second person to arrange advertising in the local newspaper and radio stations so that we could let the local community know about our charity car wash event, which would in turn hopefully bring in more money on the day for the charity.*

*Following a successful advertising campaign, I was inundated with calls from local newspapers about our event and it was becoming hard work having to keep talking to them and*

*explaining what the event was all about. But I knew that this information was important if we were to raise our target of £500.*

*Everything was going well right up to the morning of the event, when I realised we had not got the key to open the school gates. It was the summer holidays so the caretaker was not there to open the gates for us. Not wanting to let everyone down, I jumped in my car and made my way down to the caretaker's house and managed to wake him up and get the key just in time before the car wash event was due to start. In the end the day was a great success and we all managed to raise £600 for the local charity. Throughout the event I put in lots of extra effort in order to make it a great success.*

*Once the event was over I decided to ask the head teacher for feedback on how he thought I had managed the project. He provided me with some excellent feedback and some good pointers for how I might improve in the future when organising events. I took on-board his feedback in order to improve my skills."*

Now that we have taken a look at a sample response, let's explore how the response matched the core competency.

## **HOW THE RESPONSE MATCHES THE CORE COMPETENCY BEING ASSESSED**

In order to demonstrate how effective the above response is we have broken it down into sections and provided the core competency area that it matches.

### **Sentence**

*"...I decided to try to raise money for this worthwhile cause*



*by organising a charity car wash day...”*

**Core competency matched**

- Acts with integrity.
- Uses own initiative.

**Sentence**

*“Once they had agreed to help me I started out by providing them with a brief of what I wanted them to do. I informed them that, in order for the event to be a success, we needed to act with integrity and professionalism at all times.”*

**Core competency matched**

- Acting with integrity and demonstrating a strong work ethic.

**Sentence**

*“...which would give me enough time to organise such an event.”*

**Core competency matched**

- Takes ownership.

**Sentence**

*“I set about organising the event and soon realised that I had made a mistake in trying to arrange everything on my own, so I arranged for 2 of my work colleagues to assist me.”*

**Core competency matched**

- Takes ownership.
- Uses initiative.

**Sentence**

*“...arrange local sponsorship in the form of buckets, sponges*

*and car wash soap to use on the day, so that we did not have to use our own personal money to buy them.”*

**Core competency matched**

- Uses initiative.

**Sentence**

*“Once the event was over I decided to ask the head teacher for feedback on how he thought I had managed the project. He provided me with some excellent feedback and some good pointers for how I might improve in the future when organising events. I took on-board his feedback in order to improve my skills.”*

**Core competency matched**

- Asks for and acts on feedback.

**Sentence**

*“Following a successful advertising campaign, I was inundated with calls from local newspapers about our event and it was becoming hard work having to keep talking to them and explaining what the event was all about. But I knew that this information was important if we were to raise our target of £500.”*

**Core competency matched**

- Uses initiative.

**Sentence**

*“Not wanting to let everyone down, I jumped in my car and made my way down to the caretaker’s house and managed to wake him up and get the key just in time before the car wash event was due to start.”*

**Core competency matched**

- Uses initiative.
- Takes ownership.
- Showing a strong work ethic.

The explanations above have hopefully highlighted the importance of matching the core competencies that are being assessed.

When you receive your 'Welcome Pack', make sure you read it thoroughly and prepare yourself fully for the interview. Preparation is everything and by reading exactly what is required you will increase your chances of success on the day.

On the following pages we have provided you with a number of sample assessment centre interview questions that are based around the core competencies. Following each question we have provided you with some useful tips and advice on how you may consider answering the question.

Once you have read the question and the tips, use the template on the following page to create a response using your own experiences and knowledge.

## **SAMPLE COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTION 1 (WORKING WITH OTHERS)**

Please provide an example of where you have worked as part of a team to achieve a difficult task.

### **Tips for constructing your response**

- Try to think of a situation where you volunteered to work with a team in order to achieve a difficult task. It is better to say that you volunteered as opposed to being asked to get involved by another person.
- Those candidates who can provide an example where they achieved the task despite the constraints of time will generally score better.
- Consider structuring your response in the following manner:

**STEP 1** Explain what the situation was and how you became involved.

**STEP 2** Now explain who else was involved and what the task was.

**STEP 3** Explain why the task was difficult and whether there were any time constraints.

**STEP 4** Explain how it was decided who would carry out what task.

**STEP 5** Now explain what had to be done and how you overcame any obstacles or hurdles.

**STEP 6** Explain what the result/outcome was. Try to make the result positive as a result of your actions.

Now use the template on the following page to construct your own response to this question based on your own experiences and knowledge.

**Sample competency based interview question 1**

Please provide an example of where you have worked as part of a team to achieve a difficult task.

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**Examples of probing questions**

1. Would you have done anything different next time?
2. How did the end result make you feel?

## **SAMPLE COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTION 2 (PROFESSIONALISM)**

Provide an example of where you have challenged someone's behaviour that was either discriminatory or inappropriate. What did you do and what did you say?

### **Tips for constructing your response**

- When challenging this type of behaviour, make sure you remain calm at all times and never become aggressive or confrontational.
- Consider structuring your response in the following manner:

**STEP 1** Explain what the situation was and how you became involved.

**STEP 2** Now explain who else was involved and why you felt that the behaviour was inappropriate or discriminatory. What was it that was being said or done?

**STEP 3** Now explain what you said or did and why.

**STEP 4** Explain how the other person/people reacted when you challenged the behaviour.

**STEP 5** Now explain what the end result was. Try to make the result positive following your actions.

**STEP 6** Finally explain why you think it was that the people/person behaved as they did.

Now use the template on the following page to construct your own response to this question based on your own experiences and knowledge.

**Sample competency based interview question 2**

Provide an example of where you have challenged someone's behaviour that was either discriminatory or inappropriate. What did you do and what did you say?

