

# Detective

Detectives are plain-clothed police officers who specialise in investigating crime. They usually work within the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and in specialist units such as drugs, fraud and stolen vehicles. They may also work in cross-border units such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) or Counter Terrorist Command.

Detectives investigate the more serious crimes, including:

- murder and manslaughter
- burglary and robbery
- serious assaults and violent crime
- rape and sexual offences
- fraud and internet crime.

Detectives investigate crimes, arrest suspects, question them and, if charges are brought, prepare case files. They attend court to give evidence. Complex enquiries require a great deal of analysis, problem solving and a lot of paperwork. Much of a detective's work draws on huge amounts of computerised and scientific information, which can help narrow down investigations more quickly.

In common with other police officers, detectives work 40 hours a week, in shifts covering 24 hours a day, seven days a week. At times they may also be on call.

Detectives are usually based in offices in police stations, where they liaise with their uniformed colleagues and police support staff, such as crime scene investigators. They travel to incidents and crime scenes in unmarked cars, and interview witnesses in police stations, or at people's homes or places of work. They may have to carry out surveillance (undercover) work, observing suspects, for example. This could involve being outdoors in all weathers.

Detectives are paid on the same salary scale as all police officers. A detective constable starts on at least £25,000 a year, rising to approximately £48,200 (£50,200 in London) for an experienced detective inspector.

A detective should:

- have an analytical and enquiring mind
- be very methodical in their work
- be patient and determined, as enquiries can take months or even years
- be extremely thorough and accurate when gathering evidence, because a case may be thrown out if mistakes are made
- be prepared to deal with the very worst crimes and people.

To become a detective, you must first successfully complete a two-year probationary period as a police officer. See **Police Officer** for further information.

Selection for a post as detective is competitive. Many police officers gain valuable experience

by spending a few weeks on a CID attachment before applying. Once selected, detectives undergo training on the job to learn the investigative skills needed for their specialist department. This is carried out under the national Professionalising Investigation Programme, designed to improve the skills of all officers who run investigations.

Detectives may also be able to take qualifications, including diplomas or degrees, in subjects such as applied criminal investigation and criminology.

Detectives may be promoted to the rank of detective inspector. There are also opportunities to specialise further, in areas such as child protection or counter-terrorism.

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