

Rt Hon Alex Chalk KC MP
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ



Britain Yearly Meeting
of the Religious
Society of Friends

Dear Alex Chalk,

Imprisonment for Public Protection

Meeting for Sufferings, the national representative body of Quakers in Britain, is dismayed by the ongoing situation of individuals subject to Imprisonment for Public Protection.

We have heard that these indeterminate sentences were abolished in 2012 but that there are still approximately 3,000 individuals in custody with no release date set, as well as an additional 5,000 subject to recall. We understand that the Justice Committee of the House of Commons has agreed that these sentences cause 'profound psychological harm and mental torture' which can have a detrimental impact on a prisoner's application for parole. As it stands, the legacy of the IPP sentence is a 'cruel and degrading treatment' and is unworthy of the progress we have made as a society in upholding human rights and values.

While we welcome the announcement last week of the reduction of the term after which the IPP sentence is terminated from ten years in the community to five, we trust that you will remove the possibility of administrative failings alone leading to recall.

We urge you to follow and enact the recommendations in the Justice's Committee's report of September 2022, starting with the proposal to convene an expert group to devise legislation to support a resentencing exercise for all IPP prisoners, giving them a determinate sentence. A further concern is that the current Action Plan may not be sufficiently resourced to be effective, particularly given the current pressure on prison capacity and staff shortages, both of which undermine the delivery of programmes in prison.

We accept that some individuals have committed serious offences, have serious personal problems, and may be a risk to others if they are released without proper support and controls. However, we maintain that the solution here must be an appropriate and adequately funded support package to help prisoners reintegrate into the community on their release.

Quakers have a long-standing concern with the penal system. We have an active prison ministry throughout the country through our Quaker Prison Chaplains, several successful intervention programmes, an international track record on Restorative Justice and a sub-group with criminal justice expertise.

As our book of discipline says:

“Imprisonment... offers some protection to society by removing the offender. But consider how limited that protection is compared to what it could be. It puts the offender against property into a place where he is deprived of opportunities to practise the social rules about property; it puts the violent man into a subculture which is governed by violence; it puts the defrauder into a power system where corruption is rife; it puts the sexual offender into a place where sexual relief is only obtainable by substitutes; ... it puts those who need to learn to take control of their lives into a situation where all significant choices are made for them; and it puts the offender who is likely to reform into a milieu where most of the influences on him or her are criminal ones.”

(Quaker faith & practice, 23.101).

We urge you to act to remove this injustice at the earliest opportunity.

In Truth,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Robert Card', with a stylized, flowing script.

Robert Card

Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings