



Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

1974 CHAPTER 53

An Act to rehabilitate offenders who have not been reconvicted of any serious offence for periods of years, to penalise the unauthorised disclosure of their previous convictions, to amend the law of defamation, and for purposes connected therewith. [31st July 1974]

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** Act modified (1.7.1992) by Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988 (c. 53, SIF 107:1), ss. 58, 77(7), as substituted (1.7.1992) by Road Traffic Act 1991 (c. 40, SIF 107:1), s. 34; S.I. 1992/1286, art. 2, Sch. Act modified (1.4.2009) by Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988 (c. 53), s. 58A(1) (as inserted by Road Safety Act 2006 (c. 49), ss. 9(2), 61(1), Sch. 2 para. 17; S.I. 2008/3164, art. 4(b))
Act modified (1.4.2009) by Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988 (c. 53), s. 77A(9) (as inserted by Road Safety Act 2006 (c. 49), ss. 9(2), 61(1), Sch. 2 para. 27; S.I. 2008/3164, art. 4(b))
- C2** Act (except section 1(2)) modified by Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984 (c. 47, SIF 39:1), s. 3, Sch. para. 6(a)
- C3** Act excluded by Financial Services Act 1986 (c. 60, SIF 69), s. 189(1)
Act excluded (15.12.2011) by Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 (c. 23), ss. 25, 31(2), Sch. 6 para. 10(2) (with Sch. 8)
- C4** By Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53, SIF 39:1), s. 101(1), Sch. 12 para. 23; S.I. 1991/2208, art. 2(1), Sch. 1 it is provided (14.10.1991) that in relation to any time before the commencement of s. 70 of that 1991 Act (which came into force on 1.10.1992 by S.I. 1992/333, art. 2(2), Sch. 2) references in any enactment amended by that 1991 Act, to youth courts shall be construed as references to juvenile courts.
- C5** Act amended (1.10.1996) by 1996 c. 46, s. 13(5)(6); S.I. 1996/2474, art. 2

Commencement Information

- I1** Act wholly in force at 1.7.1975 see s. 11(2)

1 Rehabilitated persons and spent convictions. **E+W**

- (1) Subject to subsection (2) below, where an individual has been convicted, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, of any offence or offences, and the following conditions are satisfied, that is to say—

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- (a) he did not have imposed on him in respect of that conviction a sentence which is excluded from rehabilitation under this Act; and
- (b) he has not had imposed on him in respect of a subsequent conviction during the rehabilitation period applicable to the first-mentioned conviction in accordance with section 6 below a sentence which is excluded from rehabilitation under this Act;

then, after the end of the rehabilitation period so applicable (including, where appropriate, any extension under section 6(4) below of the period originally applicable to the first-mentioned conviction) or, where that rehabilitation period ended before the commencement of this Act, after the commencement of this Act, that individual shall for the purposes of this Act be treated as a rehabilitated person in respect of the first-mentioned conviction and that conviction shall for those purposes be treated as spent.

- (2) A person shall not become a rehabilitated person for the purposes of this Act in respect of a conviction unless he has served or otherwise undergone or complied with any sentence imposed on him in respect of that conviction; but the following shall not, by virtue of this subsection, prevent a person from becoming a rehabilitated person for those purposes—
 - (a) failure to pay a fine or other sum adjudged to be paid by or imposed on a conviction, or breach of a condition of a recognizance or of a bond of caution to keep the peace or be of good behaviour;
 - (b) breach of any condition or requirement applicable in relation to a sentence which renders the person to whom it applies liable to be dealt with for the offence for which the sentence was imposed, or, where the sentence was a suspended sentence of imprisonment, liable to be dealt with in respect of that sentence (whether or not, in any case, he is in fact so dealt with);
 - (c) failure to comply with any requirement of a suspended sentence supervision order.

[^{F1}(2A) Where in respect of a conviction a person has been sentenced to imprisonment with an order under s. 47(1) of the ^{M1}Criminal Law Act 1977, he is to be treated for the purposes of subsection (2) above as having served the sentence as soon as he completes service of so much of the sentence as was by that order required to be served in prison.]

- (3) In this Act “sentence” includes any order made by a court in dealing with a person in respect of his conviction of any offence or offences, other than—
 - (a) an order for committal or any other order made in default of payment of any fine or other sum adjudged to be paid by or imposed on a conviction, or for want of sufficient distress to satisfy any such fine or other sum;
 - (b) an order dealing with a person in respect of a suspended sentence of imprisonment.
- (4) In this Act, references to a conviction, however expressed, include references—
 - (a) to a conviction by or before a court outside Great Britain; and
 - (b) to any finding (other than a finding linked with a finding of insanity) in any criminal proceedings ^{F2} . . . that a person has committed an offence or done the act or made the omission charged;

and notwithstanding anything in section 9 of the ^{M2}Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1949 or [^{F3}section 1C] of the ^{M3}Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973 (conviction of a person ^{F4} . . . discharged to be deemed not to be a conviction) a conviction in respect of which an order is made [^{F3}discharging the person concerned] absolutely or conditionally shall be treated as a conviction for the purposes of this Act and the

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person in question may become a rehabilitated person in respect of that conviction and the conviction a spent conviction for those purposes accordingly.

Extent Information

- E1** This version of this provision extends to England and Wales only; a separate version has been created for Scotland only.

Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 1(2A) inserted (E.W.) by [Criminal Law Act 1977 \(c. 45\)](#), s. 65(7), [Sch. 9 para. 11](#)
- F2** Words in s. 1(4)(b) repealed (E.W.) (14.10.1991) by [Children Act 1989 \(c. 41, SIF 20\)](#), s. 108, [Sch. 15](#); S.I. 1991/828, [art. 3\(2\)](#)
- F3** Words in s. 1(4) substituted (E.W.) (1.10.1992) by [Criminal Justice Act 1991 \(c. 53, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 100, [Sch. 11 para. 20\(a\)\(c\)](#); S.I. 1992/333, [art. 2\(2\)](#), [Sch. 2](#).
- F4** Words in s. 1(4) repealed (E.W.) (1.10.1992) by [Criminal Justice Act 1991 \(c. 53, SIF 39:1\)](#), ss. 100, 101(2), [Sch. 11 para. 20](#), [Sch. 13](#); S.I. 1992/333, [art. 2\(2\)](#), [Sch. 2](#).

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C6** S. 1(2)(a) amended by [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(c. 33, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 170, [Sch. 8 para. 16](#), [Sch. 15 para. 47](#)
- C7** S. 1(2)(a) amended by [Criminal Justice \(Scotland\) Act 1987 \(c. 41, SIF 39:1\)](#), ss. 45(2), 47(4)(a)
S. 1(2)(a) restricted (3.2.1995) by [1994 c. 37](#), ss. 65(2), 69(2)
- C8** S. 1(2) excluded by [Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 \(c. 22, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 39(3)

Marginal Citations

- M1** 1977 c. 45.
M2 1949 c. 94.
M3 1973 c. 62.

1 Rehabilitated persons and spent convictions. **S**

(1) Subject to subsection (2) below, where an individual has been convicted, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, of any offence or offences, and the following conditions are satisfied, that is to say—

- (a) he did not have imposed on him in respect of that conviction a sentence which is excluded from rehabilitation under this Act; and
- (b) he has not had imposed on him in respect of a subsequent conviction during the rehabilitation period applicable to the first-mentioned conviction in accordance with section 6 below a sentence which is excluded from rehabilitation under this Act;

then, after the end of the rehabilitation period so applicable (including, where appropriate, any extension under section 6(4) below of the period originally applicable to the first-mentioned conviction) or, where that rehabilitation period ended before the commencement of this Act, after the commencement of this Act, that individual shall for the purposes of this Act be treated as a rehabilitated person in respect of the first-mentioned conviction and that conviction shall for those purposes be treated as spent.

