

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2024

Report to the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

Title of Report:	Specials Recruitment – Half Yearly Report
Agenda Number:	09.0
Classification	Official
Chief Officer	ACC Andy Mariner
Date Paper was Written	2nd May 2024
Version Number	1
Report from:	Essex Police
Date of Meeting:	25th June 2024
Author on behalf of Chief Officer:	Sarah Wright Citizens in Policing Commander
Date of Approval by Chief Officer:	14th May 2024
COG meeting date / date of approval (Please indicate whether paper presented to COG or not)	COG - 29th May 2024

1.0 **Purpose of Report**

This is a half yearly update on recruitment under the Special Constabulary Development Programme. This report covers the 6-month period from 1st November 2023 to 30th April 2024.

2.0 **Recommendations**

No recommendations.

3.0 **Executive Summary**

This paper reports on key deliveries against the below from 1st November 2023 to 30th April 2024 as well as future areas of focus:

- Recruitment, Training and Retention
- Reward and Recognition
- Media Opportunities
- Employer Supported Policing
- Community Special Constables

- Performance

To give some national context, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) reports significant drops in volunteering across all sectors, accelerating after COVID, coinciding with the cost-of-living crisis. Only 16% of adults surveyed in 2022 volunteer at least once a month, which is a 28% reduction from the 2018 position, where 22% of adults surveyed, volunteered at least once a month.

The national position around Special Constables follows a similar trajectory, with a 33% reduction in headcount, over a similar period of 2018 – 2022 with a reduction from 12,000 to 8,000 nationally. In Essex since April 2018, we have had a 38% reduction in headcount, now sitting at 254. Essex is consistent with the national decline in volunteering where numbers have decreased consecutively for the past 11 years. In 2023 alone, numbers saw a further 20% reduction, falling again significantly in virtually every police force.

The current Special Constabulary headcount is at 254 and we have seen a steady decline from our largest command of 537, in June 2021. However, in the last six months, we have seen this decrease slow with 39 leavers, a decrease of 6 (13.3%) from the previous 6-month period and a decrease of 26 (40%) from the same period in 2023.

4.0 Introduction

From available data, Essex Police remains the second largest Special Constabulary in England and Wales, behind only the Metropolitan Police. Data supplied by the Federation in July 2023, shows that Essex were second largest with West Midlands and Avon & Somerset forces closely behind. We continue to support other forces in sharing best practices and leading the way for ensuring our special constables are supported and valued. Our Employer Supported Policing Co-ordinator, Les Hawkins, works closely with ESP National Chief Officer, ACC Smith, recently reviewing the criteria for the Lord Ferrers ESP Award. In this period, Essex has registered four or 45% of the new businesses signed up to the ESP scheme nationally. Essex has also been approached to provide Employee Supported Policing and Dutysheet Best Practice workshops for Dorset Police.

5.0 Current Work and Performance

5.1 Recruitment, Training and Retention

The vision is to now enter the Special Constabulary back into a period of sustained growth, led by C/Supt Hammett.

Recruitment Events are mainly physical, in person events however there are virtual interviews offered, once a month, to allow more flexibility on interview times.

The SC to PC scheme is up and running smoothly. This was reviewed after one year with a report going back to the College of Policing to ensure the necessary requirements had been met.

Leading on from the work that came out of the Specials Recruitment Focus Group, the newly formed Specials Recruitment Taskforce has been active. Led by S/Sgt Damian Walters and working closely with Recruitment and Specials Command, they have helped progress a number of steps in relation to recruitment as below:

- Extensive Outreach programme across the county. This includes an agreement from Essex Park Run to attend any meeting and promote the role. Between the special recruitment team and the Taskforce, 31 outreach events have been attended in this period.
- Use of the 33 Special Constable Recruitment Ambassadors to support outreach events as well as interviewing applicants.
- PFCC funded recruitment kits are now stored throughout the county with dedicated SPOCS to coordinate allocation for outreach events.
- Speak to a Special – available on the Essex Police website for applicants to learn more directly from a special constable. Six applicants have used this opportunity.
- Ride Alongs – easier access to this scheme. It has been used as a tool to keep applicants in the pipeline warm, and the opportunity is regularly offered.
- Specials Recruitment Buddies – introduced to support through pipeline, training, and initial months on district. There are currently 22 buddies actively supporting 29 applicants.
- A revised way of working with the Media Department, where we can work on campaigns together, to build capacity. This has resulted in the creation of a new campaign video, designed, and produced by the Taskforce and supported by a local film company, Blatella Films, as a community initiative. This will be launched during National Volunteers Week in June.
- Funding provided to actively advertise the Special Constable role on Indeed and LinkedIn.
- New programme set up in partnership with South Essex College where students who enrol on their Level 4 Policing course will complete their mandatory work experience as a Special Constable, completing 1 day a week throughout their 1 year college course. This would mean students would provide double the minimum required hours every month. They may wish to stay as a special constable after the completion of the course or consider the established pathway into the regular constabulary. Nine applications have been received.
- Bi-weekly calls completed by recruitment to provide platinum service to all applicants, with the aim of reducing the dropout rate through the process and improve our conversion from applications to beginning training.
- Essex Police received 192 applications on Success Factors from 1st November 2023 – 30th April 2024. This is an increase of 31 applications (19.25%) on the previous 6-month period.

