

Essex Police Corporate Vetting Unit

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we vet people?

Essex Police is committed to the maintenance of the highest levels of honesty and integrity and the prevention of corrupt, dishonest, unethical or unprofessional behaviour. Everyone in the police service must maintain high ethical and professional standards and act with the utmost integrity. They must be seen to maintain and promote such standards. A thorough and effective vetting regime is a key component in assessing an individual's integrity. It helps to reassure the public that appropriate checks are conducted on individuals in positions of trust. Vetting also identifies areas of vulnerability which could damage public confidence in a force or the wider police service.

Essex Police conduct their vetting checks in accordance with the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) set out by the College of Policing. Compliancy with the APP ensures that consistency is applied throughout police services across England and Wales.

Vetting is carried out on all people who seek to be appointed as police officers, volunteers or employed as police staff. This is to ensure the reputation of the service is maintained and its assets safeguarded.

Any infringement of an individual's rights under the European Convention on Human Rights will only be that which is necessary and proportionate. The legitimate aims of such action will include the protection of the rights and freedoms of others, safeguarding public safety, the prevention of disorder and crime and in some cases national security.

The information gained through the vetting procedure will be held securely and only accessed by those with a legitimate reason to do so. The decision on whether or not to progress your application will be based upon this information and will be made by taking into account the circumstances and any other relevant information.

Please note, all relevant questions on the form are to be answered, ensuring all relevant boxes are ticked as appropriate. If you are unable to answer a question, as the information is unknown to you or is unobtainable then you must provide an explanation. Failure to accurately complete vetting forms will undoubtedly lead to unnecessary delays. Not Applicable (N/A) should only be used where appropriate e.g. previous surname – N/A.

It is important that the vetting form is completed fully and correctly; failure to do so may result in your application being rejected or for existing employees needing vetting renewals could lead to a disciplinary procedure.

Who is affected?

The vetting requirement applies to employed staff, volunteers and other non-police personnel who are engaged in support of Essex Police or who work in associated partnerships, categories include:

- Police Officers
- Volunteers
- Police Staff
- Contractors
- Police Community Support Officers
- Temporary or Agency Staff
- Special Constables
- Partnership Staff

The extent to which vetting is undertaken is balanced against the level of access required to police premises, sensitive information and computer systems. This is necessary to achieve safeguards required within the Human Rights and Data Protection legislation. Information provided during the vetting process will be processed in strict confidence and will only be used for security purposes. Completed questionnaires will be retained in files and securely stored within the Corporate Vetting Unit. The information will not be disclosed to any outside agency.

Vetting of Transgender employed staff, applicants and volunteers

You are obliged to provide this information. It is recognised that these security checks will seek information that may lead to the identification of transgender status. This information will remain confidential and the disclosure of this information will be restricted to those members of staff involved in the vetting process who will be required to honour that confidentiality as per section 22 of the Gender Recognition Act (2004).

Within its vetting process Essex Police recognises its legal obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and the Gender Recognition Act 2004 with particular attention paid to Section 22 (GRA 2004) regarding disclosure of Protected Information. Additionally Essex Police acknowledges the government guidelines and the requirements to secure 'Protected Information' whether it is communicated verbally, materially or held electronically as required under UK law. Any disclosed information is managed by these protocols and is not disclosable to any other parties without explicit written permission from the owner of the Protected Information. Essex Police acknowledges its legitimate aim for requesting disclosure and its legal obligations under these requirements.

How does the vetting system work?

You will be asked to complete a vetting form either manually or online and provide personal information and confirm your identity and place of residence. For roles requiring enhanced vetting, additional forms may be supplied requesting further information and / or details for national security checks to be completed.

If you are applying for the roles of Police Staff, Police Constable or Special Constable, it is mandatory to include the following persons on your vetting form and failure to include the relevant details may lead to a vetting refusal on the grounds of omission of information:

- Parents (full, step, adoptive and parents partner – if living together)
- Children (full, step, adopted, fostered, partners children – if living together) over the age of 10
- Siblings (full, step, adopted, fostered, half)
- Spouse/Partner (Includes boyfriend, girlfriend whether living together or not)
- House mates (including shared accommodation with communal areas)
- Criminal associates (associations who you think or know to be involved in criminal activities, or has a conviction)

Please ensure you include all full names, maiden and previous names, dates of birth, place of birth and addresses. If you do not know their details, please ensure you ask family members or anyone who may be able to help you obtain this information. If you are unable to provide any of these details, you must provide us with a full rationale as to why this information cannot be provided.