(2) A person shall not become a rehabilitated person for the purposes of this Act in respect of a conviction unless he has served or otherwise undergone or complied with any sentence imposed on him in respect of that conviction; but the following shall not, by

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virtue of this subsection, prevent a person from becoming a rehabilitated person for those purposes—

- (a) failure to pay a fine or other sum adjudged to be paid by or imposed on a conviction, or breach of a condition of a recognizance or of a bond of caution to keep the peace or be of good behaviour;
 - (b) breach of any condition or requirement applicable in relation to a sentence which renders the person to whom it applies liable to be dealt with for the offence for which the sentence was imposed, or, where the sentence was a suspended sentence of imprisonment, liable to be dealt with in respect of that sentence (whether or not, in any case, he is in fact so dealt with);
 - (c) failure to comply with any requirement of a suspended sentence supervision order.
- (3) In this Act “sentence” includes any order made by a court in dealing with a person in respect of his conviction of any offence or offences, other than—
- (a) an order for committal or any other order made in default of payment of any fine or other sum adjudged to be paid by or imposed on a conviction, or for want of sufficient distress to satisfy any such fine or other sum;
 - (b) an order dealing with a person in respect of a suspended sentence of imprisonment.
- (4) In this Act, references to a conviction, however expressed, include references—
- (a) to a conviction by or before a court outside Great Britain; and
 - (b) to any finding (other than a finding linked with a finding of insanity) in any criminal proceedings or in care proceedings under section 1 of the ^{M49}Children and Young Persons Act 1969 that a person has committed an offence or done the act or made the omission charged;

and notwithstanding anything in section 9 of the ^{M50}Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1949 or section 13 of the ^{M51}Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973 (conviction of a person put on probation or discharged to be deemed not to be a conviction) a conviction in respect of which an order is made placing the person convicted on probation or discharging him absolutely or conditionally shall be treated as a conviction for the purposes of this Act and the person in question may become a rehabilitated person in respect of that conviction and the conviction a spent conviction for those purposes accordingly.

Extent Information

E3 This version of this provision extends to Scotland only; a separate version has been created for England and Wales only.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C26** S. 1(2)(a) amended by Criminal Justice Act 1988 (c. 33, SIF 39:1), s. 170, Sch. 8 para. 16, **Sch. 15 para. 47**
- C27** S. 1(2)(a) excluded by Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 (c. 32, SIF 39:1), **s. 39(3)**
 S. 1(2)(a) restricted (3.2.1995) by 1994 c. 37, **ss. 65(2), 69(2)**
 S. 1(2)(a) restricted (31.3.1996) by 1995 c. 20, **s. 113(5)** (which Act was repealed (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 40, ss. 4, 6, 7(2), Sch. 3 Pt. II paras. 16(3), 17, **Sch. 5**)
 S. 1(2)(a) restricted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 43, **ss. 47(2), 50(2)**
- C28** S. 1(2)(a) amended by Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987 (c. 41, SIF 39:1), **ss. 45(2), 47(4)(a)**

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Marginal Citations

M49 1969 c. 54.

M50 1949 c. 94.

M51 1973 c. 62.

2 Rehabilitation of persons dealt with in service disciplinary proceedings.

- (1) Subject to the following provisions of this section, for the purposes of this Act any finding that a person is guilty of an offence in respect of any act or omission which was the subject of service disciplinary proceedings shall be treated as a conviction and any punishment awarded [^{F5}or order made by virtue of Schedule 5A to the ^{M4}Army Act 1955 or to the ^{M5}Air Force Act 1955 or Schedule 4A to the ^{M6}Naval Discipline Act 1957] in respect of any such finding shall be treated as a sentence.
- (2) Subsection (1) above applies [^{F6}, subject to section 17 of the ^{M7}Armed Forces Act 1976 (rehabilitation of civilians),] only where either or both of the following conditions is satisfied, that is to say—
 - (a) the offence in question is an offence to which this subsection applies; or
 - (b) the punishment awarded is a punishment to which this subsection applies.
- (3) Subsection (2) above applies to any offence consisting in the commission of a civil offence and to any offence under, and any offence of attempting to commit an offence under, any of the following enactments, or any corresponding enactment previously in force—
 - (a) sections 30, 45, 46, 61, 62, 64 and 66 of the ^{M8}Army Act 1955 and the ^{M9}Air Force Act 1955; and
 - (b) sections 5, 30, 31, 34A, 35, 36 and 37 of the ^{M10}Naval Discipline Act 1957.
- (4) Subsection (2) above applies to the following punishments—
 - (a) imprisonment;
 - (b) cashiering, discharge with ignominy or dismissal with disgrace from Her Majesty's service;
 - (c) dismissal from Her Majesty's service; and
 - (d) detention for a term of three months or more.

[^{F7}(e) detention by virtue of a custodial order made under section 71AA of or Schedule 5A to the Army Act 1955 or the Air Force Act 1955 or under section 43AA of or Schedule 4A to the Naval Discipline Act 1957.]
- (5) In this Act, "service disciplinary proceedings" means any of the following—
 - (a) any proceedings under the ^{M11}Army Act 1955, the ^{M12}Air Force Act 1955, or the ^{M13}Naval Discipline Act 1957 whether before a court-martial or before any other court or person authorised thereunder to award a punishment in respect of any offence);
 - (b) any proceedings under any Act previously in force corresponding to any of the Acts mentioned in paragraph (a) above;

[^{F8}(bb) any proceedings before a Standing Civilian Court established under the ^{M14}Armed Forces Act 1976;]

 - (c) any proceedings under any corresponding enactment or law applying to a force, other than a home force, to which section 4 of the ^{M15}Visiting Forces (British Commonwealth) Act 1933 applies or applied at the time of the

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proceedings, being proceedings in respect of a member of a home force who is or was at that time attached to the first-mentioned force under that section; whether in any event those proceedings take place in Great Britain or elsewhere.

Textual Amendments

- F5** Words inserted by [Armed Forces Act 1976 \(c. 52\)](#), [Sch. 9 para. 20\(1\)](#)
F6 Words inserted by [Armed Forces Act 1976 \(c. 52\)](#), [Sch. 9 para. 20\(2\)](#)
F7 [S. 2\(4\)\(e\)](#) added by [Armed Forces Act 1981 \(c. 55, SIF 7:1\)](#), [Sch. 4 para. 2\(1\)](#)
F8 [S. 2\(5\)\(bb\)](#) inserted by [Armed Forces Act 1976 \(c. 52\)](#), [Sch. 9 para. 20\(3\)](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C9** [S. 2](#) modified by [Armed Forces Act 1976 \(c. 52\)](#), [s. 17\(1\)](#); extended by [Armed Forces Act 1976 \(c. 52\)](#), [s. 17\(2\)](#)

Marginal Citations

- M4** 1955 c. 18.
M5 1955 c. 19.
M6 1957 c. 53.
M7 1976 c. 52.
M8 1955 c. 18.
M9 1955 c. 19.
M10 1957 c. 53.
M11 1955 c. 18.
M12 1955 c. 19.
M13 1957 c. 53.
M14 1976 c. 52.
M15 1933 c. 6.

