

# **MANSLAUGHTER BY REASON OF LOSS OF CONTROL**

**Common law and Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (sections 54 and 55)**

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

**Offence range: 3 – 20 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** demonstrated by one or more of the following:

- **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.**

### **A - High Culpability**

- Planning of criminal activity (including the carrying of a weapon) **before** the loss of control
- Offence committed in the context of other serious criminal activity
- Use of a firearm (whether or not taken to the scene)
- Loss of self-control in circumstances which only just met the criteria for a qualifying trigger
- Concealment, destruction, defilement or dismemberment of the body (where not separately charged)

### **B - Medium Culpability:**

Cases falling between high and lower because:

- factors are present in high and lower which balance each other out **and/or**
- The offender's culpability falls between the factors as described in high and lower

### **C - Lower Culpability**

- Qualifying trigger represented a very high degree of provocation

### **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
<b>Starting Point</b> 14 years' custody <b>Category Range</b> 10 - 20 years' custody	<b>Starting Point</b> 8 years' custody <b>Category Range</b> 5 – 12 years' custody	<b>Starting Point</b> 5 years' custody <b>Category Range</b> 3 - 6 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 factual 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 or in the finding of a qualifying trigger**

### Aggravating factors

#### *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 other(s) through coercion, intimidation or exploitation
3. Significant mental or physical suffering caused to the deceased

4. Victim was providing a public service or performing a public duty at the time of the offence
5. Commission of offence whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs
6. Persistence of violence
7. Offence involved use of a weapon
8. Other(s) put at risk of harm by the offending
9. Actions after the event (including but not limited to attempts to cover up/ conceal evidence)
10. 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. Intention to cause serious bodily harm rather than to kill
4. History of significant violence or abuse towards the offender by the victim
5. Violence initiated by the victim
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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