

# Crime Scene to Courtroom

## UNIT 3

### Overview

This Unit takes you on a journey through the criminal justice system. We begin with the initial investigation that takes place once a crime is discovered and then we move through the different stages of arrest, prosecution and conviction of the offender, and finally to any appeal.

We begin by looking at the roles of the different personnel involved once a crime is detected, including police officers, crime scene investigators and forensics specialists. We examine the different techniques investigators use to gather evidence, including forensic laboratory analysis, surveillance, interviewing and offender profiling. Once the evidence against a suspect has been collected, the Crown Prosecution Service has to decide whether to prosecute them. We consider how they reach their decision.

Next we look at the rights of suspects who are arrested, charged and tried, and the safeguards that aim to ensure they receive a fair trial. These safeguards include important rules about what kind of evidence is permitted in court. For example, hearsay evidence and confessions obtained by threatening the suspect are ruled out.

Criminal trials may be held in a magistrates' court or – for more serious offences – before a jury in the Crown Court. We examine the role that ordinary citizens (laypeople) play as magistrates and jurors, including the factors that may influence a jury's verdict. For example, are jurors swayed by what they see on social media about the case they are trying?

Miscarriages of justice occur when an innocent person is convicted of a crime or when the trial itself was so unfair that we cannot be sure the defendant is guilty. In such cases, the court's verdict is unsafe and it may be overturned on appeal. When you have completed this Unit, you will be in a position to review criminal cases, evaluate the evidence and the trial process, and decide for yourself whether the verdict reached by a court is safe and just.