Name:

Address:

Email:

Date:

Dear **{MP Name}**

My name is **{your name}** and I am **{profession and credentials}.** I am one of your constituents. I am writing to let you know that I am extremely concerned about the continued existence of the Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection, known as the IPP sentence, despite its abolition by the Government in 2012. The IPP sentence imprisons people indefinitely on the basis of what they might do, not what they have done. I have enclosed further information about the sentence. I would like you to take action on the matter as soon as possible.

**I would like you to take forward my concerns, set out below, by backing the swift implementation of the IPP reforms that were passed in the House of Commons set out in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024. These reforms were agreed by parliament with cross-party support. They provide a sensible and comprehensively planned way forward, and it is vital that this opportunity is not wasted.**

**I would also like your backing for legislation that would see the provision of a resentencing exercise for everybody serving an IPP sentence, carefully planned by an expert group. This was the main recommendation put forward by The Justice Select Committee inquiry into IPP in 2022.**

There is now clear evidence that:

* The IPP sentence severely affects the mental health of those serving it[[1]](#footnote-0),[[2]](#footnote-1).
* The sentence has played a role in the suicides of individuals serving it[[3]](#footnote-2).
* The sentence is associated with higher rates of self-harm compared to the rest of the prison population[[4]](#footnote-3).
* The sentence causes significant financial, social and emotional adversity for family members of people serving it, including children[[5]](#footnote-4),[[6]](#footnote-5).
* The sentence undermines professionals’ ability to assist individuals serving an IPP sentence in making changes to their lives that will reduce reoffending[[7]](#footnote-6).
* The sentence is costly and ineffective, with the Government itself acknowledging that the number of people detained in prison on the IPP sentence is set to increase, despite the administrative and policy efforts that it claimed would resolve the issue[[8]](#footnote-7).

The Government has defended its decision not to abolish the sentence retrospectively, on the basis that it enables public protection. Yet it has failed to produce any evidence that the IPP sentence is any more effective than the determinate sentences given to individuals who pose a similar level of risk, and are convicted of equivalent crimes under current sentencing law.

The clear imposition of harm and clear lack of benefit of the IPP sentence is of great concern to me. Furthermore, indefinite detention on the basis of what an individual might do has no place in a fair, proportionate and just system of punishment. Nor does the infliction of harm on families, children and loved ones who have committed no crime.

Furthermore, I have experience in working with people affected by the IPP sentence. I have observed that **{add your personal experiences here, if applicable}**.

At this crucial time, I would like you to advocate on my behalf for implementation of the IPP reforms contained in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024. It contains provisions that offer people released from prison a more proportionate route off the IPP sentence, by reducing the review period post-release from ten years to three years, and provision to end a sentence if a person avoids recall for a further two years beyond the review point. It also grants the Secretary of State enhanced discretionary powers to prevent recall counting against someone where it is in the interests of justice to do so. Finally, the Act requires an annual progress report to be laid before parliament, enhancing accountability and transparency. These reforms are the result of substantial planning, and have offered hope to people on a hopeless sentence. It is vital that they are brought into force as a matter of urgent priority.

The Justice Select Committee published a report into the IPP sentence in 2022. The report gives a damning indictment of a regime of indefinite detention that has caused widely documented harm, and departed from public notions of justice, fairness and proportionality. The Committee concluded that even though there are ways to improve how the IPP sentence works, there is no way to truly fix it, and it is “irredeemably flawed”. Their main recommendation is a resentencing exercise. That means that everybody serving IPP would be individually resentenced by a judge, to a sentence available under current sentencing law, following the principle of balancing public protection with justice, judicial independence, and the appointment of an independent panel to implement the exercise. I would also like you to advocate on my behalf for legislating for the primary recommendation of the Justice Committee IPP inquiry. You can read the report here:

https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/102/justice-committee/news/173280/justice-ipp-sentences-report-published-22-23/

I would be grateful if you would speak to the Secretary of State for Justice, Shabana Mahmood, and request that she consider these changes to the IPP sentence, and to advocate for them yourself.

I hope to hear back from you soon. If you are unable to address this personally, I would like to request that you escalate my letter to the relevant Minister or department.

