

PRESS RELEASE

To: Editors

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Great News From The Scottish Government

Sacro, Scotland's leading criminal justice voluntary organisation, welcomes the Scottish Government's vision for community sentences and believes the proposals are highly positive and progressive.

The organisation, which works with victims, accused and offenders to make communities safer, has long campaigned to encourage policy makers and sentencers to realise how vital it is that imprisonment is restricted to those who have committed serious offences or are a danger to the public.

Susan Matheson, Chief Executive of Sacro said,

"To keep Scotland safe we need to use the most effective sanctions to reduce re-offending. Prisons crowded with short term prisoners cannot rehabilitate. Community Sentences are the smart option. We are delighted that the Scottish Government is planning a radical reform of the system and are particularly pleased that community service will involve reparation work, in which the community has a say. We also welcome the proposal that support and training can be included, and also continuous review, which has proved so successful in the Drug Courts. This is what will turn lives around, not a few weeks locked up in a prison cell for 23 hours each day which is not only unproductive but disrupts any positive links the prisoner has to training, accommodation, relationships and jobs.

"We agree that the community needs to see that reparation is being made. It is also very important that the range of issues that are the root causes of crime, are dealt with effectively – including problems of addiction and physical or mental disability. For this reason we are very encouraged by the plan to extend Drug Treatment and Testing Orders to a wider range of offenders."

"It was also with interest that we read the Scottish Executive report on public perceptions and attitudes to Community sentencing 2007. It highlights the need for offenders to meet their victims. Sacro is heavily involved in Restorative Justice and believes it should be made available at all stages of the criminal justice and youth justice processes. The opportunity to participate in Restorative Justice must be an essential component of any reparative focus and Sacro. We will support the Scottish Government in legislating to make this reality.

"The Scottish Government's vision is progressive. What we hope is that they make adequate resources available to fulfil this vision and support CJA's and local authorities to turn the vision into reality".

Sacro provides services in Community Mediation, Youth Justice, Criminal Justice across Scotland. Sacro also works in mediation in Scottish Schools.



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The organisation provides 75 services in 35 different locations and employs over 400 staff including sessional staff and volunteers. In addition to providing direct services, Sacro works to influence policy and legislation; offers consultancy and training facilities and disseminates research.

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For further information please call 0131 624 7270



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