

# Joint letter from 100 civil society figures opposing the indeterminate sentence for public protection

To The Rt Hon Dominic Raab, Secretary Of State For Justice.

This joint letter has been endorsed by a broad coalition of experts, and society comity, organisations and campaigners opposing the indeterminate sentence for the protection of the public (IPP).

We the undersigned have come together to oppose the indeterminate sentence for public protection, we ask that you consider the options below for change to the IPP sentence

A) Resentence all IPP prisoners.

B) Release all IPP prisoners on a licence more suited to the index offence. In order to ensure that all prisoners are released with the help and support of probation services, community mental health care, housing support and housing accommodation. Help former IPP prisoners to get into employment and gain much needed support from the DWP while looking for work and access to drug and alcohol support services through NHS services. Ensure these prisoners have support to reintegrate them back into society and that the support helps give them a chance to become law abiding members of the community.

## How Does The IPP Sentence Work

Like other life sentences, the IPP is divided into two points: The judge decides how many years a person must spend in prison as punishment for the crime they committed (known as a tariff) once that time is served, they may apply for release.

They must then serve a licence for the rest of their life. The licence includes restrictions on where they live, who they see and where they go.

Tariffs were set based on how many years imprisonment a person would receive before the IPP sentence was introduced - because it covered so many crimes - many not serious - tariffs were often very short - the shortest tariff was 28 days.

The tariff was followed by the continued confinement in the interest of public protection.

There is no guarantee that a person serving IPP will ever be released from prison after they have served their tariff. The parole board must decide that they are no longer dangerous and unlikely to commit another offence.

Almost nobody serving an IPP has been released on their tariff date. On 30 June 2022, there were 1,492 people serving an IPP sentence who had never been released from prison. 97% of these people were past their tariff date. 73% of those have served 5 or more years over tariff. 608 people had been in prison for more than 10 years over their tariff, including 10 people whose tariff was less than one year. There were a further 1,434 people subject to IPP sentences who were in prison having been recalled to custody. This was 8% higher than the previous year.

Even once released, if a person with an IPP breaks the terms of their licence, they can be returned to prison indefinitely and may never be released.

The fundamental difference between an IPP sentence and a sentence of a set number of years in prison is that (after serving time) the IPP sentence keeps people in prison based on what they might do in future, rather than what they have done in the past. It relies on professionals predicting the future accurately.

The sentence was supposed to deal with the most dangerous people in society. It was supposed to give them long enough in prison to access help to change their behaviour and stop committing crime. The IPP sentence has not achieved this goal.

1) The sentence loses sight of Justice.

By sentencing so many people with so many different offences to the same sentence, the principles of proper punishment are lost. This can lead to people convicted of very serious offences often serving the same number of years as people convicted of less serious offences, based on whether they are considered rehabilitated. Many people who were given the IPP sentence themselves as well as the general public, have indicated that the principles of proportionality is important.

2) Too many IPP sentences were given out.

When the IPP sentence was planned, the Government predicted around 900 people would receive it. It was actually given to more than 8,000 people altogether, including over 1,500 in the first two years. Prisons were not prepared to receive this many people with no release date.

3) People did not appreciate how serious the sentence was.

In the early years, people who were given the IPP and criminal Justice system alike could not take in that there really were so many life sentences being given to so many people, for so many crimes. This meant the sentence was badly managed, and those serving the IPP were clear about what was expected of them. Even the minister who introduced the IPP sentence, David Blunkett, now campaigns for its abolition.

4) Not enough help was available.

Prisons did not have enough rehabilitation services available to help those given IPP to deal with the problems behind their crimes. That meant they were still assessed as dangerous when they came up for parole, and so stayed in prison much longer. Together this toxic psychological mix makes it very difficult for people serving the sentence to do what is expected

10  
Reasons  
Why The  
Sentence  
Is Not  
Working

of them. The sentence produces psychological conditions which makes its goals almost impossible.

5) Prison is not the best place for change.

Studies show that rehabilitative programmes are less effective when delivered in prison - change happens best under conditions of psychological safety and security- prison is overcrowded and dangerous. People serving the IPP report that their sentence makes them more vulnerable in prison, because other prisoners know they have more to lose by misbehaviour.

6) The sentence is psychologically toxic.

Studies show three psychological effects of IPP Sentence: Anxiety, despair and a deep sense of injustice.

This is consistent with what we know about human behaviour. Not knowing what will happen, or feeling like relief from distress will never happen, both reduce our sense of control over our lives. In the most extreme cases, people resort to self-harm or suicide. The self-harm and suicide rate for those serving IPP is higher than those of other prisoners. Additionally, those who were given an IPP knew the sentence was banned, and that in most cases, their sentence is disproportionate. We know that if people feel unfairly treated, they are less likely to comply with the law. The remaining people serving the IPP sentence feel so unfairly treated by the system, that they find it difficult to cooperate with the help that is now offered "A requirement for their release".

7) We cannot predict the future.

We cannot predict the future. The IPP sentence relies on professionals being able to predict accurately whether someone will reoffend. But the best avoidable methods only predict reoffending with around 70 % accuracy, and no study has examined how accurately reoffending by those given an IPP can be predicted- The unique circumstances of the sentence may mean that current production models do not work so accurately.

8) The sentence damages people and their families.

It is by professionals that IPP has produced a legacy of mental health problems. Being in prisons for an uncertain length of time, and relying on Judgements about an uncertain future, is traumatic, and damaging 73 people with an IPP have killed themselves. The sentence also damages family members. Studies have shown that the family members of those given IPP suffer financial and emotional strain, hopelessness and loss of faith in the justice system. Some children of IPP prisoners show separation, anxiety, emotional distress and behavioural problems.

9) Licences are not working.

When those who have been given an IPP sentence do get released, they are getting recalled to prison at a higher rate than those other released prisoners. This is not because they are offending at a greater rate, but because they are struggling to comply with their licence conditions. This is often because of problems that pre-dated prison, such as drugs and homelessness. The probation service has had its budget cut dramatically in the last 10 years, making it difficult for them to help those serving an IPP cope with the damaging legacy of their sentence. Many were imprisoned as teenagers and are released in their mid 30s, which makes learning to live as an adult especially difficult.

10) There is no evidence that sentences like the IPP are effective.

IPP is not the first sentence of its kind. Other sentences, in both the UK and other countries, have been used. Based on the principle that imprisoning someone indefinitely will resolve their problems, and result in less crime. However, there is no evidence that such a sentence works any better than such a sentence to a set number of years in prison with a determined release date.

Kind Regards

Shirley Debono & IPP Committee In Action

1. Michael Mansfield QC
2. Deborah Coles, Executive Director INQUEST
3. Chris Daw QC
4. Dean Kingham, Reece Thomas Watson Solicitors
5. Dr Felicity Gerry QC, Libertas Chambers
6. Sam Grant, Head of Policy and Campaigns, Liberty
7. Andrew Sperling, Director, SL5 Legal
8. Nigel R Edwards QC, 33 Bedford Row North
9. Andrea Coomber KC (Hon) HLFPR, Chief Executive Howard League for Penal Reform
10. Dr Christina Straub, Durham University, Manchester University, Research Associate
11. Lady Val Corbett, The Corbett Network for Prisoner Reintegration
12. Harry Annison, Academic Researcher
13. Emma McClure, Solicitor
14. Lorna Hackett, Barrister
15. Revd Dr David Beedon, JBVISTA, CofE priest. Ex-Prison Chaplain
16. Richard Garside, Director, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies
17. Lubia Begum-Rob, Director, Prisoners Advice Service
18. Russell Webster, Independent Researcher and former Probation Officer
19. Amber Walker, Barrister, 33 Bedford Row
20. Naima Sakande, Deputy Director, APPEAL
21. Dr Jaspreet Tehara, Chartered Psychologist and Academic
22. Caitlin Moran, The Times
23. Suzanne Moore, The Daily Telegraph
24. Peter Tatchell, Peter Tatchell Foundation
25. Matt Potter, Journalist, broadcaster
26. Dr Sarah Lewis, Penal Reform Solutions
27. Fiona Robertson, Disability Justice Officer, SNP Disabled Members Group
28. Steve Garland, Solicitor
29. Annabelle Ledbrooke and Charlotte Millbank, Pay It Back UK
30. J.N Cunliffe, JENGBA (Joint Enterprise Not Guilty by Association)
31. Kieran Yates, Journalist, Author
32. Joshua Idehen, Artist
33. Alice Nuttall, Author

