

# Un The usual suspects?

Your guide to careers and  
volunteering in the  
Criminal Justice System

Jess/Age 23  
Trainee Probation  
Officer



Meera/Age 36  
Special Constable



Luke/Age 42  
Prison Officer



Ann/Age 55  
Legal Adviser



Lee/Age 19  
Youth Offender  
Panel Member



## Careers and volunteering in the Criminal Justice System

### What is the Criminal Justice System?

**The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is one of the major public services in the country, employing over 400,000 people.**

The organisations that deliver the service are:

- the Police;
- the Crown Prosecution Service;
- Her Majesty's Courts Service;
- the Youth Justice System;
- Her Majesty's Prison Service; and
- the Probation Service.

The CJS also works in close partnership with the charity Victim Support.

All these organisations strive to provide a high-quality service to the public and do everything to ensure that crime is tackled, victims and witnesses are supported, and offenders are punished and rehabilitated.



### Why should I work in the CJS?

The people who work in the CJS help make a real difference – to individuals, to our communities and to how the work of the CJS is delivered. If you would like to help make a difference and ensure that the CJS is delivered fairly and effectively, then we would like to hear from you.

### What is the CJS looking for?

The CJS is keen to ensure that it is representative of the communities it serves, and that people are appointed on the basis of skills or qualifications, regardless of background or any other irrelevant factor.

### What can I do?

There is a wide range of career and volunteering opportunities in the CJS, which are outlined in the following pages. The organisations that make up the CJS offer a dynamic work environment which can be extremely rewarding for the right individual. All have established structures for training staff and for promotion. In addition, some are able to offer work experience and shadowing opportunities.

## Police

### What do the Police do?

The role of the police is to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and promote confidence among local people that the police understand and are prepared to deal with the issues that matter most to them.

### Career opportunities

There are many different ways you can contribute in the Police, including:

- being on the front line in the fight against crime as a **police officer**;
- making your community safer as a **police community support officer**; or
- working in partnership with those in uniform and ensuring that the service runs efficiently and effectively in a police support role such as an **analyst** or **call handler**.



### Volunteer roles

As a volunteer, you can:

- support the work of your police force in the community as a **special constable**;
- get a taste of what it's like to be a police officer, provided you are aged between 16 and 18, as a **cadet**; or
- help in a variety of ways as a **police support volunteer**.

### Where do I find out more?

Full information on all these roles, including eligibility requirements, pay and benefits, opportunities for progression, current vacancies and the application process, can be found at: [www.policecouldyou.co.uk](http://www.policecouldyou.co.uk).

For volunteering opportunities, visit [www.policecouldyou.co.uk](http://www.policecouldyou.co.uk) or the individual police force websites through [www.police.uk/forces.htm](http://www.police.uk/forces.htm) for police cadet or volunteer support staff vacancies.

## Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

### What does the CPS do?

The CPS is responsible for prosecuting people who have been charged with a criminal offence.

### Career opportunities

There are many different ways you can contribute in the CPS, including:

- conducting Crown Court advocacy in the highest profile areas of criminal law as a **crown advocate**, **senior crown advocate** or **principal crown advocate**;
- providing charging advice to police colleagues, reviewing and prosecuting cases as a **crown prosecutor**;
- reviewing and presenting straightforward guilty pleas and bail applications in magistrates' courts as an **associate prosecutor**;
- working closely as part of the prosecution team, preparing case files for court and ensuring effective communication between CJS partners, police, courts, counsel, defence, witnesses and the general public as a **paralegal officer** or **assistant**;
- ensuring that the service runs efficiently and effectively as an **administrative officer**;
- helping the CPS achieve its aims and objectives by working in professional fields such as **equality and diversity**, **communications** and **human resources**; or
- acting as a single point of contact to provide needs assessment, information and support for victims and witnesses as a **witness care officer**.

"My role is both enjoyable and hugely rewarding. One of the most satisfying experiences is being able to give victims and witnesses positive feedback following court proceedings."

Michael - witness care officer

### Where do I find out more?

Full information on all these roles, including eligibility requirements, pay and benefits, opportunities for progression, current vacancies and the application process, can be found at: [www.cps.gov.uk/careers](http://www.cps.gov.uk/careers).



## Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS)

### What does HMCS do?

HMCS is responsible for managing magistrates' courts, the Crown Court and county courts in England and Wales, and the Royal Courts of Justice where the majority of High Court and Court of Appeal cases are heard.

