The Metropolitan Special Constabulary Strategy
2017-2021

“Exceptional volunteers meeting an extraordinary challenge”
Background to the Metropolitan Special Constabulary

Who are Special Constables?

Special constables are volunteer police officers who play a pivotal role in the Metropolitan Police Service. They are a members of the wider Citizens in Policing volunteering family, which includes Volunteer Police Cadets and Metropolitan Police Volunteers. Holding the same powers as a regular officer, Special Constables in the Metropolitan Special Constabulary (MSC) work alongside regular police officers, bringing in skills and experiences from their daily lives to provide a positive contribution to the safety of London’s communities.

Based across each of the 32 boroughs within London, Specials wear the same uniform and carry the same powers and responsibilities as regular police officers. They’re involved in all aspects of policing London, enjoying a variety of roles and carrying out duties such as:

- Neighbourhood Policing
- Anti-Robbery initiatives
- Undertaking response to emergency calls
- Road safety initiatives
- Supporting ceremonial events
- Pre-planned crime reduction initiatives

It is a demanding but satisfying and stimulation role and MSC officers are asked to volunteer at least 16 hours of their spare time each month. They help to protect and support London and the millions of people who call it home.

Special Constables make a real difference to London by reducing crime, and the fear of crime, across the city, whilst gaining unique experiences and skills which cannot be obtained from other volunteering organisations.

What do Special Constables say about their experiences?

“I love helping people, I like arresting criminals, I love doing something that makes a difference”

“It makes me proud and happy to know that I police London”

“You never know what you are going to face. It’s always different, always a challenge”

“I make a positive contribution, doing something that can change a person’s perception of the police”
Why we need to change

The need for change

The MSC Strategic Review, published in 2016, recognised significant challenges in relation to recruitment, retention and engagement of the Special Constabulary within The Met. The voluntary sector has evolved rapidly in recent years and now presents a wider breadth of opportunity to those wishing to volunteer their time. We need to evolve with the volunteering market to ensure that we offer our Special Constables a career which is both developmental and rewarding for those that give up their free time and best meets the challenges that face policing, moving towards 2021.

Our strengths

- 3000 MSC officers contributing 570000 policing hours
- Volunteers that want to support policing in London
- Depth of diversity, enabling the MSC to integrate with London’s community
- Broad skills base brought from wider experiences

Our Opportunities

- Investing in Neighbourhood Policing to bring MSC officers closer to their communities.
- Building confidence by improving diversity to reflect the communities of London.
- Innovation in recruitment and career pathways
- Supporting continued professional development to provide officers with transferable skills
Our vision

“To deliver quality policing and make the MSC one of the most desirable volunteering opportunities in London”

By 2021, the Metropolitan Special Constabulary will support the Met’s vision, through delivering 750,000 policing hours annually

We will achieve this by;
• up-skilling our people to maximise their potential
• attracting dedicated volunteer officers
• promoting diversity and inclusivity
• making best use of our people
• having clearly defined career pathways

Thereby increasing public confidence, reducing crime and disorder and helping to protect vulnerable people

The Metropolitan Special Constabulary (MSC) has, since 1831, supported the policing of London. The Metropolitan Police has evolved significantly since its inception and is now set to rise to the challenges of an increasingly complex and ever evolving crime demand. This has presented exciting opportunities to innovate and develop our Special Constabulary to meet our vision of making London the safest global city.

It is recognised that the MSC provide a valuable volunteering resource to the communities of London. Looking towards the future, it is our continued ambition that being a Special Constable will be the most rewarding volunteering opportunity in London.

This strategy sets out our vision to deliver quality volunteer policing to support the diverse challenges which face our capital city. It will build on the MSC’s strengths of diversity of background and skills and its commitment to volunteering, to enhance policing across all of London’s communities.
How we will achieve our vision

In order to achieve our ambition of delivering 750,000 hours of policing annually by 2021 we need to ensure that the Metropolitan Police Special Constabulary is at the forefront of volunteering opportunities within London. To achieve this, it must provide a rewarding experience, the provision of an ongoing challenge and a commitment to personal and professional development. In order to make the MSC a volunteering opportunity of choice we will focus on the areas outlined below.

Our focus towards 2021
How we will achieve our vision

Upskilling our People

The MPS recognise that people join the Metropolitan Special Constabulary for a variety of reasons, and that the role of a Special Constable is continually changing as the policing landscape shifts.

The MPS will ensure that Special Constables undertake a robust and comprehensive training programme that covers all aspects of policing that a typical front-line police officer will face in the course of their career. It will provide continuation training throughout the service of our Special Constables to guarantee that they have the required knowledge as improvements and changes to policing are introduced.