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**Examples of probing questions**

1. How did you feel when you were challenging their behaviour?
2. How did the person or people react when you challenged their behaviour?

## **SAMPLE COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW**

### **QUESTION 3 (WORKING WITH OTHERS)**

Provide an example of where you have helped somebody from a different culture or background to your own. What did you do and what did you say?

#### **Tips for constructing your response**

- Try to think of a situation where you have gone out of your way to help somebody.
- Try to use keywords and phrases from the core competency in your response.
- Consider structuring your response in the following manner:

**STEP 1** Explain what the situation was and how you became involved. It is better to say that you volunteered to be involved rather than to say that you were asked to.

**STEP 2** Now explain who else was involved and why they needed your help or assistance?

**STEP 3** Now explain what you said or did and why. Also explain any factors you took into consideration when helping them.

**STEP 4** Explain how the other person/people reacted to your help or assistance. Did they benefit from it?

**STEP 5** Now explain what the end result was. Try to make the result positive following your actions.

Now use the template on the following page to construct your own response to this question based on your own experiences and knowledge.



**Sample competency based interview question 3**

Provide an example of where you have helped somebody from a different culture or background to your own. What did you do and what did you say?

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**Examples of probing questions**

1. What did you learn from this experience?
2. Would you have done anything differently?

## **SAMPLE COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTION 4 (PROFESSIONALISM)**

Provide an example of where you have solved a difficult problem. What did you do?

### **Tips for constructing your response**

- Try to include keywords and phrases from the core competency in your response to this question.
- Consider structuring your response in the following manner:

**STEP 1** Explain what the situation was and why the problem was difficult.

**STEP 2** Now explain what action you took in order to solve the difficult problem?

**STEP 3** Now explain why you took that particular action, and also the thought process behind your actions.

**STEP 4** Explain the barriers or difficulties that you had to overcome?

**STEP 5** Now explain what the end result was. Try to make the result positive following your actions.

Now use the template on the following page to construct your own response to this question based on your own experiences and knowledge.

**Sample competency based interview question 4**

Provide an example of where you have solved a difficult problem. What did you do?

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**Examples of probing questions**

1. What did you learn from this experience?
2. Could you have done it any better?

## **SAMPLE COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW**

### **QUESTION 5 (SERVING THE PUBLIC)**

Provide an example of where you have broken down barriers between a group of people?

#### **Tips for constructing your response**

- Read carefully the core competency that relates to public service.
- Try to include keywords and phrases from the core competency in your response to this question, such as:  
*“I tried to understand each person’s needs and concerns.”*  
*“I took steps to identify the best way that we could all work together.”*  
*“I had their best interests at heart throughout.”*  
*“I built confidence in them by talking to them.”*
- Consider structuring your response in the following manner:

**STEP 1** Explain what the situation was and why you needed to break down the barriers.

**STEP 2** Now explain what steps you took in order to achieve the goal.

**STEP 3** Now explain why you took that particular action, and also the thought process behind your actions.

**STEP 4** Explain the barriers or difficulties that you had to overcome in order to achieve the task/objective?

**STEP 5** Now explain what the end result was. Try to make the result positive following your actions.

Now use the template on the following page to construct your own response to this question based on your own experiences and knowledge.

**Sample competency based interview question 5**

Provide an example of where you have broken down barriers between a group of people?

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**Examples of probing questions**

1. What did you learn from this experience and would you do anything differently next time?
2. What did the other people think about what you did? Were they happy with your work?

## **SAMPLE COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTION 6 (SERVICE DELIVERY)**

Please provide an example of where you have organised a difficult task effectively?

### **Tips for constructing your response**

- Read carefully the core competency that relates to service delivery.
- Try to include keywords and phrases from the core competency in your response to this question.
- Consider structuring your response in the following manner:

**STEP 1** Explain what the situation was and what it was you needed to organise.

**STEP 2** Now explain why the task was so difficult.

**STEP 3** Now explain what you did and why you did it. Also explain your considerations when organising the task.

**STEP 4** Explain what problems you had and how you overcame them.

**STEP 5** Finally explain what the end result was. Try to provide a positive outcome to the situation.

Now use the template on the following page to construct your own response to this question based on your own experiences and knowledge.

**Sample competency based interview question 6**

Please provide an example of where you have organised a difficult task effectively?

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**Examples of probing questions**

1. What did you learn from this experience and would you do anything differently next time?
2. Why do you think the task was so difficult?

## **SAMPLE COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTION 7 (PROFESSIONALISM)**

Tell me about a time when you changed how you did something in response to feedback from someone else?

### **Tips for creating your response**

- What did you need to develop?
- What feedback did you receive and from whom?
- What steps did you take to improve yourself or someone else?
- What did you specifically say or do?
- What was the result?

### **Strong response**

Police officers receive feedback from their supervisory managers on a regular basis. In their quest to continually improve, the Police Service will invest time, finances and resources into your development. Part of the learning process includes being able to accept feedback and also being able to improve as a result of it. Strong performing candidates will be able to provide a specific example of where they have taken feedback from an employer or otherwise, and used it to improve themselves.

### **Weak response**

Those candidates who are unable to accept feedback from others and change as a result will generally provide a weak response to this type of question. They will fail to grasp the importance of feedback and in particular where it lies in relation to continuous improvement. Their response will be



generic in nature and there will be no real substance or detail to their answer.

### **Sample response**

*"During my last appraisal, my line manager identified that I needed to improve in a specific area. I work as a call handler for a large independent communications company. Part of my role involves answering a specific number of calls per hour. If I do not reach my target then this does not allow the company to meet its standards. I found that I was falling behind on the number of calls answered and this was identified during the appraisal. I needed to develop my skills in the manner in which I handled the call. My line manager played back a number of recorded calls that I had dealt with and it was apparent that I was taking too long speaking to the customer about issues that were irrelevant to the call itself. Because I am conscientious and caring person I found myself asking the customer how they were and what kind of day they were having. Despite the customers being more than pleased with level of customer care, this approach was not helping the company and therefore I needed to change my approach. I immediately took on-board the comments of my line manager and also took up the offer of development and call handling training. After the training, which took two weeks to complete, I was meeting my targets with ease This in turn helped the company to reach it's call handling targets."*

Now take the time to use the space that follows to prepare your own response to this question.

