



2022 CHAPTER 19

PART 1

Sexual offences

CHAPTER 2

Anonymity and privacy

Anonymity of suspects

Restriction on reports as to suspects of sexual offences

12.—(1) Subsection (2) applies where—

- (a) an allegation that a particular person has committed a sexual offence has been made to the police, or
- (b) the police have taken any step to investigate whether a particular person has committed a sexual offence (but an allegation within paragraph (a) has not been made in respect of the offence),

and references in this section and sections 14 and 16 to “the suspect” are to the person mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b).

(2) No matter relating to the suspect is to be included in any publication if it is likely to lead members of the public to identify the suspect as a person who is alleged to have, or is suspected of having, committed the offence.

(3) Subsection (2) does not apply after the earliest time (if any) when any of the following events occurs—

- (a) a summons or warrant is issued under Article 20 of the Magistrates’ Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 against the suspect in respect of the offence;

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, Section 12. (See end of Document for details)

- (b) the suspect is charged with the offence after being taken into custody without a warrant;
 - (c) an indictment charging the suspect with the offence is presented under section 2(2)(c) or (e) of the Grand Jury (Abolition) Act (Northern Ireland) 1969;
 - (d) a magistrates' court commits the suspect to the Crown Court for trial on a new charge alleging the offence.
- (4) If none of those events occurs, then subsection (2) does not apply after the end of 25 years beginning with the date of the suspect's death.
- (5) The matters relating to a suspect in relation to which the restriction imposed by subsection (2) applies (if their inclusion in any publication is likely to have the result mentioned in that subsection) include in particular—
- (a) the suspect's name;
 - (b) the suspect's address;
 - (c) the identity of any school or other educational establishment attended by the suspect;
 - (d) the identity of any place of work;
 - (e) any still or moving picture of the suspect.
- (6) For the avoidance of doubt, for the purposes of subsection (1) it does not matter whether the allegation is made, or the step is taken, before or after this section comes into operation.

Commencement Information

- I1** S. 12 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 30\(2\)](#)
- I2** S. 12 in operation at 28.9.2023 by [S.R. 2023/142](#), [art. 3](#)

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