

# Sentences increased for 63 offenders

New statistics for 2019 [2019 ULS statistics](#) (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 21.3KB) show 63 offenders had their sentences increased, after the Attorney General and Solicitor General (the Law Officers) considered that their original sentences were too low.

Under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme, victims of crime, members of the public, and prosecutors can ask for certain Crown Court sentences to be reviewed if they believe they are too low. Only one referral is required in order for it to be considered by the Attorney General's Office.

The Law Officers carefully consider each case personally, and if they think the sentence is too low, they will ask the Court of Appeal to review the sentence. They can only ask the Court of Appeal to review a sentence with a view to increasing it if that sentence is not just lenient but unduly so, such that the sentencing judge made a gross error or imposed a sentence outside the range of sentences available.

The 2019 Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme statistics published by the Attorney General's Office revealed that in the vast majority of cases, judges get it right. There has also been a fall in the number of applications for sentences to be reviewed.

The Law Officers received 577 applications for sentences to be reviewed which met the necessary criteria to be considered under the Scheme. Of these, 93 were referred to the Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal agreed that 64 sentences were too low, and as a result 63 offenders had their sentences increased. 16 people were imprisoned after avoiding prison time at their original sentencing.

Of the 93 offenders who were referred to the Court of Appeal, these related to crimes in the following categories:

- Rape and serious sexual offences
- Homicide
- Serious assault offences
- Drug-related
- Death by dangerous driving

The Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, said:

The ULS scheme allows anyone, including victims of crime, to ask for a review of certain sentences they believe are too low.

A sentencing exercise is not an exact science. In the vast majority of cases, judges get it right. While we are seeing fewer complaints about sentences, the scheme is still important to ensure that certain cases can be reviewed where there may have been a gross error in the sentencing decision. This brings comfort to many

victims and their families.

The Law Officers have 28 days from the date of sentencing to refer a case to the Court of Appeal, so it's important for them to receive a referral as early as possible in order to properly consider a case.

The ULS scheme came into force on 1st February 1989. It was introduced after public outcry over the lenient sentencing of the offenders involved in the 1986 rape of 21 year old Jill Saward. The victim was brutally raped by a gang of robbers at her father's vicarage.

The scheme was extended in 2017 to include an additional 19 terror-related offences, and again last year to cover sexual abuse of children or vulnerable adult offences, and stalking and harassment involving violence.

#### Notes

- The first ever ULS hearing took place in July 1989 for a man who committed incest on his daughter and had his sentence doubled from 3 to 6 years.
- The ULS scheme was legislated for within the Criminal Justice Act 1988.
- Anyone is able to ask a Crown Court sentence to be reviewed by the Attorney General's Office and the progress of referrals can be followed on the website. The ULS scheme only applies to certain Crown Court offences.
- Details of some of the offences covered by the scheme can be found [here](#)
- Under the ULS scheme a case must be referred to the Court of Appeal within 28 days of the date of sentencing. This deadline cannot be extended and in order to ensure we have time to properly consider a case we ask that referrals are made early in the process. It is very difficult to consider a case which is submitted late and it is not possible to do so outside of working hours.