3 Special provision with respect to certain disposals by children's hearings under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Where a ground for the referral of a child's case to a children's hearing under the ^{M16}Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 is that mentioned in section 32(2)(g) of that Act (commission by the child of an offence) and that ground has either been accepted by the child and, where necessary, by his parent or been established to the satisfaction of the sheriff under section 42 of that Act, the acceptance or establishment of that ground shall be treated for the purposes of this Act (but not otherwise) as a conviction, and any disposal of the case thereafter by a children's hearing shall be treated for those purposes as a sentence; and references in this Act to a person's being charged with or prosecuted for an offence shall be construed accordingly.

Marginal Citations

- M16** 1968 c. 49.

4 Effect of rehabilitation.

- (1) Subject to sections 7 and 8 below, a person who has become a rehabilitated person for the purposes of this Act in respect of a conviction shall be treated for all purposes

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in law as a person who has not committed or been charged with or prosecuted for or convicted of or sentenced for the offence or offences which were the subject of that conviction; and, notwithstanding the provisions of any other enactment or rule of law to the contrary, but subject as aforesaid—

- (a) no evidence shall be admissible in any proceedings before a judicial authority exercising its jurisdiction or functions in Great Britain to prove that any such person has committed or been charged with or prosecuted for or convicted of or sentenced for any offence which was the subject of a spent conviction; and
 - (b) a person shall not, in any such proceedings, be asked, and, if asked, shall not be required to answer, any question relating to his past which cannot be answered without acknowledging or referring to a spent conviction or spent convictions or any circumstances ancillary thereto.
- (2) Subject to the provisions of any order made under subsection (4) below, where a question seeking information with respect to a person's previous convictions, offences, conduct or circumstances is put to him or to any other person otherwise than in proceedings before a judicial authority—
 - (a) the question shall be treated as not relating to spent convictions or to any circumstances ancillary to spent convictions, and the answer thereto may be framed accordingly; and
 - (b) the person questioned shall not be subjected to any liability or otherwise prejudiced in law by reason of any failure to acknowledge or disclose a spent conviction or any circumstances ancillary to a spent conviction in his answer to the question.
- (3) Subject to the provisions of any order made under subsection (4) below,—
 - (a) any obligation imposed on any person by any rule of law or by the provisions of any agreement or arrangement to disclose any matters to any other person shall not extend to requiring him to disclose a spent conviction or any circumstances ancillary to a spent conviction (whether the conviction is his own or another's); and
 - (b) a conviction which has become spent or any circumstances ancillary thereto, or any failure to disclose a spent conviction or any such circumstances, shall not be a proper ground for dismissing or excluding a person from any office, profession, occupation or employment, or for prejudicing him in any way in any occupation or employment.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by order—
 - (a) make such provision as seems to him appropriate for excluding or modifying the application of either or both of paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (2) above in relation to questions put in such circumstances as may be specified in the order;
 - (b) provide for such exceptions from the provisions of subsection (3) above as seem to him appropriate, in such cases or classes of case, and in relation to convictions of such a description, as may be specified in the order.
- (5) For the purposes of this section and section 7 below any of the following are circumstances ancillary to a conviction, that is to say—
 - (a) the offence or offences which were the subject of that conviction;
 - (b) the conduct constituting that offence or those offences; and
 - (c) any process or proceedings preliminary to that conviction, any sentence imposed in respect of that conviction, any proceedings (whether by way of

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appeal or otherwise) for reviewing that conviction or any such sentence, and anything done in pursuance of or undergone in compliance with any such sentence.

- (6) For the purposes of this section and section 7 below “proceedings before a judicial authority” includes, in addition to proceedings before any of the ordinary courts of law, proceedings before any tribunal, body or person having power—
- (a) by virtue of any enactment, law, custom or practice;
 - (b) under the rules governing any association, institution, profession, occupation or employment; or
 - (c) under any provision of an agreement providing for arbitration with respect to questions arising thereunder;

to determine any question affecting the rights, privileges, obligations or liabilities of any person, or to receive evidence affecting the determination of any such question.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C10** S. 4 excluded in part by [S.I. 1975/1023](#) (as amended: (E.W.) (18.12.2008) by [S.I. 2008/3259](#); (E.W.) (7.7.2009) by [S.I. 2009/1818](#); (E.W.) (31.3.2010) by [S.I. 2010/1153](#))
- C11** S. 4 excluded (1.1.2007) by [Gambling Act 2005 \(c. 19\)](#), [ss. 125, 358\(1\)](#) (with [ss. 352, 354](#)); [S.I. 2006/3272](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch. 1](#) (with [Sch. 4](#))
- C12** S. 4(1) excluded by [Financial Services Act 1986 \(c. 60, SIF 69\)](#), [s. 189\(2\)](#), and by [Banking Act 1987 \(c. 22, SIF 10\)](#), [s. 95\(2\)](#)
S. 4(1) excluded (25.10.1993) by [1993 c. 39, s. 19\(1\)](#); [S.I. 1993/2632](#), [art. 2](#).
- C13** S. 4(2) modified by [Financial Services Act 1986 \(c. 60, SIF 69\)](#), [s. 189\(3\)](#), and by [Banking Act 1987 \(c. 22, SIF 10\)](#), [s. 95\(3\)](#)
S. 4(2) amended (25.10.1993) by [1993 c. 39, s. 19\(2\)](#); [S.I. 1993/2632](#), [art. 2](#).
- C14** S. 4(3)(b) excluded by [Financial Services Act 1986 \(c. 60, SIF 69\)](#), [s. 189\(4\)](#), [Banking Act 1987 \(c. 22, SIF 10\)](#), [s. 95\(4\)](#), and excluded (S.) by [Debtors \(Scotland\) Act 1987 \(c. 18, SIF 45:2\)](#), [s. 80\(3\)](#), [Sch. 7 para. 5](#)
- C15** S. 4(4): functions transferred (28.2.2003) by [The Scotland Act 1998 \(Transfer of Functions to the Scottish Ministers etc.\) Order 2003 \(S.I. 2003/415\)](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch.](#) (with [art. 5](#))

5 Rehabilitation periods for particular sentences.

- (1) The sentences excluded from rehabilitation under this Act are—
- (a) a sentence of imprisonment for life;
 - (b) a sentence of imprisonment [^{F9}youth custody][^{F10}detention in a young offender institution] or corrective training for a term exceeding thirty months;
 - (c) a sentence of preventive detention; . . . ^{F11}
 - (d) a sentence of detention during Her Majesty’s pleasure or for life [^{F12}or under section 205(2) or (3) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975.], or for a term exceeding thirty months, passed under section 53 of the ^{M17}Children and Young Persons Act 1933 [^{F13}(young offenders convicted of grave crimes) or under section 206 of the said Act of 1975 (detention of children convicted on indictment)][^{F14}or a corresponding court-martial punishment][^{F15}and
 - (e) a sentence of custody for life];

and any other sentence is a sentence subject to rehabilitation under this Act.

[^{F16}(1A) In subsection (1)(d) above “corresponding court-martial punishment” means a punishment awarded under section 71A(3) or (4) of the ^{M18}Army Act 1955,

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section 71A(3) or (4) of the ^{M19}Air Force Act 1955 or section 43A(3) or (4) of the ^{M20}Naval Discipline Act 1957.]

(2) For the purposes of this Act—

- (a) the rehabilitation period applicable to a sentence specified in the first column of Table A below is the period specified in the second column of that Table in relation to that sentence, or, where the sentence was imposed on a person who was under [^{F17} eighteen years of age] at the date of his conviction, half that period; and
- (b) the rehabilitation period applicable to a sentence specified in the first column of Table B below is the period specified in the second column of that Table in relation to that sentence;

reckoned in either case from the date of the conviction in respect of which the sentence was imposed.