Details are checked against criminal and national security records, other public records such as the electoral role and in some cases, credit reference agencies. We also check content on publically

available social media sites for the purposes of service reputational reassurance and compatibility with the Code of Ethics.

Can I work within the police service if I have criminal convictions or cautions?

There is not a prescriptive list of convictions and cautions that lead to a vetting rejection. Each case is considered on its own individual merits in relation to the role being undertaken and assets being accessed, subject to the rejection criteria. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions) Order 1975 does not apply to any police officer posts, but it does apply to all police staff posts, including PCSOs, and non-police personnel, in respect of protected cautions and protected convictions only. These do not need to be disclosed by you for police staff and non-police personnel roles, and if they are, they are not considered as part of the vetting process in isolation.

Applications for a position as a police officer; a special constable; or as a member of police staff where that member of staff may be in the evidential chain are rejected in all cases where:

- Offences were committed as an adult or juvenile which resulted in a prison sentence (including custodial, suspended or deferred sentence and sentences served at a young offenders' institution or community home): or
- The applicant is a registered sex offender or is subject to a registration requirement in respect of any other conviction.

What is the purpose of financial enquiries?

Financial checks are used to assess whether applicants have been, are currently, or are likely to be in financial difficulty, or show signs of financial irresponsibility to the extent that they could become vulnerable to financial inducement.

There is no need to be concerned about mortgage and credit card commitments that are in line with your income, providing you meet these commitments. Debts only become a problem where they are substantial and individuals fail to take remedial action or where they are caused by compulsive behaviour, such as gambling.

When we identify anomalies between an your declarations and the information provided by the credit check, or where there is a need to clarify a particular issue, you may be requested to attend an interview to discuss these anomalies, however prior to attending an interview, every effort will be made to resolved these via your preferred method of contact.

You will not qualify for a vetting clearance if you:

- Have existing county court judgments outstanding
- Have been registered bankrupt and have not discharged your bankruptcy
- If you refuse to discuss a relevant matter or engage with the vetting process

What if I keep quiet about something in my past and hope no-one finds out?

Knowingly providing false information, deliberately misleading information or concealing information on a vetting form or at any subsequent interview could be regarded as evidence of unreliability and / or dishonesty. Indeed your clearance could be refused because of this, even though what you were seeking to conceal would not itself have caused a problem. Furthermore, your clearance could be removed at a later date if the facts subsequently come to light.

The vetting process requires scrutiny to be applied to the following factors:

- Past infringement of security or vetting policy or procedures
- Significant or repeated breaches of discipline
- Providing false or deliberately misleading information, or omitting significant information from the vetting questionnaires
- Unauthorised association with people with previous convictions or reasonably suspected of being involved in crime

Other identified areas of concerns include:

- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Abuse of position
- Previous breaches of the Code of Ethics
- Professional standards intelligence
- Financial vulnerability
- Identified conflict of interest
- Other inappropriate behaviour (including social media activity) which impinges on a person's suitability to serve in the role.

Remember – it is only in the most serious cases that consideration will be given to refusing vetting clearance. The main objective of the vetting procedure is to ensure that members of staff cannot be compromised because they have 'secrets' they do not wish to be disclosed.

What else can I do to ensure my vetting application is not delayed unnecessarily?

- Ensure maiden names, dates of birth and addresses are provided for all listed people of your vetting forms
- Where you cannot establish specific details, include a rationale detailing why, but please note that failure to submit details which you cannot account reasonably for, could lead to a vetting refusal
- Ensure all CCJ's are satisfied
- Have up to date IVA documents demonstrating you are not defaulting on any payment plans in place
- If you are applying for a police officer or special constable role you must declare all police contact, arrest history and reprimands, warnings, cautions and convictions (this list is not exhaustive). Failure to declare police contact is highly likely to lead to a vetting refusal.
- Please ensure you check your emails and in particular your 'junk / spam' folder as often lack of response is because the email from us has been diverted to another email folder.