



PRESS RELEASE

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Making sure community orders work

Community orders can be a very effective alternative to a short term custodial sentence if they are robust, effectively planned, properly managed and supervised. Unpaid work provides visible evidence that an offender is making retribution and affording benefit to the local community for their offending behaviour.

Magistrates impose sentences in the community on appropriate offenders intending that they will help an offender to change their behaviour and attitudes. Such orders usually include a punitive element restricting liberty through an electronically monitored curfew. Another requirement might be to undertake a number of hours of unpaid work. Magistrates, as well as the general public, must have confidence that these sentences are effective and properly managed.

Magistrates will be angry that the examples in the ITV Tonight programme undermine the sentence of the court and compromise confidence in community orders. However, experience indicates that there are some very positive examples of unpaid work programmes properly planned, supervised and providing useful activities and benefits to the community.

The Association believes that sufficient funding must be afforded to local probation trusts and third sector providers so they can deliver effectively planned and managed unpaid work and other programmes.

Notes for Editors

2011 will be the 650 anniversary of the institution of the office of Justice of the Peace (JP) and a senior judge recently stated that *its members have served the justice system with distinction ever since*. Currently nearly 29,000 men and women - known as JPs or magistrates - deal with 95% of all criminal cases brought before courts and a significant number of civil matters including family work. Magistrates are not paid for attending court, receiving only modest expenses, subsistence and small recompense for any loss of earnings. They have to attend training, are mentored and regularly appraised and work within guidelines.

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