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Responding to Ken Clarke's speech at Conservative Party conference, Roma Hooper, director of Make Justice Work, said:

"Ken Clarke is right – his most pressing priority is to reform the criminal justice system so it can deal with repeat offenders more effectively and at less cost to the taxpayer. The answer is staring the government in the face: intensive community sentences are proven to be tough, reduce crime, and cost a fraction of a short stay in prison, which for these offenders will never be anything other than a 'university of crime'".

Notes to editors:

For further information or interviews with Make Justice Work spokespeople, please call:

Sho Konno

020 7550 5626 / 07906 153 469

Extract from Ken Clarke's speech to the Conservative party conference:

"When you look at the scale of the economic crisis, I don't believe we can possibly say...

... we're not going to save money on criminals...

... but we are going to have reductions in spending on Police and Defence, on Transport and Local Government. You can't say that like the health sector, criminals are exempt from the cuts. Every criminal we have in jail costs you and me about £40,000 a year...

...and there are more than 80,000 of them in prison right now. And I just do not believe that we can follow the old brain-free policy of throwing money at the problem. That's what Labour did.

And look where it got them. And all of us.

The most shocking reminder of how broken a society ours is. In this summer's riots, more than 75 per cent of the adults charged were repeat offenders. 1 in 4 of them had been convicted of ten crimes or more.

Career criminals. ...I had a few other choice words for them at the time... Our feral underclass is too big, has been growing, and needs to be diminished. Less crime, fewer criminals

The question for me and my ministry now, is how do we reform the Criminal Justice System so that these unreformed, recidivist criminals, are dealt with more effectively and at less cost to the taxpayer.

Make Justice Work commissioned the **National Commission of Enquiry: 'Community or Custody?'** to investigate the efficacy and cost of robust community alternatives to short term prison sentences for low level offenders.

The Enquiry is chaired by **Peter Osborne**, political commentator, author and broadcaster.

The panel includes:

- **Lord Blair**, former Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police
- **Dame Anne Owers**, former Chief Inspector of Prisons
- **Roma Hooper**, Founder and Director of Make Justice Work
- **Paul McDowell**, Chief Executive of Nacro
- **Javed Khan**, Chief Executive of Victim Support
- **John Thornhill**, Chair of the Magistrates' Association

About Make Justice Work:

Make Justice Work campaigns to raise awareness of the costliness and ineffectiveness of locking up low-level offenders. It aims to raise awareness of more cost-effective alternatives to short-term custodial sentences.

www.makejusticework.org.uk