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## **Concern at lack of additional funding for justice initiatives.**

Sacro very much welcomes the intentions and ideals published in the Scottish Government's response to the recommendations of the Scottish Prisons Commission. However, the very limited additional resources being made available may make it unachievable to deliver the promised "Immediate, Visible, Effective, High Quality, Flexible and Relevant Justice". The Rt Hon Henry McLeish, Chair of the Prison Commission himself stated that additional new monies will be required to implement his Commission's package of recommendations.

*Protecting Scotland's Communities* does not make it clear how it will achieve the reduction in prison population it now says will be necessary **before** they can invest to increase the capacity of community sentences. Unfortunately this is putting the cart before the horse! There is a lack of detail in how community sentences will be delivered and how communities will be engaged – Sacro would like to see more clarity in relation to these proposals.

Focussing on early years is important and it is correct to recognise that making communities safer is not only a role of criminal justice agencies but also the responsibility of other statutory agencies – particularly to address physical and mental health and housing issues.

It is good to see the recognition that there need to be some legislative changes, particularly concerning the reduction in the use of short sentences and introducing more “Payback” alongside addressing needs. Sacro has long said it is important to “tackle needs as well as deeds”. We look forward to seeing the detail in the Criminal Justice & Licensing (Scotland) Bill in the New Year.

We also welcome the proposals to:

- > amend the *Custodial Sentences & Weapons Act* to make it more proportionate and effective, in recognition that it would have overburdened the system as currently drafted;
- > further consider how suspended and deferred sentences might be brought in or used more to support the new agenda;
- > end the practice of sending under 16s to prison.

This is a visionary document with the potential to make Scotland safer and reduce the current over use of imprisonment which is so damaging to society. The recognition is now there that robust community payback should be the default position in dealing with offenders. This must be matched by a change of mindset, in how we deal effectively with crime and its aftermath so that a community sentence is a sentence, just like any other and must be funded, implemented and given the same credence, as custodial sentences.

Sacro is ideally placed to contribute to many of the proposed reforms. Our Supervised Bail Service has the potential to significantly and safely reduce the numbers of accused held on remand and our award-winning Community Based Reparation Service has extensive experience in providing voluntary reparative tasks.

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## Background

### Sacro

Sacro is a national community justice voluntary organisation working across Scotland to make communities safer by reducing conflict and offending. Sacro operates in the community in partnership with others who share its values. It works with communities, those in conflict, victims and offenders. It does this in four key ways:

- > by being a leading provider of direct, innovative services in community mediation (CM), including schools work, restorative justice (RJ) and criminal justice (CJ)
- > through consultancy and training services, which equip Sacro and other organisations to deliver best practice, to extend the impact of Sacro's specialist expertise across Scotland
- > through research which monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of Sacro's services and keeps it abreast of research in the field, and
- > by seeking to influence policy and legislation, on the basis of research evidence, so that: the use of restorative justice and of constructive conflict resolution are extended; and the use of imprisonment is restricted to those who have committed serious crimes or are a danger to the public.

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