Written submission from the Association of Directors of Social Work

Firstly, we would like to thank the committee for seeking our views on the draft budget in relation to criminal justice. We welcome the opportunity to provide written evidence, which we have set out below. We have restricted our comment to the prisons and criminal justice social work (CJSW) aspects of the Justice section of the budget.

Overall, the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) would generally support the priorities set out in the budget in the context of the following caveats:

1. The stated support for Community Payback Orders does not appear to translate into a spending priority with the budget for CJSW having no growth. This in effect means a reduction in real terms at a time when the policy priority is focussed on reducing re-offending, something criminal justice social work services pay a key role in. It is this budget which is used to meet all of the statutory requirements which fall to local authorities, including supervision of high risk offenders. Any reduction in budget is likely to impact on service delivery in these important areas.

2. Linked to the point above, while we have welcomed the use of the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund to develop mentoring services, we have concerns about the sustainability of these services beyond the initial funding period. We would have a particular concern if the cost of these are expected to be met from the budgets for Criminal Justice Social Work.

3. It remains to be seen whether savings will flow through from mentoring services, and it is often the case that savings from new initiatives take some time to materialise and are dispersed across different budget areas.

4. We have some concerns that the impact of welfare reform may impact on community justice budgets in general, with people potentially being less able to pay fines.

5. In relation to Prisons, we welcome the modernisation of the prison estate, however, this clearly comes at a significant cost and we believe that it is all the more important to maintain and develop approaches to reducing the prison population: the availability, credibility and appropriate resourcing of community based alternatives being a key plank of this approach.

We hope this submission is useful to the committee and are happy to clarify and discuss these points at the oral evidence session on 30.10.2013.

Association of Directors of Social Work
23 October 2013