



Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015

2015 CHAPTER 2

PART 1

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Offences involving intent to cause distress etc

32 Sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety

(1) In section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988 (offence of sending letters etc with intent to cause distress or anxiety), for subsection (4) substitute—

“(4) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

- (a) on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine (or both);
- (b) on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine (or both).

(5) In relation to an offence committed before section 154(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 comes into force, the reference in subsection (4)(b) to 12 months is to be read as a reference to six months.

(6) In relation to an offence committed before section 85 of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 comes into force, the reference in subsection (4)(b) to a fine is to be read as a reference to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum.”

(2) The amendment made by this section applies only in relation to an offence committed on or after the day on which it comes into force.

Commencement Information

11 S. 32 in force at 13.4.2015 by [S.I. 2015/778](#), art. 3, [Sch. 1 para. 26](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 29/06/2021.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, Cross Heading: Offences involving intent to cause distress etc. (See end of Document for details)

33 Disclosing [^{F1}, or threatening to disclose,] private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress

- [^{F2}(1) A person commits an offence if—
- (a) the person discloses, or threatens to disclose, a private sexual photograph or film in which another individual (“the relevant individual”) appears,
 - (b) by so doing, the person intends to cause distress to that individual, and
 - (c) the disclosure is, or would be, made without the consent of that individual.]
- (2) But it is not an offence under this section for the person to disclose [^{F3}, or threaten to disclose,] the photograph or film to [^{F4}the relevant individual].
- [^{F5}(2A) Where a person is charged with an offence under this section of threatening to disclose a private sexual photograph or film, it is not necessary for the prosecution to prove—
- (a) that the photograph or film referred to in the threat exists, or
 - (b) if it does exist, that it is in fact a private sexual photograph or film.]
- (3) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under this section to prove that he or she reasonably believed that the disclosure was necessary for the purposes of preventing, detecting or investigating crime.
- (4) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under this section to show that—
- (a) the disclosure [^{F6}, or threat to disclose,] was made in the course of, or with a view to, the publication of journalistic material, and
 - (b) he or she reasonably believed that, in the particular circumstances, the publication of the journalistic material was, or would be, in the public interest.
- (5) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under this section to show that—
- (a) he or she reasonably believed that the photograph or film had previously been disclosed for reward, whether by [^{F7}the relevant individual] or another person, and
 - (b) he or she had no reason to believe that the previous disclosure for reward was made without the consent of [^{F8}the relevant individual].
- (6) A person is taken to have shown the matters mentioned in subsection (4) or (5) if—
- (a) sufficient evidence of the matters is adduced to raise an issue with respect to it, and
 - (b) the contrary is not proved beyond reasonable doubt.
- (7) For the purposes of subsections (1) to (5)—
- (a) “consent” to a disclosure includes general consent covering the disclosure, as well as consent to the particular disclosure, and
 - (b) “publication” of journalistic material means disclosure to the public at large or to a section of the public.
- [^{F9}(8) A person charged with an offence under this section is not to be taken to have intended to cause distress by disclosing, or threatening to disclose, a photograph or film merely because that was a natural and probable consequence of the disclosure or threat.]
- (9) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—
- (a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or a fine (or both), and
 - (b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine (or both).

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- (10) Schedule 8 makes special provision in connection with the operation of this section in relation to persons providing information society services.
- (11) In relation to an offence committed before [^{F10}paragraph 24(2) of Schedule 22 to the Sentencing Act 2020] comes into force, the reference in subsection (9)(b) to 12 months is to be read as a reference to 6 months.
- (12) In relation to an offence committed before section 85 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 comes into force, the reference in subsection (9) (b) to a fine is to be read as a reference to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum.

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 33 heading inserted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\), ss. 69\(2\)](#), 90(2)
- F2** [S. 33\(1\)](#) substituted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\), ss. 69\(3\)](#), 90(2)
- F3** Words in [s. 33\(2\)](#) inserted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\), ss. 69\(4\)\(a\)](#), 90(2)
- F4** Words in [s. 33\(2\)](#) substituted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\), ss. 69\(4\)\(b\)](#), 90(2)
- F5** [S. 33\(2A\)](#) inserted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\), ss. 69\(5\)](#), 90(2)
- F6** Words in [s. 33\(4\)\(a\)](#) inserted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\), ss. 69\(6\)](#), 90(2)
- F7** Words in [s. 33\(5\)\(a\)](#) substituted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\), ss. 69\(7\)\(a\)](#), 90(2)
- F8** Words in [s. 33\(5\)\(b\)](#) substituted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\), ss. 69\(7\)\(b\)](#), 90(2)
- F9** [S. 33\(8\)](#) substituted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\), ss. 69\(8\)](#), 90(2)
- F10** Words in [s. 33\(11\)](#) substituted (1.12.2020) by [Sentencing Act 2020 \(c. 17\), s. 416\(1\), Sch. 24 para. 443\(1\)](#) (with [Sch. 24 para. 447](#), [Sch. 27](#)); [S.I. 2020/1236](#), reg. 2

Commencement Information

- I2** [S. 33](#) in force at 13.4.2015 by [S.I. 2015/778](#), art. 3, [Sch. 1 para. 27](#)

34 Meaning of “disclose” and “photograph or film”

- (1) The following apply for the purposes of section 33, this section and section 35.
- (2) A person “discloses” something to a person if, by any means, he or she gives or shows it to the person or makes it available to the person.
- (3) Something that is given, shown or made available to a person is disclosed—
 - (a) whether or not it is given, shown or made available for reward, and
 - (b) whether or not it has previously been given, shown or made available to the person.
- (4) “Photograph or film” means a still or moving image in any form that—
 - (a) appears to consist of or include one or more photographed or filmed images, and
 - (b) in fact consists of or includes one or more photographed or filmed images.
- (5) The reference in subsection (4)(b) to photographed or filmed images includes photographed or filmed images that have been altered in any way.
- (6) “Photographed or filmed image” means a still or moving image that—
 - (a) was originally captured by photography or filming, or
 - (b) is part of an image originally captured by photography or filming.

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- (7) “Filming” means making a recording, on any medium, from which a moving image may be produced by any means.
- (8) References to a photograph or film include—
- (a) a negative version of an image described in subsection (4), and
 - (b) data stored by any means which is capable of conversion into an image described in subsection (4).

Commencement Information

I3 S. 34 in force at 13.4.2015 by [S.I. 2015/778](#), art. 3, [Sch. 1 para. 28](#)

35 Meaning of “private” and “sexual”

- (1) The following apply for the purposes of section 33.
- (2) A photograph or film is “private” if it shows something that is not of a kind ordinarily seen in public.
- (3) A photograph or film is “sexual” if—
- (a) it shows all or part of an individual's exposed genitals or pubic area,
 - (b) it shows something that a reasonable person would consider to be sexual because of its nature, or
 - (c) its content, taken as a whole, is such that a reasonable person would consider it to be sexual.
- (4) Subsection (5) applies in the case of—
- (a) a photograph or film that consists of or includes a photographed or filmed image that has been altered in any way,
 - (b) a photograph or film that combines two or more photographed or filmed images, and
 - (c) a photograph or film that combines a photographed or filmed image with something else.
- (5) The photograph or film is not private and sexual if—
- (a) it does not consist of or include a photographed or filmed image that is itself private and sexual,
 - (b) it is only private or sexual by virtue of the alteration or combination mentioned in subsection (4), or
 - (c) it is only by virtue of the alteration or combination mentioned in subsection (4) that [^{F11}the relevant individual (within the meaning of section 33)] is shown as part of, or with, whatever makes the photograph or film private and sexual.

Textual Amendments

F11 Words in [s. 35\(5\)\(c\)](#) substituted (29.6.2021) by [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 69\(9\)](#), [90\(2\)](#)

Commencement Information

I4 S. 35 in force at 13.4.2015 by [S.I. 2015/778](#), art. 3, [Sch. 1 para. 29](#)

Status:

Point in time view as at 29/06/2021.

Changes to legislation:

There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015,
Cross Heading: Offences involving intent to cause distress etc.