## **Sample competency based interview question 6**

Tell me about a time when you changed how you did something in response to feedback from someone else?

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### **Examples of probing questions**

1. How did you feel when the feedback was being given?
2. What, if anything, did you find difficult about making the necessary improvements?

## **MORE SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO PREPARE FOR BASED ON THE ASSESSABLE CORE COMPETENCIES**

In this short section we will provide you with a number of sample interview questions to prepare for.

### **SERVICE DELIVERY**

- Q.** Give an example of when you have worked towards an organisation's objectives or priorities?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have planned and organised a difficult task?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have carried out many different tasks at once?
- Q.** Give me an example of when you have sought advice from others whilst carrying out a difficult work-related task?

### **SERVING THE PUBLIC**

- Q.** Give an example of when you have provided excellent customer service?
- Q.** Give me an example of when you have addressed someone else's needs or expectations?
- Q.** Give me an example of when you have broken down barriers amongst a group of people?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have worked with another person or group of people to deliver an excellent level of service?

### **PROFESSIONALISM**

- Q.** Give an example of when you have worked in accordance

with an organisation's standards or ethics?

- Q.** Give an example of when you have taken ownership of a particular problem?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have acted on your own initiative to resolve an issue or difficult problem?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have challenged someone's behaviour which was discriminatory or inappropriate?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have acted on feedback which has been supplied by someone else?
- Q.** Give me an example of when you have resolved a difficult situation in a calm manner?
- Q.** Give me an example of when you have defused a potentially hostile situation?

## **WORKING WITH OTHERS**

- Q.** Give an example of when you have supported other members of a team?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have worked with other people to achieve a difficult task?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have briefed a team in relation to a difficult task which had to be achieved?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have persuaded a group of people to follow your course of action or plan?
- Q.** Give an example of when you have treated a person or group of people with dignity and respect?

## MOTIVATIONS AND VALUES QUESTIONS

Along with the competency based questions, you will also be asked two motivations and values type questions. These are questions which focus on your reasons for joining the police, and why you want to become a PCSO. Remember, you need to prepare for these questions just as thoroughly as for the competency questions. Many people relax too much when it comes to answering motivations and values questions, and as a result they fail the interview.

Below we've included some sample motivations and values type questions:

### Why do you want to become a PCSO?

In the build-up to your interview you need to think carefully about why you want to become a PCSO and what it is exactly that has attracted you to the role. Only you will know the exact reasons why you want to join the police but here are some examples of good reasons, and examples of poor reasons.

#### Good reasons to give

- To make a difference to your community, make it a safer place and reduce any fear that the public may have.
- To carry out a job that is worthwhile and one that makes a difference.
- The variety of the job and the different challenges that you will face on a day-to-day basis.
- The chance to work with a highly professional team that is committed to achieving the values and principles of the service.
- The opportunity to learn new skills.

**Poor reasons to give**

- The pay and pension.
- The leave or holiday that you will get.
- Wearing a uniform, which ultimately means you don't have to pay for your own work clothes.
- Catching criminals and driving a police car.

**What do you know about the role?**

After studying this guide you will know a considerable amount about the role of a police officer. Before the final interview you must carry out plenty of research into the role and what the service will expect of you as a serving police officer.

Remember that the role is predominantly based around the core competencies, so be fully familiar with them before you attend the interview. It is also advisable that you study your recruitment literature and also the website of the service you are applying to join.

**What do you know about the constabulary that you are applying to join?**

There is a strong possibility that you will be asked questions that relate to the constabulary you are applying to join.

The following sample questions are the types that have been asked during interviews in the past:

- Q.** What is it that has attracted you to this particular constabulary?
- Q.** What can you tell me about the structure of this constabulary?
- Q.** What can you tell me about the geographical area of this Police Service?

- Q.** Can you tell me how this constabulary is doing in relation to crime reduction?
- Q.** What crime reduction activities is this constabulary currently involved in?
- Q.** What is neighbourhood policing and how does this constabulary approach it?
- Q.** What are the ambitions of this Police Service?
- Q.** Who are our partners and stakeholders?

In order to prepare for questions that relate to the service you are applying to join, your first port of call is their website. From here you will be able to find out a considerable amount of information about their structure and activities and their success in driving down crime.

You may also wish to consider contacting your local police station and asking if it is possible to talk to a serving PCSO about his or her role and the activities that the service are currently engaged in.

## **FINAL TIPS FOR PASSING THE PCSO INTERVIEW**

- Stronger performing candidates are able to provide specific examples in response to each question.
- Try to think of scenarios, based around the core competencies, that you have encountered in the past, prior to attending the interview.
- When responding to each question, outline your contributions or actions and try to provide evidence of the competency area being assessed.
- Use keywords and phrases from the core competencies when answering the questions. This will allow you to score higher and it will also make the interviewers job easier too!
- Speak clearly, use correct English and structure each response logically.
- Sit up straight in the chair, smile and be polite.
- When responding to the interview questions do not 'generalise' but rather be specific.



# **CHAPTER 9**

## **PCSO FITNESS TEST**

The national fitness test has now been introduced in just about every force that requires fitness tests for PCSOs. More and more forces are introducing fitness tests for PCSOs and in many cases they are the same as for the regulars. It means it's tougher to get in, but PCSOs these days perform front-line policing duties most of the time, so this makes sense.

