



Criminal Justice Act 1988

1988 CHAPTER 33

PART XI

MISCELLANEOUS

Articles with blades or points and offensive weapons

141 **Offensive weapons.**

- (1) Any person who manufactures, sells or hires or offers for sale or hire, exposes or has in his possession for the purpose of sale or hire, or lends or gives to any other person, a weapon to which this section applies shall be guilty of an offence and liable [^{F1}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 both]
- [^{F1}(a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or to both;
- (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 4 years, or to a fine, or to both.]
- [^{F2}(1A) Any person who possesses a weapon to which this section applies in private is guilty of an offence and liable—
- (a) on summary conviction in England and Wales, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 51 weeks, to a fine or to both;
- (b) on summary conviction in Scotland, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months, to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or to both;
- (c) on summary conviction in Northern Ireland, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or to both;
- (d) on conviction on indictment in Northern Ireland, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 4 years, to a fine or to both.

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- (1B) In relation to an offence committed before the coming into force of section 281(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, subsection (1A)(a) has effect as if the reference to 51 weeks were to 6 months.
- (1C) For the purposes of subsection (1A) as it has effect in relation to England and Wales, a person possesses a weapon to which this section applies in private if the person possesses the weapon in a place other than—
- (a) a public place,
 - (b) school premises,
 - (c) further education premises, or
 - (d) a prison.
- (1D) For the purposes of subsection (1A) as it has effect in relation to Scotland, a person possesses a weapon to which this section applies in private if the person possesses the weapon on domestic premises.
- (1E) For the purposes of subsection (1A) as it has effect in relation to Northern Ireland, a person possesses a weapon to which this section applies in private if the person possesses the weapon in a place other than—
- (a) a public place,
 - (b) school premises, or
 - (c) further education premises.
- (1F) In subsections (1C) to (1E)—
- “domestic premises” means premises occupied as a private dwelling (including any stair, passage, garden, yard, garage, outhouse or other appurtenance of such premises which is not used in common by the occupants of more than one such dwelling);
- “further education premises”, in relation to England and Wales, means land used solely for the purposes of—
- (a) an institution within the further education sector (within the meaning of section 91 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992), or
 - (b) a 16 to 19 Academy (within the meaning of section 1B of the Academies Act 2010),
- excluding any land occupied solely as a dwelling by a person employed at the institution or the 16 to 19 Academy;
- “further education premises”, in relation to Northern Ireland, means land used solely for the purposes of an institution of further education within the meaning of Article 2 of the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (SI 1997/1772 (NI 15)) excluding any land occupied solely as a dwelling by a person employed at the institution;
- “prison” includes—
- (a) a young offender institution,
 - (b) a secure training centre, and
 - (c) a secure college;
- “public place” includes any place to which, at the time in question, the public have or are permitted access, whether on payment or otherwise;
- “school premises” means land used for the purposes of a school, excluding any land occupied solely as a dwelling by a person employed at the school; and “school” has the meaning given by—

