



Serious Crime Act 2015

2015 CHAPTER 9

PART 5

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND OTHERS

Domestic abuse

76 Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship

- (1) A person (A) commits an offence if—
 - (a) A repeatedly or continuously engages in behaviour towards another person (B) that is controlling or coercive,
 - (b) at the time of the behaviour, A and B are personally connected,
 - (c) the behaviour has a serious effect on B, and
 - (d) A knows or ought to know that the behaviour will have a serious effect on B.
- (2) A and B are “personally connected” if—
 - (a) A is in an intimate personal relationship with B, or
 - (b) A and B live together and—
 - (i) they are members of the same family, or
 - (ii) they have previously been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
- (3) But A does not commit an offence under this section if at the time of the behaviour in question—
 - (a) A has responsibility for B, for the purposes of Part 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (see section 17 of that Act), and
 - (b) B is under 16.
- (4) A’s behaviour has a “serious effect” on B if—
 - (a) it causes B to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against B, or

Status: This is the original version (as it was originally enacted).

- (b) it causes B serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on B's usual day-to-day activities.
- (5) For the purposes of subsection (1)(d) A “ought to know” that which a reasonable person in possession of the same information would know.
- (6) For the purposes of subsection (2)(b)(i) A and B are members of the same family if—
- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
 - (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
 - (c) they are relatives;
 - (d) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
 - (e) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
 - (f) they are both parents of the same child;
 - (g) they have, or have had, parental responsibility for the same child.
- (7) In subsection (6)—
- “civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
 - “child” means a person under the age of 18 years;
 - “parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989;
 - “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.
- (8) In proceedings for an offence under this section it is a defence for A to show that—
- (a) in engaging in the behaviour in question, A believed that he or she was acting in B's best interests, and
 - (b) the behaviour was in all the circumstances reasonable.
- (9) A is to be taken to have shown the facts mentioned in subsection (8) if—
- (a) sufficient evidence of the facts is adduced to raise an issue with respect to them, and
 - (b) the contrary is not proved beyond reasonable doubt.
- (10) The defence in subsection (8) is not available to A in relation to behaviour that causes B to fear that violence will be used against B.
- (11) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—
- (a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years, or a fine, or both;
 - (b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or a fine, or both.

77 **Guidance about investigation of offences under section 76**

- (1) The Secretary of State may issue guidance about the investigation of offences under section 76 to whatever persons the Secretary of State considers appropriate.
- (2) The Secretary of State may revise any guidance issued under this section.
- (3) The Secretary of State must arrange for any guidance issued or revised under this section to be published.