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 Amendment NC1 to the Victims and Prisoners Bill, proposed by Sir Bob Neill, Chair of the Justice Select Committee.** The amendment, entitled ‘Resentencing those serving a sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection’ would make provision a resentencing exercise carefully planned by an expert group.[You can view the full amendment by clicking here.](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0351/amend/victims_rm_rep_1128.pdf)

While I back the Justice Select Committee’s main conclusion that a resentencing exercise is the only way to truly fix the IPP sentence, **I would also like you to support Amendment NC26, proposed by Justice Secretary Alex Chalk**. The amendment proposes substantial reforms to the licence period of the IPP sentence, which would preserve an element of public protection while giving people an automatic end date to their IPP sentence five years post-release. You can view the full amendment at the above link, and you can read about how it would work here: [‘Reforms bring hope to rehabilitated people still serving abolished indefinite sentences.’](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/reforms-bring-hope-to-rehabilitated-people-still-serving-abolished-indefinite-sentences#:~:text=Lord%20Chancellor%20and%20Justice%20Secretary,from%20the%20most%20serious%20offenders.)

In August 2023, the [United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture stated the Government should urgently review IPP.](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/08/uk-un-torture-expert-calls-urgent-review-over-2000-prison-tariffs-under) They expressed ‘serious alarm’ about the suicides of people serving an IPP sentence (a concern recently echoed by the Prison & Probation Ombudsman), and stated that the sentence ‘violates basic principles of fair justice and the rule of law.’

There is now clear evidence that the IPP sentence:

* Severely affects the mental health of those serving it[[1]](#footnote-1),[[2]](#footnote-2).
* Has played a role in the suicides of individuals serving it[[3]](#footnote-3).
* Is associated with higher rates of self-harm compared to the rest of the prison population[[4]](#footnote-4).
* Causes significant financial, social and emotional adversity for family members of people serving it, including children[[5]](#footnote-5),[[6]](#footnote-6).
* Undermines professionals’ ability to assist individuals serving an IPP sentence in making changes to their lives that will reduce reoffending[[7]](#footnote-7).
* 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. Indefinite detention on the basis of what an individual might do also 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}**.

In 2022, the Justice Select Committee published a report on [their inquiry into the IPP sentence.](https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/102/justice-committee/news/173280/justice-committee-finds-ipp-sentences-irredeemably-flawed-and-calls-for-comprehensive-resentencing-programme/) 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 expert group to implement the exercise. It also concluded that *“the Government needs to devote far greater energy to tackling the recall merry-go-round.”*

The proposed amendments to the Victims and Prisoners Bill are 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, the former Home Secretary who introduced the sentence (Lord Blunkett), and the former Lord Chief Justice Lord Brown who has called it *“the greatest single stain on our justice system.”* Your help on this matter is crucial.

Shadow Justice Minister Ellie Reeves signalled in a Westminster Hall debate on 27th April 2023 that Labour will work constructively with the Conservatives in a cross-party effort on IPP. There is now a real chance to secure change, and I would like you to help.

In the coming months, please back Amendments NC1 and NC26, and advocate for them in whatever way you can. As a criminal justice professional, I want to see a system that delivers justice.

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.

**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**

[1,269 people serving an IPP sentence in prison have never been released.](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly) 98% are now over tariff. 55% have served between 10 and 18 years beyond their tariff. That’s 10-18 years longer than the judge thought they deserved for their crime.

[1,652 of the people currently serving an IPP in prison were recalled.](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly) In 2022, 74% 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 83 people serving an IPP sentence have killed themselves in prison. The [Prison and Probation Ombudsman](https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/ppo-prod-storage-1g9rkhjhkjmgw/uploads/2023/09/14.322_PPO_LL_Bulletin_Issue18_FINAL.pdf) 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.

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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,

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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)