Those Special Constables who wish to develop their careers within the Special Constabulary in specialist departments or areas will be provided opportunity to undertake specialist training required to undertake these roles.

Where our Special Constables hold specific skills from their ‘normal’ lives, which could benefit the MPS, we will provide opportunity for those officers to impart that knowledge to their colleagues to benefit the wider policing community.

All Special Constables will be required to have an active Performance and Development Review with their line manager, where career aspirations, specialist training requirements and sharing of knowledge can be reviewed and applied.

Where MSC officers show a strong commitment to volunteering through levels of duty time and are dedicated to being a ‘career’ special the Met will commit to supporting personal development via additional role specific training.

The above will present our MSC special constables with the opportunity to broaden their experiences and skills through flexible career pathways and will ensure that the Met is able to maximise the effectiveness of this valuable resource.
How we will achieve our vision

Attracting Dedicated Volunteers

The Metropolitan Police recognise the changing landscape of volunteering and the need to broaden the opportunities that it provides in order to make the MSC one of the most desirable volunteering opportunities in London.

In order to attract talented and diverse volunteers we will:

- Develop an effective marketing strategy aimed at attracting talented people in line with The Met’s vision to look and feel like London.

- Enhance our commitment to developing volunteering opportunities with businesses and partner agencies through the Employer Supported Policing Scheme

- Provide a smooth and efficient recruitment process to improve each volunteers’ experience and reduce the time from application to start

- Explore and identify innovative recruitment pathways to increase the attraction of the MSC as a volunteering role

- Provide enhanced support to line managers, enabling them to develop their staff into the best that they can be

- Recognise and reward the successes of the MSC through recommendations for National Honours, Recognition Events and Awards

- Expand the avenues through which the MSC can be recruited into the regular service

- Continuing to improve through exchange of best practice with other volunteer programmes and Special Constabularies

- Provide a ‘quick transfer’ process for experienced Special Constables from other Forces who wish to join the MSC
How we will achieve our vision

Promoting Diversity and Inclusivity

Diversity and inclusion in the workplace are now fundamental to the evolution of thinking within organisations and we want to capitalise on the range of diversity already contained within the Metropolitan Special Constabulary¹. Making best use of the range of backgrounds, skills and experiences that our people possess, we will be able to build a truly innovative Special Constabulary. In addition, by improving on the wealth of diversity that we already have, we will be better able support the Mets’ vision of improving community confidence through looking and feeling more like London.

To ensure that diversity and inclusivity are at the heart of the evolution of the Metropolitan Special Constabulary we will:

- Strengthen diversity within our leadership roles through positive action.
- Target recruitment to make the MSC more representative of the communities that it serves
- Work with advisory panels and staff associations to identify opportunities for improvement
- Make best use of diversity data to identify opportunities and identify issues of inclusivity
- Appoint a Diversity Champion who will advise on Strategy
- Ensure that diversity is integral to any change programmes

¹ Diversity representation at March 2017: 30% female, 33% BME
How we will achieve our vision

Making Best use of Our People

The Metropolitan Special Constabulary have historically been aligned to Borough, proving a significant contribution to front line policing. They have also provided policing to major events to some more specialist units.

To become a volunteering option of choice within London, along with making best used of our special constables, we recognise the need to more clearly define what we are asking of them. We have identified five priority areas for MSC policing over the next three years.

- Front line uniformed response policing – supporting the public when most in need through responding to emergency calls.
- Neighbourhood Policing – working alongside the regular neighbourhood teams to tackle the issues that most affect local communities
- Investigation Support – working with front line investigators in the gathering of evidence to progress ongoing investigations.
- Policing events – contributing to policing local and London-wide events, such as sports events, demonstrations and ceremonial events
- Specialist policing – this will include making best use of the diverse skills within the MSC to contribute to the prevention and detection of crime within more specialist units

The above will present our MSC special constables with the opportunity to broaden their experiences and skills through flexible career pathways and will ensure that the Met is able to maximise the effectiveness of this valuable resource.
How we will achieve our vision

Clearly defined career pathways

With a rapidly evolving crime picture and an increasingly challenging volunteering market, we recognise the need to develop structured career pathways to retain the best volunteers and meet the future demands in policing.

Whether a Special Constable wishes to develop their career through promotion, specialist lateral development or simply upskilling in their current role, there will be accessible career options for them.

To build this vision towards 2021, we will:

- Develop an improved promotion process which selects dynamic leaders from all backgrounds
- Review existing specialist roles and scope out future opportunities for lateral development
- Ensure that all career development opportunities are openly advertised and both fair and inclusive
- Make career development a focal point of annual performance reviews so that our leaders are aware of their staffs’ career ambitions
- Work with neighbouring police forces to provide opportunities for dual role specials, enabling officer within the Met to work within other forces and vice versa.