



THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MAGISTRATES' LIAISON JUDGE

1. The Magistrates' Liaison Judge has had an important function for very many years. With the advent of Her Majesty's Court Services, there is a need to re-define the role by building on and developing the existing responsibilities.
2. The unification of the administration has necessitated the creation of structures; these are set out in a paper entitled "Liaison structures with Her Majesty's Court Services".
3. Under the arrangements described in that paper, each Area will have a body known as the Area Judicial Forum (AJF), whose functions will be to deal with judicial matters in relation to the business of the Magistrates' Courts, and to co-ordinate with the Crown Court and other family courts. The chairman of this Forum will be the Magistrates' Liaison Judge in that Area. Where there is more than one Liaison Judge, the Chairman will be appointed through the Presiding Judges, but each Liaison Judge will be a member of the Forum. The membership is fully described in the paper "Liaison structures with Her Majesty's Court Services", as is the relationship of the AJF to the Justices' Issues Group and Benches.
4. Although the membership of the AJF is prescriptive, in that it must be comprised only of Judges, Magistrates and Justices Clerks, the way in which the AJF conducts its business will be a matter for local decision. It will meet two or three times a year and, subject to the guidance of the Presiding Judges, its business will include:
 - a. **General** It is essential that the judiciary within an Area coordinate their views, and the AJF will be a vital part of that coordination. It will also have an important role in ensuring that judicial independence is maintained and seen to be maintained.
 - b. **Issues relating to local relationships** It will be important to ensure that there are good relations with the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Probation Service, Youth Offending Teams and others. The AJF will be expected to play its part in the achieving those good relations.
 - c. **Committal and jurisdiction** In consultation with the Resident Judges of the Area, the Liaison Judge will be expected to provide general guidance about committal policy and jurisdiction.
 - d. **Issues raised at the Local Criminal Justice Board** The Resident Judge in the Area will generally be the representative of the judiciary to the LCJB and will be able to relay any issues to the Liaison Judge. All

judicial issues raised by the LCJB in relation to the Magistrates' Courts (including listing and the judicial responsibilities of Justices' Clerks) will only be dealt with through the Resident Judge or the Liaison Judge.

- e. **Bail and sentencing** The Liaison Judge will be expected to give such guidance as may be necessary.
 - f. **Probation**
 - i. Whilst the present Probation Boards continue, the liaison with the Probation Service will take place through the members of the Board and other arrangements in place locally.
 - ii. If and when NOMS is established, there will be a need for liaison at 42-Area level. It is anticipated that the AJF will have an important function in respect of this. Detailed arrangements must await the creation of NOMS.
 - g. **Matters that are not resolved at the Justices Issues Group** It is possible that, on rare occasions, issues relating to listing, case management or similar matters will not be resolved at the Justices' Issues Group. The AJF will provide a forum where such issues can be discussed and dealt with.
 - h. **Training** The responsibility for training rests with the JSB, but the AJF may have a function to perform in relation to resources, or other matters to be determined by the JSB.
 - i. **The Family Jurisdiction** Over the next two or three years, there will be a gradual move towards an integrated Family Court with features such as common listing. The way in which the AJF deals with issues relating to the Family Courts will depend upon the progress of these arrangements in each Area or locality, and will be agreed between the Liaison Judge, the Designated Family Judge and the Chairmen of the Family Panel.
5. Each Liaison Judge will be expected, in conjunction with the Resident Judge, to see that there are appropriate arrangements in place for:
- a. Ensuring that Magistrates who sit in the Crown Court are treated in every way as full members of the court.
 - b. Making arrangements for Magistrates to attend the Crown Court from time to time as observers.
 - c. Swearing in new Magistrates.
 - d. Ensuring, through consultation with the Designated Family Judge, that there is in place a system for appropriate communication between Magistrates sitting in the family jurisdiction and the Designated Family Judge.
 - e. Maintaining an "open door" policy to all agencies and similar bodies within the Justice system.

6. Each Liaison Judge will be expected to:
- a. Visit Magistrates' Courts within the Area from time to time.
 - b. Encourage good practice in relation to pre-trial preparation, case management and trial management and take a general interest in the performance of the Magistrates' Courts within the Area.
 - c. Meet Bench Chairmen and representatives of the Magistrates' Association as needed, and facilitate good working relations and practices.
 - d. Meet District Judges (Magistrates' Courts). Although deployment and related matters in respect of these judges are the general responsibility of the Senior District Judge (Magistrates' Courts), the Liaison Judge will be expected to assist with any local issues and to ensure that there are close links between these Judges and the local Magistracy.
 - e. Meet Justices' Clerks and, where necessary, give them support or advice in relation to the performance of their judicial functions.
 - f. Attend training and other events organised for the Magistracy, as agreed locally.