

## **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**

*{as amended 10.03.14}*

### **Rehabilitation Periods**

Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 ex-offenders only have to disclose previous criminal convictions to potential employers if they remain “unspent”. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act provides that, if an offender does not reoffend for a certain period following their conviction, they are deemed to have been rehabilitated. In these circumstances the ex-offenders convictions are spent and they are not required to inform a prospective employer of their criminal past.

The period of time following which a criminal conviction will become spent will depend on the sentence that was imposed

### **How long will it take before my caution or conviction becomes spent?**

The rehabilitation period (the length of time before a caution or conviction becomes spent) is determined by the type of disposal administered or the length of the sentence imposed. Rehabilitation periods that run beyond the end of a sentence are made up of the total sentence length plus an additional period that runs from the end of the sentence, which we have called the ‘buffer period’. Other rehabilitation periods start from the date of conviction or the date the penalty was imposed.

The ‘buffer periods’ are halved for those who are under 18 at date of conviction (save for custodial sentences of six months or less where the ‘buffer period’ is 18 months).

The rehabilitation periods for sentences with additional “buffer periods” which run from the end date of the sentence are shown in the table below:

<b>Sentence/disposal</b>	<b>Buffer period for adults (18 and over at the time of conviction or the time the disposal is administered). This applies from the <u>end</u> date of the sentence (including the licence period).</b>	<b>Buffer period for young people (under 18 at the time of conviction or the time the disposal is administered). This applies from the <u>end</u> date of the sentence (including the licence period).</b>
Custodial sentence* of over 4 years, or a public protection sentence	Never spent	Never spent
Custodial sentence of over 30 months (2 ½ years) and up to and including 48 months (4 years)	7 years	3½ years
Custodial sentence of over 6 months and up to and including 30 months (2 ½ years)	4 years	2 years

Custodial sentence of 6 months or less	2 years	18 months
Community order or youth rehabilitation order**	1 year	6 months

\*Custodial sentence includes a sentence of imprisonment (both an immediate custodial sentence and a suspended sentence), a sentence of detention in a young offender institution, a sentence of detention under section 91 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000, a detention and training order, a sentence of youth custody, a sentence of corrective training and a sentence of Borstal training.

\*\*In relation to any community or youth rehabilitation order which has no specified end date, the rehabilitation period is 2 years from the date of conviction.

The following table sets out the rehabilitation period for sentences which do not have “buffer periods” and for which the rehabilitation period runs from the date of conviction

<b>Sentence/disposal</b>	<b>Rehabilitation period for adults (18 and over at the time of conviction or the time the disposal is administered).</b>	<b>Rehabilitation period for young people (under 18 at the time of conviction or the time the disposal is administered).</b>
Fine	1 year	6 months
Conditional discharge,	Period of the order	Period of the order
Absolute discharge	None	None
Conditional caution and youth conditional caution	3 months or when the caution ceases to have effect if earlier	3 months
Simple caution, youth caution	Spent immediately	Spent immediately
Compensation order*	On the discharge of the order (i.e. when it is paid in full)	On the discharge of the order (i.e. when it is paid in full)
Binding over order	Period of the order	Period of the order
Attendance centre order	Period of the order	Period of the order
Hospital order (with or without a restriction order)	Period of the order	Period of the order
Referral order	Not available for adults	Period of the order
Reparation order	Not available for adults	None

**Important Note:** This is intended as general guidance only. It is not legal advice and must not be regarded as a definitive interpretation of the 1974 Act. Anyone in doubt should seek their own legal advice.