



Unit 1: Citizenship – Crime & Justice

What do I need to know about the criminal justice system?

1. What is a crime and why do we have laws?

- A crime is when the law has been broken.
- There are two types of law, criminal law and civil law.
- Laws keep us safe and protect our basic human rights.
- Laws also keep order in our society and avoid chaos.
- Civil law deals with disputes about such things as contracts including marriage, land and employment.
- Criminal law deals with 3 categories of crime:
 - Crimes against property - eg theft or burglary
 - Crimes against people's health and safety - eg assault, robbery or drug dealing
 - Crimes against the Crown (the state or government) eg. treason or perjury.
- Although we might not agree with every law, we are all expected to obey them all which is called 'Rule of Law'
- In the UK, laws are made by our elected MPs in Parliament.

2. How are criminals dealt with in the justice system?

- Police can arrest anyone suspected of committing a crime
- Anyone arrested is entitled to receive advice from a solicitor to ensure they are dealt with fairly.
- This suspect can be charged with the offence if the police feel that there is enough evidence. The police pass the file to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) who decide if there is enough evidence for the case to proceed to court.
- A court then issues a summons requiring them to appear in a particular court on a certain date and at a certain time.
- The suspect then attends a Magistrates court where the Magistrate listens to the evidence and decides on the verdict and a sentence.
- More serious cases are passed onto a Crown Court where the verdict is reached by a jury although the sentencing is done by the Judge who is well trained to apply the law.

3. What powers and duties to the police have?

Some of the duties of the police include:

- Provide a visible presence to reassure the community
- Teach the community about the law
- Diffuse violent situations and direct traffic
- Respond to calls from the public and conduct arrests
- Interview suspects or witnesses and gather crime scene
- Gather evidence at a crime scene

The police have certain powers to do their job effectively:

- Police can stop and search you in the street or in your vehicle if they have reasonable suspicion that you are carrying drugs, weapons, stolen goods, alcohol / tobacco if you are underage
- Police can ask you to remove outer clothing in the street
- Police can force you to go to the police station if arrested
- Police can arrest you if you refuse to co-operate



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4. What is the age of criminal responsibility?

- The age of criminal responsibility is the age at which the courts decide a person is responsible for their actions. There is much debate about what age a person knows the difference between right and wrong and should therefore stand trial in court for committing a crime.
- The age of criminal responsibility in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is 10.
- The age of criminal responsibility in Scotland is 12, as it also is in the Netherlands and Belgium.
- The age of criminal responsibility in France is 13.
- The age of criminal responsibility is 14 in Germany, Italy and Spain and 15 in Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland.
- **Learners know arguments for and against raising the age of criminal responsibility in UK**

5. What is the direct and indirect impact of crime? (Case Study)

Learners can explore the direct and indirect impact of crime on individuals, groups and society giving examples. Learners will link this to the stories of James Bulger or Rhys Jones and will be able to identify how the crime has affected a range of victims and groups, directly and indirectly

The James Bulger Story

James was two years old on 12 February 1993 when he was abducted from a shopping centre in Merseyside, by two boys, then known as Jon Venables and Robert Thompson. His body was found on a railway line, after he had been beaten to death. His killers were both just 10 years old. They were both jailed for life but were later released with new identities on licence in 2001. Venables, was sent back to prison in 2010 and 2017 for additional offences.

The Rhys Jones Story

On 22 August 2007, **Rhys Jones**, eleven, was murdered in Liverpool while walking home from football practice. Sean Mercer, aged 16 at the time of the shooting, went on trial on 2 October 2008, and was found guilty of murder on 16 December. Mercer was sentenced to life imprisonment serving a minimum of 22 years. Rhys's murder was later revealed to be a result of Mercer's failed attempt to shoot one or more rival gang members from the Strand Crew who had come into Croxteth, instead missing and hitting Rhys as he walked home.

6. What are the risks associated with gang culture?

- County lines - gangs sending young people from cities into smaller towns and villages to sell drugs.
- Disenchantment- to be disillusioned, with society, and feeling like there is no part in it for you.
- Grooming - when young people are given attention, compliments, money, food or presents in order to build a relationship with a gang member. The young person being groomed is then made to feel like they owe something to the gang, which is how they are recruited.
- County Lines criminal activity has a negative impact on the communities involved. It brings further violence, abuse and drugs into rural communities. By flooding the market with class A drugs, it increases social problems associated with drug use eg anti-social behaviour & theft.
- As well as harming communities, County Lines activity has a negative impact on the individuals involved: if caught, drug dealers can face prison sentences of nine years. For young people there is also the risk of becoming a user of drugs, as well as becoming trapped in gang activity.
- While some see criminal gangs as an escape from their life of poverty and abuse, many find that they are trapped in a vicious cycle of working for violent gangs.
- If you are worried about you or someone you know being involved in County Lines, call Crimestoppers (0800 555 111)