## Signatories

34. Greg Jenner, Public Historian
35. Ilyas Nagdee, Racial Justice Lead, Amnesty International UK
36. Halima Begum, Chief Executive Officer, The Runnymede Trust
37. Amritpal Singh Dhesi, Sikh Council UK
38. Dr Yvonne Ridley, Journalist and Author
39. Jessica Turtle, Museum of Homelessness
40. Dr. Adam Elliott-Cooper, Lecturer in Public Policy, Department of Politics and IR, Queen Mary University
41. Daniel York Loh, Writer
42. Sabrina Qureshi, Founder and Coordinator Million Women Rise Movement
43. Dorothea Jones, The Monitoring Group
44. Dr Kavita Bhanot, Literature Must Fall
45. Ahammed Hussain, Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK (MPACUK)
46. Owen Jones, Author, The Guardian
47. Lee Morgan, Progressing Prisoners Maintaining Innocence (PPMI)
48. Zafirah, Student
49. John McDonnell MP, Member of Parliament
50. Olivia Crellin, CEO and Founder, PressPad
51. Premila Tamang, Director, Gurkha Equal Rights
52. Subhadra Das, Writer and historian
53. Ramzy Alwakeel, Head of news, openDemocracy
54. Samantha Asumadu, Writer
55. Laurie Penny, Screenwriter
56. Carys Nelkon, Arts Emergency
57. Jon Robins, The Justice Gap, Brighton University
58. Henry Rossi, The Institute of Now
59. Afroze Zaidi, Editor, The Canary
60. Monica del Pilar Uribe Marin, Director of The Prisma - The Multicultural Newspaper
61. Cherrie Nichol, Foster carer
62. Neil Gaiman, Writer
63. Cat Rosina Diales, Reform and Rebuild
64. Shirley Debono, IPP Committee in Action
65. Sarah Burrows, Children Heard and Seen
66. Faith Spear FRSA, Independent Criminologist and writer
67. Katrina Pritchard, Care Assistant
68. Sarah Hughes, Centre for Mental Health
69. Lee Jasper Vice Chair Black and Asian Lawyers for

Justice, Former Equality lead for London Criminal Justice Board

70. Mr Michael O'Brien, Author
71. Minna Salami, Author, Social Critic
72. Akiko Hart, National Survivor User Network, CEO
73. Ian Hodson, BFAWU
74. Sarah O'Connell, Journalist
75. Thomas Compton, Anti-Racism Working Group, University of York
76. Nate Bethea, Writer and Producer
77. UNGRIPP
78. Danny Barrs, Progressing Prisoners Maintaining Innocence (PPMI)
79. Dr Dennis Eady, Cardiff Law School Innocence project
80. Garry Malone, PPMI. BSc (Hons) Psychology. Pg.Dip. Occupational studies in Psychology.
81. Madani Younis, Producer, Director
82. Charles Thompson MBE, CEO Screen Nation Media / Film Producer
83. Heather Mendick, Education and Equity, Research Consultant
84. Hon. Professor Dr Geraldine Akerman, NHS
85. Allison Fackrell, Foster carer
86. Naomi Murphy, Consultant Clinical & Forensic Psychologist / Honorary professor of psychology (Nottingham Trent University)
87. Philip Martin, Ex-seed Employment Agency and Recruitment Network for people with convictions
88. Kate Hammer, Trainee Psychologist & Trainee Psychotherapist
89. Marie Cavanagh, Care manager for life care plus
90. Gary Lee, The Outsiders Project, Giving Voice To The Unheard
91. Cara Mohan-Carr, Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator
92. Andrew S Hatton, Re, tired Probation Officer/Social Worker
93. Dr Andrew Henley, Associate Professor of Criminology
94. Wendy Martin, Director - Internet Erasure Ltd, working to prevent enforced disclosure of historic convictions and to support equal opportunities in housing and employment for people with convictions
95. Graham Towl, Professor of Forensic Psychology, Durham University and former Chief Psychologist, MoJ





- 96. Debbie James, Outsiders
- 97. Amanda Pilcher, Homeless prevention worker
- 98. Gillian Dickinson , Lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice, University Centre at Blackburn College
- 99. Joy Doal, CEO Anawim
- 100. Mandy Lawrence, Mother of IPP

---

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms