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Lord Timpson
Minister of State for
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Dear Andy,

IMPRISONMENT FOR PUBLIC PROTECTION

We are writing to you following the productive and insightful IPP roundtables held with MPs and Peers in May, and following the debate during the Committee Stage of Lord Woodley's Imprisonment for Public Protection (Re-sentencing) Bill this month. Several significant questions and observations were raised during these discussions, which we have addressed below. We appreciate your ongoing interest in these critical issues.

We are making progress to support those in prison to progress towards a safe and sustainable release. On 17 July, we issued a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) announcing the publication of the HMPPS Annual Report on the IPP Sentence, along with the updated Action Plan.

The Annual Report sets out the work undertaken by HMPPS to support those serving the IPP sentence in the financial year of 2024/25 and the considerable progress which has been made in reducing the population. In 2024, 602 recalled prisoners were released, the highest ever in a single year. The revised Action Plan now includes measurable targets to ensure transparency and accountability. This includes a commitment to increasing access to Release on Temporary License (ROTL), expanding the Approved Premises (AP) pilot to improve resettlement support, and enabling swift re-release following recall through Risk Assessed Recall Review (RARR).

The Annual Report and Action Plan can be found here:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6877b3570263c35f52e4dca6/HMPPS_annual_report_on_the_IPP_sentence_2024_to_25.pdf

The WMS can be found here:
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-07-17/hlws835>

Recall Review

In April, Lord Thomas and Lord Garnier reviewed 63 IPP recall cases for the month of June 2024 and some additional cases. We are carefully considering their recommendations and those published by the Howard League for Penal Reform in its report 'Ending the detention of people on IPP sentences: expert recommendations'. In the meantime, officials in HMPPS are exploring ways to improve recall decisions and speed up the post-recall review process. We want to ensure that where offenders are recalled, they are re-released as quickly as it is safe to do so.

IPP Population Data

At the Peers roundtable, we gave an update on data and committed to sharing published data on the number of people serving IPP sentences in writing – see below and in **Annex A**. The Annex also includes answers to questions provided by Lord Moylan and other Peers following the roundtable. *All data included in this letter and corresponding Annex A is published.*

- There were more **IPP re-releases** in 2024 than in any other calendar year: **602** compared with 448 in 2023.
- There were fewer recalls for IPP offenders in 2024: **619** compared to **658** in 2023. We expect this number to fall again following the significant reduction in the number of IPP offenders in the community since we implemented the licence termination provisions in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.
- The IPP **prison population is falling** – as of 31 March 2025:
 - **9%** decrease in IPP prisoners from March 2024 (**2,544** down from 2,796);
 - This includes a **14%** decrease in those who have never been released (**1,012** down from 1,180) and a **5%** decrease in recalled IPP prisoners (**1,532** down from 1,616).
 - **Around 80%** of IPP prisoners are now located in a prison most appropriate to their needs.
- The number of IPP offenders in the **community has also fallen sharply**:
 - **1,742** licences were terminated on 1 November 2024.
 - This contributed to a **54%** decrease in IPP offenders in the community in December 2024 compared to December 2023 (**1,376** down from 3,018).
- There are also **fewer IPP offenders in secure hospital** (**233** in December 2024, down from 241 in December 2023).

Baroness Chakrabarti requested further details on the IPP offenders in secure hospital settings and Peers also discussed HMP Grendon and other Therapeutic Communities. As some of the requested information is internal management information; we are carefully considering what can be shared in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Separately, we have asked officials in HMPPS to look into the process of returning IPP offenders from secure hospital to prison, to ensure they return to a prison most appropriate to their needs.

At the MPs roundtable Rachael Maskell MP gave an example of a constituent who had recently had their licence terminated and raised concerns about how former prisoners are being assessed and supported following licence termination. We have asked officials to complete an audit of the

support and signposting provided post licence termination and will provide an update at the next roundtable meeting.

