

**USER VOICE**

ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING

**THE VOICE OF  
PEOPLE ON  
IPP  
THEMATIC INSPECTION**

FEBRUARY 2024

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## **FOREWORD**

Despite sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) being abolished in 2012 (though not for existing prisoners), thousands of people remain in limbo, either waiting to be released while in prison or facing continual uncertainty in fear of being recalled.

IPP is a universally criticised policy, and with good reason. The UK government have been urged by the UN to resentence people on IPP. In February 2023 the government rejected a recommendation by the House of Commons Justice Committee to conduct a resentencing review in order to, in the words of the Chair of the Committee, give “certainty to everyone and to give hope”. What is more, the architect of the policy David (now Lord) Blunkett has expressed regret over the damage these sentences have done.

For this study, commissioned by HM Inspectorate of Probation, User Voice spoke to over 100 people in prison and in the community. People with lived experience of the criminal justice system designed our surveys and went on to engage with people on IPP. The following report is what we heard from those unfiltered and open conversations. It can often be a difficult read, which we make no apologies for.

We spoke to individuals who had been on IPP at varying lengths about their experiences in prison, their time on recall, and their ideas for reform. User-led solutions are at the heart of what User Voice does.

More than half of the participants surveyed have been recalled multiple times. The merry-go-round of recall has led to mental health issues. One word that repeatedly came up to summarise the collective feeling of people serving IPP sentences was “hopeless”. They feel trapped and forgotten. It is worth noting that while HM Inspectorate of Probation did find that recall was seen as appropriate in many cases, there was a lack of support for those with mental health or substance misuse issues, and that this often led to a deterioration in behaviour resulting in recall. Nor were IPPs well prepared for their release into the community. In many ways the system seemed to be setting up people to fail as well as presenting probation practitioners with difficult dilemmas.

We found that the impact on mental health for people on IPP and their families was considerable. Many participants stated they have developed, since their most recent recall, various mental health issues such as insomnia, anxiety, and depression. Some interviewees reported having self-harmed and having suicidal thoughts as a direct result of their most recent recall.

User Voice found a prison system unfit for the complexities of dealing with people on IPP. Almost 70% of participants stated that their preparation for release was either ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor.’ They described a distinct lack of support from probation or prison staff.

For many, release into the community has not provided opportunity for rehabilitation, rather it has brought anxiety and pessimism. Participants also stated that they could not access support as relevant staff “cannot work with” people serving IPP sentences in advance of their parole hearings which often leads to no help with vital resettlement issues such as housing or accessing banking.

Key components of the criminal justice system must include rehabilitation, hope, certainty, and fairness. Those on IPP are failed in all four categories.

**Simon Boddis**

**CEO, User Voice**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report sheds light on the experiences of people serving IPP sentences since their most recent recall to prison. In total, User Voice spoke to **111** people serving IPP sentences who have experience of recall across **11** prison estates.

For the vast majority of the people we spoke to, their experiences have left them “devastated”, “hopeless” and “living in fear”.

The stories we heard during interviews and focus groups were hard to hear, and for many they will be hard to read. We express our deepest gratitude to all the people that took part in the consultation and reliving these often-traumatic experiences.

The voices and themes emerging from this report pose serious questions around IPP sentences and what could be done to better support people serving IPP sentences to stand a chance of getting their lives back.

User Voice would like to thank HM Inspectorate of Probation for commissioning this work.

## WHAT IS AN IPP SENTENCE?

The Imprisonment for Public Protection sentence was created in England and Wales by the Criminal Justice Act 2003. The sentence was initially designed to protect the public from serious offenders whose crimes did not merit a life sentence.

While IPP sentences were abolished by the government in 2012, they were not abolished retrospectively. There was no change for those who received the sentence prior to this date.

The difference between an IPP sentence and a sentence of a set number of years in prison, is that an IPP sentence keeps people in prison based on what they might do in the future, rather than what they have done in the past. Therefore, there’s a possibility that their custodial sentence could be indefinite.