- From the 192 Success Factors applications, 35 were BAME applicants (18.32% of total applications) compared to 20 applications (12.42% of total applications), from the previous 6 months, which equates to an increase of close to 6% in the percentage of all applications.
- From the 192 applications, 69 applicants identified as female (35.93% of all applications), compared to 48 (29.81% of all applications), from the previous 6 months, which equates to an increase of 6.12% in the percentage of all applications.
- 2 intakes started in this period with 9 new officers.
- Scheduled for 5 more Intakes, by 31st October 2024, with a potential for 82 more applicants to start.
- There were 2 Attestations in this period with 14 new officers.
- Since January 2023, special constables can join Essex Federation free of charge. As of 2nd May 2024, 86% (219 specials) have signed up.

The Recruitment Team and the Specials Task Force have attended many in person events during the past 6 months. Some events attended include a talk to Public Services students at Harlow College, Park Runs, British Telecom and National Rail Employee Supported Policing events.

They also run regular Special Constable Recruitment Information Events (RIE), with a panel of special constables sharing their experiences with interested applicants. These are online or in person events at Headquarters and several now being held at locations across the county. The next RIE is booked for the 14th of May in Colchester, with 4 more planned for the year, 2 virtual events and 2 in the South and West LPA. In the last period, the Recruitment Team hosted 2 RIEs, 1 virtual over Microsoft Teams on 7th December and 1 at Essex Police College on 27th February. The events went well and supported applications during this period; however, sign ups in general were still much lower. Along with the RIEs the Taskforce also has 12 outreach events planned through to September.

5.2 Reward and Recognition

- Due to smaller intakes of students, there is an opportunity to use the Attestation to celebrate good work. During the December and March Attestations, 6 special constables were recognised for 5-year service, completion of supervisor Professional Development Plans, and exceptional work. We also celebrated 2 significant milestone anniversaries with 2 officers, SC Martin Halls and S/Supt Howard Rayner, achieving 35 and 40-years' service. These were celebrated with several of their family and friends as well as colleagues and officers from around the Force. Many of these recognised were career specials and plans are now in place to invite further specials to future ceremonies. Long Service Good Conduct also gets recognised by Essex Police with officers invited to force wide ceremonies.

- During December's Attestation we were also delighted to be able to present S/Sgt Simon Jesse with a Certificate from the High Sheriff in acknowledgement of his services and commitment to the Community Special Role serving the people of Witham. This officer is the first to receive such an award and demonstrates the impact he has made and support he has provided Witham Town Council.
- The Gold Challenge Coin has proven to be a great success over the last year, this recognises exceptional contribution or acts of merit. Specials can be nominated via the Special Command Team and those supported are invited along to the Attestation, with their family to be presented. 5 officers received coins at December's Attestation with 3 officers being presented at March's Attestation; 4 officers were presented at Braintree Awards Nights in February and a further 3 locally by appropriate representation. We also recognised 4 further officers who received coins in acknowledgement of their length of service retiring at 9, 17 years and 2 officers at 15 years. A further 2 officers have already been nominated for exceptional acts and will be presented at June's Attestation.
- We continue to recognise our special constables that have completed their 3- and 5-year service by rewarding them with a Special Constabulary Pin Badge. These badges have recently undertaken a refresh and now reflect the Kings crown. Those specials reaching 5 years continue to be invited to attend Attestations with their family to be presented with the pin badge and certificate, the last 6 months 8 officers have achieved this milestone. Those who achieve 3 years are presented with a certificate and pin badge locally. During the last 6 months over 30 officers have achieved their 3 years' service and been awarded with their pins.
- The Special Constabulary awards are due to be held on 9th May. Nominations opened in March, comprising of 11 award categories including Supervisor of the Year, Regular of the Year, Team of the Year in addition to exceptional work and acts of bravery categories. Over 60 nominations across our Force were received with 43 being shortlisted by our external judging panel and then invited to the Awards Ceremony. Winners and runners-up will be communicated after the event.
- This year's Essex Police Force Awards recently opened, and we are actively promoting and encouraging nominations before the deadline. Those applicable from our Special Constabulary Awards will also be put forward for consideration as part of the nomination process.

