



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Sentencing young people - response to report *Punishing Costs***

In response to the findings that prison for young people is costly and fails to reduce crime, John Fassenfelt, Deputy Chairman, Magistrates' Association said,

“Justice should never be governed by cost and it is vital that sentencers and the wider public have confidence in community sentences and that the youth offending teams are well resourced to provide a wide range of facilities appropriate for the variety of young people with complex backgrounds and needs.

Custody really is the last resort and only used when all other measures have been tried and exhausted. It is worthwhile noting that in December last year the number of young people in custody was the lowest since the establishment of the Youth Justice Board. This decline is the result of a number of initiatives, not least the increased provision of community based programmes and better communication between sentencers and youth offending teams. If more programmes such as intensive fostering could be available then the custody rate would almost certainly drop further.

While it is hoped that the youth offending teams will provide more intensive programmes of support for serious cases there will always be a need for custody for the most serious crimes. We remain concerned that young people who have to be detained in secure establishments are as near as possible to their homes to maintain family contacts and support and that only dedicated and specially trained staff are employed to look after and supervise young offenders.”

The principal aim of sentencing in the youth court is to prevent offending by children and young people and the courts have an obligation to consider the welfare of the child. Balancing these aims while being mindful of victims and public protection is often difficult and sentencers need good, accurate assessment information from youth offending teams.

The Magistrates' Association would like

- to see proper resources for schools and teachers to deal with non-attenders at school as these children are often at the most risk of offending
- regular lessons at school on the dangers of drug abuse

PATRON: Her Majesty the Queen  
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Registered Charity Number 216066

- action to address the dramatic increase in alcohol consumption with its effect on crime and on the health of individuals
- a strategic and funded approach to mental health issues of young people as more and more of these vulnerable young people are appearing in youth courts

END

**John Fassenfelt is available for comment on Sunday for pre-recording  
07711573448**

For further information contact Ann Flintham 020 7387 6099/ 07812 038889

The Magistrates' Association was established in 1920 and is the voice of the magistracy. Over 80% of magistrates are members and the Association supports them in their essential work, represents their views and interests, provides information and advice and contributes to their training.