



PRESS RELEASE

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Magistrates' Association responds favourably to *Reforming Women's Justice*

The Magistrates' Association endorses the proposals in the final report of the Women's Justice Taskforce. Magistrates applaud the work done by women's centres and, where they are available and suitable, welcome alternatives to custody for vulnerable defendants or those who are sole carers for dependants, especially children. We note with approval the recommendation of increased provision of bail accommodation which would give viable alternatives in more instances to remands in custody.

Malcolm Richardson, deputy chairman of the Magistrates' Association commented,

"We completely agree that provision is needed beyond the current centres, and would suggest as a matter of urgency that such provision is made available throughout the country to remove the unfairness of the full range of sentencing options being available in only some cases - effectively resulting in postcode sentencing".

END

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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 just over 27,000 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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