



Justice Committee

**Right Honourable Lady Justice May
Chair of the Sentencing Council**

Royal Courts of Justice
Strand
London
WC2A 2LL

By email only

16 June 2026

Housing offences sentencing guidelines

Dear Lady Justice May,

The Committee welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Sentencing Council's consultation on the proposed sentencing guidelines for housing offences and thanks the Council for sharing the consultation responses with us. The Committee welcomes the decision to create guidelines for these offences, which as the consultation pointed out, cause significant harm in our communities. We also recognise that up to this point, there has not been clear guidance for the courts on how to sentence these offences and as a result, the public authorities responsible for prosecuting these offences may not have been aware of the possible consequences of a successful prosecution. We note that a number of responses to the Council's consultation suggested the Council should broaden the scope of the guideline to include other housing offences. We suggest that the Council keep the guidelines under review and consider including additional housing offences in the future.

In relation to the guideline for unlawful eviction and unlawful harassment, we agree with the point made by a number of responses that temporary deprivation can cause very serious harm. As result we are concerned that the factor 'permanent deprivation' could result in cases where victims are caused significant distress by temporary deprivation falling in the lower category of harm. Similarly, we agree that with responses that suggested that "Victim evicted who had recently moved in" could also be included as an aggravating factor.

In relation to the starting points and category ranges for all the proposed guidelines, we agree with the point made by several responses that the level of fine should take into account the relevant civil penalties prescribed by government guidance.

In particular in relation to the guidelines for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and Housing Standards, we are concerned that, unless the fines are set at a level which would disincentivise non-compliance, local authorities are likely to prioritise civil



Justice Committee

enforcement. For those guidelines we are not convinced that three levels of culpability and harm are needed and that it may be preferable to move to a model based on two levels instead. We note that a number of responses pointed out that the factors in the lowest categories for HMO offences, for example "low risk of adverse effect", were not appropriate for these types of offences.

We look forward to working with the Council on future guidelines.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Slaughter
Chair
Justice Committee