The three elements of this test are:

### **ENDURANCE (AKA BLEEP/BEEP/SHUTTLE TEST) TO LEVEL 5.4 (DIFFERENT IN SCOTLAND)**

During this element you have to run to and fro along a 15 metre track in time to a series of bleeps which progressively become faster. You have to run as long as possible before you can no longer keep up with the bleeps. You must reach at least level 5.4 in order to pass the fitness test. The total running time is about 3 minutes, 40 seconds. Scotland has a different requirement for their PCSOs.

### **DYNAMIC STRENGTH – PUSH 34KG, PULL 35KG**

This part of the test is measured on a machine which looks like a large rowing machine with a seat at each end. In the first part of the test, you are pushing against the machine, in the second part, you are pulling against it. You do 3 'warm ups' then 5 maximum force pushes/pulls. You must reach at least 34 kg push strength, and 35 kg pull strength.

### **GRIP STRENGTH OF 32KG**

This final part of the test measures the grip strength in your hand using a device called a dynamometer. You grip it in

your preferred hand, and get two attempts to record the maximum grip you can. The pass mark is 32 kg.

Performance on each of these provides a good indicator of your capability of performing various police tasks. The test elements are run consecutively and minimum standards need to be achieved on each.

If you fail to reach the minimum standard in one component of the test, you fail the whole test. If you don't pass the test at your first attempt you can re-take it. However, if you fail the test after three attempts your application will be halted and you will have to wait for at least six months before re-applying.

Although the test is not particularly hard, it does require a certain level of fitness and if you are unfit, out of condition, or overweight, then you may fail this test. Start your preparation as soon as possible and get yourself a copy of the bleep test from [www.bleep-test.co.uk](http://www.bleep-test.co.uk).

# **CHAPTER 10**

## **HOW TO GET PCSO FIT**

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your FREE 'How to get PCSO Fit' information guide. Within this guide we have provided you with a number of useful exercises that will allow you to prepare for, and pass, the fitness tests.

The fitness test is not too difficult to pass, providing you put in the time and effort to reach a good all round level of fitness. Police Community Support Officers need to have a good all round aerobic fitness and also a good level of strength and stamina. The exercises contained within this guide will help you to achieve exactly that. Do not spend hours in the gym lifting heavy weights as the job does not require that level of strength, but rather aim for a varied and diverse fitness programme that cover exercises such as swimming, rowing, jogging, brisk walking and light weight work.

In addition to getting fit, keep an eye on your diet and try to eat healthy foods whilst drinking plenty of water. It will all go a long way to helping you improve your general well-being and concentration levels whilst you prepare for the selection process.

## PLANNING YOUR WORKOUTS AND PREPARING FOR THE PCSO FITNESS TESTS

Most people who embark on a fitness regime in January have given it up by February. The reason why most people give up their fitness regime so soon is mainly due to a lack of proper preparation. You will recall that throughout the duration of this guide the word preparation has been integral, and the same word applies when preparing for the fitness tests. Preparation is key to your success and it is essential that you plan your workouts effectively.

To begin with, try to think about the role of a PCSO and what it entails. You will have to run pretty fast on some occasions and you will also need a level of strength for certain operational tasks. In the build up to the physical tests we advise that you concentrate on specific exercises that

will allow you to pass the tests with ease. Read on for some great ways to pass the fitness tests and stay fit all year round.

## **GET AN ASSESSMENT BEFORE YOU START TRAINING**

The first step is to get a fitness test at the gym, weigh yourself and run your fastest mile. Once you have done all three of these you should write down your results and keep them hidden away somewhere safe. After a month of following your new fitness regime, do all three tests again and check your results against the previous months. This is a great way to monitor your performance and progress and it will also keep you motivated and focused on your goals.

## **KEEP A CHECK ON WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK**

Make sure you write down everything you eat and drink for a whole week. You must include tea, water, milk, biscuits and anything and everything that you digest. You will soon begin to realise how much you are eating and you will notice areas in which you can make some changes. For example, if you are taking sugar with your tea then why not try reducing it or giving it up all together. If you do then you will soon notice the difference.

It is important that you start to look for opportunities to improve your fitness and wellbeing right from the offset.

## **EXERCISES THAT WILL HELP YOU TO PASS THE FITNESS TESTS**

Walking is one of the best exercises you can do as part of your preparation for the fitness tests. Whilst it shouldn't be the only form of exercise you carry out, it will go a long way to improving your focus and general well being. Now when we say 'walking' we don't mean a gentle stroll, we mean 'brisk' walking. Try walking at a fast pace for 30 minutes every day for a 7 day period. Then see how you feel at the end

of the 7 day period. We guarantee you'll begin to feel a lot healthier and fitter. Brisk walking is also a fantastic way to lose weight if you think you need to. In addition to helping you to lose weight it will also keep your concentration and motivational levels up.

There are some more great exercises contained within this guide and most of them can be carried out without the need to attend a gym.

## **ONE STEP AT A TIME**

Only you will know how fit you are. We advise that you first of all write down the areas that you believe or feel you need to improve on. For example, if you feel that you need to work on your upper body strength then pick out exercises from this guide that will work on that area for you. We also advise that you obtain a copy of the multi stage fitness test and practise it. Make sure you can easily pass the required standard.

The key to making improvements is to do it gradually, and at one step at a time. Try to set yourself small goals. If you think you need to lose two stone in weight then focus on losing a few pounds at a time. For example, during the first month aim to lose 6 pounds only. Once you have achieved this then again aim to lose 6 pounds over the next month, and so on and so forth. The more realistic your goal, the more likely you are to achieve it. One of the biggest problems that people encounter when starting a fitness regime is they become bored quickly. This then leads to a lack of motivation and desire, and soon the fitness programme stops.

Change your exercise routine often. Instead of walking try jogging. Instead of jogging try cycling with the odd day of swimming. Keep your workouts varied and interesting to ensure that you stay focused and motivated.