TABLE A

Rehabilitation periods subject to reduction by half for persons [^{F18}under 18]

Sentence	Rehabilitation period
A sentence of imprisonment [^{F19} detention in a young offender institution][^{F20} or youth custody] or corrective training for a term exceeding six months but not exceeding thirty months.	Ten years
A sentence of cashiering, discharge with ignominy or dismissal with disgrace from Her Majesty's service.	Ten years
A sentence of imprisonment [^{F19} detention in a young offender institution][^{F20} or youth custody] for a term not exceeding six months.	Seven years
A sentence of dismissal from Her Majesty's service.	Seven years
Any sentence of detention in respect of a conviction in service disciplinary proceedings.	Five years
A fine or any other sentence subject to rehabilitation under this Act, not being a sentence to which Table B below or any of subsections (3) to (8) below applies.	Five years

TABLE B

Rehabilitation periods for certain sentences confined to young offenders

Sentence	Rehabilitation period
A sentence of Borstal training.	Seven years

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[^{F21}A custodial order under Schedule 5A to the ^{M21}Army Act 1955 or the ^{M22}Air Force Act 1955, or under Schedule 4A to the ^{M23}Naval Discipline Act 1957, where the maximum period of detention specified in the order is more than six months.] [^{F21}Seven years]

[^{F22}A custodial order under section 71AA of the Army Act 1955 or the Air Force Act 1955, or under section 43AA of the Naval Discipline Act 1957, where the maximum period of detention specified in the order is more than six months.] [^{F22}Seven years.]

A sentence of detention for a term exceeding six months but not exceeding thirty months passed under section 53 of the said Act of 1933 or under section [^{F23}206 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975]. Five years

A sentence of detention for a term not exceeding six months passed under either of those provisions. Three years

An order for detention in a detention centre made under [^{F24}section 4 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982,] section 4 of the ^{M24}

Criminal Justice Act 1961 . . . [^{F25}

[^{F21}A custodial order under any of the Schedules to the said Acts of 1955 and 1957 mentioned above, where the maximum period of detention specified in the order is six months or less.] [^{F21}Three years]

[^{F26}A custodial order under section 71AA of the said Acts of 1955, or section 43AA or the said Act of 1957, where the maximum period of detention specified in the order is six months or less.] [^{F26}Three years.]

(3) The rehabilitation period applicable—

- (a) to an order discharging a person absolutely for an offence; and
- (b) to the discharge by a children's hearing under section 43(2) of the ^{M25}Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 of the referral of a child's case;

shall be six months from the date of conviction.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/10/1992. This version of this Act contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.
Changes to legislation: Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 13 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

(4) Where in respect of a conviction a person was conditionally discharged, bound over to keep the peace or be of good behaviour, or placed on probation, the rehabilitation period applicable to the sentence shall be one year from the date of conviction or a period beginning with that date and ending when the order for conditional discharge or probation order or (as the case may be) the recognizance or bond of caution to keep the peace or be of good behaviour ceases or ceased to have effect, whichever is the longer.

(5) Where in respect of a conviction any of the following sentences was imposed, that is to say—

(a) an order under section 57 of the ^{M26}Children and Young Persons Act 1933 or section 61 of the ^{M27}Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 committing the person convicted to the care of a fit person;

(b) a supervision order under any provision of either of those Acts or of the ^{M28}Children and Young Persons Act 1963;

[^{F27}(c) an order under section 413 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 committing a child for the purpose of his undergoing residential training:]

(d) an approved school order under section 61 of the said Act of 1937;

(e) [^{F28}a care order or] a supervision order under any provision of the ^{M29}Children and Young Persons Act 1969; or

(f) a supervision requirement under any provision of the ^{M30}Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968;

[^{F29}(g) a community supervision order under Schedule 5A to the ^{M31}Army Act 1955 or the ^{M32}Air Force Act 1955, or under Schedule 4A to the ^{M33}Naval Discipline Act 1957;

^{F30}(h)]

the rehabilitation period applicable to the sentence shall be one year from the date of conviction or a period beginning with that date and ending when the order or requirement ceases or ceased to have effect, whichever is the longer.

(6) Where in respect of a conviction any of the following orders was made, that is to say—

(a) an order under section 54 of the said Act of 1933 committing the person convicted to custody in a remand home;

(b) an approved school order under section 57 of the said Act of 1933; or

(c) an attendance centre order under section 19 of the ^{M34}Criminal Justice Act 1948;

the rehabilitation period applicable to the sentence shall be a period beginning with the date of conviction and ending one year after the date on which the order ceases or ceased to have effect.

(7) Where in respect of a conviction a hospital order under [^{F31}Part III of the Mental Health Act 1983] or under [^{F32}Part VI of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984] (with or without [^{F33}a restriction order]) was made, the rehabilitation period applicable to the sentence shall be the period of five years from the date of conviction or a period beginning with that date and ending two years after the date on which the hospital order ceases or ceased to have effect, whichever is the longer.

(8) Where in respect of a conviction an order was made imposing on the person convicted any disqualification, disability, prohibition or other penalty, the rehabilitation period applicable to the sentence shall be a period beginning with the date of conviction and ending on the date on which the disqualification, disability, prohibition or penalty (as the case may be) ceases or ceased to have effect.

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(9) For the purposes of this section—

- (a) “sentence of imprisonment” includes a sentence of detention [^{F34}under section 207 or 415 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975] and a sentence of penal servitude, and “term of imprisonment” shall be construed accordingly;
- (b) consecutive terms of imprisonment or of detention under section 53 of the said Act of 1933 or [^{F35}section 206 of the said Act of 1975], and terms which are wholly or partly concurrent (being terms of imprisonment or detention imposed in respect of offences of which a person was convicted in the same proceedings) shall be treated as a single term;
- (c) no account shall be taken of any subsequent variation, made by a court in dealing with a person in respect of a suspended sentence of imprisonment, of the term originally imposed; and
- (d) a sentence imposed by a court outside Great Britain shall be treated as a sentence of that one of the descriptions mentioned in this section which most nearly corresponds to the sentence imposed.

(10) References in this section to the period during which a probation order, or a [^{F36}care order or] supervision order under the ^{M35}Children and Young Persons Act 1969, or a supervision requirement under the ^{M36}Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, is or was in force include references to any period during which any order or requirement to which this subsection applies, being an order or requirement made or imposed directly or indirectly in substitution for the first-mentioned order or requirement, is or was in force.

This subsection applies—

- (a) to any such order or requirement as is mentioned above in this subsection;
- (b) to any order having effect under section 25(2) of the said Act of 1969 as if it were a training school order in Northern Ireland; and
- (c) to any supervision order made under section 72(2) of the said Act of 1968 and having effect as a supervision order under the ^{M37}Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1950.

[^{F37}(10A) The reference in subsection (5) above to the period during which a reception order has effect includes a reference to any subsequent period during which by virtue of the order having been made the ^{M38}Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 or the ^{M39}Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968 has effect in relation to the person in respect of whom the order was made and subsection (10) above shall accordingly have effect in relation to any such subsequent period.]

(11) The Secretary of State may by order—

- (a) substitute different periods or terms for any of the periods or terms mentioned in subsections (1) to (8) above; and
- (b) substitute a different age for the age mentioned in subsection (2)(a) above.

