



Communications Act 2003

2003 CHAPTER 21

PART 2

NETWORKS, SERVICES AND THE RADIO SPECTRUM

CHAPTER 1

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS AND SERVICES

Offences relating to networks and services

127 Improper use of public electronic communications network

- (1) A person is guilty of an offence if he—
 - (a) sends by means of a public electronic communications network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character; or
 - (b) causes any such message or matter to be so sent.
- (2) A person is guilty of an offence if, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, he—
 - (a) sends by means of a public electronic communications network, a message that he knows to be false,
 - (b) causes such a message to be sent; or
 - (c) persistently makes use of a public electronic communications network.
- (3) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable, on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or to both.
- (4) Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply to anything done in the course of providing a programme service (within the meaning of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (c. 42)).

Changes to legislation: There are outstanding changes not yet made by the legislation.gov.uk editorial team to Communications Act 2003. Any changes that have already been made by the team appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- [^{F1}(5) An information or complaint relating to an offence under this section may be tried by a magistrates' court in England and Wales or Northern Ireland if it is laid or made—
- (a) before the end of the period of 3 years beginning with the day on which the offence was committed, and
 - (b) before the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day on which evidence comes to the knowledge of the prosecutor which the prosecutor considers sufficient to justify proceedings.
- (6) Summary proceedings for an offence under this section may be commenced in Scotland—
- (a) before the end of the period of 3 years beginning with the day on which the offence was committed, and
 - (b) before the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day on which evidence comes to the knowledge of the prosecutor which the prosecutor considers sufficient to justify proceedings,
- and section 136(3) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 (date when proceedings deemed to be commenced) applies for the purposes of this subsection as it applies for the purposes of that section.
- (7) A certificate of a prosecutor as to the date on which evidence described in subsection (5)(b) or (6)(b) came to his or her knowledge is conclusive evidence of that fact.]

Annotations:

Amendments (Textual)

- F1** S. 127(5)-(7) inserted (13.4.2015) by [Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 \(c. 2\)](#), **ss. 51(1)**, 95(1) (with s. 51(2)); [S.I. 2015/778](#), art. 3, Sch. 1 para. 42

Commencement Information

- I1** S. 127 in force at 25.7.2003 for specified purposes by [S.I. 2003/1900](#), arts. 1(2), 2(1), **Sch. 1** (with art. 3) (as amended by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), art. 1(3))
- I2** S. 127 in force at 29.12.2003 in so far as not already in force by [S.I. 2003/3142](#), **art. 3(2)** (with art. 11)

Changes to legislation:

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- specified provision(s) amendment to earlier commencing SI 2003/1900, art. 3(2) by [S.I. 2003/3142 art. 1\(3\)](#)
- specified provision(s) amendment to earlier commencing SI 2003/3142 by [S.I. 2004/1492 art. 2](#)
- specified provision(s) amendment to earlier commencing SI 2003/3142 by [S.I. 2004/697 art. 2](#)
- specified provision(s) amendment to earlier commencing SI 2003/3142 art. 4 Sch. 2 by [S.I. 2004/545 art. 2](#)

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

- Act amendment to earlier affecting provision SI 2004/1944 art. 4 Sch. by [S.I. 2010/118 art. 1 2-5](#)
- Act applied by [S.I. 1991/1220 \(N.I. 11\)](#), art. 104(5) (as substituted) by [S.I. 2017/1285 Sch. 1 para. 28\(2\)\(c\)](#) (This amendment comes into force on the day that Digital Economy Act 2017 (c. 30), s. 4, Schs. 1, 3 come fully into force. Those provisions are commenced on 28.12.2017 by [S.I. 2017/1286](#), reg. 2)
- Act power to extend conferred by [2017 c. 30 s. 119\(7\)s. 119\(8\)\(d\)](#)

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

- s. 2A-2C and cross-heading inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 98\(1\)](#)
- s. 24A 24B inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 98\(2\)](#)
- s. 28A inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 101\(2\)](#)
- s. 38(11A) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 101\(3\)](#)
- s. 51(2)(i) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 2\(3\)](#)
- s. 51(2)(da) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 3](#)
- s. 58(2A) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 84](#)
- s. 65(2A)-(2C) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 1\(4\)](#)
- s. 66(9A) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 1\(5\)](#)
- s. 72A 72B inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 1\(7\)](#)
- s. 124O and cross-heading inserted by [2010 c. 24 s. 19](#)
- s. 124P 124Q inserted by [2010 c. 24 s. 20\(1\)](#)
- s. 124Q(7)(a) words substituted by [2013 c. 22 Sch. 9 para. 52](#)
- s. 124R inserted by [2010 c. 24 s. 21](#)
- s. 124S 124T and cross-heading inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 102](#)
- s. 134D and cross-heading inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 83\(2\)](#)
- s. 134AA 134AB inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 82\(2\)](#)
- s. 135(3)(ica) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 82\(4\)](#)
- s. 137A 137B inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 86\(2\)](#)
- s. 192(1)(d) (ia) inserted by [2010 c. 24 s. 20\(2\)](#)
- s. 194A inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 87\(4\)](#)
- s. 198(2A) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 88\(4\)](#)
- s. 198ZA inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 88\(6\)](#)
- s. 258A inserted by [2017 c. 12 s. 1](#)
- s. 289A and cross-heading inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 90](#)
- s. 311A inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 95\(1\)](#)
- s. 365(1A) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 89\(3\)](#)
- s. 365(5A)(5B) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 89\(6\)](#)
- s. 365A inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 89\(7\)](#)
- s. 368E(5)(d)(e) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 94\(3\)](#)

- s. 368BC 368BD and cross-heading inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 93\(2\)](#)
- s. 368CA inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 93\(4\)](#)
- s. 393(6)(aza) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 98\(4\)](#)
- s. 393(6)(ba) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 83\(4\)](#)
- s. 394(11) inserted by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 46\(3\)](#)
- s. 400(1)(da) inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 8\(4\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 402(2)(aa) inserted by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 47\(2\)](#)
- s. 402(2A) inserted by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 47\(3\)](#)
- s. 402(4) inserted by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 47\(4\)](#)
- s. 1401(1)(a) words substituted by [2017 c. 30 s. 86\(4\)](#)
- s. 1401(7) words substituted by [2017 c. 30 s. 86\(4\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1958 c. 24, s. 17 (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 6](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1958 c. 69 s. 45(2) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 5\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1962 c. 58, s. 40(2) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 7](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1964 c. 40, s. 53 (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 8](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1980 c. 66, s. 177(12) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 11](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1980 c. 66, s. 334(8) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 12\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A para. 103(2) applied by 1984 c. 54, s. 132(4) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 16\(3\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1984 c. 54, s. 50(3) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 14\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1984 c. 54, s. 75(9) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 15\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 6 applied by 1985 c. 68, s. 298(2) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 19](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1986 c. 31, s. 62(1) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 25\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1989 c. 22, Sch. 4 para. 4 (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 27](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1989 c. 29, Sch. 16 para. 1(6) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 28](#)
- Sch. 3A para. 103(2) applied by 1990 c. 8, s. 256(5) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 29\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1991 c. 56, Sch. 13 para. 4 (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 30\(a\)\(b\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1991 c. 57, Sch. 22 para. 5 (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 31\(a\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1993 c. 42, Sch. 2 para. 16 (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 33](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by 1995 c. 45, Sch. 4 para. 2(7) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 37](#)
- Sch. 3A para. 103(2) applied by 1997 c. 8, s. 212(7) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 41\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A para. 103(2) applied by 2003 asp 2, Sch. 1 para. 12 (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 49\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 9 applied by 2010 asp 5, s. 36(1) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 56](#)
- Sch. 3A applied by S.I. 1991/1220 (N.I. 11), art. 104(5) (as substituted) by [S.I. 2017/1285 Sch. 1 para. 28\(2\)\(c\)](#) (This amendment comes into force on the day that Digital Economy Act 2017 (c. 30), s. 4, Schs. 1, 3 come fully into force. Those provisions are commenced on 28.12.2017 by S.I. 2017/1286, reg. 2)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by S.I. 1992/231 N.I. 1), Sch. 4 para. 3(2) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 32](#)

- Sch. 3A para. 103(2) applied by S.I. 1993/3160 (N.I. 15), Sch. 9 para. 2(2) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 34\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by S.I. 1994/426 (N.I. 1), art. 12(1) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 35\(2\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 10 applied by S.I. 1996/275 (N.I. 2), Sch. 3 para. 3(2) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 39\(3\)](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 9 excluded by 1985 c. 48 s. 8A (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 22](#)
- Sch. 3A Pt. 6 excluded by 1996 c. 61, Sch. 15 Pt. 4 para. 2(1) (as amended) by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 3 para. 38\(3\)](#)
- Sch. 3A inserted by [2017 c. 30 Sch. 1](#)
- Sch. 8 para. 43(c) and word inserted by [2017 c. 30 s. 8\(5\)\(c\)](#)
- Sch. 17 para. 1(2)(c) inserted by [S.I. 2017/1285 Sch. 1 para. 8\(2\)\(b\)\(ii\)](#) (This amendment comes into force on the day that Digital Economy Act 2017 (c. 30), s. 4, Schs. 1, 3 come fully into force. Those provisions are commenced on 28.12.2017 by S.I. 2017/1286, reg. 2)