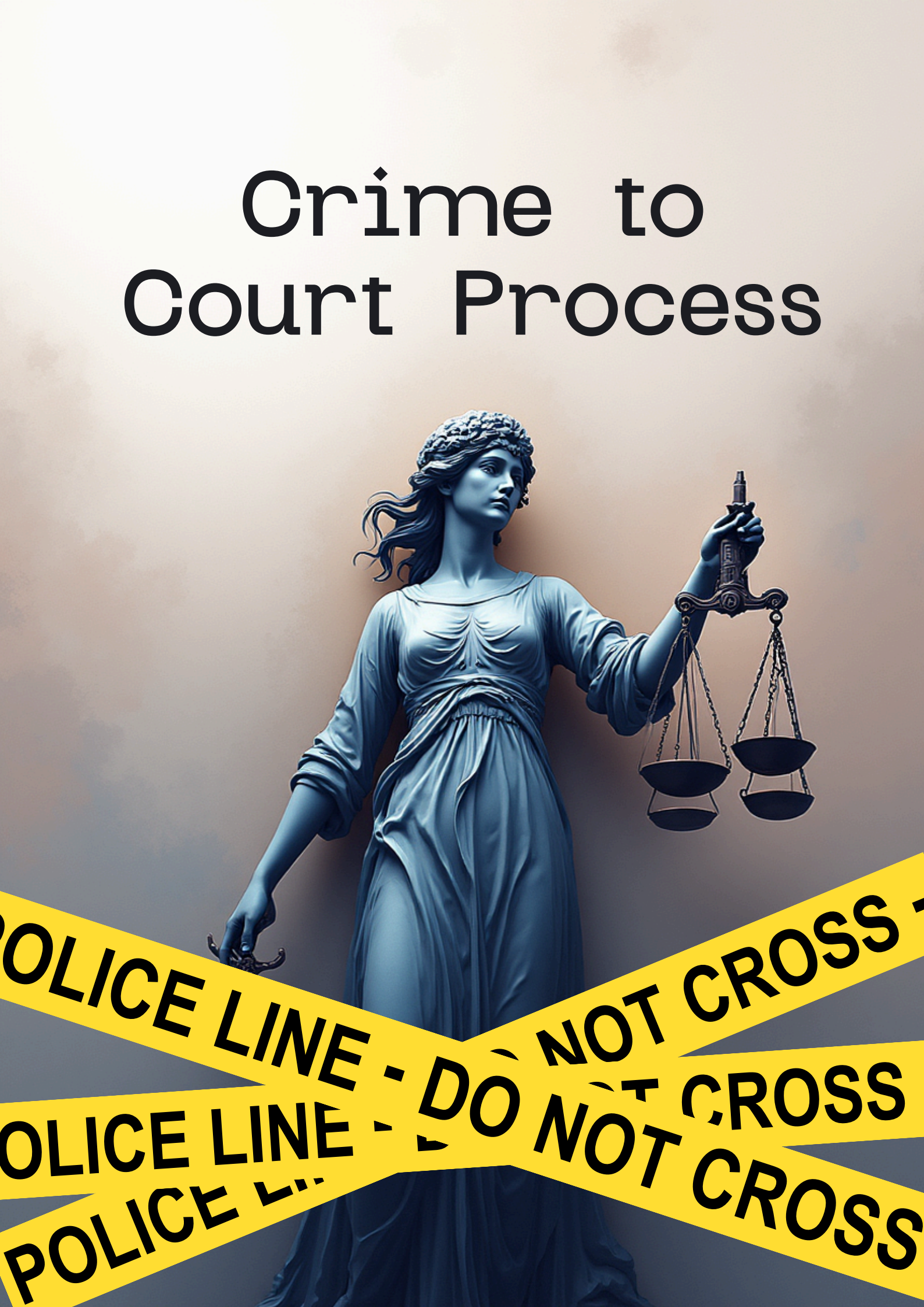
Crime to Court Process



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Crime to Court Process

This diagram is a flowchart illustrating the process of a criminal investigation, from an incident taking place through the courtroom. The diagram is organised into a sequence of connected steps. While it provides a useful overview, it is important to note that this process is specific to our fictional case and may differ significantly depending on the jurisdiction — particularly across the four nations of the UK (England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland) - as well as the nature and classification of the crime. Variations may occur in investigative procedures, legal frameworks, prosecutorial decision-making, and court processes. The information presented relates only to processes in England and Wales.



Police Investigation

The police are typically the first authority to engage. They secure the scene, gather initial information, and begin the investigation.

Police Investigation



Forensic Investigation

A team of Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs) analyses the crime scene, gathers physical and digital evidence, photographs the scene, and ensures nothing is contaminated.
Physical evidence gathered from the crime scene by CSIs is sent to laboratory specialists for analysis, which may include chemical or biological analysis, or physical comparison tests (such as DNA, toxicology, or toolmark analysis). Forensic scientists then evaluate the results to determine how strongly the findings support the prosecution or the defence.



Forensic Investigation

Court

The case proceeds to trial, where evidence is presented and a verdict is reached.