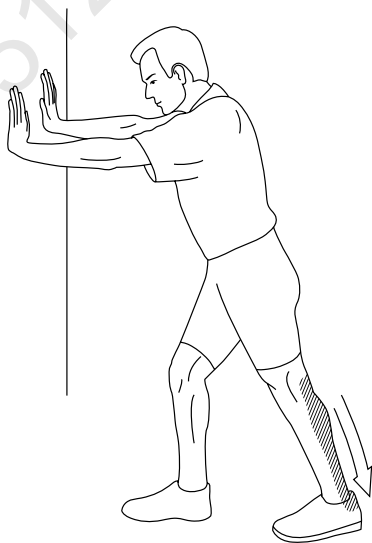
## **STRETCHING**

How many people stretch before carrying out any form of exercise? Very few people is the correct answer. Not only is it irresponsible but it is also placing yourself at high risk from injury. Before we commence with the exercises we will take a look at a few warm up stretches. Make sure you stretch fully before carrying out any exercises. You want your career to be a long one and that means looking after yourself, including stretching! It is also very important to check with your GP that you are medically fit to carry out any form of physical exercise.

### **The warm-up calf stretch**

To perform this stretch effectively you should first of all start off by facing a wall whilst standing upright. Your right foot should be close to the wall and your right knee bent. Now place your hands flat against the wall and at a height that is level with your shoulders. Stretch your left leg far out behind you without lifting your toes and heel off the floor, and lean towards the wall.

Once you have performed this stretch for 25 seconds switch legs and carry out the same procedure for the left leg. As with all exercises contained within this guide, stop if you feel any pain or discomfort.



### **Stretching the shoulder muscles**

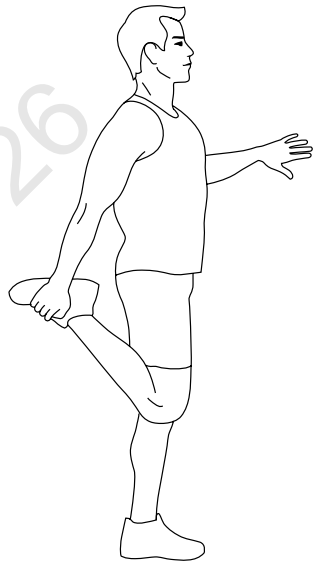
To begin with, stand with your feet slightly apart and with your knees only slightly bent. Now hold your arms right out in front of you and with your palms facing away from you with your fingers pointing skywards. Now place your right palm on the back of your left hand and use it to push the left hand further away from you. If you are performing



this exercise correctly then you will feel the muscles in your shoulder stretching. Hold for 10 seconds before switching sides.

### **Stretching the quad muscles (front of the thigh)**

Before you carry out any form of brisk walking or running then it is imperative that you stretch your leg muscles. During the fitness tests, and especially prior to the multi stage fitness test, the instructors should take you through a series of warm up exercises which will include stretching the quad muscles. To begin with, stand with your right hand pressed against the back of a wall or firm surface. Bend your left knee and bring your left heel up to your bottom whilst grasping your foot with your left hand. Your back should be straight and your shoulders, hips and knees should all be in line at all times during the exercise. Hold for 25 seconds before switching legs.



### **Stretching the hamstring muscles (back of the thigh)**

To perform this exercise correctly, stand up straight and place your right foot onto a table or other firm surface so that your leg is almost parallel to the floor. Keep your left leg straight and your foot at a right angle to your leg. Start to slowly move your hands down your right leg towards your ankle until you feel tension on the underside of your thigh. When you feel this tension you know that you are starting to stretch the hamstring muscles. Hold for 25 seconds before switching legs.

We have only covered a small number of stretching exercises within this section; however, it is crucial that you stretch out fully in all areas

before carrying out any of the following exercises. Remember to obtain professional advice before carrying out this type of exercise.

## **RUNNING**

As we have already mentioned, one of the great ways to prepare for the fitness tests is to embark on a structured running programme. You do not need to run at a fast pace or even run for long distances, in order to gain massively from this type of exercise. Before we provide you with the running programme however, take a read of the following important running tips.

### **Tips for running**

- As with any exercise you should consult a doctor before taking part to make sure that you are medically fit.
- It is certainly worth investing in a pair of comfortable running shoes that serve the purpose for your intended training programme. Your local sports shop will be able to advise you on the types that are best for you. You don't have to spend a fortune to buy a good pair of running shoes.
- It is a good idea to invest in a 'high visibility' jacket or coat so that you can be seen by fast moving traffic if you intend to run on or near the road.
- Make sure you carry out at least 5 whole minutes of stretching exercises not only before but also after your running programme. This can help to prevent injury.
- Whilst you shouldn't run on a full stomach, it is also not good to run on an empty one either. A great food to eat approximately 30 minutes before a run is a banana. This is great for giving you energy.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Try to drink at least 1.5 litres each day in total. This will keep you hydrated and help to prevent muscle cramp.

- Don't overdo it. If you feel any pain or discomfort then stop and seek medical advice.

## **RUNNING PROGRAMME WEEK 1**

### **DAY 1**

- Run a total of 3 miles only at a steady pace.

If you cannot manage 3 miles then try the following:

- Walk at a brisk pace for half a mile or approximately 10 minutes.

Then

- Run for 1 mile or 8 minutes.

Then

- Walk for another half a mile or approximately 10 minutes.

Then

- Run for 1.5 miles or 12 minutes.

Walking at a brisk pace is probably the most effective way to lose weight if you need to. It is possible to burn the same amount of calories if you walk the same distance as if you were running.

When walking at a 'brisk' pace it is recommended that you walk as fast as is comfortably possible without breaking into a run or slow jog.

### **RUNNING PROGRAMME WEEK 1**

#### **DAY 2**

- Walk for 2 miles or approximately 20 minutes at a brisk pace.

Then

- Run for 2 miles or 14 minutes.

### DAY 3

- Repeat DAY ONE.

### DAY 4

- Walk at a brisk pace for 0.5 miles or approximately 7 minutes.

Then

- Run for 3 miles or 20 minutes.

