

Quaker briefing for debate on Imprisonment for Public Protection, 27 April at 13.30

[Quakers in Criminal Justice \(QICJ\)](#) is a charity affiliated to [Quakers in Britain](#). QICJ is made up of Quakers with experience (including lived experience) and professional knowledge of many aspects of the criminal justice system. We are joining others to call for an end to misguided IPP sentences.

QICJ believes that the failure of the Ministry of Justice to accept the core recommendations Justice Committee's report into IPPs is indefensible and the strain on both prisoners and their families is intolerable.

Drawing on evidence from four QICJ members, quoted below, we believe that people with this sentence have been neglected, particularly in terms of sentence progression, parole hearings and rehabilitation. We maintain that no-one can fail to be damaged by the particular nature of protracted, indeterminate incarceration under IPP. We endorse and support the research by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies: *Review of the Psychological Impact of IPP*.

An alternative approach

IPP prisoners should not be subject to indefinite licence conditions which can transport them straight back to prison. Instead we advocate a specific probation programme to maximise opportunities for reintegration into society, thus minimising the risk of reoffending. This would be a welfare approach and must be properly funded to succeed. It should be the hallmark of any action plan.

Quakers have expertise in supporting ex-offenders and should be invited to the table. We pioneered **Circles of Support and Accountability** (COSA) in Britain to support former sex offenders to integrate back into society and minimise their risk. A number of them will have had IPP sentences. COSA has grown into a successful organisation, Circles UK, with a network of regional providers of Circles, which often have Quaker participation. The core of this model is support in the community – a vital factor for released of IPP prisoners.

Extracts from four submissions to QICJ from men with lived experience of IPP

1. Prisoner in Open Conditions

I write to highlight the issues of prisoners serving IPP sentences with what seems like no end in sight. I received a two-year 42 day IPP sentence and am still in prison almost 10 years later.

There is hardly any awareness or support for residents with neuro-diverse conditions – autism, Aspergers syndrome, dyslexia etc or for people with learning difficulties. I feel you are seen as difficult or a problem and, instead of being supported, are viewed as manipulative, deceptive or demanding.

If you are put on an ACCT – what used to be called suicide watch – you might be removed from open conditions to closed as unmanageable. Your progress towards release if you are IPP is effectively halted. This happened to me.

The rate of self-harm by IPP prisoners is nearly 3 times as high as those with determinate sentences. 63 IPPs have committed suicide.

When Mr Gove, briefly serving as Minister of State for Justice, delivered the annual Longford Lecture on 16 November 2016, under the title "*What's really criminal about our justice system?*", he turned to the subject of IPPs. He proposed that the Government should use the power of executive clemency to release those IPP prisoners who have been in prison for much longer than their tariff: "*In terms of pure justice and fairness, there are far too many prisoners, who were sentenced under the IPP - Imprisonment for Public Protection - indeterminate sentence provisions who have served far longer than the gravity of their offence requires and who should be released.*" AND

“I would recommend using the power of executive clemency for those IPP prisoners who have been in jail for far longer than the tariff for their offence and have now – after multiple parole reviews – served much longer than the maximum determinate sentence for that index offence.”

2. B shares his experience:

I met one IPP prisoner while inside. His crime carried a two year tariff and he had been in for 17 years, so he said. He was a sex offender so I assumed he had been through some form of treatment or therapy. I asked him directly how much treatment in total he'd had while inside and he said “six weeks”. Unbelievable!

IPP lads have no chance. They know it, we know it and the prison officers definitely knew the injustice of the system, but they were part of it and could do nothing.

3. S, on IPP themselves, makes the following points:

- When the sentence was first introduced ‘trigger-happy’ judges led to it being hugely over-used
- IPP sentence was used as a punitive measure not purely based on risk (as was intended)
- Pre-sentence reports were often inadequate
- In prison, the insufficient availability of specified behaviour management courses impeded progress
- Treatment options were never in place for the numbers of IPP prisoners, so Parole came round without the opportunity to evidence a reduction in risk
- On release, restrictions set us up to fail, forming barriers in the three areas where police and probation are constantly assessing our ability to achieve: housing, employment and social networks.

4. J describes how IPP affected fellow prisoners

I write from the personal experience of many friends who were and probably still are serving indeterminate IPP sentences with little or no hope whatever of release. As someone who benefitted immensely from the programmed treatment courses available to me (but not to them), I knew how depressed they were that they were simply ‘not allowed’ to address their offending because there were too many prisoners with determinate sentences who had to be offered (so-called voluntary) treatment courses before release on licence / probation – and not enough staff to provide courses for IPPs as well. Even Lifers got help before IPPs – because IPPs could just get pushed to the back of the line to rot there because no provision had been made for them when this inhuman sentence was rushed through without due and proper consideration, in response to media pressure.

If Quakers are concerned with post-incarceration welfare, one of the main things to keep in mind is that an IPPer can be recalled for the slightest mistake. No amount of post-parole welfare is likely to have the required effect on someone who knows that at any moment, at the whim of a backside-covering probation officer, he could be back inside for the rest of his life.

Conclusion

These quotations show the injustice and psychological damage of IPP sentences. We recognise that the Probation Service is currently under-resourced and understaffed and directed to focus on risk management. This must all be remedied, so Probation can coordinate a comprehensive welfare service and support IPP prisoners to integrate back into society after their terrible experience of the justice system.