IPP reform promises and the persistence of indefinite punishment

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The People's Inquiry into IPP Risk and State Harm



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The sentence behind the speeches

Britain has become accomplished at announcing its concern about Imprisonment for Public Protection. Ministers acknowledge injustice, unveil initiatives and promise progress. Meanwhile, people continue living under the sentence that Parliament stopped imposing in 2012. The central scandal is this distance between the language of resolution and the machinery of continuation. An announcement can change the political atmosphere overnight. It cannot, by itself, change the legal authority under which somebody remains imprisoned or liable to recall.

The question is therefore exacting: what has changed in the state's power over the person? Shorter licence periods matter. Release matters. Every termination matters. Yet improvements within an indefinite sentence cannot be presented as the sentence's abolition. Until legislation resolves the position of those still subject to IPP and its childhood equivalent, DPP, the state continues administering a punishment it has already rejected for new cases. (House of Commons Library, 2026).

This is the distinction political discourse repeatedly blurs. Activity becomes achievement; consultation becomes accountability; the promise of a pathway becomes evidence that a destination exists. For those waiting, the difference is measured in birthdays missed, relationships lost, psychological deterioration and lives that end before the promised reform arrives. Discourse analysis makes the allocation of responsibility visible. The prisoner must engage, demonstrate, comply and progress. The institution will review, explore, monitor and consider. One vocabulary imposes obligations on a person; the other preserves discretion for an organisation. Failure by the person can have immediate consequences for liberty. Failure by the institution can become another action point. This asymmetry deserves examination whenever ministers count processes as evidence of justice. The outcomes that matter are accurate decisions, timely correction and sustained freedom.

A chronology of incomplete remedies

The pattern predates abolition. In 2008, legislation restricted IPP's availability and restored judicial discretion, while leaving earlier sentences intact. In 2011, ministers promised better assessment, sentence planning and parole processes. In 2012, prospective abolition stopped the creation of new cases without resolving the existing population. Parliament also provided a power to change the release test; the 2022 Justice Committee recorded that it remained unused. Recognition of injustice repeatedly outran willingness to dismantle its legal foundation. (UK Parliament, 2008; House of Commons, 2011; UK Parliament, 2012; Justice Committee, 2022).

Operational remedies accumulated. Warren Hill's progression regime opened in 2014. An IPP Action Plan and targeted psychology reviews followed in 2016; rules allowed release without an oral hearing. Three further progression regimes opened in 2018. Psychology reviews widened in 2019 and 2021. These interventions helped individuals, but their purpose remained progression through IPP, rather than liberation from its organising principle. (Ministry of Justice, 2022b; Ministry of Justice, 2022a; Parole Board, 2016).

From 2020, probation proactively encouraged eligible licence applications. Automatic referrals followed as policy in 2021 and legislation in 2022. The Justice Committee recommended resentencing in September 2022. Government rejected that central remedy in February 2023, offering a refreshed action plan instead. External scrutiny arrangements, operational delivery plans, specialist guidance and further training then expanded around a sentence that remained enforceable. (Justice Committee, 2022; Parole Board, 2022; Justice Committee, 2023).

The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 brought substantive changes: shorter qualifying periods, a presumption favouring termination, automatic termination provisions, executive re-release after recall and annual reporting. Implementation began in November 2024 and February 2025. A safety toolkit, a Parole Board taskforce, progression-panel requirements, recall controls and a recall-referral trial added further layers. Section 42 of the Sentencing Act 2026 reduced the adult qualifying period again and restored an opportunity to request a further review. Implementation must be scrutinised; retrospective abolition remains outstanding. (Howard League for Penal Reform et al., 2024; HMPPS, 2025b; UK Parliament, 2026; HMPPS, 2026b).

What the numbers establish

The case against IPP does not require pretending that nothing improves. On 30 June 2026, 2,271 people remained imprisoned under IPP: 856 never released and 1,415 recalled. Those populations had fallen. Government reported a 31% fall in recall events between 2024 and 2025. These reductions matter. They cannot answer whether each remaining restriction is necessary, proportionate or sustained by a fair assessment. (House of Commons Library, 2026; HMPPS, 2026a).

The sharper question concerns the persistence and concentration of harm. Official figures show that 77% of IPP recall events in 2025 involved people not facing a further charge at recall, compared with 70% in 2023. Absence of a charge does not establish that every recall was unjustified. It does establish that returning people to indefinite custody cannot simply be explained to the public as punishment for newly prosecuted crimes. Reasons and alternatives require independent scrutiny. (Ministry of Justice, 2026c). Risk Assessed Recall Review produced 61 executive re-releases between 1 November 2024 and 31 December 2025. Those releases mattered. Ministers must publish cases considered, refusals, reasons, processing times and detention avoided. An outcome count cannot establish equitable access. (Timpson, 2026).

Paper release decisions illustrate the same problem. The power dates from 2016; current guidance permits decisions on the papers where evidence and fairness allow. Reliable, comparable outcome figures are needed. Faster decisions must preserve an oral hearing where disputed evidence requires one. Administrative speed cannot purchase legitimacy through exclusion. (Parole Board, 2016; Parole Board, 2026).

Hope can become an instrument of injury

Hope is not an incidental feature of this system. It is what people organise survival around. A parliamentary recommendation, a ministerial assurance or an approaching termination date can become the point beyond which somebody finally imagines a life. Political communication to this population therefore carries an unusual responsibility: promises must be specific, deliverable and accompanied by honest limits. The consequences of disappointment are documented. In May 2023, Independent Monitoring Boards reported three apparently self-inflicted IPP deaths in the four weeks following the rejection announcement they examined. Across 24 prisons, people described intensified hopelessness and fear of dying inside. This evidence does not establish a single cause for every death. It makes the psychological consequences of political decisions impossible to dismiss. (Independent Monitoring Boards, 2023).

The official record confirmed 92 self-inflicted deaths in prison from IPP's introduction to December 2025, alongside 44 on licence in the community between April 2019 and March 2025. These differently bounded records are not a complete account of deaths. Earlier community data were not readily identifiable centrally. A state capable of maintaining lifelong restrictions must be capable of accounting comprehensively for the people who die under them. (Ministry of Justice, 2026d). In 2025, IPP self-harm occurred at 1,290 incidents per 1,000 prisoners, against 837 across the prison population. The IPP rate rose from 1,189 in 2024 even as the absolute number of incidents fell. Incidents are not unique individuals; repeated injury matters too. A shrinking population can coexist with an intensifying rate of harm. Population reduction alone is an inadequate moral balance sheet. (Ministry of Justice, 2026b; Ministry of Justice, 2026a).

Coroners have supplied the human meaning. Scott Rider's coroner warned that further deaths could follow without review of IPP prisoners. Matthew Price's inquest identified anxiety that seeking mental-health help might damage his prospects of ending the sentence. Taylor Atkinson's jury identified the indefinite sentence as likely the most significant contributor to the despair and exhaustion preceding his death. These are findings about suffering, not public-relations difficulties. (Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 2024c; Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 2024b; INQUEST, 2025).



Scott Rider, 45, died at HMP Woodhill in June 2022 after approximately 17 years in custody on an IPP sentence carrying a 23-month minimum tariff. The coroner described his treatment as "inhumane and indefensible". Photograph: Michelle Mahon / The Independent.



Taylor Atkinson, 50, died at HMP Eastwood Park in July 2022, almost nine years beyond his minimum tariff. His inquest jury found that the indefinite sentence was likely the most significant factor behind the despair and mental exhaustion preceding his suicide. Photograph: Supplied / The Independent.

Josh McRae died at Long Lartin aged 34 in September 2024. The September 2025 podcast reported an ongoing inquest; the sources reviewed do not establish suicide. Uncertainty requires investigation, not silence. (The Institute of Now, 2025; Martin, 2024).



Josh McRae, 34, died at HMP Long Lartin on 6 September 2024 after spending approximately 16 years in custody under an IPP sentence with a four-year minimum tariff. *First imprisoned as a teenager, he spent almost another 11 years inside following recall. His mother, Theresa, said the sentence had taken his adult life: "He wanted to have a family, he wanted a job." Photograph: Theresa McRae / The Independent.*

In Haydar Jefferies's case, the published record identifies neglect, system failure and admitted failures. Institutional responsibility is an evidential question, not something officials can erase through reassurance. (Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 2024a).



Haydar Jefferies, 50, rebuilt his life in the community, married and ran a pub before being recalled under his IPP sentence. *He remained imprisoned after the allegations prompting his recall were no longer pursued. He died in hospital on 5 March 2023 following self-inflicted injuries at HMP Coldingley; the jury could not determine his intention. It found that his IPP status and delayed parole hearing contributed to his psychosis, and that failures to obtain medical care amounted to neglect contributing to his death. His family repeatedly raised concerns, but their warnings were not properly recorded or shared with clinical staff. Photograph: Supplied / The Independent.*

The People's Inquiry vehemently rejects any account that makes every IPP self-inflicted death entirely the individual's fault while treating the prison service, probation and Ministry of Justice as blameless. "Self-inflicted" describes a classification; it does not settle causation or absolve institutions. Our commitment is to investigate every IPP death independently, in custody, hospital or the community, examining policy, care, recall, warning signs and institutional responses alongside individual circumstances. Families must participate meaningfully. We will follow the evidence without prejudging individual culpability. Independent investigation is also central to Article 2 accountability for deaths in custody. (R (Amin) v Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2003).