### DAY 5

- Repeat day one.

### DAY 6 AND DAY 7

- Rest days. No exercise.

## **RUNNING PROGRAMME WEEK 2**

### DAY 1

Run for 4 miles or 25 minutes.

### DAY 2

- Run a total of 3 miles at a steady pace.

If you cannot manage 3 miles then try the following:

- Walk at a brisk pace for half a mile or approximately 10 minutes.

Then

- Run for 1 mile or 8 minutes.

Then

- Walk for another half a mile or approximately 10 minutes.

Then

- Run for 1.5 miles or 12 minutes.

## RUNNING PROGRAMME WEEK 2

### DAY 3

- Rest day. No exercise.

### DAY 4

- Run for 5 miles or 35–40 minutes.

### DAY 5

- Run for 3 miles or 20 minutes.

### Then

- Walk at a brisk pace for 2 miles or approximately 20 minutes.

### DAY 6

- Run for 5 miles or 35–45 minutes.

### DAY 7

- Rest day. No exercise.

Once you have completed the second week running programme, use the 3rd week to perform different types of exercises, such as cycling and swimming. During week 4 you can then commence the 2 week running programme again. You'll be amazed at how much easier it is the second time around!

When preparing for the selection process, use your exercise time as a break from your studies. For example, if you have been working on the application form for a couple of hours why not take a break and go running? When you return from your run you can then concentrate on your studies feeling refreshed.

Now that we've provided you with a structured running programme to follow, there really are no excuses. So, get out there and start running! We'll now provide you with a number of key targeted exercises that will

allow you to prepare effectively for the fitness tests.

## **EXERCISES THAT WILL IMPROVE YOUR ABILITY TO PASS THE FITNESS TESTS**

### **Press-ups**

Whilst running is a great way to improve your overall fitness, you will also need to carry out exercises that improve your upper body strength. These exercises will help you to pass the strength tests which form part of the assessment. The great thing about press-ups is that you don't have to attend a gym to perform them. However, you must ensure that you can do them correctly as injury can occur. You only need to spend just 5 minutes every day on press-ups, possibly after you go running or even before if you prefer. If you are not used to doing press-ups then start slowly and aim to carry out at least 10.

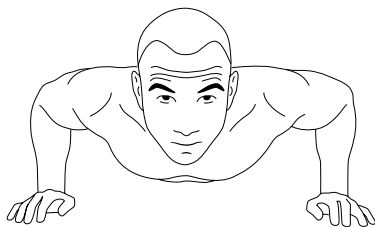
Even if you struggle to do just 10, you will soon find that after a few days practice at these you will be up to 20+.

#### **Step 1**

To begin with, lie on a mat or even surface. Your hands should be shoulder width apart & fully extend the arms.

#### **Step 2**

Gradually lower your body until the elbows reach 90°. Do not rush the movement as you may cause injury.



#### **Step 3**

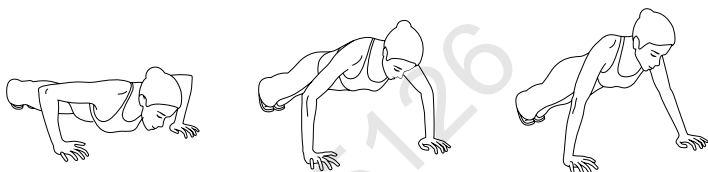
Once your elbows reach 90° slowly return to the starting position with

your arms fully extended.

The press up action should be a continuous movement with no rest. However, it is important that the exercise is as smooth as possible and there should be no jolting or sudden movements. Try to complete as many press ups as possible and always keep a record of how many you do. This will keep your focus and also maintain your motivation levels.

Did you know that the world record for non-stop press-ups is currently 10,507 set in 1980!

**WARNING** – Ensure you take advice from a competent fitness trainer



in relation to the correct execution of press-up exercises and other exercises contained within this guide.

## Sit-ups

Sit ups are great for building the core stomach muscles. At the commencement of the exercise lie flat on your back with your knees bent at a 45° angle and with your feet together. Your hands can either be crossed on your chest, by your sides, or cupped behind your ears. Without moving your lower body, curl your upper torso upwards and in towards your knees, until your shoulder blades are as high off the ground as possible. As you reach the highest point, tighten your abdominals muscles for a brief second. This will allow you to get the most out of the exercise. Now slowly start to lower yourself back to the starting position. You should be aiming to work up to at least 50 effective sit-ups every day. You will be amazed at how quickly this can be achieved and you will begin to notice your stomach muscles developing.

Whilst sit-ups do not form part of fitness tests, they are still a great way of improving your all-round fitness and therefore should not be neglected.

## Pull-ups

Pull ups are another great way for building the core upper body muscle groups. The unfortunate thing about this type of exercise is you will probably need to attend a gym in order to carry them out. Having said that, there are a number of different types of 'pull up bars' available to buy on the market that can easily and safely be fitted to a doorway at home. If

you choose to purchase one of these items make sure that it conforms to the relevant safety standards first.



Lateral pull-ups are very effective at increasing upper body strength. If you have access to a gymnasium then these can be practised on a 'lateral pull-down' machine. It is advised that you consult your gym member of staff to ask about these exercises.

Pull ups should be performed by grasping firmly a sturdy and solid bar. Before you grasp the bar make sure it is safe. Your hands should be roughly shoulder width apart. Straighten your arms so that your body hangs loose. You will feel your lateral muscles and biceps stretching as you hang in the air. This is the starting position for the lateral pull up exercise.

Next, pull yourself upwards to the point where your chest is almost touching the bar and your chin is actually over the bar. Whilst pulling upwards, focus on keeping your body straight without any arching or swinging as this can result in injury. Once your chin is over the bar, you can lower





yourself back down to the initial starting position. Repeat the exercise 10 times.

### **Squats (these work the legs and bottom)**

Squats are a great exercise for working the leg muscles. They are the perfect exercise in your preparation for the fitness tests.

