



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Response to comments made by Justice Committee on sentencing**

The Magistrates' Association reads with interest and some concern the Justice Committee report on sentencing published yesterday -  
<http://www.parliament.uk/justicecom/> *Sentencing policy must not be driven by misguided conception of what public want, says justice committee*

The law is created by Parliament and magistrates have a duty to administer the law as it stands. Magistrates are present in court and hear all the relevant information in each case. Sentencing guidelines (produced by the Sentencing Guidelines Council) provide criteria to assess the level of seriousness of a particular offence. Magistrates use a structured decision making process in conjunction with the guidelines which offer a range of sentences according to the factors of the offence and circumstances of the offender. Magistrates also have due regard for case law which is important in considering prevalent crime such as using a knife or other bladed instrument.

It is a fact that when the general public are given explanations of how the sentencing process works and have asked to undertake a sentencing decision themselves they are much more confident about the criminal justice system. Magistrates in the Community and Local Crime, Community sentence are two local public relations projects started by the Magistrates Association which involve magistrates talking about their role and how court works.

END

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