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- (a) in relation to land in England and Wales, section 4 of the Education Act 1996;
 - (b) in relation to land in Northern Ireland, Article 2(2) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (SI 1986/594 (NI 3)).]
- (2) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument direct that this section shall apply to any description of weapon specified in the order except—
 - (a) any weapon subject to the ^{M1}Firearms Act 1968; and
 - (b) crossbows.
- ^{F3}(3)
- (4) The importation of a weapon to which this section applies is hereby prohibited.
- (5) It shall be a defence for any person charged in respect of any conduct of his relating to a weapon to which this section applies—
 - (a) with an offence under subsection (1) [^{F4}or (1A)] above; or
 - (b) with an offence under section 50(2) or (3) of the ^{M2}Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 (improper importation),to [^{F5}show] that his conduct was only for the purposes of functions carried out on behalf of the Crown or of a visiting force.
- (6) In this section the reference to the Crown includes the Crown in right of Her Majesty’s Government in Northern Ireland; and
 - “visiting force” means any body, contingent or detachment of the forces of a country—
 - (a) mentioned in subsection (1)(a) of section 1 of the ^{M3}Visiting Forces Act 1952; or
 - (b) designated for the purposes of any provision of that Act by Order in Council under subsection (2) of that section,which is present in the United Kingdom (including United Kingdom territorial waters) or in any place to which subsection (7) below applies on the invitation of Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom.
- (7) This subsection applies to any place on, under or above an installation in a designated area within the meaning of section 1(7) of the ^{M4}Continental Shelf Act 1964 or any waters within 500 metres of such an installation.
- [^{F6}(7A) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under subsection (1A) to show that the weapon in question is one of historical importance.]
- (8) It shall be a defence for any person charged in respect of any conduct of his relating to a weapon to which this section applies—
 - (a) with an offence under subsection (1) above; or
 - (b) with an offence under section 50(2) or (3) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979,to [^{F5}show] that the conduct in question was only for the purposes of making the weapon available to a museum or gallery to which this subsection applies.
- [^{F7}(8A) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under subsection (1A) to show that they possessed the weapon in question only in their capacity as the operator of, or as a person acting on behalf of, a museum or gallery.]

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- (9) ^{F8}If a person acting on behalf of ^{F8}the operator of, or a person acting on behalf of, a museum or gallery to which subsection (8) above applies is charged with hiring or lending a weapon to which this section applies, it shall be a defence for him to ^{F5}show that he had reasonable grounds for believing that the person to whom he lent or hired it would use it only for cultural, artistic or educational purposes.
- (10) Subsection (8) above applies to a museum or gallery only if it does not distribute profits.
- (11) In this section “museum or gallery” includes any institution which has as its purpose, or one of its purposes, the preservation, display and interpretation of material of historical, artistic or scientific interest and gives the public access to it.
- ^{F9}(11ZA) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under subsection (1A) to show that they possessed the weapon in question for educational purposes only.]
- ^{F10}(11A) Subject to subsection (11C), where a person is charged with an offence under subsection (1) ^{F11}or (1A)] above in respect of conduct of his relating to a weapon to which this section applies, it shall be a defence to show that his conduct was for the purpose only of making the weapon in question available for one or more of the purposes specified in subsection (11B).
- ^{F12}(11AA) [It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under subsection (1A) to show that the person possessed the weapon in question only for one or more of the purposes specified in subsection (11B).]
- (11B) Those purposes are—
- (a) the purposes of theatrical performances and of rehearsals for such performances;
 - (b) the production of films (as defined in section 5B of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (c. 48));
 - (c) the production of television programmes (as defined in section 405(1) of the Communications Act 2003 (c. 21)).
- (11C) Where—
- (a) a person is charged with an offence under subsection (1) above in respect of conduct of his relating to a weapon to which this section applies (a “relevant weapon”), and
 - (b) the relevant weapon is one the importation of which is prohibited,
- subsection (11A) does not apply unless the condition in subsection (11D) is satisfied.
- (11D) The condition is that there is in force as respects Scotland provision to the effect that it is a defence for a person (“A”) charged with a relevant offence in respect of A's conduct relating to a relevant weapon to show that A's conduct was for the purpose only of making the weapon in question available for one or more of the purposes specified in subsection (11B).
- (11E) In subsection (11D), “relevant offence” means an offence under section 50(2) or (3) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 (c. 2) (penalty for improper importation of goods).
- (11F) For the purposes of this section, a person shall be taken to have shown a matter specified in subsection (5), ^{F13}(7A), (8), (8A), (9), (11ZA), (11A) or (11AA)] above if—

