WHITING SENTENCED TO LIFE FOR MURDER OF SARAH PAYNE

Roy Whiting kidnapped, killed and callously dumped the body of eight-year-old Sarah Payne in a crime which was every parent's worst nightmare, said the Chief Crown Prosecutor for Sussex, Alison Saunders.

Whiting, who was sentenced to life imprisonment at Lewes Crown Court for the little girl's kidnap and murder, had denied having anything to do with Sarah's abduction and killing but was convicted by the jury.

Mrs Saunders said: "A missing child is every parent's worst nightmare and the disappearance of eight-year-old Sarah nearly 18 months ago touched the hearts of everyone."

"Since the early days of the search for Sarah, the CPS in Sussex worked tirelessly with the police to put the case together. Once a suspect was identified, we advised the police on the steps to take including an identity parade."

"It wasn't until January this year that we reached a point where we thought there was sufficient evidence for the police to arrest Roy Whiting who, at the time, was serving a prison sentence."

"Once we had the forensic evidence, we knew we had a strong case to seek justice for Sarah."

Whiting's conviction marked the end of many months of hard work by the prosecution team, she said, adding: "I would like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence. While nothing can bring back Sarah, justice has been done with the conviction of Roy Whiting for her murder."

Note To Editors:

1. Alison Saunders took up her appointment as Chief Crown Prosecutor for Sussex in April 2001. Previously an Assistant Chief Crown Prosecutor for CPS London, she is a barrister who has worked for the CPS since 1986. Alison has wide and varied experience of prosecuting many high profile cases; during 2001 these included David Mulcahy, the railway rapist, and Barry George who was convicted of the murder of Jill Dando.

2. For further information contact the CPS Press Office on 020 7796 8105.