Textual Amendments

- F9** Words inserted by [Criminal Justice Act 1982 \(c. 48, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 77, [Sch. 14 para. 36\(a\)](#)
- F10** Words inserted (E.W.) by [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(c. 33, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 123, [Sch. 8 paras. 9, 16](#)
- F11** Word repealed by [Criminal Justice Act 1982 \(c. 48, SIF 39:1\)](#), [Sch. 16](#)
- F12** Words inserted by [Criminal Justice \(Scotland\) Act 1980 \(c. 62, SIF 39:1\)](#), [Sch. 7 para. 24\(a\)\(i\)](#)
- F13** Words substituted by [Criminal Justice \(Scotland\) Act 1980 \(c. 62, SIF 39:1\)](#), [Sch. 7 para. 24\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

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- F14** Words inserted by Armed Forces Act 1976 (c. 52), **Sch. 9 para. 20(4)**
- F15** S. 5(1)(e) inserted by Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48, SIF 39:1), **Sch. 14 para. 36(b)**
- F16** S. 5(1A) inserted by Armed Forces Act 1976 (c. 52), **Sch. 9 para. 20(5)**
- F17** Words in s. 5(2)(a) substituted (1.10.1992) by Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53, SIF 39:1), ss. 68, 101(1), Sch. 8 para. 5(a), **Sch. 12 para. 22(2)**; S.I. 1992/333, art. 2(2), **Sch. 2**.
- F18** Words in s. 5(2) in the Heading to Table A substituted (1.10.1992) by Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53, SIF 39:1), ss. 68, 101(1), Sch. 8 para. 5(b), **Sch. 12 para. 22(2)**; S.I. 1992/333, art. 2(2), **Sch. 2**.
- F19** Words inserted (E.W.) by Criminal Justice Act 1988 (c. 33, SIF 39:1), s. 123, Sch. 8 paras. 9, **16**
- F20** Words inserted by Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48, SIF 39:1), s. 77, **Sch. 14 para. 37(a)**
- F21** Entry inserted by Armed Forces Act 1976 (c. 52), **Sch. 9 para. 21(1)**
- F22** Entry made by Armed Forces Act 1981 (c. 55, SIF 7:1), **Sch. 4 para. 2(2)(a)**
- F23** Words substituted by Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (c. 62, SIF 39:1), **Sch. 7 para. 24(b)(i)**
- F24** Words inserted by Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48, SIF 39:1), **Sch. 14 para. 37(b)**
- F25** Words repealed by Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (c. 62, SIF 39:1), **Sch. 7 para. 24(b)(ii)**, Sch. 8
- F26** Entry made by Armed Forces Act 1981 (c. 55, SIF 7:1), **Sch. 4 para. 2(2)(b)**
- F27** S. 5(5)(c) substituted by Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (c. 62, SIF 39:1), **Sch. 7 para. 24(c)**
- F28** Words in s. 5(5)(e) repealed (E.W.) (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), s. 108, **Sch. 15**; S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F29** S. 5(5)(g)(h) added by Armed Forces Act 1976 (c. 52), **Sch. 9 para. 21(2)**
- F30** S. 5(5)(h) repealed (1.1.1992) by Armed Forces Act 1991 (c. 62, SIF 7:1), s. 26(2), **Sch. 3**; S.I. 1991/2719, art. 2, **Sch.**
- F31** Words substituted by Mental Health Act 1983 (c. 20, SIF 85), **Sch. 4 para. 39**
- F32** Words substituted by Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 (c. 36, SIF 85), ss. 17(2), 127(1), **Sch. 3 para. 22**
- F33** Words substituted by Mental Health (Amendment) Act 1982 (c. 51, SIF 85), **Sch. 3 para. 49**
- F34** Words substituted by Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (c. 62, SIF 39:1), **Sch. 7 para. 24(d)(i)**
- F35** Words substituted by Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (c. 62, SIF 39:1), **Sch. 7 para. 24(d)(ii)**
- F36** Words in s. 5(10) repealed (E.W.) (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), s. 108, **Sch. 15**; S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F37** S. 5(10A) inserted by Armed Forces Act 1976 (c. 52), **Sch. 9 para. 21(3)**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C16** S. 5 modified (S.) by Criminal Justice Act 1988 (c. 33, SIF 39:1), s. 124, Sch. 8 para. 16, **Sch. 9 para. 8**

Marginal Citations

- M17** 1933 c. 12.
M18 1955 c. 18.
M19 1955 c. 19.
M20 1957 c. 53.
M21 1955 c. 18.
M22 1955 c. 19.
M23 1957 c. 53.
M24 1961 c. 39.
M25 1968 c. 49.
M26 1933 c. 12.
M27 1937 c. 37.
M28 1963 c. 37.
M29 1969 c. 54.
M30 1968 c. 49.
M31 1955 c. 18.
M32 1955 c. 19.

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- M33** 1957 c. 53.
- M34** 1948 c. 58.
- M35** 1969 c. 54.
- M36** 1968 c. 49.
- M37** 1950 c. 5. (N.I.)
- M38** 1968 c. 49.
- M39** 1968 c. 34. (N.I.)

6 The rehabilitation period applicable to a conviction.

- (1) Where only one sentence is imposed in respect of a conviction (not being a sentence excluded from rehabilitation under this Act) the rehabilitation period applicable to the conviction is, subject to the following provisions of this section, the period applicable to the sentence in accordance with section 5 above.
- (2) Where more than one sentence is imposed in respect of a conviction (whether or not in the same proceedings) and none of the sentences imposed is excluded from rehabilitation under this Act, then, subject to the following provisions of this section, if the periods applicable to those sentences in accordance with section 5 above differ, the rehabilitation period applicable to the conviction shall be the longer or the longest (as the case may be) of those periods.
- (3) Without prejudice to subsection (2) above, where in respect of a conviction a person was conditionally discharged or placed on probation and after the end of the rehabilitation period applicable to the conviction in accordance with subsection (1) or (2) above he is dealt with, in consequence of a breach of conditional discharge or probation, for the offence for which the order for conditional discharge or probation order was made, then, if the rehabilitation period applicable to the conviction in accordance with subsection (2) above (taking into account any sentence imposed when he is so dealt with) ends later than the rehabilitation period previously applicable to the conviction, he shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as not having become a rehabilitated person in respect of that conviction, and the conviction shall for those purposes be treated as not having become spent, in relation to any period falling before the end of the new rehabilitation period.
- (4) Subject to subsection (5) below, where during the rehabilitation period applicable to a conviction—
 - (a) the person convicted is convicted of a further offence; and
 - (b) no sentence excluded from rehabilitation under this Act is imposed on him in respect of the later conviction;
 if the rehabilitation period applicable in accordance with this section to either of the convictions would end earlier than the period so applicable in relation to the other, the rehabilitation period which would (apart from this subsection) end the earlier shall be extended so as to end at the same time as the other rehabilitation period.
- (5) Where the rehabilitation period applicable to a conviction is the rehabilitation period applicable in accordance with section 5(8) above to an order imposing on a person any disqualification, disability, prohibition or other penalty, the rehabilitation period applicable to another conviction shall not by virtue of subsection (4) above be extended by reference to that period; but if any other sentence is imposed in respect of the first-mentioned conviction for which a rehabilitation period is prescribed by any other provision of section 5 above, the rehabilitation period applicable to another conviction shall, where appropriate, be extended under subsection (4) above by reference to the

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rehabilitation period applicable in accordance with that section to that sentence or, where more than one such sentence is imposed, by reference to the longer or longest of the periods so applicable to those sentences, as if the period in question were the rehabilitation period applicable to the first-mentioned conviction.