5.3 Media Attraction

In this half yearly report we continue to maximise social media coverage around several events in which to gain a positive impact on recruitment figures. Recruitment Information Events are promoted via the Essex Police website to increase numbers and social media content has been issued around specific special related stories as highlighted below: -

OFFICIAL

- In November, an article was published in relation to S/Sgt Simon Jesse, who received the High Sheriff Award for “great and valuable” services to the community through his Community Special Constable role in Witham.
- In December and again in February, Southend special constables were highlighted externally for their Takeover Operations, dealing with several incidents throughout the shifts and allowing their regular colleagues time to focus on their current workloads and investigations. This was also posted on Instagram.
- In December, an external and internal article was released concerning S/Supt Howard Rayner, who celebrated 40 years of volunteering on 23rd November. S/Supt Rayner was also recognised and short listed in the National Lord Ferrers Awards in October for Lifetime Achievement. Both accolades were recognised and celebrated on 18th December at the Specials Attestation.
- In January, an external media article highlighted the 2,000 plus hours contributed across the force by all specials during the Christmas and New Year. The article highlighted some of the incidents they attended and how they helped keep people safe at one of the busiest times of the year.
- In February, the Employee Supported Policing Scheme was promoted through an article about the Greater Manchester Group at Stansted Airport signing up to the scheme and photos from their presentation with the ESP Coordinator.
- In February, an article focused on Southend special constables who completed a 17-mile charity walk, raising £500, for St Vincent de Paul Society, who provide practical help for anyone affected by poverty or disadvantage.
- In March, a feature was published concerning Operation Traverse, a national policing operation, to tackle illegal fishing and fish theft. The Rural Engagement Team along with special constables patrolled Hanningfield Water Park with the Environment Agency fisheries enforcement officers. They spoke to over 83 people and boats about the importance of knowing the laws surrounding freshwater fishing and the permissions required. Separate to this, in March, an Instagram post promoting specials by showing a special with the dog unit.
- In April, the Braintree and Uttlesford Specials were featured in an article about a joint operation between the Community Policing Team and the Rural Engagement Team to visit villages and more isolated rural areas in both districts to focus on rural crime and rural-related issues.
- The Business Time Essex magazine previously featured a free full-page article about Essex Specials and Employee Supported Policing. Funding was provided and adverts for specials continue to appear in their Business Directory.
- The new We Value Difference 3 campaign features specials and as part of this, Media are planning activity to promote specials recruitment.

OFFICIAL

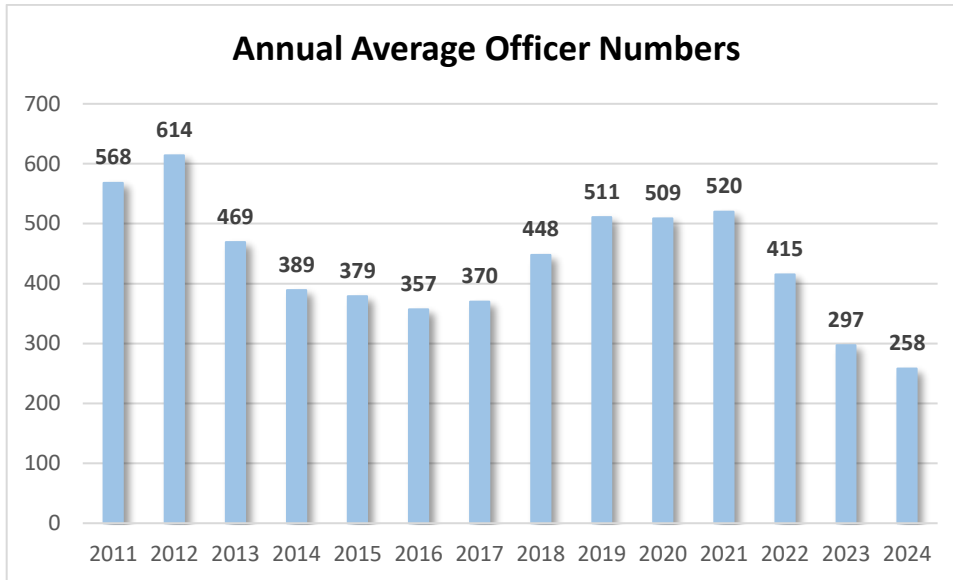
- Facebook continued to be the highest media source for Special applications during 2023. The new Orlo licences for social media allow the 8 special constable users the ability to update both “X” (Twitter) and district Facebook pages with specials related activity.
- Indeed, is an online employment website, and a popular source for regular recruitment. In April, funding was provided, to promote the special constable role for the first time. Linked In, is another useful tool for recruitment, with a funded space for specials to be promoted. An advert for Essex special constables was posted in April.
- The Specials Recruitment Taskforce, in collaboration with Media have revised the ‘My Other Life’ campaign. With support from a local film company, as part of a community initiative, a new video has been completed and is due to be launched during National Volunteers Week in June with a month-long social media plan. From the new campaign, updated posters are being produced for circulation in key sites such as train stations and colleges. The video can be used in “reel” format for social media and further campaign material is being planned. This is an exciting development and should lead to more capacity and reach across our social media platforms.

