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.

There is now clear evidence that:

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

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}**.

I am aware that the Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill will return to Parliament in the coming months. I would be grateful if you would speak to the Secretary of State for Justice, Robert Buckland, and request that he considers including some of the following changes to the IPP sentence, and to advocate for them yourself, ideally in a cross-party effort:

**Resentencing**

To resentence every person currently still serving an IPP sentence, to a determinate sentence that is proportional to the crime they committed, and legal under current sentencing law (a life sentence could be reserved for the most serious crimes). This would restore a sense of just and proportionate punishment.

**Licence conditions**

Once a person serving an IPP sentence is released from prison, adjust their licence conditions by either:

*Making the licence length proportionate to the index offence.*

or

*Allow the Parole Board discretion to set licence lengths.*

or

*Reducing the amount of time people must wait to apply to have their licence removed, from 10 years to 5 years.*

or

*Removing the IPP sentence upon release from prison and replace it with a time-limited supervision order, to aid resettlement.*

and

*Restricting the use of indeterminate recall to prison for minor breaches.*

and

*Involving a third party in recall decisions (e.g. the Parole Board).*

and

*Giving those recalled to prison a right to an annual Parole hearing (currently every 2 years).*

**Support**

Allocate funding to offer holistic support to all those affected by the IPP sentence. There is a wealth of evidence documenting the harm that the IPP sentence has caused to those serving it, and to their families, which should be rectified by the state.

The Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill is a window of opportunity to rectify the wrongs to a sentence that has been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights, the Prison Reform Trust, the Howard League, Liberty, Amnesty International, and the Minister who introduced the sentence, David Blunkett, who has called it *“the greatest single stain on our justice system”*. Your help on this matter is crucial.

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 a life sentence 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. In March 2021, 3,134 people were still in prison serving an IPP sentence.

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 two 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 may apply to the Parole Board for release. If they achieve 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 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**

1,784 people serving an IPP sentence in prison have never been released. 96% are now over tariff. 29% have served between 10 and 16 years beyond their tariff.

1,350 of the people currently serving an IPP in prison were recalled. Between 2015 and 2020, 56% of IPP recalls were for non-compliance, not further offending. The Government has forecast that the recalled IPP population will double in the next six years.

The self-harm incident rate for IPP prisoners is almost double that of determinately sentenced prisoners. So far, 70 people serving an IPP sentence have killed themselves in prison, and the Prison and Probation Ombudsman has warned of 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-1)
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-2)
3. Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. (2019). *Investigating cases involving IPP prisoners.* https://www.ppo.gov.uk/blog/investigating-thedeaths-of-ipp-prisoners/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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-4)
5. Annison, H., & Condry, R. (2019). The pains of indeterminate imprisonment for family members. *Prison Service Journal(241*), 11-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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-6)
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-7)
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-8)