The administrative promise and the missing safeguard

The disparity is particularly stark in licence termination. HMPPS aimed to submit 97.5% of termination reports on time. Its 2025–26 annual report records only 20% meeting the deadline between 17 July 2025 and 31 March 2026. It acknowledges slower referrals in some cases, while explaining that late reports did not always delay referral. That qualification matters. It does not rescue the achievement from the target. (HMPPS, 2026a, p. 29). Section 42's further-review opportunity came into force on 1 June 2026. Calling it an automatic annual review would overstate the entitlement: the additional referral depends on an eligible person's request. People need notification and assistance to exercise that right. (UK Parliament, 2026; HMPPS, 2026b).

Current policy requires discussion and disclosure of the further-review report, seven calendar days for representations and ordinarily waiting for those representations or the deadline before referral. Separately, progression-panel policy requires involvement, an advance agenda and a debrief where attendance is impossible. The July 2026 supervision framework says a panel is not mandatory for an offender-initiated further review. Where panels do occur, however, their participatory safeguards still matter. Each duty needs its own compliance record. (HMPPS, 2026b, paras 8.28–8.43; HMPPS, 2025c, paras 8.2, 9.3–9.4).

Accounts reported to our Inquiry allege reports submitted without disclosure, panels held without meaningful participation and named legal representatives left outside the process. Testing these allegations requires the contemporaneous record and institutional responses. Substantiated cases would expose a serious contradiction: a procedure advertised as an exit can reproduce the exclusion that makes escape harder. Recalls shortly before expected termination require scrutiny of contemporaneous evidence, alternatives and effects on termination. Timing alone cannot prove improper purpose. The test is necessity supported by reasons that survive independent challenge, rather than preventable institutional failure. Decision-makers must establish disclosure, completed representations and meaningful access to the named solicitor. Procedural fairness is substantive justice. An inaccessible safeguard is a promise the institution makes to itself.

The file that becomes the person

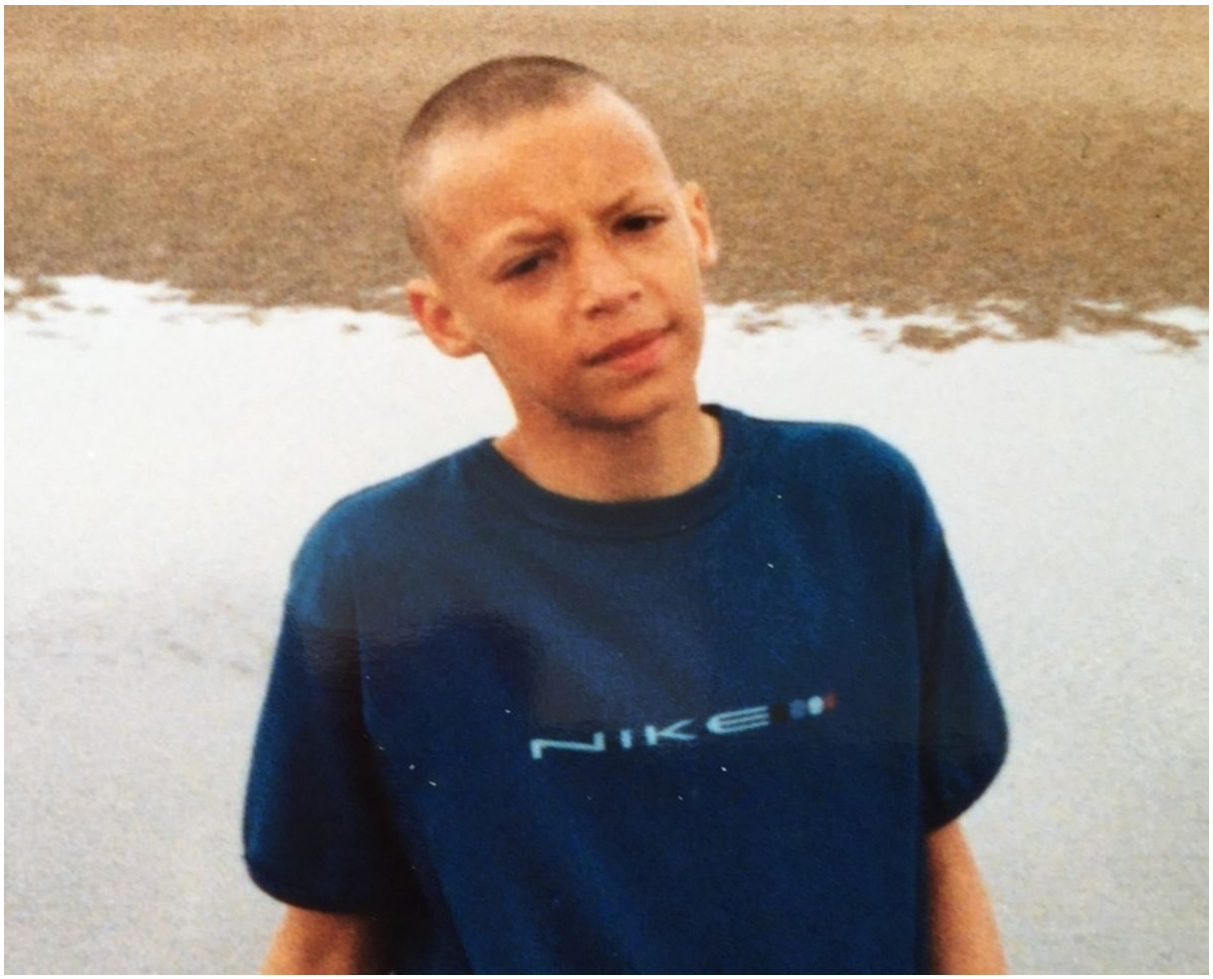
OASys and associated assessments deserve sustained scrutiny because their descriptions travel. An allegation can inform a risk formulation, which influences a psychological assessment, which informs parole, placement, release planning and licence conditions. Repetition across documents can make one disputed proposition look like several independent confirmations. The authority of the file grows while its evidential origin recedes. Foucault's analysis of examination and documentary power helps illuminate this process. Institutional knowledge does not merely describe a person; through classification and accumulated records, it helps determine what can be done to them. Applied to IPP, this raises urgent questions about authorship, evidential standards, correction and the circulation of contested claims. The assessment must remain answerable to evidence rather than become the authority that decides which evidence counts. (Foucault, 1977, pp. 189–191).

