

	ROLE OVERVIEW	EXPERTISE ISSUES and LIMITATIONS	COST & AVAILABILITY ISSUES
<b>POLICE OFFICERS</b>	Police officers are typically the <b>first responders</b> at crime scenes, responsible for <b>securing the area, protecting the public, gathering initial evidence, and arresting suspects</b> where necessary. More complex investigations, such as <b>homicides, organised crime, and serious fraud</b> , are led by <b>CID detectives</b> , who bring additional training and <b>specialist investigative expertise</b> to manage challenging cases effectively.	Police officers develop their <b>expertise</b> through <b>structured training</b> , with a minimum of <b>two years</b> for new recruits, while detectives complete <b>additional specialist qualifications</b> . Their <b>expert knowledge</b> is enhanced by access to elite units such as the <b>Flying Squad, Counter-Terrorism Command, and the Cyber Crime Unit</b> , which provide <b>specialist expertise</b> and advanced investigative techniques.  Despite this, investigative <b>expertise</b> can be undermined by procedural failings. The <b>Stephen Lawrence case (1993)</b> revealed how a lack of <b>expert handling</b> at the scene, coupled with <b>institutional racism</b> , caused major investigative errors and <b>delayed justice for nearly two decades</b> . Similarly, the <b>Hillsborough Disaster (1989)</b> highlighted shortcomings in <b>expert planning, public safety management, and evidence handling</b> , leading to <b>widespread criticism</b> of policing practices and a significant erosion of public trust.	The <b>annual cost</b> of employing each police officer is <b>well over £100,000</b> , which includes <b>salary, equipment, and ongoing training</b> . These high costs place significant pressure on police budgets, particularly as the demand for skilled investigators continues to rise  There are also persistent issues of <b>availability</b> . <b>High workloads</b> contribute to <b>sickness, burnout, and retention problems</b> , with around <b>19% of officers absent at any one time</b> . Recruitment challenges and a shortage of <b>specialist investigators</b> create further delays, particularly in handling <b>complex investigations</b> such as organised crime, terrorism, and cyber-related offences.
<b>SOCOS/CSI</b>	<b>Scene of Crime Officers (SoCOs)</b> are responsible for <b>securing and processing crime scenes</b> to preserve their integrity. They <b>recover biological and physical evidence</b> , including <b>DNA, fingerprints, and fibres</b> , and ensure all materials are <b>packaged, labelled, and documented correctly</b> to prevent <b>contamination</b> . Their work provides the <b>foundation for forensic analysis</b> and plays a <b>critical role</b> in supporting successful investigations and prosecutions.	<b>Scene of Crime Officers (SoCOs)</b> receive <b>specialist scientific training</b> that equips them with the <b>expert skills</b> required to recover, preserve, and document evidence effectively. They play a <b>critical role during the ‘golden hour’</b> , when prompt and precise action is essential to prevent evidence degradation. Their <b>expert handling</b> ensures investigators and forensic scientists have <b>reliable, uncontaminated materials</b> to analyse, forming the foundation of many successful prosecutions  However, when <b>expert procedures</b> are not followed, the consequences can be severe. In the <b>Amanda Knox case (2007)</b> , investigators were heavily criticised for <b>failing to secure the scene</b> and mishandling key forensic items. These errors led to <b>claims of evidence contamination</b> , which significantly <b>weakened the prosecution’s case</b> and highlighted how mistakes in scene management can undermine justice.	Training and equipment <b>costs</b> for CSIs are <b>substantial</b> , as specialist tools and protective gear are essential to safely and effectively manage crime scenes. The <b>Salisbury Novichok poisonings (2018)</b> highlighted the <b>extreme risks</b> faced by investigators when handling hazardous materials, which require <b>costly specialised equipment and strict safety protocols</b> .  However, there are persistent issues with <b>availability</b> . <b>Staffing shortages</b> , particularly in <b>rural areas</b> , can lead to <b>delays in securing scenes or rushed evidence collection</b> , increasing the risk of <b>compromised investigations</b> . <b>High staff turnover</b> and <b>limited geographic coverage</b> further exacerbate these challenges, meaning that SOCO resources are not always available when and where they are most needed.
<b>FORENSIC SCIENTISTS &amp; SPECIALISTS</b>	<b>Forensic scientists</b> and specialists analyse a wide range of <b>evidence</b> in laboratory settings, including <b>DNA, toxicology, ballistics, fibres, and digital data</b> . Many work as <b>specialists</b> , providing <b>expertise</b> in highly technical areas such as <b>fire investigation,</b>	Forensic scientists provide <b>expert analysis</b> of evidence recovered from crime scenes, drawing on <b>science degrees</b> and often <b>postgraduate research</b> to deliver findings that <b>significantly influence legal proceedings</b> . Their <b>specialist expertise</b> covers areas such as <b>DNA profiling, toxicology, ballistics, digital forensics, and anthropology</b> , enabling investigators to link suspects, victims, and crime scenes with precision.	Forensic services are <b>expensive to operate</b> , with <b>annual costs estimated at £300 million to £350 million</b> . These high expenses stem from the <b>specialist training required</b> for staff and the <b>substantial cost of advanced technologies</b> used in areas such as DNA profiling, toxicology, and digital forensics.  However, funding pressures have created significant <b>availability challenges</b> . <b>Police budget cuts</b> have reduced

	<p><b>forensic anthropology, and computer forensics.</b> Using <b>advanced scientific techniques</b>, they help to <b>establish links between suspects, victims, and crime scenes</b>, providing evidence that is often central to securing convictions.</p>	<p>However, forensic evidence is <b>not infallible</b>, and errors or misinterpretations can result in <b>serious miscarriages of justice</b>. The <b>Sally Clark case (1999)</b> highlights this risk: expert witness <b>Professor Roy Meadow</b> wrongly testified that the likelihood of two natural cot deaths in the same family was <b>1 in 73 million</b>, leading to Clark’s wrongful conviction for murdering her two infant sons. After <b>three years</b>, her conviction was overturned, exposing the dangers of <b>flawed expert testimony</b>.</p> <p>Similarly, in the <b>Barry George case (2001)</b>, forensic evidence of <b>gunshot residue</b> used to convict him of the murder of TV presenter <b>Jill Dando</b> was later <b>discredited</b>, resulting in his acquittal. The <b>Colin Stagg case (1994)</b> further illustrates the risks of <b>over-reliance on forensic profiling techniques</b>: an undercover <b>‘honey trap’ operation</b> based on flawed psychological profiling collapsed, Stagg was acquitted, and the <b>real perpetrator remained at large for several years</b>.</p>	<p>the use of forensic science in investigations, <b>limiting the capacity to analyse evidence</b> effectively. The shortage of <b>qualified forensic experts</b> leads to <b>delays in laboratory processing</b> and the <b>preparation of cases</b>, while also <b>restricting the availability of expert witnesses</b> during trials. As a result, even when forensic evidence is critical, it is not always accessible in a timely or reliable way.</p>
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CPS	<p>The <b>Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)</b> is an <b>independent body</b>, established in <b>1986</b>, responsible for <b>reviewing cases</b> investigated by the police and deciding whether they should proceed to prosecution. It <b>advises police during investigations</b>, determines the <b>appropriate charges</b>, and prepares cases for court. The CPS also operates <b>specialist divisions</b> that require advanced <b>expert knowledge</b>, handling areas such as <b>terrorism, complex fraud, and organised crime</b>.</p>	<p>Prosecutors within the <b>CPS</b> are <b>qualified solicitors or barristers</b> who undergo <b>rigorous professional training</b> — completing the <b>Legal Practice Course (LPC)</b> or <b>Bar Vocational Course (BVC)</b> followed by <b>pupillage or training contracts</b>. This ensures they are recognised <b>experts in criminal law</b>. The <b>separation of roles</b> between the <b>police</b>, who investigate, and the <b>CPS</b>, which prosecutes, is designed to maintain <b>independence</b> and <b>impartiality</b> in the justice system.</p> <p>CPS prosecutors apply their <b>expert knowledge</b> to ensure that every case satisfies both the <b>evidential test</b> — there is sufficient, reliable evidence to secure a conviction — and the <b>public interest test</b> — that prosecuting the case serves society’s wider interests. In addition, the CPS operates <b>specialist divisions</b> for <b>terrorism, organised crime, complex fraud</b>, and other <b>high-profile areas</b>, enabling it to handle <b>highly intricate cases</b> requiring advanced expertise.</p> <p>However, despite this level of <b>professional expertise</b>, the CPS faces significant <b>recruitment and retention challenges</b>. Salaries range from <b>£28,000 to £54,000</b> for junior and mid-level roles and around <b>£65,000</b> for Senior Crown Advocates, whereas equivalent roles in the <b>private sector</b> can command <b>£80,000 to £150,000 or more</b>, particularly in London. This disparity makes private practice <b>far more attractive</b>, leading to <b>staff shortages, heavier caseloads</b>, and frequent <b>delays in case preparation</b>.</p> <p>These pressures have contributed to <b>high-profile failures</b>. In the <b>Damilola Taylor case (2000)</b>, the CPS relied on a vulnerable witness who was later deemed unreliable, resulting in the <b>collapse of the first trial</b>. The <b>Birmingham Six case</b> similarly exposed <b>systemic weaknesses</b>: wrongful convictions, secured on the basis of <b>flawed forensic evidence and unreliable confessions</b>, were eventually <b>overturned after years of appeals</b>.</p>	<p>There are significant <b>cost and availability challenges</b> facing the <b>Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)</b>. In <b>2020</b>, the CPS operated on a budget of <b>£567 million</b>, which has proven <b>insufficient to meet growing demands</b>. Limited funding, combined with comparatively <b>lower salaries</b> than the private sector, contributes to <b>burnout, high staff turnover</b>, and an ongoing <b>shortage of experienced prosecutors</b>. CPS lawyers are frequently required to manage <b>hundreds of cases simultaneously</b>, creating severe <b>workload pressures</b>.</p> <p>These <b>availability issues</b> have a <b>direct impact on justice</b>. Delays in <b>charging decisions</b> and <b>trial preparation</b> are especially problematic in <b>complex cases</b> that require <b>highly skilled prosecutors</b>, such as <b>rape prosecutions, terrorism, and large-scale fraud</b>. The consequences are stark: in <b>2020</b>, there were <b>58,657 rape allegations</b> in <b>England and Wales</b>, yet only <b>1,925 prosecutions</b> were initiated. This shortfall has been <b>partly attributed to a lack of experienced CPS lawyers</b> and insufficient resources to handle such cases effectively.</p>
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**PATHOLOGISTS**

Forensic pathologists are **medical doctors** who determine the **cause, manner, and timing of death** through detailed **post-mortem examinations**. Their findings help investigators establish whether a death was **natural, accidental, or suspicious** and provide **vital timelines** that guide the direction of criminal investigations and court proceedings.

Pathologists are **highly skilled medical professionals** whose work plays a **crucial role** in criminal investigations. Typically, they hold a **medical degree** and complete at least **seven years of specialist forensic training**, giving them **expertise** in **evaluating injuries, analysing toxicology results, and establishing cause and timing of death**. Their findings often form the **cornerstone of homicide investigations**, providing critical insights that guide police and prosecutors.

However, despite this high level of **expertise**, errors can have **serious consequences**. In the **Camden Ripper case (2002)**, forensic pathologist **Dr Freddy Patel misdiagnosed a victim’s cause of death**, which **delayed the identification of a serial killer** and allowed him to **commit further murders**. This case highlights how even small mistakes in expert interpretation can **significantly undermine investigations** and delay justice.

Forensic pathology faces **severe cost and availability challenges** in **England and Wales**. There are only around **35–40 Home Office-registered forensic pathologists**, creating a **serious shortage of experts**. This limited availability often causes **significant delays in conducting autopsies**, which in turn slows **investigations, charging decisions, and court proceedings**.

The shortage is worsened by the **high cost of training and maintaining these specialists**. Becoming a forensic pathologist requires a **medical degree** followed by **at least seven years of specialist training**, involving substantial investment in education, laboratory facilities, and ongoing professional development. These costs act as a **barrier to entry**, reducing the number of qualified professionals entering the field.

Because of these combined **cost pressures and limited availability**, investigative progress can be **seriously delayed**. In some cases, access to **expert pathology reports** — which are often central to determining **cause of death** — can take **weeks or even months**, impacting the overall **effectiveness of the criminal justice process**.