5.3 Recruitment Data from 1st Apr 2016 to Current Date

The table at the top of the next page compares the recruitment and exits of the current year with the previous 8 years. The number of Specials who resign to become a regular officer has increased from a position of 26.6% in March 2017 due to the success of the Uplift Programme. While there is an average of 33.9% since 2017, we have seen a decline in 2023/24 to 18.4%. Please note that 2024/25 figures are partial and represent data from 1st April 2024 – 2nd May 2024.

Year	Joiner	Exits	(No. of leavers who have joined regulars)	% of leavers who have become a regular
2016/17	87	105	28	(26.6%)
2017/18	180	116	38	(32.7%)
2018/19	215	127	49	(38.5%)
2019/20	163	163	77	(47.2%)
2020/21	167	137	40	(29.2%)
2021/22	82	146	42	(28.8%)
2022/23	31	178	70	(39.3%)
2023/24	32	87	16	(18.4%)
2024/25	5	0	0	(0%)
Grand Total	989	1,059	360	(33.9%)

The above table identifies the SC Command as a significant pipeline to the recruitment of PCs, both within Essex Police and wider, with 360 recruits having started their policing journey as a Special.



Please note that the above graph shows Dutysheet average special constable numbers for each calendar year.

5.4 **Employer Supported Policing and Community Special Constables**

Employer Supported Policing (ESP)

- 82 businesses (including Essex Police), in the last 6 months, support 66 officers in the Employer Supported Policing scheme which is an increase of 6 businesses from the previous period. Of these 66 officers, 29 are employed by Essex Police in other roles.
- 220 Employer Supported Policing duties have resulted in 1,532 hours of policing in this period which is an increase of 18% for duties and an increase of 13% for hours worked on the previous half.
- Essex continues to lead nationally with ESP. In the last six months, 9 businesses have been registered nationally on the ESP scheme. Les Hawkins, ESP Coordinator, has registered 4 of these (45%). These include businesses such as Microsoft, The Met Office, McLaren Automotive. Les Hawkins was recently asked by the ESP National Chief Officer Lead, ACC Deb Smith, Wiltshire Police, to review and propose updated criteria and wording for the ESP category for the Lord Ferrers Awards.
- Essex Police is regularly approached for ESP advice and support from other forces. Les Hawkins has recently been asked to provide ESP and Duty Sheet Best Practice workshops for Dorset Police.
- Currently in various stages of negotiation with over 90 businesses – some initial and others at the stage of final decisions, including Police Digital Services, Ikea, and Virgin Media O2.

- Essex Chambers of Commerce continues to plan for future events and Les Hawkins attends many of their networking events to promote ESP.

Community Special Constables (CSC)

- We have 10 active Community Special Constables officers covering 7 councils. We have growth in the pipeline including 5 in post foundation training and 5 awaiting start dates.
- Community Special Constables have worked 170 duties resulting in 1,195 hours. This is an increase of 5.5% duties and an increase of 5.5% hours on the previous period.
- Les Hawkins has linked in with all 70 participating councils ensuring they have all the current recruitment materials. He has also promoted the Specials Recruitment Task Force and several councils have already planned for the Task Force to attend their local events in order to assist with recruitment.
- Les Hawkins meets regularly with the CSCs around the county where the team share best practices and ideas around CSC recruitment.
- The combined ESP and CSC hours account for 6.8% of all Specials hours (6.2% last period) and 6.1% of all Specials duties in this period. (5.5 last period)

5.5 Performance

- 254 officers (as of 9th May 2024);
- 12 Ethnic Minority officers (4.69% of the establishment 30th April 2024);
- Delivered 40,330 hours of which 30,105 were operational hours. This is equivalent to the working time provided by 23 full time officers at a cost of £1.2m during this half year (or 46 full time officers a year at a cost of £2.4m). Recognising the cost to Essex Police of supporting the Special Constabulary volunteers, the efficiency saving of deploying SCs instead of PCs, during this period was £609,080.
- 82 businesses (including Essex Police) and 66 officers who now benefit from the ESP scheme.
- 10 Community Special Constables actively covering 7 parishes with a further 10 CSCs in the pipeline.

Les Hawkins, our Employer Supported Policing Co-ordinator, is working with the ESP National Chief Officer, ACC Smith from Wiltshire Police to review and propose updated criteria and wording for the ESP category for the Lord Ferrers Awards. Maria Rawlings, Specials Coordinator, seats on the panel of local assessors for the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAV).

Over the period 1st November 2023 to 30th April 2024, 255 specials have contributed a total of 40,330 hours compared to 39,947 hours in the previous period. This is a 19.4% decrease on the same period in 2022/23, where 49,550 hours were contributed by 326 special constables.

The last 6 months has seen 30,105 operational hours contributed, a decrease of 4.5% compared to operational hours worked the previous 6 months. During the same 6-month period in 2022, 39,636 operational hours and a total of 49,550 hours were contributed.

The hours worked by the Special Constabulary during this 6-month period is equivalent to the working time provided by 23 full time officers at a cost of £1.2m during this period (or 46 full time officers a year at a cost of £2.4m). Recognising the cost to Essex Police of supporting the Special Constabulary volunteers, the efficiency saving of deploying SCs instead of PCs, during this period was £609,080.

During 1st November 2023 to 30th April 2024, there were, on average a command of 263 special constables. During this period, 62.4% of special constables have volunteered at least 16 hours each month, the minimum number of hours expected.

In addition, the 263 Specials have averaged 25 hours each per month compared to the last 6-month period when 289 Specials averaged 23 hours each. This is an equivalent to the same period in 2022/23, when 333 Specials averaged 25 hours per officer.

Non-Operational and Service Exit:

39 leavers represent a decrease of 6 (13.3%) from the previous 6-month period and a decrease of 26 (40%) from the same period in 2023.

- 8 for Essex regulars.
- 2 for other Force regulars.
- 3 retired.
- 4 due to a change in personal circumstances.
- 3 for medical reasons.
- 2 due to other personal reasons.
- 14 for work/life balance.
- 3 resigned during training - could no longer commit.

We currently have 39 specials (15.4%) who are currently non-operational or in a leave of absence (data as of 7th May 2024).

The team continues to be part of the LPSU Strategic Co-ordination Group to look at the mobilisation of LPSU resources delivering a partnership approach across different geographical locations throughout Essex. Our special constables play an integral part of Operation Stronghold, a weeklong operation of intensification focusing on night-time patrols and engagement.

During this period, 255 special constables performed 6,339 duties with 30,105 operational hours contributed including 13,996 high visibility hours, along with the

increase in average hours per officer this period, it demonstrates the specials continue to be a receptive and engaged group. As well as community-based operations such as Stronghold, Specials have also supported their districts with several high visibility patrol operations, targeting anti-social behaviour and patrolling hotspot areas as per Op Grip. They support several local traffic operations such as Op Vision Zero and Ignition which assist in speed enforcement. All these events have continued to support community engagement, improving public trust and confidence, as well as engaging with the public providing crime prevention advice along with supporting their regular colleagues.

The Specials are tasked directly by their districts and support their regular colleagues in the execution of High Harm offence warrants through Operation Nightshade. They will assist and add value by covering foot patrols, public reassurance, visibility in High Harm areas. By running Takeover Operations and dealing with other STORM incidents and warrants, they allow their regular colleagues to focus on the outstanding High Harm suspects.

The Specials Command Team continues to support its regular colleagues with successful deployments and supporting their colleagues with county wide and national operations. S/Supt Leon Dias is the regional lead for Operation Zappas, the deployment of special constables to the Paris Olympics in August 2024.