### Career opportunities

There are many different ways you can contribute at HMCS, including:

- giving advice to magistrates on points of law as a **legal adviser**;
- supporting the work of judges as a **higher court clerk**;
- assisting with the smooth running of the day's business as a **court usher**;
- enforcing county court judgments as a **bailiff**; or
- ensuring that the service runs efficiently and effectively as an **administrative officer**.

### Volunteer roles

As a volunteer, you can assist with the delivery of justice as a **magistrate**.

### Where do I find out more?

Full information on all these roles, including eligibility requirements, pay and benefits, opportunities for progression, current vacancies and the application process, can be found at: [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk). If you are interested in becoming a magistrate, visit: [www.magistrates.gov.uk](http://www.magistrates.gov.uk).

"Dealing with both pre- and post-court work, assisting legal advisers in court, handling telephone enquiries, speaking with customers – just a few aspects of my role within the magistrates' court. An exciting and varied role covering all main aspects within the court; it's hugely rewarding and interesting and I am gaining valuable experience."

Laura – administration assistant



## Youth Justice System

### What does the Youth Justice System do?

The Youth Justice System deals with children and young people aged 10–17 who have already offended or are at risk of offending.

### Career opportunities

There are many different ways you can contribute to the Youth Justice System, including:

- supervising young people in the community as a member of the **youth offending team staff**; or
- ensuring that the service runs efficiently and effectively in an **administrative post**.

### Volunteer roles

Volunteers make a significant contribution to the Youth Justice System. As a volunteer, you can:

- befriend and mentor young people as a **mentor**;
- help tackle crime and reduce re-offending as a **youth offender panel member**;
- support young people when being interviewed by the police as an **appropriate adult**; or
- help deliver justice as a **youth court magistrate**.



### Where do I find out more?

To find out more about careers and volunteering in youth justice, visit:  
[www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/yjs/getinvolved](http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/yjs/getinvolved).

## Her Majesty's Prison Service

### What does HM Prison Service do?

The role of HM Prison Service is to protect the public by holding in custody those committed by the courts in a safe, decent and healthy environment. Most prisons and young offender institutions are operated within the public sector, but there is an increasing number of private sector providers too.

The prison and probation services form part of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

### Career opportunities

There are many different ways you can contribute in the Prison Service, including:

- being responsible for security and helping people improve their lives as a **prison officer**, or **prison custody officer** in the private sector;
- serving the needs of prisoners, staff and faith communities as a **chaplain**;
- ensuring that the service runs efficiently and effectively in an **operational support role** or as a member of the **administrative staff**; or
- ensuring the smooth running of an establishment in an industrial career such as an **electrician**, **caterer** or **gardener**.

"I don't think there's any greater reward than changing someone's perceptions of what life in general, and their life in particular, could be – and seeing them willing to make the change."

Kole – prison officer



### Volunteer roles

There are many volunteer opportunities in the Prison Service. As a volunteer, you can:

- help offenders to get their lives back on track as a **prison visitor**; or
- ensure an independent view on the running of a prison as an **independent monitoring board member**.

### Where do I find out more?

Full information on all these roles within the public sector, including eligibility requirements, pay and benefits, opportunities for progression, current vacancies and the application process, can be found at: [www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk](http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk).

For information about volunteer roles, visit [www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk](http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk). To find out more about being a prison visitor, see the National Association of Prison Visitors website at: [www.naopv.com](http://www.naopv.com).

For information on independent monitoring boards go to: [www.imb.gov.uk](http://www.imb.gov.uk).

Information on opportunities offered by private sector providers is available through company websites.

## The Probation Service

### What does the Probation Service do?

The role of the Probation Service is to prevent people from re-offending and to protect the public.

The prison and probation services form part of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

### Career opportunities

There are many different ways you can contribute in the Probation Service, including:

- managing offenders to reduce the risk of re-offending as an **offender manager**. This can include work in prisons;
- delivering offending behaviour programmes to address specific issues as a **probation officer** or **probation service officer**;
- managing and supervising residents at approved premises (hostels) as a **probation officer** or **supervisor**;
- assisting offenders with specific problems such as accessing employment, training and education, finding accommodation, and financial and debt advice as a **probation service officer**;
- providing victims with information about sentenced prisoners so that their needs are considered in release plans as a **victim contact officer**;
- advising courts on probation matters as a **probation service officer** or **probation officer**;
- supervising groups of offenders sentenced to carry out unpaid work in the community as a **community payback supervisor**;

- getting practical experience as a **trainee probation officer**; or
- ensuring that the service runs efficiently and effectively in an **administrative post**.