## TIME SERVED

The average time surveyed between the length of their original tariff and the time served in prison before their first release was **6** years. This does not take into consideration the additional years spent in prison due to recall(s).

**69%** have served more than five years over their original tariff before their first release, and **13%** served more than ten years.

## PREPARATION FOR RELEASE

**2 in 3** participants rated the quality of the support they received from the prison and prison staff in the preparation for their most recent release as ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’.

Most described a distinct lack of support with specific areas such as accommodation, finances, and getting identification as particular areas of failure. Participants said how these factors were also exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

People found real benefit in progressing to a Cat-D prison, which helped with the anxiety and stress of transitioning to life on the outside.

## PAROLE HEARINGS

Frequent adjournments and changes in key members of staff act as a barrier to positive parole hearing outcomes.

People reported that the Parole Board consistently “move the goalposts” at each parole hearing to avoid releasing those serving IPP sentences which leads to general feelings of pessimism and hopelessness when preparing for and attending parole hearings.

## EXPERIENCE UPON RELEASE

People serving IPP sentences spend significant periods in prison and therefore often find release to be an overwhelming experience in which adjustment to the outside world is difficult. Interviewees told us of a clear lack of support in adjusting to the outside world.

Participants who spent time at Approved Premises often described the financial burden of staying there and the environment not being conducive to rehabilitation and desistance.

## COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Over half rated the quality of the support they received in the community as ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’ and described a lack of support from probation.

Many people have experienced a revolving door of probation practitioners and therefore have no continuity of support. The ease of recall and subsequent fear of repercussion is a barrier to openness and honesty with probation staff, which means people often “suffer in silence”.

For people serving IPP sentences, a supportive probation practitioner is one that is both flexible and understanding.

## EXPERIENCE OF RECALL

**3 in 4** participants reported that they ‘Disagree’ or ‘Strongly Disagree’ that their most recent recall was fair and just.

The most popular response as to why people thought that their most recent recall was unfair and unjust was that they were recalled without being charged for a further offence. Some stated that they were recalled for “hearsay” and often without any evidence.

Others were recalled for asking for help and missing appointments. Nearly **1 in 5** agreed that their most recent recall was fair and just. Such participants described being recalled for what they referred to as “legitimate reasons”, such as committing a further offence, breaking licence conditions, or being caught with illicit substances.

## THE IMPACT OF RECALL

**88%** of participants stated that their most recent recall has impacted them as well as their families 'To a Great Extent'.

The most prominent theme regarding the impact of recall, on people serving IPP sentences, was the effect on mental health.

Many participants stated they have developed various mental health issues since their most recent recall, such as insomnia, anxiety, and depression. Many are now prescribed medication for their mental health; that they previously did not need. Some interviewees reported having self-harmed or having suicidal ideations as a direct result of their most recent recall.

Recall has a significant impact on people serving IPP sentences' ability to maintain close relationships. Participants reported the impact of their most recent recall, the life experiences and mental health of their siblings, parents, and children at length.

## RECENT PRISON EXPERIENCE

The majority of people serving IPP sentences we spoke to describe a lack of support from prison staff since their most recent recall back to prison. Some going as far as to label the support as "non-existent".

There are limited opportunities for them to progress their rehabilitation in prison. Many have exhausted the limited courses available to them, some of which they are not eligible for, due to not having a release date.

It is notoriously difficult for people serving IPP sentences to be granted parole and they are more likely to experience bullying due to fears of being punished for retaliating.

A significant majority of interviewees and focus group participants reported that both prison staff and probation staff are not well informed about IPP sentences. People serving IPP sentences often reported having experienced trauma because of their sentence and therefore have specific needs. Participants reported that staff are often not aware of these needs due to their lack of understanding of the sentence.