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- (a) sufficient evidence of the matter is adduced to raise an issue with respect to it; and
 - (b) the contrary is not proved beyond a reasonable doubt.
- (11G) The Scottish Ministers may by order made by statutory instrument modify the application of this section in relation to any description of weapon specified in the order.
- (11H) An order under subsection (11G) may make different provision for different purposes.
- (11J) A statutory instrument containing an order under this section shall not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Scottish Parliament.]
- ^{F14}(11A) It shall be a defence for a person charged in respect of conduct of his relating to a weapon to which this section applies—
- (a) with an offence under subsection (1) [^{F15}or (1A)] above, or
 - (b) with an offence under section 50(2) or (3) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979,
- to show that his conduct was for the purpose only of making the weapon in question available for one or more of the purposes specified in subsection (11B).
- [It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under subsection (1A) to show that
- ^{F16}(11AA) they possessed the weapon in question only for one or more of the purposes specified in subsection (11B).]
- (11B) Those purposes are—
- (a) the purposes of theatrical performances and of rehearsals for such performances;
 - (b) the production of films (within the meaning of Part 1 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 – see section 5B of that Act);
 - (c) the production of television programmes (within the meaning of the Communications Act 2003 – see section 405(1) of that Act).
- (11C) For the purposes of this section a person shall be taken to have shown a matter specified in subsection (5), [^{F17}(7A), (8), (8A), (9), (11ZA), (11A) or (11AA)] if—
- (a) sufficient evidence of that matter is adduced to raise an issue with respect to it; and
 - (b) the contrary is not proved beyond a reasonable doubt.
- (11D) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument—
- (a) provide for exceptions and exemptions from the offence under subsection (1) [^{F18}or (1A)] above or from the prohibition in subsection (4) above; and
 - (b) provide for it to be a defence in proceedings for such an offence, or for an offence under section 50(2) or (3) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, to show the matters specified or described in the order.
- (11E) A statutory instrument containing an order under this section shall not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.]
- (12) This section shall not have effect in relation to anything done before it comes into force.

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- [^{F19}(12A) An order under this section which has the effect that possession in private of a weapon of a particular description is, or is to become, an offence under subsection (1A) may make provision—
- (a) enabling arrangements to be made for the surrender of weapons of that description;
 - (b) as to the procedure to be followed in relation to the surrender of such weapons;
 - (c) for the payment of compensation in respect of weapons surrendered in accordance with the arrangements;
 - (d) as to the requirements that must be met by a person making a claim for compensation;
 - (e) as to the procedure to be followed in respect of a claim and for the determination of a claim;
 - (f) enabling a person to exercise a discretion in determining whether to make a payment in response to a claim and the amount of such a payment.]
- (13) In the application of this section to Northern Ireland [^{F20}in subsection (2) above the reference to the Secretary of State shall be construed as a reference to the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland and the reference] to the ^{M5}Firearms Act 1968 shall be construed as a reference to the ^{M6}Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order [^{F21}2004].
- [^{F22}(14) In the application of this section to Northern Ireland, the power under subsection (11D) above to provide by order—
- (a) for exceptions and exemptions from the offence under subsection (1) above; and
 - (b) for it to be a defence in proceedings for such an offence to show the matters specified or described in the order,
- is exercisable by the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland (and not by the Secretary of State).
- (15) Any power of the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland to make an order under this section shall be exercisable by statutory rule for the purposes of the Statutory Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (and not by statutory instrument).
- (16) No order shall be made by the Department of Justice under this section unless a draft of the order has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- (17) Section 41(3) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 applies for the purposes of subsection (16) in relation to the laying of a draft as it applies in relation to the laying of a statutory document under an enactment.]