### Volunteer roles

As a volunteer, you can help offenders to get their lives back on track as a **mentor**.

### Where do I find out more?

Full information on all these roles, including eligibility requirements, pay and benefits, opportunities for progression, current vacancies and the application process, can be found on your local probation service website. Follow a link to your local service from [www.justice.gov.uk/about/noms.htm](http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/noms.htm).

The trainee probation officer scheme is organised by regional probation training and development consortiums, which you can contact at:

- **East of England:** [www.eeptdc.co.uk](http://www.eeptdc.co.uk)
- **North East:** 0191 491 1693
- **North West:** [www.probation-northwest.co.uk](http://www.probation-northwest.co.uk)
- **South East:** [www.serptc-probation.gov.uk](http://www.serptc-probation.gov.uk)
- **South West:** [www.probation-swtraining.co.uk](http://www.probation-swtraining.co.uk)
- **Midlands:** [www.probationtraining-midlandsconsortium.org.uk](http://www.probationtraining-midlandsconsortium.org.uk)
- **Yorkshire and Humberside:** [www.yhpc.co.uk](http://www.yhpc.co.uk)
- **Wales:** 01443 494 333



## Victim Support

### What does Victim Support do?

Victim Support is the national charity which helps people affected by crime in England and Wales. It gives free and confidential support to help people deal with what they've been through as a victim or witness, whether or not they report the crime to the police. It also runs the Witness Service in every criminal court.

### Career opportunities

There are a number of ways you can contribute to Victim Support, including:

- working to help victims of crime and help Victim Support achieve its aims in a **service delivery, fundraising, administration, marketing or policy role**; or
- being responsible for the day-to-day management, support and supervision of volunteers as a **volunteer support worker**.

"My work as a volunteer is immensely satisfying and I pride myself on going to whatever lengths are necessary to make sure that victims get the help they need."

Kathy – volunteer



### Volunteer opportunities

Volunteers are crucial to the work of Victim Support. As a volunteer, you can:

- give emotional support, information and practical help to people who have suffered the effects of crime as a **Victim Support volunteer**;
- give support and practical information to people attending court as a **Witness Service volunteer**; or
- take phone calls and put people in touch with the necessary support network as a **Victim Supportline volunteer**.

### Where do I find out more?

Full information on all these roles, including eligibility requirements, pay and benefits, opportunities for progression, current vacancies and the application process, can be found at: [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk).

To find out about volunteering, you can call the charity's free volunteerline on 0800 840 4207 or email [volunteering@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@victimsupport.org.uk).

## Interested in volunteering?

CJS volunteering opportunities are open to all, regardless of background, age or skills. In most cases formal qualifications are not required, just a willingness to devote time and effort.

Volunteering can be very rewarding. It can offer you:

- a sense of value and need;
- work experience and increased career options;
- new and improved skills;
- personal development and achievement;
- training opportunities;
- an opportunity to meet new people; and
- most importantly, a chance to make a difference.

## How much time does it involve?

How much time you want to devote is up to you and your personal circumstances, but it can also depend on the role. This can range from occasional help to several days a week. Please contact individual organisations for further information.

## Further information

To find out more about career and volunteering opportunities in the CJS, please visit [www.cjsonline.gov.uk](http://www.cjsonline.gov.uk) and [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk), or visit your Local Criminal Justice Board website via [www.lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk](http://www.lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk) to find out about local opportunities.

For additional opportunities you can visit the following websites, which are just a few examples of other organisations working with the CJS:

**Legal Services Commission:**

[www.legalservices.gov.uk](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk)

**Neighbourhood Watch:**

[www.neighbourhoodwatch.net](http://www.neighbourhoodwatch.net)

**Clinks:**

[www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org)

**PACT** (Prison Advice and Care Trust):

[www.prisonadvice.org.uk](http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk)

**SOVA** (Supporting Others through Volunteer Action):

[www.sova.org.uk](http://www.sova.org.uk)

**Independent Custody Visiting Association:**

[www.icva.org.uk](http://www.icva.org.uk)

**NACRO** (crime reduction charity):

[www.nacro.org.uk](http://www.nacro.org.uk)



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[www.cjsonline.gov.uk](http://www.cjsonline.gov.uk)