The Inquiry has been asked to examine accounts alleging that attempts to correct records, including with contradictory police material, were treated as evidence of increased risk or "grievance thinking". The alleged mechanism is intelligible: disagreement becomes pathology, pathology becomes risk, and risk justifies continued control. A system organised this way could make its own mistakes exceptionally difficult to expose. There are legal routes to challenge inaccurate data and unfair decisions, including rectification rights, complaints and litigation. Their existence does not establish their effectiveness. Remedies must be accessible, independent and fast enough to prevent disputed material determining liberty. Professional opinion must be distinguished from established fact, and its factual foundations must remain challengeable. (Information Commissioner's Office, n.d.a; Information Commissioner's Office, n.d.b).

Criticism supported by evidence cannot fairly become a substitute for evidence of dangerousness. Otherwise, the person must choose between leaving a damaging error unchallenged and risking punishment for challenging it. That is an abuse of epistemic power: the institution reserves authority over both the accusation and the meaning of the reply.

Wayne Bell and the production of risk

Wayne Bell's case exposes why this matters. Given an indefinite sentence as a teenager after an assault and bicycle robbery, he became the subject of parliamentary concern about severe mental illness and inability to engage with parole. His family's account includes electroconvulsive therapy during psychiatric treatment and years of devastating separation. Their account of a five-year period without access or contact, disputed explanations for that separation and his subsequent return to prison demands independent investigation. (The Institute of Now, 2024; Debono, 2026; House of Commons, 2019).



Wayne Bell, pictured as a child. His case raises profound questions about indefinite punishment, psychiatric suffering and the possibility of release. Photograph: Manchester Evening News.

The treatment account requires clinical evidence and careful scrutiny. The fundamental question is why a person's route out of punishment can become less attainable as his mental condition deteriorates. Assessment must distinguish current offence-related danger from institutional distress, disability and the consequences of prolonged confinement. Wayne's case requires independent clinical and legal scrutiny, disclosure to properly authorised representatives and a realistic route to resolution. Public protection is a real duty. Its invocation becomes evasive when it closes inquiry into whether the state's own practices worsen the conditions later cited against release. Necessary protection must be evidenced, proportionate and capable of challenge. A policy cannot establish its success by producing deterioration and then presenting that deterioration as the reason the policy must continue.

Scrutiny must reach the governing assumptions

Stakeholder participation deserves the same analytical discipline. Published records of stakeholder meetings include UNGRIPP, the Prison Reform Trust, Howard League, Royal College of Psychiatrists, Division of Forensic Psychology, Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, Independent Monitoring Boards, Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody, both prison and probation inspectorates, the Parole Board and HMPPS. These organisations have different functions; attendance does not establish endorsement. (IPP External Stakeholder Challenge Group, 2023).

