

Written evidence from Mr Eddie Doherty, Probation Officer at Probation Service

What options are available to reduce the size of the IPP prison population? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different options?

1. Resentence each case on an individual basis to a different disposal using the EDS sentence as a template, providing a tailored approach that takes into account the index offence and where the person is in the sentence process-This is complicated and could not possibly take into account the individual narrative of every case. Some prisoners have been out and recalled a number of times, some are many years over tariff and would warrant immediate release even though they may be in a severe state of crisis. I think this would be a very difficult solution and open to challenge from men who felt their resentence was unjust/different from a comparable case.
2. Provide each IPP prisoner with a finite licence period set, for example ,at 5 years from the point of any or the most recent release. Some prisoners will have been out for longer than 5 years and will be taken out of the system straight away. Others will have additional motivation to see out their licence and any recall will have a SLED. Men still in custody will know they have a sentence end date once release. I think this could be a good solution if all the remaining prisoners in custody are directed to a fast track parole hearing process that sets realistic and measurable goals before release. I am talking about an entirely separate pathway for IPP prisoners with set Parole board members whose sole function is to hear IPP cases , set short term targets and facilitate the release at the earliest safe opportunity in order to commence the fixed term licence period.
3. Commission multi agency teams in each region to manage the progression of IPP prisoners both in an out of custody. This would not necessarily require a change in legislation but would afford IPP prisoners access to interventions on an individual basis from Forensic and Clinical Psychology as well as ETE/mentoring services and experienced Probation Officers.

The 'team around the prisoner 'approach would work best when accompanied by the ideas in (2) ie; Finite licence period and fast track parole process where hand picked boards follow the progress of a prisoner through agreed set goals up to release and for any subsequent recall

What are the current barriers preventing release? What measures would need to be taken to overcome these barriers, and what would be the operational and resource implications for HMPPS?

Barriers-lack of access to Psychological services both clinical and forensic, poor support in the community beyond the short period in an Approved Premises. There needs to be access to Psychological support from a dedicated team after release to manage the transition. Placing someone on a waiting list for Talking Therapy in the community along with thousands of members of the public does not take into account the specific trauma of the IPP sentence and the need for individually sculpted support. Operationally I am thinking of a multi agency team of dedicated individuals whose sole focus is to create a road that can be travelled by IPP prisoners in and out of custody. This would take IPP prisoners out of the generic Probation caseload and place them with officers who are hand picked for their

motivation and skills in dealing with this group. There would need to be mentors, housing representatives, substance misuse workers, psychological and mental health professionals to provide a safe corridor for progress. In the short term, resource intensive, but with a discernible and measurable goal that would ultimately save money.

What would be the options and implications of backdating the change to IPP legislation?

The best outcome I can think of would be to change the supervision duration to make the licence have an end date. If this is combined with additional help to achieve safe release, ultimately the IPP population would be reduced to a negligible figure, where only the most challenging cases find themselves unable to achieve release.

This residual group will emerge and can be managed by a separate, yet to be decided, process.

What is the experience of people on IPP sentences in prison? What additional mental health challenges do people serving IPP sentences face because of the nature of their indeterminate sentence?

The IPP sentence has created trauma through hopelessness, leaving a very psychologically damaged group of people, this is why any answer to the problem involves extensive clinical and forensic psychological support. The dependency of the IPP prisoner is borne through experience and is therefore tangible not an imagined psychological condition.

How is release and resettlement planned and managed for IPP prisoners given their unpredictable release date?

Currently IPP prisoners sit with POM's until the Parole process at which point a COM becomes involved. This is a fragmented process that does not encourage continuity or the building of trust. This is why a dedicated multi agency team would be beneficial as the prisoner would know that a set of individuals with a clear remit are supporting their progress consistently. Furthermore, recalled IPP recalls end up in different prisons to the ones that released them, all the knowledge that built that person toward parole and release, is lost. Furthermore they are faced with a new Parole Board, not the one that released them.

How are people on IPP sentences managed within the community once released?

They sit on a generic caseload. My assessment is that COM's are very wary of allowing too much latitude and recall is triggered quicker because of the established profile of IPP prisoners as 'dangerous' individuals through the IPP label. A busy COM may not want to be exposed to the consequences of a man on life licence committing a serious further offence. Further to this IPP's are spread across teams, a newly qualified officer could have the case and be particularly reluctant to act in anything but a defensive way.

What are the main reasons why people serving IPP sentences are recalled? Once recalled what support is given to prepare them for re-release?

Recall is often preceded by clear signs of psychological distress, feelings of displacement and struggles with mundane tasks that men on shorter sentences take for granted (managing the 'on line' world for example) Beyond the stay at an AP the level of support is low, it would be more economically viable for each licenced prisoner to have a small team

of support workers(the team being allocated a number of prisoners on their caseload) to micro manage some of the practical assistance until such a time as the individual needs reduced support which I would foresee tailoring off during any finite licence period. After recall , addressing reasons for failure is difficult, Part B's are generic , eg: undertake relapse prevention work, undertake 'therapy'(vague and unhelpful as Probation officers are straying into the clinical realm) possibly a programme that may not run in the local area. Altogether unhelpful ,I think the ideas I have proposed could address this by building continuous support around the prisoner in and out of custody over seen by the same team