

30 June 2009

SGC 02/09

## **Council Consults on Sentencing of Youths**

Today the Sentencing Guidelines Council published a draft guideline on the principles which apply when courts sentence young offenders.

Far more than with adults, the approach to sentencing young offenders will be individualistic, the Council says in the draft guideline. This recognises that young people under 18 can be significantly different in maturity and that the individual circumstances of each offender will need to be considered carefully.

The guideline is set in the context of new laws for sentencing young people which are expected to come into force later this year.

It deals with the approach to the new youth rehabilitation order, including the order with intense supervision and surveillance which is an alternative to an immediate custodial sentence.

The guideline also covers the length of custodial sentences, where it is particularly important to consider maturity as well as age, in addition to the circumstances of the offence.

The closer an offender was to age 18 when the offence was committed and the greater the maturity of the offender or the sophistication of the offence, the closer the sentence is likely to be to that which would be imposed on an adult.

Tim Workman, Senior District Judge and Council member said: "It is very important that young people who commit offences are held responsible for their actions and, where possible, take part in repairing the damage caused.

The sanction imposed should establish that responsibility and do everything possible to reduce the risk of further offences.”

Council member, Anthony Edwards said: “Some offenders will be extremely mature, more so than some offenders who are over 18, whilst others will be significantly less mature.

For younger offenders, greater flexibility will be required to reflect the potentially wide range of culpability and to deal with problems shared by many young people who have to be sentenced – such as mental health problems, learning, speech and language difficulties - in order to reduce the likelihood of them offending again.”

The Council is seeking the views of the Justice Secretary and the Justice Select Committee.

**Notes to editors:**

The consultation guideline is available on the SGC website ([www.sentencing-guidelines.gov.uk](http://www.sentencing-guidelines.gov.uk)) along with:

- a copy of a covering letter being sent to the Council’s consultees, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, and the Justice Select Committee;
- advice to the Council from the Sentencing Advisory Panel.

Printed copies may be obtained from: the Sentencing Guidelines Secretariat, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 8-10 Great George Street, London SW1P 3AE (tel: 020 7084 8130).

Further information about the Council and Panel can be found at <http://www.sentencing-guidelines.gov.uk/about/index.html>.

For further information about this press release and the guidelines, please contact the secretariat on 020 7084 8130 or 07515 359793.

**The consultation closes on 28 August 2009.**

**ENDS**