



## Report of the Police and Crime Panel

**Report title:** PCSO Recruitment

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024

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**Purpose of the report:** Update requested

**Recommendations:** Information only

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### Executive Summary

Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) recruitment this year has continued to be a challenge despite a significant number of applications and targeted recruitment activity. Whilst we have seen an increase in the number of applications there is a lower conversion rate of applications to appointable candidates.

### Operational overview

Our current PCSO establishment is 294 with actuals of 249.02.

Year to date we have recruited 43 PCSOs however over the same period we have seen 51 PCSO leavers. 15 of those leavers have joined as Police Officers, 2 retirements and the remaining 34 were resignations.

Years 2 and 3 of Uplift saw a significant increase in PCSOs leaving to become Police Officers with 107 PCSOs becoming officers over those 2 years alone.

In addition to our normal recruitment activities, targeted recruitment campaigns have been undertaken which has included streamlining the application process, the use of recruitment platforms such as “Easy Apply with Indeed” and increased attendance at recruitment fayres. Since April we have presented the PCSO role at over 50 events in addition to the neighbourhood led events where recruitment materials are also available.

Seven paid campaigns through Meta (Facebook/Instagram) have resulted in 7,843 clicks through to the PCSO recruitment page.

Since 1 April 2023 we have received 338 applications for the role of PCSO, this is a 50% increase in comparison to last year. Historically we have appointed 1 in 5 applicants however of the 338 applications 213 have been unable to be progress any further. The main reasons include:

- 108 - rejected at eligibility checks
  - This includes status to work in the UK, residency criteria (living in the UK for 1 year in the last 3 years for vetting, driving licence, educational qualifications, appropriateness of tattoos.
- 11 - rejected at shortlisting



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- 15 – unsuccessful at interview
- 8 - rejected at pre-employment checks (vetting/OHU)
- 71 – applications withdrawn by the candidate

There are currently 56 applications being processed prior to interview as well as 7 candidates with interviews booked and a further 34 having been invited to interview. Caution should be taken with this number as some candidates have been invited to interview some time ago and are yet to book onto an interview, the recruitment team contacting these candidates.

An additional 23 candidates have passed their interview and are progressing towards formal offers and course allocation.

We have also seen an increase in Police Officers joining as PCSOs where they have been subject to regulation 13 and the officer role has not suited their skill set.

### Next Steps

We are currently exploring the possibility of offering a non-apprenticeship entry route due to anecdotal evidence that this may be a barrier to potential applicants. In practical terms the only difference is a presentation at the end of the programme however the apprenticeship allows Thames Valley Police to draw down on a levy. We have removed references to this in marketing material however we have not seen a noticeable difference in applicant numbers and as such it is unclear how much a barrier this is.

Through the launch of the revised exit interviews and resignation process we will be able to achieve a better understand as to why our PCSOs are leaving and target retention and recruitment activity accordingly. Over the coming months we will also be launching a stay interview process which is designed to identify those thinking of leaving earlier but also gain a better understanding why individuals stay in their roles.

### Conclusion

Despite significant efforts being made in the recruitment of PCSOs we are not achieving the number of appointable applicants that we require. Whilst there is a significant number of applications the conversion rates to appointable candidates is lower than in previous years.