- (6) Subject to subsection (7) below, for the purposes of subsection (4)(a) above there shall be disregarded—
- (a) any conviction in England and Wales of [^{F38}a summary offence or of a scheduled offence (within the meaning of [^{F39}section 22 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980]) tried summarily in pursuance of subsection (2) of that section (summary trial where value involved is small);]
 - (b) any conviction in Scotland of an offence which is not excluded from the jurisdiction of inferior courts of summary jurisdiction by virtue of section 4 of the ^{M40}Summary Jurisdiction (Scotland) Act 1954 (certain crimes not to be tried in inferior courts of summary jurisdiction); and
 - (c) any conviction by or before a court outside Great Britain of an offence in respect of conduct which, if it had taken place in any part of Great Britain, would not have constituted an offence under the law in force in that part of Great Britain.
- (7) Notwithstanding subsection (6) above, a conviction in service disciplinary proceedings shall not be disregarded for the purposes of subsection (4)(a) above.

Textual Amendments

F38 Words substituted by [Criminal Law Act 1977 \(c. 45\), s. 65\(7\), Sch. 12](#)

F39 Words substituted by [Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 \(c. 43, SIF 82\), Sch. 7 para. 134](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C17 Words in [s. 6\(7\)](#) amended (1.10.1996) by [1996 c. 46, s. 13\(3\)\(c\); S.I. 1996/2474, art. 2](#)

Marginal Citations

M40 [1954 c. 48.](#)

7 Limitations on rehabilitation under this Act, etc. **E+W**

- (1) Nothing in section 4(1) above shall affect—
- (a) any right of Her Majesty, by virtue of Her Royal prerogative or otherwise, to grant a free pardon, to quash any conviction or sentence, or to commute any sentence;
 - (b) the enforcement by any process or proceedings of any fine or other sum adjudged to be paid by or imposed on a spent conviction;
 - (c) the issue of any process for the purpose of proceedings in respect of any breach of a condition or requirement applicable to a sentence imposed in respect of a spent conviction; or
 - (d) the operation of any enactment by virtue of which, in consequence of any conviction, a person is subject, otherwise than by way of sentence, to any disqualification, disability, prohibition or other penalty the period of which extends beyond the rehabilitation period applicable in accordance with section 6 above to the conviction.

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- (2) Nothing in section 4(1) above shall affect the determination of any issue, or prevent the admission or requirement of any evidence, relating to a person's previous convictions or to circumstances ancillary thereto—
- (a) in any criminal proceedings before a court in Great Britain (including any appeal or reference in a criminal matter);
 - (b) in any service disciplinary proceedings or in any proceedings on appeal from any service disciplinary proceedings;
 - [^{F40}(c) in any proceedings relating to adoption, the marriage of any minor, the exercise of the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court with respect to minors or the provision by any person of accommodation, care or schooling for minors;
 - (cc) in any proceedings brought under the Children Act 1989;]
 - [^{F41}(d) in any proceedings relating to the variation or discharge of a supervision order under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, or on appeal from any such proceedings]
 - (e) in any proceedings before a children's hearing under the ^{M41}Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 or on appeal from any such hearing; or
 - (f) in any proceedings in which he is a party or a witness, provided that, on the occasion when the issue or the admission or requirement of the evidence falls to be determined, he consents to the determination of the issue or, as the case may be, the admission or requirement of the evidence notwithstanding the provisions of section 4(1).
 - (g) ^{F42}
- In the application of this subsection to Scotland, "minor" means a child under the age of eighteen, including a pupil child.
- (3) If at any stage in any proceedings before a judicial authority in Great Britain (not being proceedings to which, by virtue of any of paragraphs (a) to (e) of subsection (2) above or of any order for the time being in force under subsection (4) below, section 4(1) above has no application, or proceedings to which section 8 below applies) the authority is satisfied, in the light of any considerations which appear to it to be relevant (including any evidence which has been or may thereafter be put before it), that justice cannot be done in the case except by admitting or requiring evidence relating to a person's spent convictions or to circumstances ancillary thereto, that authority may admit or, as the case may be, require the evidence in question notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (1) of section 4 above, and may determine any issue to which the evidence relates in disregard, so far as necessary, of those provisions.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by order exclude the application of section 4(1) above in relation to any proceedings specified in the order (other than proceedings to which section 8 below applies) to such extent and for such purposes as may be so specified.
- (5) No order made by a court with respect to any person otherwise than on a conviction shall be included in any list or statement of that person's previous convictions given or made to any court which is considering how to deal with him in respect of any offence.

Extent Information

E2 This version of this provision extends to England and Wales only; a separate version has been created for Scotland only.

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Textual Amendments

- F40** S. 7(2)(c)(cc) substituted (E.W.) (14.10.1991) for s. 7(2)(c) by Children Act 1991 (c. 41, SIF 20), s. 108, **Sch. 13 para. 35(2)**; S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F41** S. 7(2)(d) substituted (E.W.) (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), s. 108, **Sch. 13 para. 35(3)**; S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F42** S. 7(2)(g) added by Banking Act 1979 (c. 37, SIF 10), **s. 43(4)** and repealed by Banking Act 1987 (c. 22, SIF 10), s. 108(2), **Sch. 7 Pt. I**

Marginal Citations

- M41** 1968 c. 49.

7 Limitations on rehabilitation under this Act, etc. **S**

(1) Nothing in section 4(1) above shall affect—

- (a) any right of Her Majesty, by virtue of Her Royal prerogative or otherwise, to grant a free pardon, to quash any conviction or sentence, or to commute any sentence;
- (b) the enforcement by any process or proceedings of any fine or other sum adjudged to be paid by or imposed on a spent conviction;
- (c) the issue of any process for the purpose of proceedings in respect of any breach of a condition or requirement applicable to a sentence imposed in respect of a spent conviction; or
- (d) the operation of any enactment by virtue of which, in consequence of any conviction, a person is subject, otherwise than by way of sentence, to any disqualification, disability, prohibition or other penalty the period of which extends beyond the rehabilitation period applicable in accordance with section 6 above to the conviction.

(2) Nothing in section 4(1) above shall affect the determination of any issue, or prevent the admission or requirement of any evidence, relating to a person's previous convictions or to circumstances ancillary thereto—

- (a) in any criminal proceedings before a court in Great Britain (including any appeal or reference in a criminal matter);
- (b) in any service disciplinary proceedings or in any proceedings on appeal from any service disciplinary proceedings;
- (c) in any proceedings relating to adoption or to the guardianship, wardship, marriage, custody, care or control of, or access to, any minor, or to the provision by any person of accommodation, care or schooling for minors;
- (d) in any care proceedings under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 or on appeal from any such proceedings, or in any proceedings relating to the variation or discharge of a care order or supervision order under that Act;
- (e) in any proceedings before a children's hearing under the ^{M52}Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 or on appeal from any such hearing; or
- (f) in any proceedings in which he is a party or a witness, provided that, on the occasion when the issue or the admission or requirement of the evidence falls to be determined, he consents to the determination of the issue or, as the case may be, the admission or requirement of the evidence notwithstanding the provisions of section 4(1).

- (g)

F53

Status: Point in time view as at 01/10/1992. This version of this Act contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.

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In the application of this subsection to Scotland, “minor” means a child under the age of eighteen,^{F54} . . .