September 2023 notes explicitly record all external stakeholders supporting resentencing. Their concerns included fear of challenging errors. March 2024 minutes nevertheless record a proposed dashboard discussion conditional on its data not being shared or referenced outside the meeting. That restriction warrants explanation: scrutiny loses democratic force when significant evidence remains inaccessible to the people affected. The published record does not establish a wider ban on campaigning. Nor should participation obscure organisations' continuing public demands for reform. (IPP External Stakeholder Challenge Group, 2023; Ellis and Day, 2025; IPP External Stakeholder Challenge Group, 2024).

The democratic question remains whether scrutiny can challenge the framework itself. A forum examining implementation within government policy cannot substitute for independent examination of that policy's legitimacy. Its terms, confidentiality restrictions, disagreements and evidence of influence should be published. Families, including bereaved families, must retain an independent public voice. Their access to ministers must never depend on converting unbearable experience into administratively acceptable reassurance. Article 10 protects expression, including forceful scrutiny of government. In Castells v Spain, the European Court emphasised the wider limits of permissible criticism of government and the importance of public scrutiny. Confidentiality can protect legitimate interests, but restrictions require justification. If ministers have confidence in their evidence, openness should strengthen their position. The burden should fall on the state to explain secrecy, rather than on injured people to justify speaking. (Castells v Spain, 1992, para. 46).

Managing harm to ending it

A social-harm approach associated with Hillyard and Tombs asks what legal categories conceal. IPP's costs include fractured families, lost livelihoods, damaged trust and distress among those administering the sentence. Harm does not disappear because the conduct producing it remains authorised. Zemiology requires attention to preventable injury across the whole social field, including injury generated by state institutions. (Hillyard and Tombs, 2007). In my February article I wrote: "I have seen exhaustion, sadness and moral conflict in the eyes of staff at both frontline and senior levels." Tom Wheatley later described "issues of conscience" and urged: "It is a really knotty problem, but someone has to be courageous and take action." Staff wellbeing and families belong in the reckoning; the extent of lasting injury requires research. (Robinson, 2026; Martin, 2026).

Research should hear from officers repeatedly responding to crisis, psychologists whose therapeutic work meets an immovable sentencing structure and governors managing the aftermath of deaths. It should investigate distress carried home and pressures on partners and children. Staff need protection when reporting harmful practice. Safeguarding knowledge must reach people with the power to change decisions. Wellbeing initiatives become evasive when they ask employees to adapt indefinitely to conditions government could change.

Nuremberg's Principle IV states that obeying government or superior orders "does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him." It concerns international crimes, not automatic liability for administering IPP. Hierarchy cannot extinguish conscience. Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi warned, "It happened, therefore it can happen again". These histories demand vigilance against dehumanisation, without equating distinct atrocities. (International Law Commission, 1950, Principle IV; Levi, quoted in Union Station, n.d.).



Defendants before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, 1945–1946. U.S. National Archives, photograph 238-NT-612, NAID 540128. Public domain.

Mertens's transformative paradigm locates inquiry within human rights, unequal power and meaningful participation. Gergen's future-forming research asks what inquiry helps bring into being. Together, they support an agenda extending beyond another diagnosis: enforceable remedies, independent assessment, evidence correction, funded reintegration and accountability shaped by those harmed. Research must help construct a future people can actually reach. (Mertens, 2007; Gergen, 2015). The CCRC's targeted work had produced 25 IPP/DPP referrals during 2026 by 24 September, with more than 250 cases under review. This offers an important route for particular sentencing errors. Case-by-case correction cannot substitute for legislative resolution of the whole sentence. (Criminal Cases Review Commission, 2026). Every promised safeguard should carry a named responsible authority, a deadline, a published measure of delivery and an independent remedy when delivery fails. Compassion requires consequences for institutional failure.

The test of British justice

Britain's legal reputation cannot be secured through declarations about its traditions while the exercise of state power contradicts their purpose. Magna Carta's promise remains an accusation against delay: "To no one will we sell, to no one will we deny or delay right or justice." The principle behind habeas corpus demands effective scrutiny of confinement. Institutions must honour that inheritance even when it requires surrendering familiar powers. (UK Parliament, n.d., clause 40).



