

UNLAWFUL ACT MANSLAUGHTER

Common law

**Triable only on indictment
Maximum: Life imprisonment**

Offence range: 1 – 24 years' custody

This is a serious specified offence for the purposes of sections 224 and 225(2) (life sentences for serious offences) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

This is an offence listed in Part 1 of Schedule 15B for the purposes of section 224A (life sentence for a second listed offence) and section 226A (extended sentence for certain violent or sexual offences) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

The type of manslaughter (and thereby the appropriate guideline) should have been identified prior to sentence. If there is any dispute or uncertainty about the type of manslaughter that applies the judge should give clear reasons for the basis of sentence.

STEP ONE

Determining the offence category

CULPABILITY

- The characteristics set out below are indications of the level of culpability that may attach to the offender’s conduct; the court should balance these characteristics to reach a fair assessment of the offender’s overall culpability in the context of the circumstances of the offence.
- The court should avoid an overly mechanistic application of these factors.

<p>A- Very High Culpability</p>	<p>Very high culpability may be indicated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extreme character of one or more culpability B factors and /or • a combination of culpability B factors
<p>B- Factors indicating high culpability</p>	<p>Death was caused in the course of an unlawful act which involved an intention <u>of the offender</u> to cause harm falling just short of GBH</p> <hr/> <p>Death was caused in the course of an unlawful act which carried a high risk of death or GBH which was or ought to have been obvious to the offender</p> <hr/> <p>Death was caused in the course of committing or escaping from a serious offence in which the offender played more than a minor role</p> <hr/> <p>Concealment, destruction, defilement or dismemberment of the body (where not separately charged).</p>
<p>C- Factors indicating medium culpability</p>	<p>Cases falling between high and lower including but not limited to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where death was caused in the course of an unlawful act which involved an intention <u>of the offender</u> to cause harm (or recklessness as to whether harm would be caused) that falls between high and lower culpability • where death was caused in the course of committing or escaping from a less serious offence but in which the offender played more than a minor role
<p>D- Factors indicating lower culpability</p>	<p>Death was caused in the course of an unlawful act</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which was in defence of self or other(s) (where not amounting to a defence) OR • where there was no intention <u>of the offender</u> to cause any harm and no obvious risk of anything more than minor harm OR • in which the offender played a minor role <hr/> <p>The offender’s responsibility was substantially reduced by mental disorder, learning disability or lack of maturity</p>

HARM

For all cases of manslaughter the harm caused will inevitably be of the utmost seriousness. The loss of life is taken into account in the sentencing levels at step two

STEP TWO

Starting point and category range

Having determined the category at step one, the court should use the corresponding starting point to reach a sentence within the category range below. The starting point applies to all offenders irrespective of plea or previous convictions.

- **Where a case does not fall squarely within a category, adjustment from the starting point may be required before adjustment for aggravating or mitigating features.**

Culpability			
A	B	C	D
Starting Point 18 years' custody Category Range 11 - 24 years' custody	Starting Point 12 years' custody Category Range 8 - 16 years' custody	Starting Point 6 years' custody Category Range 3 - 9 years' custody	Starting Point 2 years' custody Category Range 1 - 4 years' custody

Note: The table is for a single offence of manslaughter resulting in a single fatality. Where another offence or offences arise out of the same incident or facts concurrent sentences **reflecting the overall criminality** of offending will ordinarily be appropriate: please refer to the *Offences Taken into Consideration and Totality* guideline and step six of this guideline.

Below is a **non-exhaustive** list of additional elements providing the context of the offence and factors relating to the offender. Identify whether a combination of these or other relevant factors should result in any upward or downward adjustment from the sentence arrived at so far.

Care should be taken to avoid double counting factors already taken into account in assessing culpability

Factors increasing seriousness

Statutory aggravating factors:

1. Previous convictions, having regard to a) the **nature** of the offence to which the conviction relates and its **relevance** to the current offence; and b) the **time** that has elapsed since the conviction
(See step five for a consideration of dangerousness)
2. Offence committed whilst on bail
3. Offence motivated by, or demonstrating hostility based on any of the following characteristics or presumed characteristics of the victim: religion, race, disability, sexual orientation or transgender identity

Other aggravating factors:

1. History of violence or abuse towards victim by offender
2. Involvement of others through coercion, intimidation or exploitation
3. Significant mental or physical suffering caused to the deceased
4. Victim particularly vulnerable due to age or disability
5. Victim was providing a public service or performing a public duty at the time of the offence
6. Commission of offence whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs
7. Persistence of violence
8. Offence involved use of a weapon
9. Other(s) put at risk of harm by the offending
10. Leading role in group or gang
11. Death occurred in the context of an offence which was planned or premeditated.
12. Offence committed in the presence of children
13. Actions after the event (including but not limited to attempts to cover up/ conceal evidence)
14. Blame wrongly placed on other(s)
15. Abuse of a position of trust
16. Offence committed on licence or post sentence supervision or while subject to court order(s)

Factors reducing seriousness or reflecting personal mitigation

1. No previous convictions **or** no relevant/recent convictions
2. Remorse
3. Attempts to assist the victim
4. History of significant violence or abuse towards the offender by the victim
5. Lack of premeditation
6. Good character and/or exemplary conduct
7. Serious medical conditions requiring urgent, intensive or long-term treatment
8. Mental disorder or learning disability
9. Age and/or lack of maturity
10. Sole or primary carer for dependent relatives

STEP THREE

Consider any factors which indicate a reduction for assistance to the prosecution

The court should take into account sections 73 and 74 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (assistance by defendants: reduction or review of sentence) and any other rule of law by virtue of which an offender may receive a discounted sentence in consequence of assistance given (or offered) to the prosecutor or investigator.

STEP FOUR

Reduction for guilty pleas

The court should take account of any potential reduction for a guilty plea in accordance with section 144 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the *Guilty Plea* guideline.

STEP FIVE

Dangerousness

The court should consider whether having regard to the criteria contained in Chapter 5 of Part 12 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 it would be appropriate to impose a life sentence (section 224A or section 225) or an extended sentence (section 226A). When sentencing offenders to a life sentence under these provisions, the notional determinate sentence should be used as the basis for the setting of a minimum term.

STEP SIX

Totality principle

If sentencing an offender for more than one offence, or where the offender is already serving a sentence, consider whether the total sentence is just and proportionate to the overall offending behaviour in accordance with the Offences Taken into Consideration and Totality guideline.

STEP SEVEN

Compensation and ancillary orders

In all cases the court should consider whether to make compensation and/or other ancillary orders.

Where the offence involves a firearm, an imitation firearm or an offensive weapon the court may consider the criteria in section 19 of the Serious Crime Act 2007 for the imposition of a Serious Crime Prevention Order.

STEP EIGHT

Reasons

Section 174 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 imposes a duty to give reasons for, and explain the effect of, the sentence.

STEP NINE

Consideration for time spent on bail

The court must consider whether to give credit for time spent on bail in accordance with section 240A of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

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