Liz Saville Roberts MP noted concerns about the capacity of the Probation Service, and we want to highlight the positive and productive work taking place despite these pressures. HMPPS concluded an Approved Premises (AP) pilot to better prepare individuals for their release, including extending the time IPP offenders could remain in an Approved Premise from 12 to 16 weeks. The pilot, which was tested in four Approved Premises, has received positive feedback from offenders and nine additional Approved Premises have been identified for wider roll-out, subject to funding. This will help prisoners resettlement into the community and progress towards having their licence terminated.

We also wish to address the suggestion made in the House of Lords debate on 4 July that 80% of those still serving the IPP sentence in prison committed non-violent offences. An IPP sentence could only be imposed where an offender was convicted of a serious specified violent or sexual offence, and where in the Court's opinion, the offender posed a risk of harm to the public. The table below outlines the types of index offences for which 2,852 prisoners, as at 31 December 2023, received the IPP sentence. This information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foi-releases-for-september-2024>.

IPP	Violence against the person	Sexual Offences	Robbery	Theft	Criminal damage and arson	Possession of weapons	Public order offences	Miscellaneous crimes against society	Summary Non-Motoring
	1,015	844	666	73	114	60	7	51	19

The figures in this table have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large-scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

- For violence against the person, assault with intent to cause serious harm was the most common at 598 individuals convicted of this offence.
- Of the sexual offences, rape of a female aged 16 and over was the most common at 302.
- Robbery, in the Criminal Justice Act 2003, is in Schedule 15 of specified violent offences.
- For theft offences, aggravated burglary in a dwelling was the most common at 52.
- For criminal damage and arson, arson endangering life was the most common at 52.
- For possession of weapons, 38 individuals were convicted of possession of firearms with intent.
- For miscellaneous crimes against society, 31 were convicted of obscene publications including indecent photographs of children.

Our offices will be in touch in due course with details of the next meetings which will be scheduled in September or October.

Thank for your continued interest in this important issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nic' with a stylized flourish.

SIR NIC DAKIN

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James' in a cursive script.

LORD TIMPSON

Additional Questions from Peers

1. **It remains unclear what the overall objective(s) are of the action plan i.e. to decrease the unreleased IPP population in prison? To reduce the recall population? To reduce the rate of self-inflicted death and self-harm? The HMPPS Annual Report on the IPP Sentence describes the Action Plan as being a structure to “ensure that we are taking all possible steps to support prisoners towards release” [pg 34]. The next iteration of the plan should make clear the overarching objective(s) that the actions in the plan are working towards.**

The overarching objective of the action plan is to ensure that HMPPS is taking all possible steps to support people serving IPP sentences to reduce their risk, so that they can be released by the Parole Board and to be supported towards license termination once in the community, thereby ending their sentence. In line with feedback from external stakeholders, we are introducing measurable targets which will capture progress of some of the key deliverables within the Action Plan; as covered in more detail below.

2. **The current plan is very process focused; the focus should be on measurable outcomes. The plan should track key indicators and measures of success. Measures in the plan should include**
 - **‘Indicators’, which ought to be tracked (i.e. release rate, recall rate etc). These are not measures HMPPS can necessarily commit to directly and operationally delivering against but can be tracked as part of the plan.**
 - **‘Success measure’ (i.e. frequency of parole panels). These are targets which are in HMPPS’ gift and can be committed to.**

The updated action plan published alongside the Annual Report on 17 July includes a number of measurable targets through which progress can be tracked. In addition to these measures, we will continue to track a number of other metrics including population statistics.

3. **In order to deliver ‘greater transparency around IPP statistics’, the performance data collected for tracking needs to form part of the published annual report on progress against the IPP Action Plan.**

The status of the success measures is published within the Annual Report.

4. **Communication: little reference is made throughout the plan to gathering input from those serving IPP sentences. The ‘Communication Strategy’ needs to be prepared and published alongside the final updated Action Plan, in order to include strategy on how the content of the AP will be communicated to those serving the sentence, rather than being an action to complete within the plan.**

Within the revised Action Plan we have committed to developing a clear communications strategy by September 2025 which will improve how relevant information (such as policy, process and legislation updates which will impact those serving IPP sentences) is shared with both staff and those serving IPP sentences in custody and the community. It is important that updates are communicated directly to those serving the sentence and by also improving our communications with frontline staff we can ensure they are equipped to provide appropriate support.

5. **On current projections, how many people will be on an IPP (a) in prison, and (b) in the community in, 2030, 2035, 2040, 2045. [You explained you might not want to answer this question as framed. Perhaps you could see your way to another means of providing what the question aims to elicit?]**

We do not intend to publish projected IPP population figures due to the harmful unintended consequences this could trigger such as loss of hope. We will continue to ensure (through the measures set out in the Action Plan) that those serving the sentence both in custody and in the community are supported to make progress towards release and licence termination.

6. **What is the impact of the current prison capacity crisis on delivery against the aims of the IPP action plan, including on, Progression, Access to Offending Behaviour Programmes, Transfers, Bespoke psychological interventions**

The pressures which arise on account of the prisons being full inevitably adds to the challenge of delivering the action plan. However, ensuring that IPP prisoners are in the appropriate prison to meet their needs is a priority for HMPPS. IPP prisoners also continue to be a priority group for current and future Offending Behaviour Programmes¹ (OBP) attendance, where suitable to reduce the individual's risk and to support progression. Furthermore, the vast majority of IPP prisoners have engaged with at least one OBP over the course of their time in custody and this means that the demand is relatively low in comparison to the overall population of IPPs.

There is currently a small number of IPP prisoners that are on the OBP waiting list, awaiting to be assessed or for attendance. These individuals will continue to be a high a priority given the importance of IPP progression and the IPP Action Plan. Transfers will be supported in line with the progressive transfers for ISP policy framework², to support OBP engagement where required and if suitable. We are mindful of the fact that capacity pressures can have an impact on many aspects of prison regimes and whilst we believe that this is unlikely to be to the extent that it is detrimental to IPPs and their ability to access an OBP, this will be closely monitored. Furthermore, for those that have been deemed to require an alternative, bespoke psychological pathway, IPPs will continue to be a priority group and will be assessed regarding their suitability in accordance with Psychology Services bespoke strategy.

7. **What particular arrangements are in place to support the cohort of IPP prisoners who have never been released and are 10 years past their tariff expiry date?**

The IPP Action Plan sets out to support the entire IPP cohort. The Progression Panel Policy Framework³ published on 17 July ensures that resource is directed to those who need it most to continue progressing through their sentence.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/offending-behaviour-programmes-and-interventions>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progressive-transfers-for-indeterminate-sentence-prisoners-policy-framework>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progression-panels-for-indeterminate-sentences-policy-framework>

8. What assessment has been made of the effectiveness of the new arrangements for terminating an IPP licence in the Victims and Prisoners Act?

Following the reforms to the IPP licence termination criteria introduced on 1 November 2024 in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, which resulted in the automatic termination of 1,742 IPP licences on that date, the number of IPP offenders on licence in the community as at 31 December 2024 fell to 1,376 – a decrease of 52% compared to 2,885 as at 30 September 2024 and of 54% compared to 3,018 as at 31 December 2023.

We would expect to see more licence terminations than prior to the imposition of the Act, as we significantly reduced the qualifying period and enabled automatic licence termination for the first time.

9. What has been the impact of getting rid of the annual licence review conducted by the Parole Board for people on an IPP were entitled to once the qualifying period had expired? Now, one review is conducted at the three year point on the expiry of the qualifying period. For those on an IPP whose licence is not terminated at the review, the only route to automatic termination is to be continually on licence for two years post the expiry of the qualifying period.

Previously, offenders had to wait 10 years before they became eligible for referral to the Parole Board and would be referred annually thereafter if their licence was not terminated. There was no provision for automatic termination.

The Act reduced the qualifying period to three years (or two for those serving a DPP sentence) and allowed for automatic termination after a further two years without recall.

In addition to significantly reducing the time offenders had to wait before becoming eligible for referral to the Parole Board, the changes have also provided greater certainty to offenders and victims about licence termination.

Any change in policy to allow an additional referral midway through the automatic period would need to take account of the effect on victims and the resource impact on the Parole Board and the Probation Service.

Although there is no further opportunity in law for offenders to have their licence terminated by the Parole Board, Probation Practitioners can refer a case to the Parole Board to suspend supervision at their own discretion if there has been sufficient progress one year after the decision not to terminate the licence.

Those who were recalled shortly before the changes came into effect will be considered for licence termination when they are re-released by the Parole Board.

10. What use has been made of the new power of executive release of recalled IPP prisoners (Risk Assessed Recall Review)? [Think it's important to understand this in context of the use of RARR generally so would add "If it has been used, how many and what proportion of RARR releases were of IPP prisoners?" and/or "If it has been used, how many IPPs applied for RARR and how many were released?"]

RARR has been used in multiple cases, with some IPP prisoners being re-released months before their expected parole hearing. There are three routes for identifying IPP cases for potential RARR:

- I. The Probation Service can initiate a review of suitability for re-release at any point during the prisoner's recall.
- II. The Public Protection Casework Section (PPCS) will review all post recall reports (including all subsequent Parole reports should the initial recall review not lead to a re-release) from the Probation Service, with a specific focus on those cases where the Probation Practitioner has indicated that the recalled prisoner might be suitable for re-release using the RARR power.
- III. PPCS will also consider RARR where the prisoner makes representations for the Secretary of State to use the RARR power. We are reviewing our communication with those serving IPP sentences to ensure they are informed of changes, including the availability of RARR.

PPCS ask the Probation Service to provide an assessment as to whether a prisoner might be suitable for re-release under RARR (where this is not already provided in a post recall report). This assessment must include a risk management plan to manage the prisoner's risk in the community. The Probation Service is required to keep cases under review. If there is a significant change of circumstances, they must consider whether release can safely be managed, at which point RARR will be considered.

The revised Action Plan published on 17 July commits to maximising the use of RARR and sets a target that all IPP offenders recalled for being out of touch, or in relation to allegations which were quickly proven to be unsubstantiated will be considered for RARR.

11. Since the introduction of the Act, how many and what proportion of recalled IPP prisoners have been released with their licence terminated?

We are aware that the Parole Board has released recalled IPP prisoners unconditionally, however, the data is not published.

12. How many people on an IPP in the community have had their licence automatically terminated?

Following the reforms to the IPP licence termination criteria introduced on 1 November 2024 in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, which resulted in the automatic termination of 1,742 IPP licences on that date, the number of IPP offenders on licence in the community as at 31 December 2024 fell to 1,376 – a decrease of 52% compared to 2,885 as at 30 September 2024 and of 54% compared to 3,018 as at 31 December 2023. (The next official statistics will be published on 31 July 2025.)

Around 600 were due to be referred to the Parole Board for consideration of licence termination following the second phase of reforms we implemented on 1 February 2025.

13. How many people on an IPP in the community have had a licence review on the expiry of the qualifying period? Of these, how many at the review

- 1. Had their licence terminated**
- 2. Had their licence left in place**
- 3. Had their licence conditions varied**

Around 600 individuals are being referred to the Parole Board to consider their licence being terminated as the new qualification period came into effect on 1 February 2025.

We cannot share a more precise figure on the number of individuals who have had their licence terminated or varied since 1 February 2025, as to do so would provide an early indication of data on individuals serving IPP sentences in the community, which is not yet publicly available and is intended for future publication.

ENDS