## THE IPP STATE OF MIND

People serving IPP sentences are living in a state of fear due to their sentence. For many, release into the community doesn't come with a sense of freedom, it comes with paranoia and pessimism. They believe any situation can lead to them being back in prison at the drop of a hat, stopping them from living their lives.

If there is one word to summarise the collective feeling of people serving IPP sentences, it is "hopeless". Many felt like they were without a path to get out and had no hope of being released. They feel trapped and forgotten.








## GOOD PRACTICE

Less than **1 in 6** have experienced good practice in relation to their IPP sentence at any point during their sentence. True examples of good practice were few and far between. Two themes emerged as evidence of good practice across all **111** engagements:

- 1) People find real benefit in attending forums for Lifers and people serving IPP sentences. The sessions give them an opportunity to “find out where you stand” and provide peer-support.
- 2) Specialised wings and enhanced programmes offer a better environment and tailored support for people serving IPP sentences. Participants who have experienced these wings stated that there are fewer incidents of violence and bullying which fosters a more rehabilitative environment.

## PEER-LED SOLUTIONS

**7** key peer-led solutions emerged from interviews and focus groups to the challenges people serving IPP sentences face:

-  People serving IPP sentences want to be resentenced. Some respondents said they would be happy to sign a waiver to any compensation after being resentenced. People just want their lives back.
-  Specialised training for prison and probation staff on IPP sentences.
-  Specific houseblocks/wings for people serving IPP sentences with staff that understand their sentences and know how to support them.
-  Implement a clear progression plan for release for each individual person serving an IPP sentence.
-  Where possible, Approved Premises to be located near a persons support network and managed to be a supportive environment.
-  Better access to mental health services that are tailored to the needs of those serving an IPP sentence.
-  People serving IPP sentences want to have group forums, specifically for people serving IPP sentences, where they can share experiences and hear updates from a staff member who is ‘in the know’.

When writing to Members of Parliament please give your previous home address in order to avoid delays in your case being taken up by the M.P.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number  name

Wing

## #Emotions

"See I have these emotions & emotions on the phone, phone coz the answer to his questions I don't know, know"  
#Chorus x 2<sup>99</sup>

I really wanna recompense with my son, but I'm scared he'll be like daddy this sentence doesn't make sense coz all he's seen is me not coming home trying to explain it's down to the parole board & home secretary for 16yrs now, this shuts illegal & kinda scary along the way I've met more people trusted than that bird from American Mary now I put myself in this

but you can't justify to me why it's jail life I'm still living and all this has just got harder for me my son grown up with his dad trapped up in the Hmp which has just made him yet another <sup>government</sup> statistic the thought of what I've put him through & missed out on makes me sick so you see this is my life I ain't dreaming IAP is what I'm feeling I put pen 2 paper to release this eternal pain these black marks under my eyes you can see the strain you can see the strain coz we been holding it down but it's like I'm trapped in a whirlpool going round & around stuck in this governments progressive tool

like I'm in a traffic jam on the M25 when I come to jail my mum was still alive don't know about it but I think I've had my share of this pain & strife yet these Brexit lot keep playing god with thousands of lives

"~~See~~ Chorus x 2 -  
See I have these emotions & emotions on the phone, phone coz the answer to his questions I don't know, know"



## USER VOICE OVERVIEW

User Voice is a unique ex-offender led charity that brings lived experience to the heart of systemic change. We bring about transformation for individuals and institutions by empowering the most marginalised in society, so the system can work for everyone.

We are led by lived experience, over 70% of staff have experience of the criminal justice system. We exist to reduce offending and improve rehabilitation by working with the most marginalised people in and around the criminal justice system. We ensure that practitioners and policymakers hear their voices.

Since User Voice was founded in 2009, we have given a voice to over 160,000 people in prison and on probation. We have worked in 1 in 5 UK prisons and three-quarters of probation services. Our prison Councils are about change. The Council's democratic process makes sure that all voices can be heard. By focusing on collective challenges and solutions, we can give practitioners and policymakers a route to effective and lasting change.

