

Annex B: Background to guidelines

Statutory requirements

In producing these draft guidelines, the Council has had regard to a number of statutory requirements.

The purposes of sentencing are stated in section 142 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003:

- the punishment of offenders;
- the reduction of crime (including its reduction by deterrence);
- the reform and rehabilitation of offenders;
- the protection of the public; and,
- the making of reparation by offenders to persons affected by their offences.

The Sentencing Council has also had regard to the statutory duties in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 which set out requirements for sentencing guidelines as follows:

- guidelines may be general in nature or limited to a particular offence;
- the Council must publish them as draft guidelines;
- the Council must consult the following persons about draft guidelines: the Lord Chancellor, such persons as the Lord Chancellor may direct, the Justice Select Committee of the House of Commons, such other persons as the Council considers appropriate;
- after making appropriate amendments, the Council must issue definitive guidelines;
- the Council may review the guidelines and may revise them;¹⁵
- the Council must publish a resource assessment in respect of the guidelines;¹⁶ and
- the Council must monitor the operation and effect of its sentencing guidelines.¹⁷

Section 125(a) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 states that, '*every court must, in sentencing an offender, follow any sentencing guideline which is relevant to the offender's case*'. Therefore, courts are required to impose a sentence consistent with the guidelines, unless contrary to the interests of justice to do so. Therefore, the Sentencing Council is keen to ensure that the guidelines are as accessible as possible for sentencers.

When preparing sentencing guidelines, the Council must have regard to the following matters:

- the sentences imposed by courts in England and Wales for offences;
- the need to promote consistency in sentencing;
- the impact of sentencing decisions on victims of offences;

¹⁵ s.120 Coroners and Justice Act 2009

¹⁶ s.127(2) *ibid*

¹⁷ s.128(1) *ibid*

- the need to promote public confidence in the criminal justice system;
- the cost of different sentences and their relative effectiveness in preventing re-offending; and
- the results of monitoring the operation and effect of its sentencing guidelines.¹⁸

When publishing any draft guidelines, the Council must publish a resource assessment of the likely effect of the guidelines on:

- the resources required for the provision of prison places;
- the resources required for probation provision; and
- the resources required for the provision of youth justice services.¹⁹

In order to achieve these requirements, the Council has considered case law on the offences included within the guidelines, where it is available, evidence on current sentencing practice and drawn on members' own experience of sentencing practice. The intention is for the decision making process in the proposed guideline to provide a clear structure, not only for sentencers, but to provide more clarity on sentencing for the victims and the public, so that they too can have a better understanding of how a sentence has been reached.

The Council has had regard to these duties throughout the preparation of this draft guideline. In developing an understanding of the cost and effectiveness of different sentences, the Council has considered the available information and evidence and these are contained in the resource assessment which accompanies this consultation paper.

¹⁸ s.120(11) Coroners and Justice Act 2009

¹⁹ s.127(3) *ibid*