



Contempt of Court Act 1981

CHAPTER 49

CONTEMPT OF COURT ACT 1981

Strict liability

- 1 The strict liability rule.
- 2 Limitation of scope of strict liability.
- 3 Defence of innocent publication or distribution.
- 4 Contemporary reports of proceedings.
- 5 Discussion of public affairs.
- 6 Savings.
- 7 Consent required for institution of proceedings.

Other aspects of law and procedure

- 8 Confidentiality of jury's deliberations: Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- 9 Use of tape recorders.
- 10 Sources of information.
- 11 Publication of matters exempted from disclosure in court.
- 12 Offences of contempt of magistrates' courts.
- 13

Penalties for contempt and kindred offences

- 14 Proceedings in England and Wales.
- 15 Penalties for contempt of court in Scottish proceedings.
- 16 Enforcement of fines imposed by certain superior courts.
- 17 Disobedience to certain orders of magistrates' courts.

Supplemental

- 18 Northern Ireland.
- 19 Interpretation.

Changes to legislation: Contempt of Court Act 1981 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 17 November 2023. 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

- 20 Tribunals of Inquiry.
- 21 Short title, commencement and extent.

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1 — Times when Proceedings are Active for Purposes of Section 2

Preliminary

- 1 In this Schedule “criminal proceedings” means proceedings against a person...
- 1ZA Proceedings under the Double Jeopardy (Scotland) Act 2011 (asp 16)...
- 1A In paragraph 1 the reference to an offence includes a...
 - 2 Criminal, appellate and other proceedings are active within the meaning...

Criminal proceedings

- 3 Subject to the following provisions of this Schedule, criminal proceedings...
- 4 The initial steps of criminal proceedings are:—
- 4A Where as a result of an order under section 54...
- 5 Criminal proceedings are concluded— (a) by acquittal or, as the...
- 6 The reference in paragraph 5(a) to sentence includes any order...
- 7 Proceedings are discontinued within the meaning of paragraph 5(c)—
- 8 Criminal proceedings before a court-martial or standing civilian court are...
- 9 Criminal proceedings in England and Wales or Northern Ireland cease...
- 9A Where proceedings in England and Wales have been discontinued by...
- 10 Without prejudice to paragraph 5(b) above, criminal proceedings against a...
- 11 Criminal proceedings against a person which become active on the...

Other proceedings at first instance

- 12 Proceedings other than criminal proceedings and appellate proceedings are active...
- 13 In England and Wales or Northern Ireland arrangements for the...
- 14 In Scotland arrangements for the hearing of proceedings to which...

Appellate proceedings

- 15 Appellate proceedings are active from the time when they are...
- 16 Where, in appellate proceedings relating to criminal proceedings, the court—...

SCHEDULE 2 — Amendments

Part I — . . .

Part II — LEGAL AID (SCOTLAND) ACT 1967 (C. 43)

- 1 In section 1, in subsection (2), after “provide,” there shall...
- 2 In section 1, after subsection (7) there shall be inserted...

Part III — CORONERS ACT 1887, COUNTY COURTS ACT 1959, ATTACHMENT OF EARNINGS ACT 1971 AND MAGISTRATES’ COURT ACT 1980

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Coroners Act 1887 (c. 71)

- 1 In subsections (1) and (2) of section 19 and in...
- 2—5

Attachment of Earnings Act 1971 (c. 32)

- 6 In section 23, after subsection (1) there shall be inserted...

Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 (c. 43)

- 7 In section 97, in subsection (4), for the words “7...

SCHEDULE 3 — Application of Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 to Civil Contempt Proceedings Under Section 63(3)

- 1 (1) Where the proceedings are taken of the court's own...
- 2 Where the proceedings are taken by way of complaint for...
- 3 Whether the proceedings are taken of the court's own motion...

SCHEDULE 4 — Sections 12, 13, 14 and 16 as Applied to Northern Ireland

- 12 Offences of contempt of magistrates' courts.
- 13 Legal aid.
- 14 Proceedings in Northern Ireland.
- 16 Enforcement of fines imposed by superior courts.

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- s. 4(4) repealed by [2003 c. 44 Sch. 37 Pt. 4](#) (This amendment not applied to legislation.gov.uk. S. 4(4) already repealed (22.7.2004) by 2004 c. 14, Sch. 1 Pt. 1 Group 4)
- s. 14(2A) repealed by [2008 c. 4 Sch. 4 para. 25Sch. 28 Pt. 1](#)