5.6 Operational Deliverables

- Special Takeover Days - continue to support our Regular Colleagues to focus on case progression, victim contacts, online training and ANPR duties. In this period Special Constables have supported in Southend, Chelmsford, Braintree and Uttlesford.
- Op Vision Zero - a Road Safety Operation run by Safer Essex Roads Partnership and supported by Essex Police. Focussing on the fatal four - Seat Belts, Mobile Phones, Speeding and Impairment. Special Constables have supported Vision Zero operations in Thurrock, Rayleigh, Canvey, Brentwood, Colchester, Basildon, Clacton, Southend, Uttlesford and Harlow.
- Project Servator - a policing tactic that aims to disrupt a range of criminal activity, including terrorism, while providing a reassuring presence for the public. Special Constables have received training and help local officers with knife arches and community engagement at Lakeside Shopping Centre and Colchester.
- Op Nightshade – continues to support High Harm shifts and activity as directed locally. In Colchester, special constables ran an Operation Nightshade shift to progress packages for these offenders.
- Op Stronghold – continues to support High Visibility patrols and community engagement. Specials Constables from across the county have supported these regular, weeklong operations of intensification focusing on night-time patrols and engagement.
- In the next period, Special Constables are being asked to support Op Sceptre, 13th -19th May, targeting knife crime. They will also be involved in the England Euros Op Hubble in June and several special constables will be travelling to Paris to support the Olympics via Op Zappas in August. National Special Constable Weekend is 7th – 9th June 2024 and the specials will be showcasing the depth of their skills by completing duties and events over the weekend.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

The greatest risks to the continued growth of the special constabulary remains the recruitment of regular officers and the current cost of living.

- 1) Exit of Specials who because of change of circumstances due to the continued impact of the pandemic on private and self-employed businesses and the need to make difficult lifestyle changes.
- 2) Cost of living in which there has been an increase in pricing to Petrol, Mortgages, Parking, Food, Gas and Electricity.
- 3) Increased conversion rate of specials to regular which is assisting in the officer uplift priority.
- 4) Media produced a bespoke Special Constabulary #myotherlife campaign in October 2022; however, there needs to be a continued focus from Media to recruit. Areas of focus should be especially around career specials and Community Special Constables which is in line with the PFCC Police and Crime Plan. Our weekly applications continue to be lower than at their height in 2019-2020 when we had a pro-active bespoke media campaign.

6.1 Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities

The Police and Crime Plan 2021-24 states that the PFCC will ‘*boost community volunteering, encourage the Active Citizen Programme and grow the police family – increasing the Special Constabulary, with a Special Constable in every community*’.

While the Special Constabulary had grown significantly since April 2016, we have now seen a large decrease in numbers. This is set within the context of a significant reduction in numbers of specials nationally and our active recruitment of regular officers. There are special constables aligned to each of the Community Policing Teams. The Community Special Constables scheme continues to promote the role both with local councils and focused recruitment. The Active Citizen programme has however remained more stable around numbers, not following such a decline.

6.2 Demand

The impact on demand is best measured through the contribution of performance and operational hours. The improvements in operational performance are described in section 5.6.

6.3 Risks/Mitigation

The following red risks are identified on the force risk register and the action being taken to mitigate these risks is detailed in section 5. This risk is led by C/Supt Hammett and will be governed through the Special Constabulary Review Board.

URN	Score	Risk	Rationale
1196	40 - Red	Unable to meet the Special Constabulary establishment target due	There continues to be a successful pathway for SCs to become a PC and this is expected to continue in 24/25 and beyond.

		to Force recruitment and other factors.	
--	--	---	--

6.4 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

We continue to monitor the number of female candidate applications we are receiving in comparison to before the pandemic.

2019 - 346 female applicants, 35% of overall application numbers
2020 - 312 female applicants, 31% of overall application numbers
2021 - 217 female applicants, 35% of overall application numbers
2022 - 124 female applicants, 31.47% of overall application numbers
2023 – 111 female applicants, 33.23% of overall application numbers
2024 – 57 female applicants, 33.92% of overall application numbers
(This is based on Success Factors applications and not including Quick Apply.)

S/Insp Samantha Wright sits on the Women’s Leadership and Development Forum (WLDF) as a Special Champion, along with CIP Commander, Sarah Wright, who is an executive member and Reward and Recognitions lead.

Maria Rawlings, Specials Coordinator, is an executive member of the HELP Forum as is S/Insp Martyn Nichols for the Disability Network. S/Superintendent Leon Dias is a HeForShe Ambassador and is looking to recruit further ambassadors from within the specials this summer. Joe Belkaid, Specials Coordinator, is a Unison Representative. Maria Rawlings has also completed the training to be a Force Welfare Officer and supports special constables. We are promoting and encouraging other special constables to undertake the Welfare Officer training and support the command. We are working with the Federation to create opportunities for special constables to sit on the Essex Federation Council later in 2024.

At the Specials Awards 2024, SC Helen Maplesden won the Norman Dooley Trophy for Meritorious Conduct and SC Shauna Daly won Student Officer of the Year. The Southend Specials Team, led by S/Insp Sam Wright were runners up for Team of the Year.