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 141(1) substituted (N.I.) (16.7.2008) by The Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order S.I. 2008/1216 (N.I. 1), arts. 1, **90(5)**; S.R. 2008/293, art. 2, Sch.
- F2** S. 141(1A)-(1F) inserted (14.7.2021 for E.W., 27.3.2023 for S.) by **Offensive Weapons Act 2019** (c. 17), ss. **46(2)**, 70(1)(2) (with s. 46(18)(19)); S.I. 2021/819, reg. 2(d); S.S.I. 2023/72, reg. 2(1)(b)
- F3** S. 141(3) repealed (S.) (1.11.2007) by **Custodial Sentences and Weapons (Scotland) Act 2007** (asp 17), ss. 66(2), 67, **Sch. 5**; S.S.I. 2007/431, art. 3 Sch. and s. 141(3) repealed (E.W.N.I.) (1.4.2008) by **Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006** (c. 38), ss. 65, 66(2), **Sch. 5**; S.I. 2008/791, arts. 2(e)
- F4** Words in s. 141(5)(a) inserted (14.7.2021 for E.W., 27.3.2023 for S.) by **Offensive Weapons Act 2019** (c. 17), ss. **46(3)**, 70(1)(2); S.I. 2021/819, reg. 2(d); S.S.I. 2023/72, reg. 2(1)(b)

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- F5** Word in s. 141(5)(8)(9) substituted (S.) (1.11.2007) by [Custodial Sentences and Weapons \(Scotland\) Act 2007 \(asp 17\)](#), [s. 60\(1\)\(a\)](#); S.S.I. 2007/431, [art. 3](#), Sch. and the same word in s. 141(5)(8)(9) substituted (E.W.N.I.) (6.4.2008) by [Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 \(c. 38\)](#), ss. 43(3), 51, 66(2), Sch. 2 para. 11(2); S.I. 2008/791, [art. 3\(a\)\(c\)](#)
- F6** S. 141(7A) inserted (14.7.2021 for E.W., 27.3.2023 for S.) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(4\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.I. 2021/819, [reg. 2\(d\)](#); S.S.I. 2023/72, [reg. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- F7** S. 141(8A) inserted (14.7.2021 for E.W., 27.3.2023 for S.) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(5\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.I. 2021/819, [reg. 2\(d\)](#); S.S.I. 2023/72, [reg. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- F8** Words in s. 141(9) substituted (14.7.2021 for E.W., 27.3.2023 for S.) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(6\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.I. 2021/819, [reg. 2\(d\)](#); S.S.I. 2023/72, [reg. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- F9** S. 141(11ZA) inserted (14.7.2021 for E.W., 27.3.2023 for S.) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(7\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.I. 2021/819, [reg. 2\(d\)](#); S.S.I. 2023/72, [reg. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- F10** S. 141(11A)-(11J) inserted (S.) (1.11.2007 for purpose of inserting subsections (11F) to (11J) and otherwise prosp. for inserting (11A) to (11E)) by [Custodial Sentences and Weapons \(Scotland\) Act 2007 \(asp 17\)](#), [ss. 60\(2\)](#), 67; S.S.I. 2007/431, [art. 3](#), Sch.
- F11** Words in s. 141(11A) inserted (S.) (27.3.2023) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(12\)](#), 70(2); S.S.I. 2023/72, [reg. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- F12** S. 141(11AA) inserted (S.) (27.3.2023) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(13\)](#), 70(2); S.S.I. 2023/72, [reg. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- F13** Words in s. 141(11F) substituted (27.3.2023) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(14\)](#), 70(2); S.S.I. 2023/72, [reg. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- F14** S. 141(11A)-(11E) inserted (E.W.N.I.) (1.4.2008 for purpose of inserting (11D) and (11E) and 6.4.2008 in so far as not already in force) by [Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 \(c. 38\)](#), ss. 43(4), 51, 66(2), [Sch. 2 para. 11\(3\)](#); S.I. 2008/791, [arts. 2\(c\)](#), [3\(c\)](#)
- F15** Words in s. 141(11A)(a) inserted (E.W.N.I.) (14.7.2021 for E.W.) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(8\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.I. 2021/819, [reg. 2\(d\)](#)
- F16** S. 141(11AA) inserted (E.W.N.I.) (14.7.2021 for E.W.) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(9\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.I. 2021/819, [reg. 2\(d\)](#)
- F17** Words in s. 141(11C) substituted (E.W.N.I.) (14.7.2021 for E.W.) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(10\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.I. 2021/819, [reg. 2\(d\)](#)
- F18** Words in s. 141(11D)(a) inserted (E.W.N.I.) (14.7.2021 for E.W.) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(11\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.I. 2021/819, [reg. 2\(d\)](#)
- F19** S. 141(12A) inserted (1.1.2021 for S., 14.7.2021 for E.W.) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(15\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.S.I. 2020/410, [reg. 2\(g\)](#); S.I. 2021/819, [reg. 2\(d\)](#)
- F20** Words in s. 141(13) substituted (12.4.2010) by [The Northern Ireland Act 1998 \(Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions\) Order 2010 \(S.I. 2010/976\)](#), [art. 1\(2\)](#), [Sch. 14 para. 31\(2\)](#) (with arts. 28-31)
- F21** Word in s. 141(13) substituted (1.2.2005) by [The Firearms \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2004 \(S.I. 2004/702 \(N.I. 3\)\)](#), [arts. 81](#), [82](#), [Sch. 7 para. 11](#); S.R. 2005/4, [art. 3](#) (with transitional provisions in arts. 4-7)
- F22** S. 141(14)-(17) inserted (12.4.2010) by [The Northern Ireland Act 1998 \(Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions\) Order 2010 \(S.I. 2010/976\)](#), [art. 1\(2\)](#), [Sch. 14 para. 31\(3\)](#) (with arts. 28-31)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 141 applied (S.) (29.9.2005) by [The Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(Offensive Weapons\) \(Scotland\) Order 2005 \(S.S.I. 2005/483\)](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch.](#)
- C2** S. 141 modified (S.) (27.3.2023) by [Offensive Weapons Act 2019 \(c. 17\)](#), [ss. 46\(18\)\(19\)](#), 70(1)(2); S.S.I. 2023/72, [reg. 2\(1\)\(b\)](#)

