MAGISTRATES’ TRAINING VISITS TO PRISON SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

1. Introduction

1.1 This Order cancels and replaces AG 54/1996.

1.2 Purpose

The Order takes into account the Magistrates’ New Training Initiative which provides the requirement for magistrates to reach certain competencies set by the Judicial Studies Board. One of these is “to achieve and apply an understanding of the framework within which magistrates operate”. This includes the role of the Prison Service within the criminal justice system. The Order supports the current Business Plan vision to work constructively with criminal justice agencies and other organisations, and also supports one of the overarching aims set by the Government for the criminal justice system viz. To dispense justice fairly and efficiently and to promote confidence in the rule of law.

1.3 Output
The Order will assist magistrates to acquire the required competence and will assure consistency in the type of visits to establishments they are offered.

2. **Impact and resource Assessment**

2.1 Impact and demand on resources are likely to be neutral since the Order merely refines previous advice, adapting it to the contemporary climate.

3. **Implementation**

3.1 Mandatory: The Magistrates’ New Training Initiative is taking effect over a phased period ending on 30 September 2003. *This Order must be implemented as soon as possible and in any case by one month from date of publication.*

3.2 Visiting establishments by law magistrates assist them to meet the requirement of being a competent person to undertake judicial duties and magistrates will be interested to be given some general information about the establishment and about the Prison Service policies before the commencement of the tour. (The pamphlets “The Prison Service Vision” and the précis of the current Business Plan would be useful handouts).

3.3 Mandatory: An experienced magistrate or justices’ clerk will usually act as a visit leader. *The Governor must ensure that an operational manager of a least Prison Service grade 3 normally accompanies the group or is available to them for discussion at the end of the visit.*

3.4 A sample programme for a visit and suggested topics for discussion, agreed with the Magistrates’ Association, is annexed.
4. **Audit and Monitoring**

Self-audit for the present, perhaps by seeking feedback from the Clerk to the visiting bench. After February 2001 compliance will be audit under Standard 64 (Treatment of the public and criminal justice agencies).

5. **Contact Point**

Claudia Sturt, Room 535 Cleland House (020 7217 6856).

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**Martin Narey**  
**Director General**
ANNEX

SAMPLE PROGRAMME FOR A 2-3 HOUR VISIT BY MAGISTRATES - AND SUGGESTED TOPICS TO INCLUDE IN ANY DISCUSSIONS DURING AND AT THE END OF THE TOUR

- reception;
- view of the wings, and an opportunity to see and enter a cell;
- segregation unit;
- health care centre;
- probation - (staff could explain how the prison role differs from court work);
- workshops (an opportunity to talk to prisoners);
- education block;
- visits area - (mention of family ties);
- gymnasium and sports facilities, including exercise yard;
- chapel - (an opportunity to explain the role of the chaplain, prison visitors, volunteers and other faiths’ representatives/leaders);
- library;
- kitchen - (the magistrates will be interested to know about meal times, menus and budgets);
- any specialist units;
- training annex.

2. **Suggested topics for discussion:**

- aims and problems of the prison;
- a comparison of a governor’s adjudication functions and the sentencing powers of magistrates;
- incentives and earned privileges;
- educational provision;
- work opportunities;
- equal opportunities;
- race relations policy;
- links with the community;
- offending behaviour programmes;
- problems of confinement in closed institutions including suicide awareness and anti-bullying strategies;
- drug strategy;
- relationship between staff and prisoners and staff and management.