Please do keep me informed of any progress made.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

**{Your name}**

**What is an IPP sentence?**

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 introduced the Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection, known as the IPP sentence.

The IPP was an indefinite sentence, potentially life, that could be given for any of 153 crimes, including affray and criminal damage. Many of these crimes had never previously been given a life sentence.

Before 2005, life sentences were reserved for murder, and the most serious cases of manslaughter, GBH, robbery with violence, and perpetrators of sexual violence.

Between 2005 and 2013, 8,711 people in England & Wales were given the IPP sentence. Prior to its implementation, it was predicted that only 900 people would receive this type of sentence, as it was intended for only the most serious offences.

In 2012, following a ruling against the IPP sentence by the European Court of Human Rights for breaching Article 5(1), it was abolished by the Government. But it was not abolished retrospectively. On 31st March 2023, 2,916 people were still serving an IPP sentence in prison.

Until recently there was little precedent for retrospective changes to law. However, the introduction of the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act 2020 indicates that, where there is political will, retrospective changes will be enacted.

Apart from a handful of successful appeals, all people released on an IPP continue to serve their sentence in the community, for life.

**How does the IPP sentence work?**

The IPP is divided into three parts. The judge decides how many years a person must spend in prison as punishment for their crime (known as a ‘tariff’). Once that time is served, they remain in prison indefinitely, but may apply to the Parole Board for release. If they achieve release, they must then serve a licence for at least 10 years, but potentially the rest of their life. The licence includes restrictions on where they live, who they see, and what they do.

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 was 28 days. The tariff was then followed by indefinite confinement in the interests of public protection, and, if release was achieved, recall on a public protection basis. It is the ongoing, indeterminate nature of the sentence which has caused today’s problems.

**Today’s picture**

[1,180 people serving an IPP sentence in prison have never been released.](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly) 99% are now over tariff. 57% have served between 10 and 18 years beyond their tariff. That’s 10-19 years longer than the judge thought they deserved for their crime.

[1,616 of the people currently serving an IPP in prison were recalled.](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly) In 2023, 83% of IPP recalls were for non-compliance, not further offending. The Government forecast that [the recalled IPP population would double between](https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2020-12-07.125975.h) 2020 and 2026.

[The self-harm incident rate for those serving an IPP is more than double that of those serving a determinate sentence.](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics)  So far, at least 90 people serving an IPP sentence have killed themselves in prison. The [Prison and Probation Ombudsman](https://ppo.gov.uk/news/adrian-usher-there-are-several-risk-factors-associated-with-ipp-sentences/) and the [Independent Monitoring Board](https://imb.org.uk/news/ipp-prisoners-report-increased-hopelessness-following-resentencing-rejection/) have both recently warned about the role of the IPP sentence in suicides.

1. HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2016). *Unintended consequences: Finding a way forward for prisoners serving sentences of public protection.* https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wpcontent/uploads/sites/4/2016/11/Unintended-consequences-Web-2016.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Edgar, K., Harris, M. & Webster, R. (2020). *No life, no freedom, no future: The experiences of prisoners recalled under the sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection.* Prison Reform Trust. http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/no%20freedom\_final\_web.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. (2019). *Investigating cases involving IPP prisoners.* https://www.ppo.gov.uk/blog/investigating-thedeaths-of-ipp-prisoners/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Prison Reform Trust. (2019). *Bromley briefings prison factfile: Winter 2019*, p. 29,

http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/portals/0/documents/bromley%20briefings/Winter%202019%20Factfile%20web.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Annison, H., & Condry, R. (2019). The pains of indeterminate imprisonment for family members. *Prison Service Journal(241*), 11-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. McConnell, M., & Raikes, B. (2019). 'It’s not a case of he’ll be home one day' The impact on families of sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP). *Child Care in Practice, 25*(4), 349-366. https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2018.1448257 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Edgar, K., Harris, M. & Webster, R. (2020). *No life, no freedom, no future: The experiences of prisoners recalled under the sentence of*

*Imprisonment for Public Protection.* Prison Reform Trust. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Ministry of Justice (2021). Prison population projections 2020-2026, England and Wales. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/938571/Prison\_Population\_Projections\_2020\_to\_2026.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)