At the commencement of the exercise, stand up straight with your arms at your sides. Concentrate on keeping your feet shoulder-width apart and your head up. Do not look downwards at any point during the exercise.

Now start to very slowly bend your knees while pushing your rear out as though you are about to sit down on a chair. Keep lowering yourself down until your thighs reach past the 90° point. Make sure your weight is on your heels so that your knees do not extend over your toes. At this point you may wish to tighten your thighs and buttocks to intensify the exercise.

As you come back up to a standing position, push down through your heels which will allow you to maintain your balance. Repeat the exercise 15 to 20 times.

### **Lunges (these work the thighs and bottom)**

You will have noticed throughout this section of the guide that we have been providing you with simple, yet highly effective exercises that can be carried out at home. The lunge exercise is another great addition to the range of exercises that require no attendance at the gym.

To begin with, stand with your back straight and your feet together (you may hold light hand weights if you wish to add some intensity to the exercise).



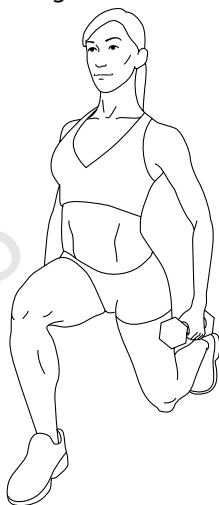
Next, take a big step forward as illustrated in the diagram making sure you inhale as you go and land with the heel first. Bend the front knee no more than 90 degrees so as to avoid injury. Keep your back straight and lower the back knee as close to the floor as possible. Your front knee should be lined up over your ankle and your back thigh should be in line with your back.

To complete the exercise, exhale and push down against your front heel, squeezing your buttocks tight as you rise back to a starting position.

Try to repeat the exercise 15 to 20 times before switching sides.

### **Lateral raises (these work the shoulder muscles)**

Whilst PCSOs are not usually required to lift heavy items of equipment during their day to day work, they still need to have a good level of upper body strength. Lateral raises will allow you improve your upper body strength in a safe and effective manner.



Take a dumbbell in each hand and hold them by the sides of your body with the palms facing inward.

Stand or sit with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent. Do not lean backwards as you could cause injury to your back. Raise your arms up and out to the sides until they are parallel to the ground, then lower them back down carefully. Repeat the exercise 15 to 20 times.

## **ALTERNATIVES EXERCISES**

### **Swimming**

Apart from press-ups, lateral raises and the other exercises we have

provided you with, another fantastic way to improve your upper body and overall fitness is to go swimming. If you have access to a swimming pool, and you can swim, then this is a brilliant way to improve your fitness.

If you are not a great swimmer you can start off with short distances and gradually build up your swimming strength and stamina. Breaststroke is sufficient for building good upper body strength providing you put the effort into swimming an effective number of lengths. You may wish to alternate your running programme with the odd day of swimming. If you can swim 10 lengths of a 25-metre pool initially then this is a good base to start from. You will soon find that you can increase this number easily providing that you carry on swimming every week. Try running to your local swimming pool if it is not too far away, swimming 20 lengths of breaststroke, and then running back home.

This is a great way to combine your fitness activity and prevent yourself from becoming bored of your training programme.

## **Rowing**

If there is one exercise that will allow you to work every single muscle group in the body then it is rowing. This is the perfect exercise for preparing to pass the fitness tests. It will increase your aerobic fitness and it will also improve your lower and upper body strength.

As with any exercise of this nature there is a risk of injury. It is crucial that you use the correct technique when rowing on a purpose built machine. By applying the correct technique you will be far more efficient and you will also see faster results.

Whilst exercising on the rowing machine, make sure you keep your back straight and concentrate on using your legs and buttocks. Never extend so far that you lock out your knees. Try and be smooth throughout the entire exercise. To obtain a suitable indoor rowing training programme that is relevant to your current fitness levels please visit [www.concept2.co.uk](http://www.concept2.co.uk).

## **The multi stage fitness test or bleep test**

This part of the selection process requires you to demonstrate a specific level of fitness.

In simple terms the bleep test requires you to run backwards and forwards (shuttles) between 2 fixed points a set distance apart. The test is progressive in that as the levels increase so does the difficulty. A tape will be played that contains a series of 'bleeps' set out at different intervals.

The distance between the 'bleeps' at level 1 will be far greater than the 'bleeps' at level 10. Each time the 'bleeps' increase, the tape will let you know that you are progressing to the next level. During the test you will be required to keep up with 'bleeps' and not fall behind them or run ahead of them. Level 1 starts off at around walking pace and gradually increases as each stage progresses.

The best way to practise for this stage of the test is to practise the actual test itself. However, the next best alternative is to go running at least 3 miles, at least 3 times a week. Each time you go out running you should try to push yourself a little bit harder and further.

By running 3 times a week you will give your body the rest it needs in between each run so it is probably best to run on alternate days.

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# **CHAPTER 11**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**What is a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO)?**

PCSOs are members of support staff employed, directed and managed by the Police. They work alongside police officers to provide a visible and accessible uniformed presence to improve the quality of life in the community and offer greater public reassurance.

**Are PCSOs used as a replacement for regular police officers?**

No, PCSOs are used in addition to existing police officers.

**Are PCSOs the same as Special Constables?**

No, PCSOs have a unique role designed purely to tackle antisocial behaviour and quality of life issues. While Special Constables are unpaid volunteers with similar powers to that of regular full-time police officers, PCSOs are paid Support Staff employees with their own unique powers.

**Why are Police Services employing PCSOs?**

Public demand for visible patrols has never been greater. The Police have taken advantage of new opportunities arising from Government reforms of policing to increase their capacity to meet this demand and deliver the service that the community expect and deserve.

**Where do PCSOs work?**

They work within the county area as defined by the relevant Police Service.