Marginal Citations

- M1** 1968 c. 27.
M2 1979 c. 2.
M3 1952 c. 67.
M4 1964 c. 29.

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M5 1968 c. 27.

M6 S.I. 1981/155 (N.I. 2).

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- s. 141(4) repealed by [2009 c. 26 Sch. 7 para. 119\(2\)](#)Sch. 8 Pt. 10
- s. 141(5)(b) and word repealed by [2009 c. 26 Sch. 7 para. 119\(3\)](#)Sch. 8 Pt. 10
- s. 141(8)(b) and word repealed by [2009 c. 26 Sch. 7 para. 119\(3\)](#)Sch. 8 Pt. 10
- s. 141(11A) restricted by [2007 asp 17 s. 60\(2\)](#)
- s. 141(11A) words repealed by [2009 c. 26 Sch. 7 para. 119\(5\)](#)Sch. 8 Pt. 10
- s. 141(11A)(b) and word repealed by [2009 c. 26 Sch. 7 para. 119\(4\)](#)Sch. 8 Pt. 10
- s. 141(11C)-(11E) repealed by [2009 c. 26 Sch. 7 para. 119\(7\)](#)Sch. 8 Pt. 10
- s. 141(11D)(a) words repealed by [2009 c. 26 Sch. 7 para. 119\(6\)\(a\)](#)Sch. 8 Pt. 10
- s. 141(11D)(b) words repealed by [2009 c. 26 Sch. 7 para. 119\(6\)\(b\)](#)Sch. 8 Pt. 10
- s. 141(14)(a) words inserted by [2019 c. 17 s. 46\(16\)](#)

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. 36(2)(b)(v) and word inserted by [2019 c. 17 s. 13\(3\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 36(3A)(3B) substituted for s. 36(3A) by [2008 c. 4 s. 46\(2\)](#)
- s. 41(4A) inserted by [2004 c. 28 Sch. 10 para. 28](#)
- s. 139AZA(1)(a)(iii) and word inserted by [2019 c. 17 s. 13\(4\)\(b\)](#)