User Voice has co-produced over 120 peer research projects with over 20,000 participants. Our sector leading research such as 'Coping with COVID' (2022), and 'Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice Sector' (2023) give decisions makers feedback and solutions.

Over the past 14 years we have provided a path for over 300 people from the criminal justice system into employment. Former members of User Voice staff have gone onto work for the Ministry of Justice, the NHS, and Civil Service, to name a few.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

This report gives a voice to people serving IPP sentences. Access to participants came from User Voice being commissioned by HM Inspectorate of Probation to capture the voice of people serving IPP sentences for the inspection titled: 'A Thematic Inspection of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) Recall Decisions.'

The overall objective was to better understand the experience of people serving IPP sentences that have experienced being recalled. Furthermore, our objective was:

- To understand the experience of people on IPP sentences and what support they have or haven't had prior to their most recent release.
- To understand the effectiveness of the support they received during their most recent period in the community.
- To understand the reasons and experiences around participants' most recent recall.
- To understand the effectiveness of the support they have received upon recall to prison, during their most recent period in the community.
- To highlight the biggest issues faced by those serving IPP sentences and any good practices that could be built upon by both prison and probation services.

## APPROACH

### PRE-FIELDWORK

- Research materials were developed with the involvement of two lived experience panels
  - One with people currently serving IPP sentences in prison and another with people serving IPP sentences in the community.
- Participant recruitment had two facets:
  - 1) Interviews/focus groups were set up with individuals on HMIP's case sample as well as some additional participants.
  - 2) All other people serving IPP sentences that have experience of recall were contacted to complete a face-to-face questionnaire.

### FIELDWORK

- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted in **11** prisons by a team of **4** lived experience peer researchers and the project lead.
- Face-to-face questionnaires were completed by participants across all **11** prisons.

### DATA ANALYSIS

- All interviews were transcribed.
- Thematic data analysis was completed on all qualitative data.
- Statistical analysis was completed on all Likert-scale questionnaire responses.
- An analysis session was held with all the research staff involved on the project. The purpose was to identify key themes in the data and areas of focus for the report.

