



PRINCIPLES AND PROPOSALS

Crime and the Community - A discussion paper on criminal justice policy in Northern Ireland HMSO 1993

GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE ISSUES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

In its general approach to criminal justice issues, the Government is guided by the following principles:

● **Protection**

the primary aim is the protection of the public: both through helping local communities to create safer environments for home and working life and through the effective detection, conviction and sentencing of offenders.

● **Personal Responsibility**

individuals are personally responsible for their actions and must be held to be so. Crime and criminality can, of course, be affected by a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors.

These help us to comprehend crime, but not to condone it. Many people face similar difficulties and yet do not resort to crime. The individual citizen also has an important role to play in reducing the incidence of crime.

● **Proportionality**

the response should directly reflect the gravity of the problem, whether in dealing with crime generally or when it comes to sentencing those found guilty of a particular offence. People should not be deprived of their liberty unless the seriousness of their offence or the risk to other's safety make it essential.

● **Fairness**

in all that it does, the criminal justice system must fairly respect the needs and rights of the victim, the offender and society as a whole, treating - and being seen to treat - all who come into contact with it in a fair and impartial manner.

● **Responsiveness**

the criminal justice process should work in a way that commands the confidence and meets the needs and reasonable expectations of the citizen who comes into contact with it, particularly those of victims, witnesses, jurors and people awaiting trial.

Summary of proposals contained in Crime and the Community - A discussion paper on criminal justice policy in Northern Ireland HMSO 1993.

Proposals

The main proposals are:

- Government support for local action to be developed by local communities themselves to promote community safety, building on the existing Safer Towns initiative;
- pilot offence mediation schemes to operate alongside the formal criminal justice process to help the victim and to ensure the offender recognises the full impact of his or her crime;
- better use of cautioning for both juveniles and adults;
- sustained action to reduce demand delays for those being held in custody charged with serious offences;
- a sentencing framework which distinguishes between violent, sexual and other offences and which expects the

court normally to pass a sentence commensurate with the seriousness of the offence committed, taking account of relevant aspects of the offender's history, using pre-sentence reports in appropriate cases, and giving reasons for the decisions made;

- providing sentencers with a more extensive range of sentences enabling the court to select and combine sentences according to the nature and seriousness of the offence committed;
- introducing a new combined custody and community sentence ensuring supervision of offenders after their release;
- unit fines linked to the offender's disposable income, to increase fairness and to help ensure that fine levels provide appropriate punishment;

- new juvenile justice arrangements which recognise the responsibility of parents and which provide a range of sentence lengths for those made the subject of training school orders;
- improved co-operation and co-ordination within the criminal justice system through a new Consultative Group and strategic and operational conferences involving practitioners and advisers in the criminal justice system;
- more published information about crime and the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland, aimed at sentencers, criminal justice agencies and the interested public; and
- Government encouragement to develop policy-focused academic research in criminology and criminal justice.

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CRIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND

