



HM Prison & Probation Service

Director General Operations
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Sarah Middleton
HM Assistant Coroner for City of Kingston Upon Hull and the County of the East Riding of Yorkshire
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15 December 2025

Dear Ms Middleton,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report of 20 October 2025 addressed to the Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, following the end of the inquest into the death of Scott Berry on 13 October 2025. I am responding on behalf of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) as Director General Operations.

I know that you will share a copy of this response with the family of Mr Berry and I would like to express my condolences for their loss. Every death in custody is a tragedy and the safety of those in our care is my absolute priority.

Following evidence heard at the inquest, you have raised concerns about those still serving the IPP sentence in prison, in many cases several years after they completed their minimum term (tariff). Before I address those concerns, I should affirm that HMPPS remains fully committed to supporting the progression of those prisoners serving IPP sentences to the point where the independent Parole Board determines that they may be safely released.

As you will be aware, the IPP sentence was introduced in the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) 2003 and was abolished in late 2012 by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012. This abolition was not applied retrospectively, as the Government at the time took the view it would not be right to alter sentences that had been lawfully imposed prior to their abolition. It is important to note that courts could only impose an IPP sentence for specified serious offences listed within Schedule 15 of the CJA 2003.

It is for the independent Parole Board to determine whether any prisoner serving an IPP sentence may be released on licence, once they have completed the minimum period of imprisonment set by the Court at the point of sentence. In order to direct the prisoner's release, the Parole Board must be satisfied that it is no longer necessary for an individual to be confined in prison for the protection of the public.

As of 30 September 2025, the number of IPP prisoners was **2,422**, down from **2,694** the year before – a reduction of around **10%**. Of those, **946** had never been released (down from 1,095 the year before) and **1,476** had been recalled to custody (down from 1,599 the year before). In 2024 there were **619** recalls, the lowest since 2017. We expect the number

of IPP recalls to fall further due to the significant reduction of those serving IPP sentences in the community. **602** IPP re-releases, following recall, were recorded in 2024, the highest number in a given year and over a third more than in 2023.

I note that you raised concerns that IPP prisoners are waiting for a Parole Board review. The priority when listing cases is a matter for the Independent Parole Board. Nonetheless, HMPPS updated the Generic Parole Process Policy Framework in February 2025 and introduced a presumption for an 18-month period between parole reviews for IPP prisoners and 12 months for DPP (youth equivalent of IPP sentence) prisoners¹.

The Parole Board has established an IPP Taskforce to manage cases. It aims to reduce the time it takes an IPP case to go through the parole system by sending the most complex cases straight to oral hearing, allowing for reports to be directed earlier. The Taskforce is made up of 25 members, including specialist psychologist and psychiatrist members. All members of the taskforce have considerable experience in reviewing and managing IPP prisoners' cases. They are further supported by 20 case managers who provide an enhanced level of case management support for those members².

The Government is determined to support the rehabilitation of IPP offenders through a refreshed IPP Action Plan, which we published on 17 July 2025. The Plan puts an important emphasis on effective frontline delivery in our prisons and the Probation Service, to ensure that those serving IPP sentences have robust and effective sentence plans and that they are in a prison most appropriate to their needs. This is the most effective way to help them to reduce their risk so that they can progress towards safe release from custody. I have provided a list in **Annex A** which details some of the operational measures we are taking to support the IPP cohort.

The refreshed Action Plan was published in our IPP Annual Report and can be accessed using the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmpps-annual-report-on-the-ipp-sentence-2024-to-25>.

Our IPP Action Plan is led at Director level to ensure there is senior accountability for its delivery. [REDACTED], Area Executive Director for the South West, South Central & Public Protection, has taken this lead role. He established the IPP Progression Board in June 2023, and is the Chair. The Board meets on a quarterly basis and is used to hold all workstream owners to account for their delivery of actions within the Action Plan. [REDACTED] is also Chair of the External Stakeholder Challenge Group, which was established in September 2023. The Group ensures that the work we are delivering is subject to regular scrutiny and accountability from key campaign groups and independent bodies.

I note that the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) completed their independent investigation into the death of Mr Berry. The PPO's report³, published in June 2024, found that staff managed Mr Berry's risk of suicide and self-harm appropriately and that Mr Berry received a good standard of care and support from prison and healthcare staff during his time in prison.

I can assure you that reducing the number of self-inflicted deaths in custody is a key priority for me and HMPPS. Staff work hard to identify and support prisoners at risk of suicide and

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generic-parole-process-policy-framework>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmpps-annual-report-on-the-ipp-sentence-2024-to-25>

³ <https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/14/2025/10/F6675-23-Death-of-Mr-Scott-Berry-in-hospital-Humber-21-10-2023-SI-31-40-37.pdf>

self-harm. HMPPS Safety Team has a dedicated team member who focuses on the safety of IPP prisoners. In May 2023, the Safety Team produced a learning bulletin sharing early learning from the self-inflicted death of IPP prisoners. The bulletin provided guidance for suggested actions staff can take, including the importance of considering IPP prisoners' heightened level of risk. In November 2023, the Safety Team delivered a safety briefing to front-line staff to further raise awareness on the risks of IPP prisoners. Two further sessions were also held during a dedicated 'IPP in Focus' weeks in April 2024 and September 2025, both of which were attended by high numbers of staff. The sessions during these weeks were all recorded for wider dissemination to prisons and probation delivery units across England and Wales.

The Safety Team have also developed a Safety Toolkit, with a range of learning and practice materials to help front-line staff support those serving the IPP sentence effectively, recognising the heightened level of risk of self-harm and suicide among IPP prisoners. Our refreshed IPP Action Plan has a workstream dedicated to Safety with the main objective of supporting prisons to deliver improvements to the safety of those serving an IPP sentence by actively identifying and supporting IPP prisoners at risk of self-harm and violence in custody, whilst supporting their engagement and progression. Our primary focus is on raising awareness of the heightened risk of self-harm and suicide of IPP prisoners so all staff understand the risk factors and can provide effective support.

We will continue to monitor, analyse and share any changing or emerging trends in published IPP prisoner data with staff and to inform and update our guidance where appropriate.

The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 received Royal Assent on 24 May 2024 and introduced significant changes to the IPP licence. This included reducing the qualifying period for consideration of licence termination from 10 years after first release to three years (or two for those serving a DPP sentence), introducing a provision for automatic licence termination and enabling the Secretary of State to re-release a recalled IPP offender under the Risk Assessed Recall Review (RARR) power.

These changes resulted in the automatic termination of 1,742 IPP licences on 1 November 2024. A further 600 people became eligible for referral to the Parole Board to consider licence termination on 1 February 2025. So far, the number of people serving the sentence in the community has fallen by two-thirds following the implementation of these changes.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention. I trust that this response provides assurance that action is being taken to address the matters that you have raised.

Yours sincerely



Director General Operations

Annex A - IPP Operational Measures

Working Toward Release

- Focus on getting 90% of IPP prisoners into the right prisons for their needs.
- Many prisons are running IPP Forums to provide peer support to those serving the sentence. Through the Action Plan we will continue to build on this good practise and deliver more Forums across the estate
- HMPPS conduct a six-monthly RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating exercise to identify which IPP prisoners are most struggling to progress, so that support can be targeted.
- We published the Progression Panel Policy Framework in July, and have already seen a significant number of panels recorded. These panels, comprising of HMPPS staff and wider partner agencies, ensure that those serving IPP sentences are on the right progression pathway, with access to the right interventions, at the right time.
- HMP Aylesbury is in the process of creating the Phoenix Unit, which will be a bespoke unit dedicated to support IPP prisoners with a red RAG rating who are struggling to progress in their sentence.
- Psychology have rolled out a case review process to ensure that attendance at progression panels is supported by a thorough review of the case and targeted preparation to help optimise the panel.
- HMPPS Psychology Services is completing light touch quarterly reviews on DPP prisoners to ensure a regular review of the RAG rating and barriers to progression are considered.

Continued Support After Release

- Expansion of the Approved Premises (AP) pilot which provides in reach work to IPP prisoners to support them to transition to the AP, and allows a longer stay for individuals. This was piloted at 4 sites in the North West and is being rolled out to a further 11 sites across England and Wales.
- Psychology Services are delivering an IPP Community Pathway (which has expanded for all cases now but started with IPP sentenced individuals). This is focused on consultancy, staff support and training for probation/AP staff, as well as completing discrete research projects. All of which is important for through the gate working, handover of cases and alternatives to recall.

Recall

- HMPPS have streamlined recall documentation and added a direct request to consider suitability for Risk Assessed Recall Review (RARR) ensuring that the potential for a swifter re-release is firmly in the mind of the Probation Officer completing it.
- All IPP recalls are considered for suitability for RARR
- Refresher training has been delivered to PPCS senior managers on the causal link.
- The recall template is going to be updated to capture the causal link more clearly.
- The recall referral trial has begun; this will extend the period of time in which IPP prisoners must be referred to the Parole Board following recall with the intent of allowing more time for consideration of RARR.

Communications, Training and Engagement

- The Public Protection Group (PPG) and Psychology Services are working together to review existing training packages and set up a central shared folder with links to all training relevant to the management and progression of those serving the IPP sentence to make training easier to access. Through this process we will also address any gaps in training provisions.
- Psychology Services have also completed a number of IPP Continued Professional Development (CPD) events and teach ins across the estate.
- HMPPS are creating an IPP Communications Strategy. IPP prisoners have been consulted on this, and throughout December/January external stakeholders will have

the opportunity to provide thoughts and feedback. We will publish this internally in the new year. This will set out objectives to ensure policy changes and important messages reach the entire intended audience (both prisoners and staff), and methods for testing that communications have been successful.

- There have been a number of IPP events recently including at The Verne and Littlehey providing opportunity to share examples of good practice. There are more IPP events due to take place in the New Year.
- Annual IPP Scrutiny Panels looking into Area Delivery Plans took place in February 2025 and will take place again week commencing 23rd February 2026.