

# **Perverting the Course of Justice**

**Common law**

**Triable only on indictment**

**Maximum: Life imprisonment**

**Offence range: Community order – 7 years' custody**

## STEP ONE

### Determining the offence category

The court should determine the offence category with reference only to the factors in the table below. In order to determine the category the court should assess **culpability** and **harm**.

The level of **culpability** is determined by weighing up all the factors of the case. **Where there are characteristics present which fall under different levels of culpability the court should balance these characteristics to reach a fair assessment of the offender's culpability.**

<b>CULPABILITY</b>	
Demonstrated by one or more of the following:	
<b>A-</b> High Culpability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct over a sustained period of time</li><li>• Sophisticated and/or planned nature of conduct</li><li>• Underlying offence very serious</li><li>• Breach of trust or abuse of position or office</li></ul>
<b>B-</b> Medium culpability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other cases that fall between categories A and C because:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Factors are present in A and C which balance each other out <b>and/or</b></li><li>○ The offender's culpability falls between the factors described in A and C</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>C-</b> Lower culpability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unplanned and/or limited in scope and duration</li><li>• Unsophisticated nature of conduct</li><li>• Underlying offence was not serious</li><li>• Involved through coercion, intimidation or exploitation or as a result of domestic abuse</li><li>• Offender's responsibility substantially reduced by mental disorder or learning disability</li></ul>
<b>HARM</b>	
The level of harm is assessed by weighing up all the factors in the case.	
Category 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Serious consequences for an innocent party as a result of the offence (for example time spent in custody/arrest)</li><li>• Serious distress caused to an innocent party (for example loss of reputation)</li><li>• Serious impact on administration of justice</li><li>• Substantial delay caused to the course of justice</li></ul>
Category 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suspicion cast upon an innocent party as a result of the offence</li><li>• Some distress caused to an innocent party</li><li>• Some impact on administration of justice</li><li>• Some delay caused to the course of justice</li></ul>
Category 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited distress caused to an innocent party</li><li>• Limited impact on the administration of justice</li><li>• Limited delay caused to the course of justice</li></ul>

## 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

Harm	Culpability		
	A	B	C
<b>Category 1</b>	<b>Starting Point</b> 4 years' custody <b>Category Range</b> 2 - 7 years' custody	<b>Starting Point</b> 2 years' custody <b>Category Range</b> 1 -4 years' custody	<b>Starting Point</b> 1 years' custody <b>Category Range</b> 9 months - 2 years' custody
<b>Category 2</b>	<b>Starting Point</b> 2 years' custody <b>Category Range</b> 1 -4 years' custody	<b>Starting Point</b> 1 years' custody <b>Category Range</b> 9 months - 2 years' custody	<b>Starting Point</b> 9 months' custody <b>Category Range</b> 6 months - 1 years' custody
<b>Category 3</b>	<b>Starting Point</b> 1 years' custody <b>Category Range</b> 9 months - 2 years' custody	<b>Starting Point</b> 9 months' custody <b>Category Range</b> 6 months - 1 years' custody	<b>Starting Point</b> 6 months' custody <b>Category Range</b> High level community order – 9 months custody

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.

### Factors increasing seriousness

#### *Statutory aggravating factors:*

- 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
- Offence committed whilst on bail

#### *Other aggravating factors:*

- Offender involves others in the conduct
- Offence committed in a domestic context
- Vulnerable victim

- Commission of offence whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Evidence concealed/destroyed
- Offence committed on licence or post sentence supervision or while subject to court order(s)

### **Factors reducing seriousness or reflecting personal mitigation**

- No previous convictions **or** no relevant/recent convictions
- Remorse
- Good character and/or exemplary conduct
- The offender was in a lesser or subordinate role if acting with others/performed limited role under direction
- Determination, and/or demonstration of steps taken to address addiction or offending behaviour
- Physical disability or serious medical conditions requiring urgent, intensive or long-term treatment
- Mental disorder, learning disability (where not taken into account at step one)
- Age and/or lack of maturity
- 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 [section 74 of the Sentencing Code](#) (reduction in sentence for assistance to prosecution) 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 73 of the Sentencing Code](#) and the [Reduction in Sentence for a Guilty Plea](#) guideline.

### **STEP FIVE**

#### **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 [Totality](#) guideline.

### **STEP SIX**

#### **Compensation and ancillary orders**

In all cases, the court should consider whether to make compensation and/or other ancillary orders. Where the offence has resulted in personal injury, loss or damage the court must give reasons if it decides not to order compensation ([Sentencing Code, s.55](#)).

- [Ancillary orders – Magistrates' Court](#)
- [Ancillary orders – Crown Court Compendium](#)

**STEP SEVEN****Reasons**

[Section 52 of the Sentencing Code](#) imposes a duty to give reasons for, and explain the effect of, the sentence.

**STEP EIGHT****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 and [section 52 of the Sentencing Code](#)

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