- (3) If at any stage in any proceedings before a judicial authority in Great Britain (not being proceedings to which, by virtue of any of paragraphs (a) to (e) of subsection (2) above or of any order for the time being in force under subsection (4) below, section 4(1) above has no application, or proceedings to which section 8 below applies) the authority is satisfied, in the light of any considerations which appear to it to be relevant (including any evidence which has been or may thereafter be put before it), that justice cannot be done in the case except by admitting or requiring evidence relating to a person’s spent convictions or to circumstances ancillary thereto, that authority may admit or, as the case may be, require the evidence in question notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (1) of section 4 above, and may determine any issue to which the evidence relates in disregard, so far as necessary, of those provisions.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by order exclude the application of section 4(1) above in relation to any proceedings specified in the order (other than proceedings to which section 8 below applies) to such extent and for such purposes as may be so specified.
- (5) No order made by a court with respect to any person otherwise than on a conviction shall be included in any list or statement of that person’s previous convictions given or made to any court which is considering how to deal with him in respect of any offence.

Extent Information

- E4** This version of this provision extends to Scotland only; a separate version has been created for England and Wales only.

Textual Amendments

- F53** S. 7(2)(g) added by [Banking Act 1979 \(c. 37, SIF 10\)](#), s. 43(4) and repealed by [Banking Act 1987 \(c. 22, SIF 10\)](#), s. 108(2), [Sch. 7 Pt. I](#)
- F54** Words in s. 7(2) repealed (S.) (25.9.1991) by [Age of Legal Capacity \(Scotland\) Act 1991 \(c. 50, SIF 49;8\)](#), ss. 10(2), 11(2), [Sch. 2](#)

Marginal Citations

- M52** 1968 c. 49.

8 Defamation actions.

- (1) This section applies to any action for libel or slander begun after the commencement of this Act by a rehabilitated person and founded upon the publication of any matter imputing that the plaintiff has committed or been charged with or prosecuted for or convicted of or sentenced for an offence which was the subject of a spent conviction.
- (2) Nothing in section 4(1) above shall affect an action to which this section applies where the publication complained of took place before the conviction in question became spent, and the following provisions of this section shall not apply in any such case.
- (3) Subject to subsections (5) and (6) below, nothing in section 4(1) above shall prevent the defendant in an action to which this section applies from relying on any defence of justification or fair comment or of absolute or qualified privilege which is available to him, or restrict the matters he may establish in support of any such defence.

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- (4) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (3) above, where in any such action malice is alleged against a defendant who is relying on a defence of qualified privilege, nothing in section 4(1) above shall restrict the matters he may establish in rebuttal of the allegation.
- (5) A defendant in any such action shall not by virtue of subsection (3) above be entitled to rely upon the defence of justification if the publication is proved to have been made with malice.
- (6) Subject to subsection (7) below a defendant in any such action shall not, by virtue of subsection (3) above, be entitled to rely on any matter or adduce or require any evidence for the purpose of establishing (whether under section 3 of the ^{M42}Law of Libel Amendment Act 1888 or otherwise) the defence that the matter published constituted a fair and accurate report of judicial proceedings if it is proved that the publication contained a reference to evidence which was ruled to be inadmissible in the proceedings by virtue of section 4(1) above.
- (7) Subsection (3) above shall apply without the qualifications imposed by subsection (6) above in relation to—
 - (a) any report of judicial proceedings contained in any bona fide series of law reports which does not form part of any other publication and consists solely of reports of proceedings in courts of law, and
 - (b) any report or account of judicial proceedings published for bona fide educational, scientific or professional purposes, or given in the course of any lecture, class or discussion given or held for any of those purposes.
- (8) In the application of this section to Scotland—
 - (a) for the reference in subsection (1) to libel and slander there shall be substituted a reference to defamation;
 - (b) for references to the plaintiff and the defendant there shall be substituted respectively references to the pursuer and the defender; and
 - (c) for references to the defence of justification there shall be substituted references to the defence of veritas.

Marginal Citations

M42 1888 c. 64.

VALID FROM 19/12/2008

[^{F43}8A Protection afforded to spent cautions

- (1) Schedule 2 to this Act (protection for spent cautions) shall have effect.
- (2) In this Act “caution” means—
 - (a) a conditional caution, that is to say, a caution given under section 22 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) (conditional cautions for adults) or under section 66A of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c. 37) (conditional cautions for children and young persons);
 - (b) any other caution given to a person in England and Wales in respect of an offence which, at the time the caution is given, that person has admitted;

Status: Point in time view as at 01/10/1992. This version of this Act contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.

Changes to legislation: Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 13 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (c) a reprimand or warning given under section 65 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (reprimands and warnings for persons aged under 18);
- (d) anything corresponding to a caution, reprimand or warning falling within paragraphs (a) to (c) (however described) which is given to a person in respect of an offence under the law of a country outside England and Wales.]

Textual Amendments

F43 S. 8A inserted (E.W.) (19.12.2008) by [Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 \(c. 4\)](#), ss. 49, 153(7), [Sch. 10 para. 3](#) (with [Sch. 27 para. 19](#)); S.I. 2008/3260, [art. 2\(1\)\(d\)](#)

[^{F44}8B Protection afforded to spent alternatives to prosecution: Scotland

- (1) For the purposes of this Act, a person has been given an alternative to prosecution in respect of an offence if the person (whether before or after the commencement of this section)—
- (a) has been given a warning in respect of the offence by—
 - (i) a constable in Scotland, or
 - (ii) a procurator fiscal,
 - (b) has accepted, or is deemed to have accepted—
 - (i) a conditional offer issued in respect of the offence under section 302 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 (c.46), or
 - (ii) a compensation offer issued in respect of the offence under section 302A of that Act,
 - (c) has had a work order made against the person in respect of the offence under section 303ZA of that Act,
 - (d) has been given a fixed penalty notice in respect of the offence under section 129 of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004 (asp 8),
 - (e) has accepted an offer made by a procurator fiscal in respect of the offence to undertake an activity or treatment or to receive services or do any other thing as an alternative to prosecution, or
 - (f) in respect of an offence under the law of a country or territory outside Scotland, has been given, or has accepted or is deemed to have accepted, anything corresponding to a warning, offer, order or notice falling within paragraphs (a) to (e) under the law of that country or territory.
- (2) In this Act, references to an “alternative to prosecution” are to be read in accordance with subsection (1).
- (3) Schedule 3 to this Act (protection for spent alternatives to prosecution: Scotland) has effect.]

Textual Amendments

F44 S. 8B inserted (S.) (1.11.2011) by [Criminal Justice and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2010 \(asp 13\)](#), ss. [109\(2\)](#), [206\(1\)](#); S.S.I. 2011/354, [art. 2\(1\)](#), [Sch.](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/10/1992. This version of this Act contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.
Changes to legislation: Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 13 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

9 Unauthorized disclosure of spent convictions.

(1) In this section—

“official record” means a record kept for the purposes of its functions by any court, police force, Government department, local or other public authority in Great Britain, or a record kept, in Great Britain or elsewhere, for the purposes of any of Her Majesty’s forces, being in either case a record containing information about persons convicted of offences; and

“specified information” means information imputing that a named or otherwise identifiable rehabilitated living person has committed or been charged with or prosecuted for or convicted of or sentenced for any offence which is the subject of a spent conviction.

