

8.3 How have policing methods developed from 1900 to today?

Law enforcement during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

Continuity The role of the police officer remained the same, the principal aim being the maintenance of public order and the prevention rather than the investigation of crime

Change Tremendous advances in forensic science; the use of computer technology to investigate crime; the development of specialist units to deal with particular aspects of crime investigation; and changes in transport

Increased resources for the police

Developments in transport

Revised

One of the biggest changes in policing during the first half of the twentieth century was due to new methods of transport:

- 1909 – the first use of bicycles
- 1919 – introduction of police cars (not commonly used until the 1930s)
- 1930s – police motorbikes greatly improved police speed and effectiveness
- 1970s – ‘**bobby** on the beat’ replaced by patrol cars and ‘rapid response’ teams
- 1980s – introduction of police helicopters and light aircraft.

Key term

Bobby – nickname for a policeman; after Sir Robert Peel

Developments in communications and technology

Revised

- **Telegraph and radio:** wireless communication was first used to enable the arrest of Dr Crippen in 1910; police telephone boxes appeared in the 1920s; two-way radios made their first appearance in the 1930s and are now an essential tool in modern policing.
- **Camera and video technology:** in 1901 the first police photographer was employed to record images of criminals; today photographs and video recordings play a vital part in any crime scene investigation; many police cars and all helicopters are fitted with cameras; the police also make use of **CCTV**.
- **Computer technology:** the Police National Computer came into use in 1974; today it holds databases for fingerprints, **DNA** records, motor vehicle records and missing persons.

Key terms

CCTV – closed-circuit television used for surveillance

DNA – deoxyribonucleic acid, present in all living things and provides a unique genetic code or make-up for each individual body

Developments in police recruitment and training

Revised

The National Police Training College was set up in 1947 to provide new recruits with fourteen weeks of basic training and training courses for promotion; in 2012 the College of Policing took over responsibility for all police training needs.

The changing role and status of women police officers

Revised

Policewomen first appeared in 1919 but they had only limited duties such as patrol work, looking after children and female prisoners, and hospital duties. It was not until 1973 that they were granted equal opportunities to take on the same roles as male officers. In 1995 Pauline Clare became the first female appointed Chief Constable (for Lancashire).

Revision task

Use the information in this section to help you describe the key developments in policing in each of the following areas:

Communications and technology

Policewomen

Transport

The specialisation of police services

The development of specialist branches

Revised

Specialist unit and year founded	Principal function in the twentieth century
Criminal Investigation Department (CID) (1878)	Plainclothes detectives investigate major crimes such as murders, serious assaults, robberies, fraud and sexual offences
Flying Squad (1919)	Deals with serious theft; later became the Central Robbery Squad
Fraud Squad (1946)	Investigates fraud and other economic crimes
Dog Handling Squad (1946)	Trained officers use dogs to help trace people, property, drugs and explosives
Anti-Terrorist Branch (1971) (SO13)	Aims to monitor and prevent terrorist activity
National Hi-Tech Crime Team (2002)	Deals with serious and organised cybercrime
Counter Terrorist Command (2006) (SO15)	Formed from merger of Anti-Terrorist Branch (SO13) and Special Branch (SO12); it aims to prevent terrorist-related activity

Developments in forensic science

Revised

- **Fingerprinting:** following its first use in 1901, a national register of fingerprints was set up; in 1995 the National Automatic Fingerprint Identification System was introduced.
- **Forensic scientists:** Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCOs) attend crime scenes to examine and gather forensic evidence; they carry out tests on hair, skin, dust, fibres from clothing and traces of blood to match them to a suspect.
- **DNA and genetic fingerprinting:** since the 1980s police have increasingly depended on DNA and **genetic fingerprinting** to help solve crimes and investigate past, unresolved crimes; a DNA National Database was established in 1995.

Key term

Genetic fingerprinting – the method of matching DNA samples found at a crime scene with a suspect

Developments in community policing

Revised

During the late twentieth century several initiatives were introduced to help improve police–community relations:

- **On the beat:** more police officers were returned to the beat to provide a visible presence on the streets.
- **Neighbourhood Watch Schemes:** first introduced in 1982, these have developed into a nationwide membership of 10 million people; they involve organised groups of local people who work with the police to prevent crime in their neighbourhood.
- **Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs):** first introduced in 2002, these help deal with anti-social behaviour and minor crime in the hope of making ordinary people feel more secure in their locality; by 2012 they numbered 16,000 (7 per cent of the force).
- **Crime Prevention Schemes:** these are run by the police and offer advice on personal safety, home and vehicle security, and protection against fraud.

Modern-day problems facing the police

Revised

- **The use of firearms by the police:** all 43 regional police forces have a number of officers trained in the use of firearms; SO19 has also been developed as the Specialist Firearms Branch.
- **Increase in police powers:** the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) and the Police Act (1996) gave the police increased powers to deal with people involved in rioting, picketing and violent disorder; the Terrorism Act (2000) gave the police the right to detain a suspected terrorist for up to 48 hours and up to seven days if granted permission by a judge. These increased powers have sometimes resulted in legal challenges against police actions.
- **Pressures of red tape:** officers are required to keep written records of all dealings with the public and to record interviews held in the police station; this increase in bureaucracy has become burdensome and time-consuming for police officers.
- **Pressure from organised criminals:** developments in technology and transport have resulted in changing patterns of crime; drug trafficking is now operated by gangs on a global scale; gang culture in city areas has resulted in an increase in gun and knife crime; attacks by terrorist gangs have also been on the increase.

Key term

Red tape – time-consuming official paperwork and routines

Exam practice

Describe developments in policing methods during the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. **[4 marks]**

Answers online

Exam tip

When answering 'describe' questions you need to ensure that you include two to three key factors. To obtain maximum marks you need to support these factors with specific factual detail, in this case, describing developments in forensic science such as DNA and genetic fingerprinting, the growth of special units and developments in community policing.