"Freedom under law": Runnymede's promise must be honoured through effective scrutiny of state power and justice without indefinite delay. AI-edited from David Kerrigan's photograph, CC BY-SA 3.0.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's Opinion 16/2026 found the continued detention of five IPP prisoners arbitrary under international law. Separately, UN experts warned in July that the regime's prolonged uncertainty and psychological deterioration may amount to psychological torture. These are distinct interventions, not a criminal conviction of the British government. Their authority demands a substantive answer, effective remedies and scrutiny extending beyond the named cases. (UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, 2026; Great James Street Chambers, 2026; OHCHR, 2026). Andy Burnham's August pledge to end IPP this Parliament is therefore a commitment against which government must be judged. In September, the Justice Secretary still placed a further announcement in the future. Recognition is welcome; an enforceable legislative route, timetable and protection against further avoidable harm remain the tests. People cannot live safely inside the interval between an announcement and its fulfilment. (Prime Minister's Office, 2026; House of Commons, 2026).

Penal populism offers the appearance of safety through escalating punishment while displacing its costs onto prisoners, victims seeking effective prevention, families, communities and staff. A democratic government must explain and confront those costs. It must stop treating the avoidance of political embarrassment as though it were identical to protecting the public. The decisive task is legislative resolution of every remaining IPP and DPP sentence, with independent judicial safeguards, proportionate arrangements for demonstrable risks, funded recovery and redress. Public confidence will grow through correction, not through the defence of indefensible continuity. Until the legal machinery changes, the gulf between compassionate language and coercive reality remains open. People continue paying for that gulf with years of their lives—or with a horrific suicide in a prison cell or the community.

Evidence tables and supporting sources

Research cut off 25 October 2026.

Table 1. Chronology of national measures, 2008–2026

This chronology covers the principal publicly documented national measures identified in the research. It distinguishes implementation from announcements and includes measures that tightened control alongside those intended to ease it. It does not claim to catalogue every local initiative or unpublished internal instruction.

Date	Measure and status	What changed and what remained unresolved
2008	Criminal Justice and Immigration Act restrictions	Judicial discretion and a seriousness threshold narrowed future use. Existing sentences continued. (UK Parliament, 2008)
2011–2012	NOMS coordination and progression work	Ministers promised better assessment and sentence planning. NOMS later reported central allocation for open transfers and a management information tool. These were management changes within IPP. (House of Commons, 2011; Spurr, 2012)
December 2012	LASPO prospective abolition and release-test power	New IPP sentencing ended for the relevant post-commencement convictions. Existing sentences survived. Section 128 supplied a power to amend the release test; the 2022 Committee recorded its non-use. (UK Parliament, 2012; Justice Committee, 2022)
December 2014	Warren Hill progression regime	A specialist setting offered progression. It did not confer a release date. (Ministry of Justice, 2022b)
2016	Joint action plan and psychology case reviews	A programme to address progression blockages began; its scope later expanded. (Justice Committee, 2022; Ministry of Justice, 2022a)
22 November 2016	Parole Board Rules changes	Release on the papers became possible. This removed a procedural obstacle but did not remove the statutory release test. (Parole Board, 2016)
2018	Three additional progression regimes	Humber, Erlestoke and Buckley Hall expanded specialist provision. Access and successful release still required individual examination. (Ministry of Justice, 2022b)
2019 and 2021	Expanded psychology review cohorts	Eligibility widened to additional short-tariff and long-post-tariff groups. A review was not equivalent to release. (Ministry of Justice, 2022a)
September 2020 and September 2021	Proactive licence applications, followed by automatic-referral policy	Government encouraged applications, then adopted automatic referrals for eligible people. The original ten-year qualifying period remained until later legislation. (Justice Committee, 2022; Parole Board, 2022)
June–September 2022	Statutory automatic referral and reconsideration	The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act made referral a statutory responsibility. Termination decisions became eligible for reconsideration in September. (Parole Board, 2022)
2022	Restrictions on transfer to open conditions	A more restrictive ministerial test affected progression. This tightened control; it did not abolish existing sentences. The criteria were subsequently revised. (Justice Committee, 2022; Justice Committee, 2023)
28 September 2022	Justice Committee resentencing recommendation	This was a parliamentary recommendation, not a government implementation. It proposed a legislative solution. (Justice Committee, 2022)
February and April 2023	Rejection of resentencing and refreshed action plan	Government retained IPP while revising operational work. The plan did not authorise a resentencing exercise. (Justice Committee, 2023)
2023	External Stakeholder Challenge Group	Published September notes record support for resentencing. The forum scrutinised operational delivery rather than replacing legislation. (Justice Committee, 2023; IPP External Stakeholder Challenge Group, 2023)
December 2023–February 2025	Recall inspection and government response	Inspection identified broadly appropriate recall decisions alongside inadequate prior support. Government published an action plan in January 2024 and an update in February 2025. (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2023; Ministry of Justice and HMPPS, 2025)