**If I am unsuccessful at any stage of the recruitment process, when can I re-apply?**

If you are unsuccessful at any stage of the process, you will not have to wait any length of time before you can re-apply. However, Police Services recruit at certain times of the year and you can only re-apply if they are recruiting.



**Do I have to be tall to be a PCSO?**

No, there are no height restrictions in place.

**How long is my probationary period?**

The probationary period for PCSOs is 12 months.

**How old do I have to be to apply to become a PCSO?**

At present, you can apply to become a PCSO at the age of 18.

**Can I apply with criminal convictions?**

You may be eligible to join with minor convictions or cautions, but this depends on how old you were at the time and what the conviction or caution was for. There are certain types of offences that will lead to instant rejection, such as murder, manslaughter, death by reckless driving, rape, kidnapping, firearms offences, gross indecency, hostage taking, hijacking or torture. Please check with your local Police Service to verify this information.

**Do I have to be a British Citizen?**

To be eligible for appointment you must be a British Citizen, an EC or EEA national, a Commonwealth Citizen or a Foreign National with no restrictions on your stay in the UK. You must also have lived in the UK for a minimum of 3 years prior to your application.

**If I am female, or a member of a minority group, will my application be discriminated against?**

No, all Police Services welcome and encourage applications from females and ethnic minority groups. The principles of fair and open competition apply and appointments will be made on merit.

### **Can I apply if I have tattoos?**

Yes, as long as your tattoo will not cause offence to members of the public or your colleagues.

### **What qualifications do I need to become a PCSO?**

There are no formal educational requirements to become a PCSO, but applicants must undergo a written test at the Selection Centre. Therefore, a reasonable standard of English is required.

### **How can PCSOs be effective without full police powers?**

PCSOs are not police officers. Their main role is to deal with quality of life issues that do not always require the presence of a police officer. All PCSOs will be given full training to enable them to take appropriate action in the event of difficult circumstances. They will be supervised by police officers and will carry radios to enable them to call for assistance, should it be required.

### **Why don't the Police just employ more police constables?**

The Police do continue to employ as many police officers as Government funding allows. However, they also need to provide a more visible and accessible uniformed foot patrol and tackle quality of life issues. These tasks do not always require the powers or experience of police officers, but often take them away from more appropriate duties.

### **How can you tell a PCSO from a police officer?**

PCSOs have their own style of uniform, which makes it easier to tell the difference between them and regular police officers. PCSOs have blue bands around their hats, blue ties, and blue epaulettes on their shoulders. On the back of

their coat or jacket it says POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER. All PCSOs also carry personal identification with them.

**What equipment do PCSOs carry?**

PCSOs will wear protective vests, but will not carry other personal protection equipment such as CS spray or batons. They will all have a personal radio that provides immediate access to police communications and support.

**Do PCSOs work shifts?**

Yes.

**Are there opportunities to work part-time and flexible hours as a PCSO?**

Yes, part-time and flexible hours are usually considered.

**What powers do PCSOs have?**

All PCSOs have the following powers:

- Issuing fixed penalty notices (e.g. for riding on footpaths, dog fouling and litter).
- Confiscating alcohol and tobacco.
- Entering property to save life or prevent damage.
- Demanding the name and address of a person acting in an antisocial manner.
- Removing abandoned vehicles.
- Seizing vehicles being used to cause alarm or distress.

## **A FEW FINAL WORDS**

You have now reached the end of the guide and no doubt you will be ready to start preparing for the PCSO selection process. Just before you go off and start on your preparation, consider the following.

The majority of candidates who pass the selection process have a number of common attributes. These are as follows:

### **1. They believe in themselves.**

The first factor is self-belief. Regardless of what anyone tells you, you can become a PCSO. Just like any job of this nature, you have to be prepared to work hard in order to be successful. Make sure you have the self-belief to pass the selection process and fill your mind with positive thoughts.

### **2. They prepare fully.**

The second factor is preparation. Those people who achieve in life prepare fully for every eventuality and that is what you must do when you apply to become a police community support officer. Work very hard and especially concentrate on your weak areas.

### **3. They persevere.**

Perseverance is a fantastic word. Everybody comes across obstacles or setbacks in their life, but it is what you do about those setbacks that is important. If you fail at something, then ask yourself 'why' you have failed. This will allow you to improve for next time and if you keep improving and trying, success will eventually follow. Apply this same method of thinking when you apply to become a police community support officer.

**4. They are self-motivated.**

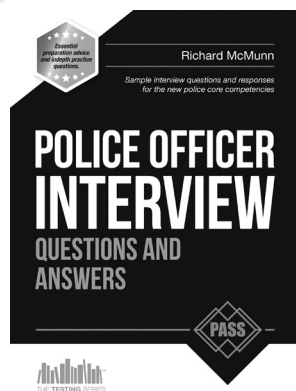
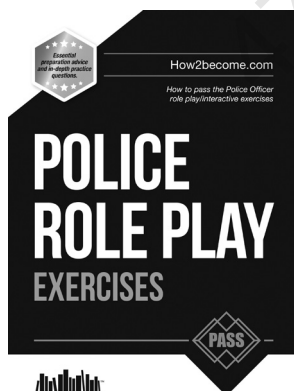
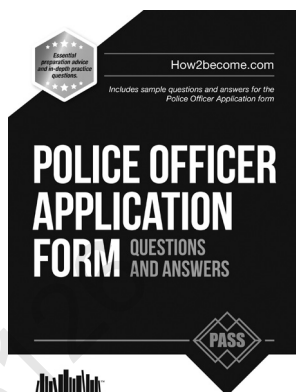
How much do you want this job? Do you want it, or do you really want it?

When you apply to join the police as a PCSO you should want it more than anything in the world. Your levels of self-motivation will shine through on your application and during your interview. For the weeks and months leading up to the selection process, be motivated as best you can and always keep your fitness levels up as this will serve to increase your levels of motivation.

Work hard, stay focused, and you can achieve anything that you set your mind to.

**The How2Become Team**

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