

Police Discretion

Criminal Justice

Why officers must choose what to notice, and what shapes that choice.

Discretion is unavoidable; the question is how it is guided.

Why it exists

Law is broader than any force can enforce

Resources are always short of demand

Statutes need judgement in context

Full enforcement would be unworkable

Discretion is widest at the lowest rank

How it is shaped

Policy, guidance and charging standards

Supervision and recorded reasons

Complaints and independent oversight

Body-worn video and audit trails

Occupational culture and peer norms

Educational reference. Because discretion cannot be abolished, accountability rests on recording and reviewing its use.