

Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill

Fact sheet: Child sexual exploitation at hotels

Background

1. These provisions address the problem of hotels, guest houses and bed and breakfast accommodation being used for the purpose of child sexual exploitation. At the Bill's Second Reading in the House of Commons, Kris Hopkins (then a backbench MP) drew attention to cases in his constituency and elsewhere where children had been drugged and taken to hotels or guest houses where they were raped. The Home Secretary agreed to consider what could be done to address this.
2. The Bill will allow the police to require hotels and similar establishments, in which they reasonably believe child sexual exploitation is taking place, to request, and provide to the police, information about guests. This will include the guest's name and address, and other information which will be prescribed following consultation with the police and the hotel industry, for example, age. The information supplied will be a source of valuable intelligence to support the investigation of any criminal offences which are being committed on the premises and help close the net on paedophile rings.
3. This new power supports existing closure powers in Part 2A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and provisions in the Bill to restrict the activities of anyone who poses a risk of sexual harm to children and adults through the creation of Sexual Harm Prevention Orders and Sexual Risk Orders. Furthermore, the new power reflects the Government commitment to tackle child sexual exploitation as part of the work being undertaken through the National Group on Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People (SVACV). The SVACV National Group's inaugural action plan was published in July 2013.¹

Information about guests at hotels

4. The provisions will work by creating a power for a police officer, of at least the rank of inspector, to serve a notice on a hotel operator requiring the operator to provide the names and addresses of guests and other prescribed information. The notice would state how frequently the information must be provided, and over what period of time. The specified period will be no more than six months, although the police may serve a subsequent notice on the expiry of that period.

¹ Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People – National Group Progress and Action Plan https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/230443/Sexual_Violence_against_Children_and_Vulnerable_People.pdf

5. The officer must reasonably believe that the hotel has been used for the purposes of child sexual exploitation, or conduct that is preparatory to, or otherwise connected with, child sexual exploitation.
6. The hotel operator will commit a criminal offence if they fail to comply with the notice, without a reasonable excuse. It would also be an offence to provide information without taking reasonable steps to verify it or knowing it to be incorrect. These offences would be tried in the magistrates' court, with a maximum penalty of a Level 4 fine (currently £2,500). However, the hotel operator is only expected to take reasonable steps to obtain the information or verify it. A person served with a notice would have a right of appeal to the magistrates' court.
7. We would expect this targeted power to be used around 10 times a year and, as such, the impact on business is expected to be minimal.

Home Office
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