In this period, we introduced the rank of Special Chief Inspector and created 5 new roles across the county. Seven specials applied with 5 being interviewed including 2 female specials. S/Insp Michelle Hill successfully passed the interview and S/Insp Sam Wright is due to be interviewed in May.

Plans are in place for a survey and Listening Circle for female special constables to discuss and understand any challenges they may face and how we can support.

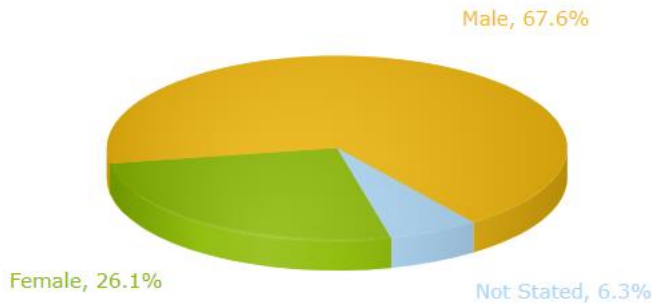
Following on from the new Neurodiversity Policy, work is undergoing to create a Welfare Plan for specials incorporating this work, along with maternity and paternity support and guidance both for individuals and line managers.

Recruitment continues to work closely with Positive Action, HR Innovation, and the new Specials Recruitment Task Force, around a variety of workstreams including the Buddy Scheme for Specials as well as training for Recruitment Ambassadors. Some

of the teams are Recruitment Buddies for regulars and specials or are Retention Buddies for officers and staff.

Special Constabulary Gender Breakdown:

Force Gender Breakdown



(Duty sheet, 9th May 2024)

6.5 Health and Safety Implications

There are no specific health and safety implications in this paper.

7.0 Consultation/Engagement

- Heather Turner and Pru Kingham – Media
- Lorna Lewis-Allen – Learning and Development
- Sam Dawes - Specials Recruitment Delivery Manager
- Les Hawkins – Supported Policing Champion

8.0 Actions for Improvement

The action taken to sustain recruitment over the last quarter has been summarised in section 5 above.

9.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome

Awards and Recognition:

- We continue to recognise our special constables that have completed their 3 - and 5-year service by presenting them with a Special Constabulary Pin Badge at our Attestations. We also ensure to recognise significant milestone anniversaries such as 20 years and above or awards and accolades won outside of the organisation. This can be recognised with a Head of Special Constabulary letter, or certificates, gold coins, and invites to Attestations to celebrate. Long Service Good Conduct also gets recognised by Essex Police with officers invited to force wide ceremonies every five years of service.
- The new Special Chief Inspector role will be able to support each district, to deliver and organise further events that recognise good service. During the trial

of this role in the North, the Acting S/CH/INSP was able to re-introduce the Specials and Regular Command Team Roadshows where special constables were thanked and recognised within their district. The plan is to hold these regularly across the county.

- The Special Constabulary Awards was held on 9th May with 11 award categories. Over 60 nominations were received, and the best of these will be put forward to the Force Awards
- Good work is published through the Specials Weekly Update, shared via Viva Engage, and with Media for the Chief's Blog and external publication if appropriate. Chief's Commendations are also considered.

Communication:

- Facebook continues to be the highest media source for Special applications during 2023. The new Orlo licences for social media allow the 8 special constable users the ability to update both "X" (Twitter) and district Facebook pages with specials related activity.
- Indeed, is an online employment website, and a popular source for regular recruitment. In April, funding was provided, to promote the special constable role for the first time. Linked In, is another useful tool for recruitment, with a funded space for specials to be promoted. An advert for Essex special constables was posted in April.
- The Essex Chamber of Commerce along with the Essex Association of Local Councils continues to support and promote our ESP and CSC Schemes. Our ESP/CSC Co-ordinator provides an updated report at the Chamber of Commerce monthly meetings.

Recruitment, Training, and Retention:

- Command Team Away Day held with Local Policing Support Unit Command, Special Command, and other special constables to put in place a strategic and tactical plan for the next 6 years, Vision 2030, to recruit and retain. This will progress and be monitored through the monthly Specials Senior Manager Meeting and the bi-monthly Special Constabulary Review Board.
- Continued work with the Specials Recruitment Focus Group and Task Force to coordinate activity particularly around outreach events and develop ideas around retention and recruitment.
- Continue weekly 'pipeline' meeting of Specials Development Team, HR, Business Support, Vetting, L&D. Terms of Reference is to review numbers at each stage against target, process, and attrition from application to attestation to identify any blockers or risks and take action to mitigate.