2024	Delivery plans and Parole Board IPP taskforce	More focused operational and case-management arrangements developed. Their existence does not establish consistent implementation. (Howard League for Penal Reform et al., 2024; Parole Board, 2026; IPP External Stakeholder Challenge Group, 2023)
24 May 2024	Victims and Prisoners Act: Royal Assent	Licence reform, executive re-release and reporting provisions were enacted, with phased commencement. (UK Parliament, 2024)
1 November 2024	Automatic termination and RARR	Automatic termination ended 1,742 licences at commencement. Executive re-release became available after recall, alongside power to disapply recall effects for automatic termination in qualifying circumstances. These were material legal gains. (Howard League for Penal Reform et al., 2024; HMPPS, 2025a)
7 November and 12 December 2024	Supervision and progressive-transfer frameworks	New frameworks governed community supervision and progressive transfers. The transfer framework was published in November and implemented in December. (HMPPS, 2026b; HMPPS, 2024)
December 2024	IPP Safety Toolkit	Staff resources addressed sentence-related vulnerability. Publication is distinct from proof of reduced injury. (HMPPS, 2025b)
1 February 2025	Reduced qualifying periods	Adult IPP eligibility fell from ten to three years; DPP eligibility fell to two years. The separate automatic-termination route required its additional qualifying conditions. (Howard League for Penal Reform et al., 2024)
January–October 2025	Quarterly DPP reviews and mandatory progression-panel framework	Psychology reviews increased oversight of the childhood cohort. The July framework formalised timing, preparation, participation and records; the annual report describes operational rollout in October. (HMPPS, 2026a; HMPPS, 2025c)
2025	Senior recall controls and further delivery targets	Government tightened who could authorise recall and adopted report-timeliness targets. Recall necessity still required individual assessment. (HMPPS, 2025b; Timpson, 2026)
3 November 2025	Recall-referral trial	A longer window before referral aimed to enable earlier RARR consideration. This was a trial, not universal proof of quicker release. (Inside Time, 2025)
22 January and 1 June 2026	Sentencing Act, section 42	Royal Assent followed by commencement reduced the adult qualifying period to two years and added an offender-initiated further-review opportunity, subject to eligibility. (UK Parliament, 2026; HMPPS, 2026b; Timpson, 2026; UK Government, 2026)
May–July 2026	ROTL expansion and refreshed action plan	HMPPS described a common model for four progression prisons, with staggered operational rollout. Six targets, advocate provision and additional psychology resources were announced or carried forward. (Timpson, 2026; HMPPS, 2026a)
August 2026	Phoenix Unit and updated Parole Board guidance	In September, the Justice Secretary confirmed that the Aylesbury unit had opened the previous month. Specialist provision remained within the existing sentence. (Parole Board, 2026; House of Commons, 2026)
30 August and 15 September 2026	Commitment to end IPP during this Parliament	A policy commitment and promised legislation were announced. The September statement anticipated another announcement later in 2026. These statements did not themselves repeal existing sentences. (Prime Minister's Office, 2026; House of Commons, 2026)
24 September 2026	CCRC thematic review and appeal referrals	The independent CCRC reported 25 IPP/DPP referrals during 2026 and more than 250 cases under review. Individual appeal remedies are distinct from government abolition. (Criminal Cases Review Commission, 2026)

