

More than 3,000 extra officers join police in recruitment drive

Police ranks across England and Wales have been bolstered with an additional 3,005 officers since the government launched a major recruitment drive, according to figures released today (30 April).

The figures follow the launch of the government's campaign in September 2019 to recruit 20,000 extra officers over the next three years.

They show 3,005 recruits joined the police specifically as part of the uplift programme. In total, forces recruited 6,435 officers from November 2019 to March 2020, including recruitment planned before the government campaign was announced.

The statistics show that forces across England and Wales have successfully accelerated their recruitment plans and are on track to meet their target of 6,000 by March 2021.

There are now a total of 131,596 officers, a 5% increase on March 2019 – of which uplift officers account for approximately half.

This morning, the Home Secretary held a Zoom call with new recruits at Lancashire Constabulary, where she thanked them for stepping up to join the police and protect the public, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Each one of these brave officers will make a difference in helping to cut crime and keep people safe. For many, their first role has been to join the fight to stop the spread of coronavirus, protect the NHS and save lives.

Thanks to new digital assessment centres, the doors remain wide open for anyone who wants to join them and make a difference in their community.

Getting more police officers on the streets is an absolute priority for the British people – and this Government.

The College of Policing has announced it is rolling out new online assessment centres, which will ensure that recruitment continues during the coronavirus outbreak.

The college's online assessment process will take candidates through situational judgement tests, briefing exercises and interviews. The first forces, including West Midlands and Hampshire, are already trialling this platform and the service will be launched nationally in June.

New recruits are receiving tailored training so they can be safely deployed to the frontline and support the police's emergency response as soon as possible.

College of Policing CEO Chief Constable Mike Cunningham said:

The recruitment figures released today are extremely encouraging and demonstrate the scale and breadth of the positive work that has been undertaken so far to increase police officer numbers.

The numbers joining the service show that huge progress is already being made to recruit an additional 20,000 officers over the next three years. This investment in the workforce provides a great opportunity to enhance diversity across the service and the College of Policing will equip those joining with the skills and training needed to match the complexity of the job.

The College of Policing is working hard to enable forces to continue to recruit during the current emergency by introducing online recruit assessment and other measures to help get officers on the streets so they can keep their communities safe.

Figures from the NPCC showed that overall crime fell by 28 per cent in the first few weeks of the coronavirus outbreak.

Alongside new recruits the government has recently announced other measures to support the police's coronavirus response.

These include testing for all essential workers, including police officers and support staff; the relaxation of tax rules to encourage officers nearing retirement and those recently retired to serve; and the unlocking of £84million for forces to use in fight against coronavirus.

National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Chair Martin Hewitt said:

With over 3,000 additional officers already joining policing in the past seven months, we are well on our way to meeting our target of 6,000 by March next year.

Working with the Home Office, we are making every effort to keep recruitment of officers going despite all the challenges coronavirus brings. Creative solutions from the College of Policing will help to ensure this momentum is not lost and that recruitment and training can continue during the pandemic.

APCC Chair Katy Bourne OBE said:

The positive latest figures for police officer recruitment show that police forces are being innovative in the face of adversity,

adapting assessment and training procedures to safely manage the onboarding of the maximum number of new recruits.

Although we know that the volume of many crime types has fallen due to travel and social restrictions, crime is like water, it always finds a level and the pandemic has created the circumstances for other crimes to mushroom. When there are more people back on the streets there will, sadly, be more crime so we still need those additional police officers that the public have been calling for.

The government's Uplift programme will ensure that all police forces have the numbers they need for business as usual and the increased demand of policing safe, social interactions.

It also shows that there are plenty of people from all walks of life with diverse skills and experiences who want to become police officers at a critical time for our country and join the frontline in our collective endeavour against COVID-19.

Our citizens quite rightly would prefer to see police targeting criminals and preventing crime rather than moving people on from beauty spots. However, having put so much effort into the stay at home campaign over the last five weeks, we still need a police presence to deter those whose impatience and recklessness could spoil it for us all.

The recruitment drive is at the centre of the government's commitment to back the police with more resources, powers and support to keep communities safe.

Other steps include the biggest funding boost for the policing system in a decade, a new covenant to recognise the service and sacrifice of the police, funding to provide over 8,000 more officers with Taser to keep themselves and the public safe, expanded stop and search powers, and plans to consult on increasing the maximum sentence for assaulting police officers and other emergency service workers.