



IPP Factsheet

What are IPPs?

Sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPPs) were created by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and started to be used in April 2005. They were designed to protect the public from serious offenders whose crimes did not merit a life sentence.

Offenders sentenced to an IPP are set a minimum term (tariff) which they must spend in prison. After they have completed their tariff they can apply to the Parole Board for release. The Parole Board will release an offender only if it is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public for the offender to be confined. If offenders are given parole they will be on supervised licence for at least 10 years. If offenders are refused parole they can only apply again after one year.

Why aren't they working?

They were designed as a way to protect the public from serious offenders but have been used far more widely than intended, with some have been issued to offenders who have committed low level crimes with tariffs as short as two years. They have been handed down at a rate of more than 800 a year and as a result more than 6,500 offenders are currently serving IPP sentences.

IPPs have proved difficult to understand and leave victims and their families uncertain about how and when an offender will be released. IPPs lead to inconsistent sentencing. They have been given to some offenders, while others who have committed similar crimes have served fixed sentences.

What are we doing instead?

In July 2011 the Prime Minister announced a review of the unclear and inconsistent IPP sentence.

Following that review we are now introducing a range of consistent tough sentences with fixed lengths, which will see more dangerous criminals given life sentences and give victims a clear understanding of how long offenders will be imprisoned. Dangerous criminals will serve a tough extended sentence which includes a long prison term and a long period of supervision when the prison sentence has been served.

We will do this by:

- Abolishing IPPs, so that more dangerous offenders can be given straightforward life sentences by judges.
- Introducing a “two strikes” policy so that a mandatory life sentence will be given to anyone convicted of a second serious sexual or violent crime. Making it the only time a mandatory life sentence must be given, other than for murder.
- Creating a new “extended sentence” for criminals convicted of serious sexual or violent offences, which will mean they cannot be released from prison until they have served at least two-thirds of their sentence (by comparison to the normal halfway point) and for the most serious offenders only then if the Parole Board agrees it.
- Coupling this with long licence periods for these offenders, so that when they are released from prison they will be monitored for long periods and returned to prison if necessary. This will be an extra five years for violent offenders and eight years for sexual offenders.

What does this mean for prisoners currently serving IPPs?

The changes will not be retrospective. Current IPP prisoners will continue to serve their sentences, and will only be released when the Parole Board assesses them as suitable.