Table 2. Numerical record and interpretation

Indicator	Reported figure and period	Interpretation and source
Prison population	2,271 on 30 June 2026: 856 never released and 1,415 recalled.	Population at one date, excluding the separate community and hospital populations. (House of Commons Library, 2026)
Hospital population	207 on 31 December 2025, compared with 233 a year earlier.	A separate population; figures from different dates should not be silently combined. (Timpson, 2026)
Recall events	658 in 2023; 619 in 2024; 31% fewer in 2025 than in 2024.	Events are not unique people. The recent direction is downward. (HMPPS, 2025b; HMPPS, 2026a)
No further charge at recall	463 cases, or 70%, in 2023; 449, or 73%, in 2024; 329, or 77%, in 2025.	No further charge is not equivalent to no risk or a proven wrongful recall. (Ministry of Justice, 2026c)
RARR	61 re-releases between 1 November 2024 and 31 December 2025.	A dated outcome count, not a current lifetime total or a success rate without a denominator. (Timpson, 2026)
On-time termination reports	Target: 97.5%. Achieved: 20% between 17 July 2025 and 31 March 2026.	HMPPS acknowledged delayed referrals in some cases; it did not state that every late report caused a delayed referral. (HMPPS, 2026a)
On-time PAROM1 reports	Target: 90%. Achieved: 81% between 1 July 2025 and 31 March 2026.	A separate measure from termination-report timeliness. (HMPPS, 2026a)
Historical all-cause deaths in custody	The 2022 Committee cited IAPDC evidence of 250 deaths by May 2021, including 65 self-inflicted deaths.	A historical total, not the current death toll. It does not establish that every death was caused by IPP. (Justice Committee, 2022)
Official self-inflicted deaths in custody	92 from the introduction of IPP through December 2025.	Official count with a specified end date. (Ministry of Justice, 2026d)
Self-inflicted deaths in the community	44 between April 2019 and March 2025.	Earlier IPP-specific returns were not readily identifiable centrally. (Ministry of Justice, 2026d)
More recent reported custody count	96 on the UNGRIPP statistics page; also raised in Parliament in July 2026.	Separately attributed. It should not silently replace the official count of 92, which has a different stated end date. (UNGRIPP, n.d.)
Self-harm rates	1,189 incidents per 1,000 IPP prisoners in 2024; 1,290 in 2025.	Approximately an 8.5% increase, reported by the Ministry of Justice as 9%. (Ministry of Justice, 2026a)
Population comparator	837 incidents per 1,000 prisoners across the whole estate in 2025.	The IPP rate was approximately 1.54 times the overall rate. This does not support a current claim of 2.5 times. Sentence and sex composition affect interpretation. (Ministry of Justice, 2026b)
Recent self-harm incidents	3,325 in 2023; 3,237 in 2024; 3,188 in 2025.	UNGRIPP reproduces Ministry of Justice data. Falling absolute totals can coexist with a rising rate within a shrinking population. (UNGRIPP, n.d.)

Table 3. Historical recorded IPP self-harm incidents

Source: Justice Committee (2022).

Year	Recorded IPP self-harm incidents
2012	2,276
2013	2,161
2014	2,143
2015	2,537
2016	2,873
2017	2,924
2018	3,024
2019	2,878
2020	2,066

These are incidents, including repeat incidents, rather than numbers of individuals. The historical and recent figures are selected published data, not an uninterrupted series or a causal estimate of the action plan's effects. Neither the listed deaths nor the available classifications constitute a complete register of all IPP and DPP deaths across prison, hospital and community settings.

Table 4. Coroners' findings and warning evidence

Person or organisation	Report or evidence	Findings and significance
Scott Rider	Prevention of Future Deaths report, dated 12 April 2024. Reference: 2024-0210.	The coroner described his treatment as inhumane and indefensible and warned of further deaths without a review of IPP prisoners. This is a prospective warning requiring scrutiny of the response and implementation. (Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 2024c).
Matthew Price	Prevention of Future Deaths report, dated 22 February 2024 and published 26 February 2024.	The inquest recorded the continuing IPP sentence's impact on his wellbeing and his anxiety about seeking mental-health help while trying to discharge the sentence. It demonstrates that release into the community does not necessarily end sentence-related harm. (Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 2024b).
Sean Davies	Prevention of Future Deaths report. Reference: 2024-0460.	The report records his learning of the rejection of resentencing and his subsequent death in February 2023, alongside wider concerns. It contains apparent internal date inconsistencies concerning categorisation; those dates require checking against the underlying record. Temporal sequence alone does not establish causation. (Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 2024d).
Taylor Atkinson	December 2025 jury conclusion, reported by the family's solicitors and published by INQUEST.	The jury found that indefinite sentencing was likely the most significant factor contributing to despair and mental exhaustion. This is an inquest finding reported by representatives, rather than a separately identified Regulation 28 report. (INQUEST, 2025).
Independent Monitoring Boards	May 2023 briefing on the impact of IPP sentences on prisoners' wellbeing.	The briefing reported three apparently self-inflicted deaths in the four-week period it associated with the rejection announcement. This is the monitors' published account; it should not be generalised into a finding that one political decision caused every death. (Independent Monitoring Boards, 2023).
Josh McRae	Episode 17 of *Trapped*, published 7 September 2025, and contemporary reporting by The Independent.	The podcast announced his September 2024 death at HMP Long Lartin, aged 34, and described the inquest as ongoing at publication. The contemporary Independent report stated that the cause was unknown. These sources do not justify classifying his death as suicide. (The Institute of Now, 2025; Martin, 2024).
Haydar Jefferies	Published Prevention of Future Deaths report. Reference: 2024-0702.	The report records that neglect contributed to his death, identifies a Ministry of Justice system failure concerning the recording of family concerns and lists admitted failures. This contradicts any blanket proposition that institutional conduct in every IPP death was faultless. (Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 2024a).

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