

**PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY BEFORE ANSWERING  
THE QUESTION ON CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS**

Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, a conviction becomes spent after a period of time. 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 is 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 date</u> 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 date</u> 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:

(see overleaf)

Sentence/disposal	Rehabilitation period for adults (18 and over at the time of conviction or the time the disposal is administered).	Rehabilitation period for young people (under 18 at the time of conviction or the time the disposal is administered).
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

#### Examples:

- A 2 year custodial sentence given to an adult may become spent after 6 years: the rehabilitation period is the period of the sentence plus a further 'buffer period' of 4 years, giving a total of 6 years.
- A 2 year custodial sentence suspended for 2 years is spent after 6 years; the rehabilitation period is the period of the custodial sentence plus a further buffer period of 4 years giving a total of 6 years. (A suspended sentence is a sentence of imprisonment and the rehabilitation period is therefore determined by the custodial sentence, regardless of the period for which it is suspended).
- A 6 month sentence of detention given to a young person may become spent after 2 years: the rehabilitation period is the period of the sentence plus a further 'buffer period' of 18 months, giving a total of 2 years.
- A 1 year community order given to an adult may become spent after 2 years: the rehabilitation period is the length of the order plus a further 'buffer period' of 1 year, giving a total of 2 years.
- A 1 year youth rehabilitation order given to a young person may become spent after 18 months: the rehabilitation period is the length of the order plus a further 'buffer period' of 6 months, giving a total of 18 months.
- An adult who is given a fine will have to declare this conviction for 1 year from the date of conviction before it is considered spent.

#### Rehabilitation periods for motoring offences?

An endorsement for a road traffic offence listed in Schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988, imposed either by the court or by means of a fixed penalty notice (FPN) is a sentence for the purposes of the 1974 Act and may become spent after 5 years (or two and half years where the offender is under 18). Road traffic legislation specifically provides for a FPN in these circumstances to be treated as a conviction and dealt with as such under the 1974 Act. Penalty points and a driving disqualification imposed by the court on conviction may become spent when they cease to have effect (penalty points have effect for three years as set out in road traffic legislation). Where the court imposes more than one sentence or penalty for the offence then the longest rehabilitation period determines when the conviction may become spent.

A fixed penalty notice (FPN) can be used to deal with minor road traffic offences, but it is not a criminal conviction or a caution and the 1974 Act does not apply.

For more information on the rehabilitation periods for particular driving offences, please consult: [www.direct.gov.uk/en/motoring/driverlicensing/endorsementsanddisqualifications/dg\\_10022425](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/motoring/driverlicensing/endorsementsanddisqualifications/dg_10022425)