- Continue with weekly Specials Checkpoint Meetings with HR Recruitment Managers and Head of Special Constabulary to focus on campaign.
- Inclusion in weekly force recruitment meetings with HR Recruitment managers to ensure the pipeline of applicants are moving effectively and efficiently through the various stages.
- Seats offered per year is sufficient to grow our establishment but also holds the contingency to increase classroom sizes from 22 to 24 if required, for weekend intakes.
- Reviewing our timetables for the 2024/2025 years, we have scheduled eight weekend courses which allows for a slightly larger gap between intakes, to support the needs of the stakeholders within the recruitment process, allowing 7 weeks between intakes compared to four or five weeks in years gone by.
- For the 2024/2025 financial year, we will be offering 204 seats. This has scope to be increased, should demand require more seats to be offered.
- The Specials Training Team continues to deliver multiple opportunities for officers holding Accompanied Patrol Status, Directed Patrol Status, Qualified Special Constable. Directed Patrol Status and Qualified Special Constable can take part in the Phase Two programme for the Special Constabulary Learning Programme (SCLP). This has received brilliant feedback and is a wonderful opportunity for special constables to develop, and further their career than was originally available before.
- To date, during 2023/2024 financial year, 60 seats for 3 of the Phase Two modules, were offered to Directed Patrol Status (DPS) and Qualified Special Constable Status (QSC). Phase 2 modules have been attended by 29 officers, with 80 seats offered for the next financial year.
- In this last 6-month period, 3 QSC Special Constables were offered response courses. DPS and QSC officers were also offered three Athena V6 workshops, a Section 165 and Tintman training sessions. There was also Intoximeter, Drugs Wipe, Servator and Speed Gun training sessions available.
- Since 1 November 2023, 9 students have started training.
- Continued engagement with Safer Essex and Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) to drive the Community Specials Programme.

Reporting and Governance:

- Development of 6 year Strategic and Tactical Recruitment and Retention Plan – Vision 2030.
- Bi-monthly Specials Review Board.

National Overview

- Dr Iain Britton, College of Policing, published an online article January 2024 on The Police Foundation website. Dr Britton stated that the national headcount of Special Constables was at its lowest level for the past half century. Numbers have decreased consecutively for the past 11 years and in 2023 alone, numbers saw a further 20% reduction, falling again significantly in virtually every police force. Over the past 12 months, recruitment was at the lowest volume and the attrition rate was at its highest level for a quarter of a century. This has seen many police forces with fewer special constables than they had as recently as four years ago with some forces at serious risk of basic sustainability. Dr Britton offered several recommendations for forces including attracting older, career specials, providing opportunities for development, a more flexible, inclusive, and professional model, embed a culture that treats volunteers with respect, listen to and empower female voices especially those in leadership positions.
- The College of Policing, Special Constabulary Learning Programme (SCLP) is embedded aligning with PEQF and provides a clear pathway from SC to PC. The Learning and Development Team delivers multiple opportunities for Directed Patrol Specials to attend Phase Two programmes for SCLP and is a great tool to aid retention and development of career specials. This is leading the way nationally compared to other forces and has seen huge amounts of success.
- Les Hawkins, our Employer Supported Policing Co-ordinator, is the Regional ESP lead and continues to work closely with ESP National Chief Officer, ACC Smith from Wiltshire Police, recently reviewing and advising on the criteria for the Lord Ferrers ESP Award. Last year, Les was invited to seat on the judging panel for the national Lord Ferrers Awards. In the last 6 months Essex has signed up 45% of the organisations that have joined ESP across the country and continues to provide Best Practice workshops to support other forces. Sarah Wright, CIP Commander, is the Deputy Regional CIP Lead, and attends national meetings on behalf of the region. Maria Rawlings, Specials Support Officer, joined the panel of local assessors for the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAV) and has been active in this period visiting and reviewing nominations for this national award.

Links

[Where have all the Special Constables gone, and what can we do about it? \(long read\) - The Police Foundation \(police-foundation.org.uk\)](#)

Published 15 January 2024

CJ Marshall – Special Assistant Chief Officer, Metropolitan Special Constabulary; Trustee, Association of Special Constabulary Officers and Police Foundation Practitioner Fellow

Dr Iain Britton – Visiting Fellow, Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice, University of Northampton and Visiting Associate Professor, University of Central Florida

OFFICIAL

[Police volunteers insights from Churchill Fellowship Award winner Dr Iain Britton \(Part 1\) - PolicingTV](#)

Published 29 November 2023

OFFICIAL