



**PRESS RELEASE**

28 Fitzroy Square  
London W1T 6DD

E-mail: [ann.flintham@magistrates-association.org.uk](mailto:ann.flintham@magistrates-association.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7387 6099

Fax: 020 7383 4020

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Magistrates' Association responds to Prison Governors' Association motion to abolish short term custodial sentences

John Thornhill, Chairman, Magistrates' Association said:

“Short term custodial sentences are part of statute and a proper sentence in law; prison governors have a duty in law to manage the sentences imposed by the court and should not be meddling in our duty to decide a proportionate sentence. The Sentencing Guidelines Council and the legislature believe that there are occasions when a short custodial sentence is appropriate ie when the offence is serious; an offender continues to offend despite opportunities for reform through fines and community sentences; or when offenders continue to breach community sentences. Punishment is one of the purposes of sentencing and restriction of liberty is an element of punishment. In reality magistrates send very few offenders to prison and only as a last resort. At any one time only about 5% of the prison population has been sent there by magistrates and the number so sentenced continues to decrease.”

END

For further information please contact Ann Flintham direct tel 020 7387 6099  
mobile 07812 038889

PATRON: Her Majesty the Queen  
PRESIDENT: The Lord Chief Justice

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