- (2) Subject to the provisions of any order made under subsection (5) below, any person who, in the course of his official duties, has or at any time has had custody of or access to any official record or the information contained therein, shall be guilty of an offence if, knowing or having reasonable cause to suspect that any specified information he has obtained in the course of those duties is specified information, he discloses it, otherwise than in the course of those duties, to another person.
- (3) In any proceedings for an offence under subsection (2) above it shall be a defence for the defendant (or, in Scotland, the accused person) to show that the disclosure was made—
- (a) to the rehabilitated person or to another person at the express request of the rehabilitated person; or
 - (b) to a person whom he reasonably believed to be the rehabilitated person or to another person at the express request of a person whom he reasonably believed to be the rehabilitated person.
- (4) Any person who obtains any specified information from any official record by means of any fraud, dishonesty or bribe shall be guilty of an offence.
- (5) The Secretary of State may by order make such provision as appears to him to be appropriate for excepting the disclosure of specified information derived from an official record from the provisions of subsection (2) above in such cases or classes of case as may be specified in the order.
- (6) Any person guilty of an offence under subsection (2) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding [^{F45}level 4 on the standard scale].
- (7) Any person guilty of an offence under subsection (4) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding [^{F46}level 5 on the standard scale] or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both.
- (8) Proceedings for an offence under subsection (2) above shall not, in England and Wales, be instituted except by or on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Textual Amendments

- F45** Words substituted by virtue of (E.W.) [Criminal Justice Act 1982 \(c. 48, SIF 39:1\)](#), [ss. 38, 46](#) and (S.) [Criminal Procedure \(Scotland\) Act 1975 \(c. 21, SIF 39:1\)](#), [ss. 289F, 289G](#)
- F46** Words substituted by virtue of (E.W.) [Criminal Justice Act 1982 \(c. 48, SIF 39:1\)](#), [ss. 38, 46](#) and (S.) [Criminal Procedure \(Scotland\) Act 1975 \(c. 21, SIF 39:1\)](#), [ss. 289F, 289G](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/10/1992. This version of this Act contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.

Changes to legislation: Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 13 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C18 S. 9(8) explained by [Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 \(c. 59\), s. 12](#)

VALID FROM 19/12/2008

[^{F47}9A] Unauthorised disclosure of spent cautions

- (1) In this section—
 - (a) “official record” means a record which—
 - (i) contains information about persons given a caution for any offence or offences; and
 - (ii) is kept for the purposes of its functions by any court, police force, Government department or other public authority in England and Wales;
 - (b) “caution information” means information imputing that a named or otherwise identifiable living person (“the named person”) has committed, been charged with or prosecuted or cautioned for any offence which is the subject of a spent caution; and
 - (c) “relevant person” means any person who, in the course of his official duties (anywhere in the United Kingdom), has or at any time has had custody of or access to any official record or the information contained in it.
- (2) Subject to the terms of any order made under subsection (5), a relevant person shall be guilty of an offence if, knowing or having reasonable cause to suspect that any caution information he has obtained in the course of his official duties is caution information, he discloses it, otherwise than in the course of those duties, to another person.
- (3) In any proceedings for an offence under subsection (2) it shall be a defence for the defendant to show that the disclosure was made—
 - (a) to the named person or to another person at the express request of the named person;
 - (b) to a person whom he reasonably believed to be the named person or to another person at the express request of a person whom he reasonably believed to be the named person.
- (4) Any person who obtains any caution information from any official record by means of any fraud, dishonesty or bribe shall be guilty of an offence.
- (5) The Secretary of State may by order make such provision as appears to him to be appropriate for excepting the disclosure of caution information derived from an official record from the provisions of subsection (2) in such cases or classes of case as may be specified in the order.
- (6) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (2) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.
- (7) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (4) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 51 weeks, or to both.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/10/1992. This version of this Act contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.
Changes to legislation: Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 13 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

(8) Proceedings for an offence under subsection (2) shall not be instituted except by or on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions.]

Textual Amendments

F47 S. 9A inserted (E.W.) (19.12.2008) by Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (c. 4), ss. 49, 153(7), **Sch. 10 para. 4** (with Sch. 27 para. 19); S.I. 2008/3260, **art. 2(1)(d)**

VALID FROM 01/11/2011

[^{F48}9B Unauthorised disclosure of spent alternatives to prosecution: Scotland

- (1) In this section—
- (a) “official record” means a record that—
 - (i) contains information about persons given an alternative to prosecution in respect of an offence, and
 - (ii) is kept for the purposes of its functions by a court, police force, Government department, part of the Scottish Administration or other local or public authority in Scotland,
 - (b) “relevant information” means information imputing that a named or otherwise identifiable living person has committed, been charged with, prosecuted for or given an alternative to prosecution in respect of an offence which is the subject of an alternative to prosecution which has become spent,
 - (c) “subject of the information”, in relation to relevant information, means the named or otherwise identifiable living person to whom the information relates.
- (2) Subsection (3) applies to a person who, in the course of the person's official duties (anywhere in the United Kingdom), has or has had custody of or access to an official record or the information contained in an official record.
- (3) The person commits an offence if the person—
- (a) obtains relevant information in the course of the person's official duties,
 - (b) knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that the information is relevant information, and
 - (c) discloses the information to another person otherwise than in the course of the person's official duties.
- (4) Subsection (3) is subject to the terms of an order under subsection (6).
- (5) In proceedings for an offence under subsection (3), it is a defence for the accused to show that the disclosure was made—
- (a) to the subject of the information or to a person whom the accused reasonably believed to be the subject of the information, or
 - (b) to another person at the express request of the subject of the information or of a person whom the accused reasonably believed to be the subject of the information.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/10/1992. This version of this Act contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.

Changes to legislation: Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 13 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (6) The Scottish Ministers may by order provide for the disclosure of relevant information derived from an official record to be excepted from the provisions of subsection (3) in cases or classes of cases specified in the order.
- (7) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (3) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.
- (8) A person commits an offence if the person obtains relevant information from an official record by means of fraud, dishonesty or bribery.
- (9) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (8) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months, or to both.]

Textual Amendments

F48 S. 9B inserted (S.) (1.11.2011) by [Criminal Justice and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2010 \(asp 13\)](#), ss. [109\(3\)](#), 206(1); S.S.I. 2011/354, [art. 2\(1\)](#), Sch.

10 Orders.

- (1) Any power of the Secretary of State to make an order under any provision of this Act shall be exercisable by statutory instrument, and an order made under any provision of this Act except section 11 below may be varied or revoked by a subsequent order made under that provision.
- (2) No order shall be made by the Secretary of State under any provision of this Act other than section 11 below unless a draft of it has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, each House of Parliament.

11 Citation, commencement and extent.

- (1) This Act may be cited as the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- (2) This Act shall come into force on 1st July 1975 or such earlier day as the Secretary of State may by order appoint.
- (3) This Act shall not apply to Northern Ireland.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C19 Power conferred by s. 11(2) to bring Act into operation before 1.7.1975 was not exercised

Status: Point in time view as at 01/10/1992. This version of this Act contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.

Changes to legislation: Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 13 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

VALID FROM 01/10/1996

SCHEDULE

SECTION 6(4): SERVICE DISCIPLINARY CONVICTIONS

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VALID FROM 19/12/2008

[^{F51}SCHEDULE 2

PROTECTION FOR SPENT CAUTIONS

Textual Amendments

F51 Sch. 2 inserted (E.W.) (19.12.2008) by [Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 \(c. 4\)](#), ss. 49, 153(7), [Sch. 10 para. 6](#) (with [Sch. 27 para. 19](#)); S.I. 2008/3260, [art. 2\(1\)\(d\)](#)

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VALID FROM 01/11/2011

[^{F52}SCHEDULE 3

(introduced by section 8B(3))

PROTECTION FOR SPENT ALTERNATIVES TO PROSECUTION: SCOTLAND

Textual Amendments

F52 Sch. 3 inserted (S.) (1.11.2011) by [Criminal Justice and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2010 \(asp 13\)](#), ss. 109(4), 206(1); S.S.I. 2011/354, [art. 2\(1\)](#), Sch.

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Status:

Point in time view as at 01/10/1992. This version of this Act contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.

Changes to legislation:

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 13 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations.