

UK Corporate Criminal Liability Extended

Crime and Policing Act 2026

10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW...

1. The Crime and Policing Act 2026 (CPA) expands measures in the UK, by which corporates (including partnerships) may incur criminal liability. From 29 June 2026, if a senior manager of an organisation, acting within the scope of their authority, commits a criminal offence under UK law, then the organisation will also commit an offence (section 250 of CPA).
2. This new law replaces section 196 of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 (ECCTA) and extends corporate criminal liability to **any** criminal offence which may be prosecuted in the UK. While the senior manager path to corporate liability under ECCTA was restricted to economic crimes (like fraud or bribery), section 250 of the CPA means that corporates could now incur liability for crimes relating to damage and reckless behaviour, dishonesty and sexual crimes.
3. The change makes it easier to prosecute organisations, including those outwith the UK. The new law is a significant shift in the risk profile for potential exposure for corporates to criminal liability and a reason for organisations to revisit risk registers and compliance arrangements ahead of the law coming into force.
4. A **senior manager** is defined as an individual who plays a significant role in (i) the making of decisions about how the whole or substantial part of the activities of the body corporate or partnership are to be managed or organised; or (ii) the managing or organising of the whole or substantial part of those activities.
5. Whether an individual is a senior manager depends on fact, not title, remuneration or employment status. Senior managers are not limited to directors, C-Suite, or other top-level managers. This might include a wide range of people who may not necessarily sit at, or near the top of, an org chart.
6. **Actual or apparent authority** does not mean that the senior manager must have been authorised to carry out a criminal offence. It would be sufficient that the act was of the type that the senior manager was authorised to take or would ordinarily undertake in their role.
7. There is no specific defence provided and section 250 applies to organisations regardless of size. There is no “reasonable” or “adequate” procedures defence. No knowledge of the crime is required for the corporate to be criminally liable and the corporate need not have

received any benefit for them to be guilty. If the senior manager has committed an offence, the corporate can also be prosecuted.

8. For international corporates, criminal liability will not attach to conduct carried out wholly overseas and where there is no UK nexus; however, there are specific crimes (such as bribery and fraud) which can be prosecuted against individuals or organisations with a close connection to the UK, regardless of where they are committed. Section 250 ensures that the same test still applies.
9. Any penalty will involve a criminal conviction for the corporate and a fine, in addition to any sentences imposed on individuals who are also found guilty of the same offence. The maximum level of any financial penalty will depend on the offence. However, for most serious cases, unlimited fines will be available.
10. Even where the risk of prosecution may be low the potential impact is high. Where organisations have been shielded from prosecution previously, they can now expect scrutiny and enforcement for many kinds of serious fault-based wrongdoing. Statutory guidance is expected but meantime it is recommended that organisations review risk assessments and compliance arrangements to take account of the changes introduced by CPA.

If you would like to discuss the implications of the changes and how that could impact you and your business, please contact [our corporate crime team](#).