



# Public Order Act 1986

## 1986 CHAPTER 64

### PART I

#### NEW OFFENCES

**[<sup>F1</sup>4A Intentional harassment, alarm or distress.**

- (1) A person is guilty of an offence if, with intent to cause a person harassment, alarm or distress, he—
  - (a) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, or
  - (b) displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting,thereby causing that or another person harassment, alarm or distress.
- (2) An offence under this section may be committed in a public or a private place, except that no offence is committed where the words or behaviour are used, or the writing, sign or other visible representation is displayed, by a person inside a dwelling and the person who is harassed, alarmed or distressed is also inside that or another dwelling.
- (3) It is a defence for the accused to prove—
  - (a) that he was inside a dwelling and had no reason to believe that the words or behaviour used, or the writing, sign or other visible representation displayed, would be heard or seen by a person outside that or any other dwelling, or
  - (b) that his conduct was reasonable.
- (4) <sup>F2</sup> .....
- (5) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or both.]

---

*Changes to legislation: Public Order Act 1986, Section 4A is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 11 April 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) View outstanding changes*

---

#### Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 4A inserted (3.2.1995) by 1994 c. 33, s. 154; S.I. 1995/127, art. 2, **Sch. 1**
- F2** S. 4A(4) repealed (1.1.2006) by Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (c. 15), ss. 111, 174(2), 178(8), Sch. 7 para. 26(4), **Sch 17 Pt. 2**; S.I. 2005/3495, art. 2(m)(u)(xxvi)

**Changes to legislation:**

Public Order Act 1986, Section 4A is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 11 April 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.

[View outstanding changes](#)

**Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:**

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 4B inserted by [2023 c. 47 s. 1](#)