The objectives of sentencing are:

• Retribution. Retribution has public support, but more limited judicial support. The concept that 'the punishment should fit the crime' - the tariff system, is one of retribution.

Retribution is the penal policy of the Old Testament - an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

• Deterrence of the offender - most likely to be effective if the sentence is cruel and unusual (blinding, dismemberment, etc.)

• Deterrence of other potential offenders. This is dependent on publicity, severity and the perceived risk of being caught (i.e. the perceived level of police powers and the effectiveness of their exercise)

• Rehabilitation - this implies that the offender can be rehabilitated - that the solution to crime is to correct the personality defects of the offender - which is unlikely for many criminals, and can take many years at a high cost. It is less applicable if the offender is remorseful.

In considering the rehabilitative effect of a sentencing, it must be considered whether prisons are rehabilitative or degenerative; in addition does a criminal record really help people to return to normal employment (particularly employment more profitable than crime (where the crime is of a pecuniary nature), etc. (which is likely to be necessary for full rehabilitation)?

Rehabilitation is a high-cost policy, and is high-risk in that 'returns' are far from certain, with a fear that good money should not be thrown after bad. As such, purely rehabilitative sentences such as counselling are not part of UK penal policy, and even the apparently rehabilitative community service order, was introduced as a result of rising prison numbers. Even with hospital orders, the primary purpose is protection of the public, and the only order that was introduced purely to rehabilitate offenders rather than to save money or protect the public was the drug treatment order.