Court



Incident Occurs

Crime Reported or Discovered

Police Investigation

Request CSIs

Collection of Potential Evidence

Police Investigation

Forensic Investigation

Court

Police Investigation

Incident Occurs

An incident occurs when a possible crime or emergency takes place.

Crime Reported or Discovered

A crime is reported by the public or detected by the police.

Police Investigation

The police are typically the first authority to engage. They secure the scene, gather initial information, and begin the investigation, for instance, by collecting digital evidence.

Request Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs)

The responding officer or the senior investigating officer assesses the scene and, if forensic evidence might help (e.g., fingerprints, DNA), they request the attendance of CSIs.

Collection of Evidence

The CSIs carefully search for and recover items of physical evidence, such as weapons, ensuring that they are properly packaged and labelled.

Secure & Assess the Scene



Collect the Evidence

Forensic Investigation



Send Evidence to the Lab



Report CSI Findings



Forensic Analysis



Report Lab Findings

Police Investigation

Forensic Regulator

Court

Forensic Investigation

Secure and Assess the Scene

CSIs secure the area to prevent contamination and assess what type of evidence may be present. They document the scene with photographs and notes before collecting anything.

Collect the Evidence

The CSIs carefully search for and recover physical evidence, such as fingerprints, DNA, fibres, and weapons, and ensure they are properly packaged and labelled.

Send Evidence to the Lab

Once collected, evidence is sent to the forensic laboratory for detailed scientific analysis, following strict chain-of-custody procedures.

Report CSI Findings

CSIs record their observations in a formal report, describing how and where each item was found and any relevant scene details.

The Forensic Lab Analyses the Evidence

Forensic scientists test the evidence using scientific methods to identify substances, analyse DNA, compare fingerprints, and interpret results.

The Lab Reports Findings

The lab shares its results with investigating officers to support the case. Forensic experts may also present and explain their findings in court as impartial witnesses.

Forensic Science Regulator

The Forensic Science Regulator ensures that all forensic work used in the criminal justice system meets high scientific and quality standards. The regulator sets guidelines, issues a Code of Practice, and checks that police forces, laboratories, and practitioners follow proper procedures.
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forensic-science-regulator

Crown Prosecution Service

Forensic Investigation

Police Investigation

Charging Decision (Police)

Charging Decision (CPS)

Magistrates' Court

Court

Plea

Expert Witness

Trial (Magistrates' or Crown Court)

Verdict and Sentencing

Defence / Prosecution

Police Reports

Appeal

Court

Charging Decision (by the Police)

For less serious offences, the police can decide to charge a suspect directly if there is enough evidence to proceed. They prepare a case file and begin the court process.

Charging Decision (by the CPS)

For more serious or complex cases, the Crown Prosecution Service reviews the evidence gathered by police and decides whether to charge, based on the evidential and public interest tests.

Crown Prosecution Service

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decides whether there is enough evidence to charge a suspect and whether it is in the public interest. They prepare and present the case in court, working with the police to ensure fair and effective prosecutions.
https://www.cps.gov.uk/

Magistrates' Court

In England and Wales, every criminal case starts in the Magistrates' Court, where the defendant hears the charge, enters an early guilty or not-guilty plea, and the court decides whether the defendant should be granted bail or remanded in custody. The magistrates then determine whether the case will remain in the Magistrates' Court (for less serious offences) or sent to the Crown Court (for more serious or complex ones).

Plea

If the defendant pleads guilty, the magistrates either sentence immediately or send the case to the Crown Court for sentencing if their powers are not sufficient. If the defendant pleads not guilty, the case goes to trial—either in the Magistrates' Court (summary offences) or the Crown Court (either-way or indictable offences).

Trial

The trial is where the court hears all the evidence and decides whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

Court

Expert Witness

Expert witnesses (including forensic scientists) provide independent, scientific evidence to help the court understand technical findings. They explain how evidence was collected, analysed, and what it means.

Defence / Prosecution

The prosecution presents evidence to prove the case against the defendant, while the defence challenges that evidence and presents their own to create reasonable doubt.

Police Reports

Police reports provide a factual record of the investigation, including statements, evidence gathered, and officers' observations, helping the court understand how the case was built.

Verdict and Sentencing

The verdict is the court's decision on whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty, reached either by magistrates or by a jury in the Crown Court after reviewing all the evidence and arguments. If the defendant is found not guilty, they are acquitted and the case ends. If they are found guilty (or have pleaded guilty), the court moves to sentencing, where the judge or magistrates decide the appropriate punishment using sentencing guidelines and considering the seriousness of the offence, harm caused, culpability, aggravating and mitigating factors, and any credit for an early guilty plea.

Appeal

After conviction or sentencing, the defendant can challenge the outcome if there has been an error of law, the proceedings were unfair, or the sentence was too harsh. Magistrates' Court decisions are appealed to the Crown Court, while Crown Court cases go to the Court of Appeal (with permission). The appeal court can uphold the decision, reduce or change the sentence, order a retrial, or quash the conviction.

Partners

















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