

ADULT SEXUAL OFFENDING AGAINST CHILDREN: THE LAW



Northern
Ireland
Office

IT IS AGAINST THE

LAW TO:

Have any sexual activity with a child or young person under the age of 16.

There are also offences of causing, inciting, arranging or facilitating such activity, and engaging in sexual activity in front of a child or making a child watch a sex act.

If you have any sexual activity with a person under 16, or do any of the above, you could go to prison for a maximum period of 14 years.

If you have penetrative sexual activity with a child under 13 you will be guilty of rape or assault and could go to prison for life.

Remember - there never has been a law against young people giving consent to sex – it is the taker of that consent, you, who will be punished.

It is against the law to have any sexual activity with a young person under 18 if you are in a position of trust with that young person, for example in a residential home, school or hospital.

It is against the law to have any sexual activity with a young person under 18 if you are a member of that person's family, extended family or live in the same household and involved in caring for the person.

It is against the law to pay for sex with a young person under 18. If penetrative sex is involved you could go to prison for life.

It is against the law to cause, incite, control, arrange or facilitate the involvement of a person under 18 in prostitution or pornography.

It is against the law to make, take, possess or distribute indecent images of a person under 18 (used to be under 16) unless the young person was 16 or over and you were married, civil partners or lived together as partners in a long term relationship.

For more detail see the leaflet '**Safer from sexual crime: protecting children and young people**' available on www.nio.gov.uk/sexualoffences