## RESEARCH SAMPLE BREAKDOWN

11

Different prisons

111

People on IPP sentences had their voice heard

26

People interviewed

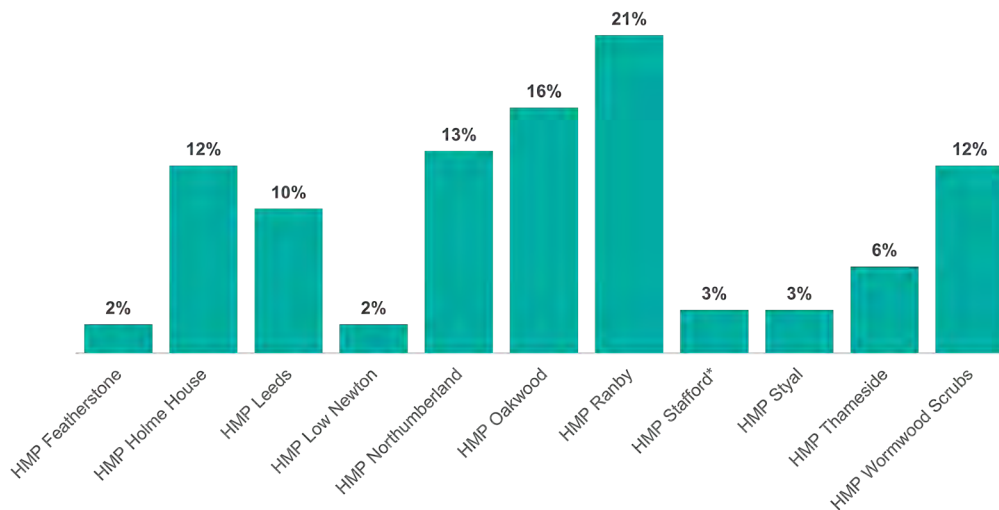
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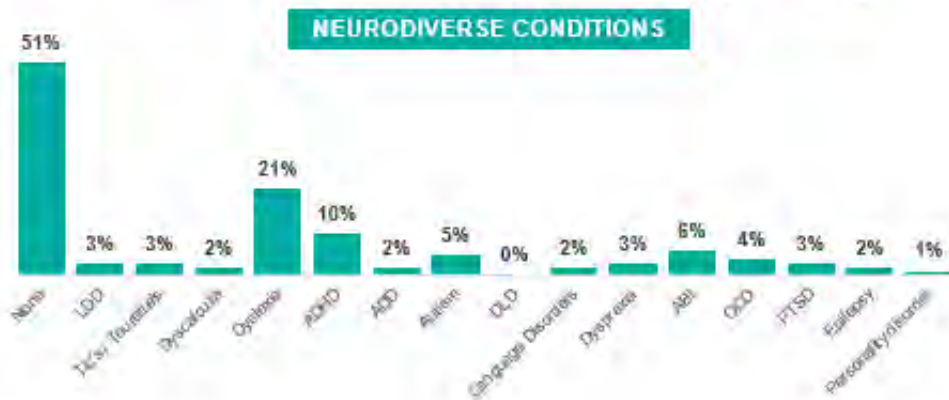
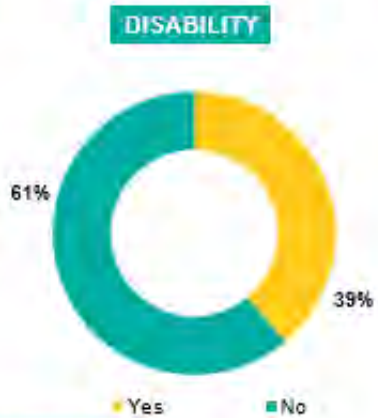
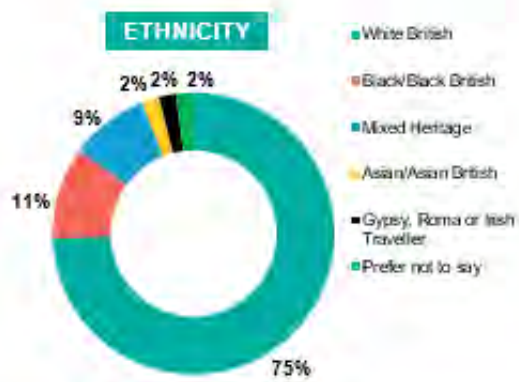
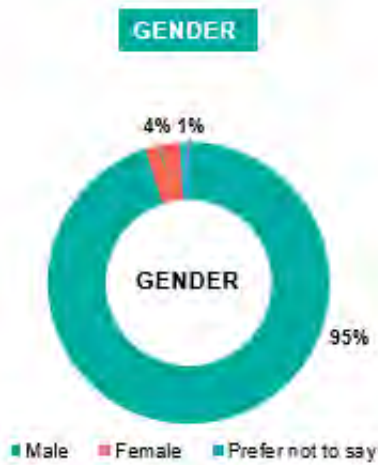
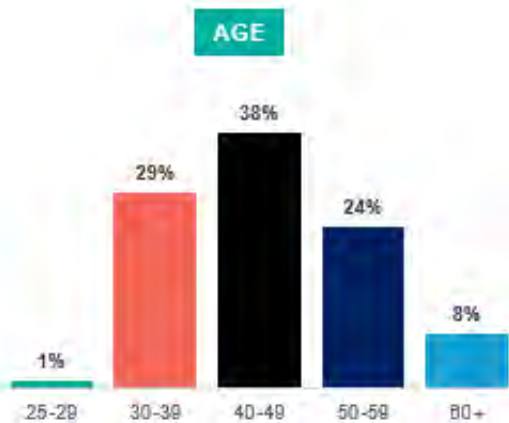
Focus groups conducted

105

People surveyed

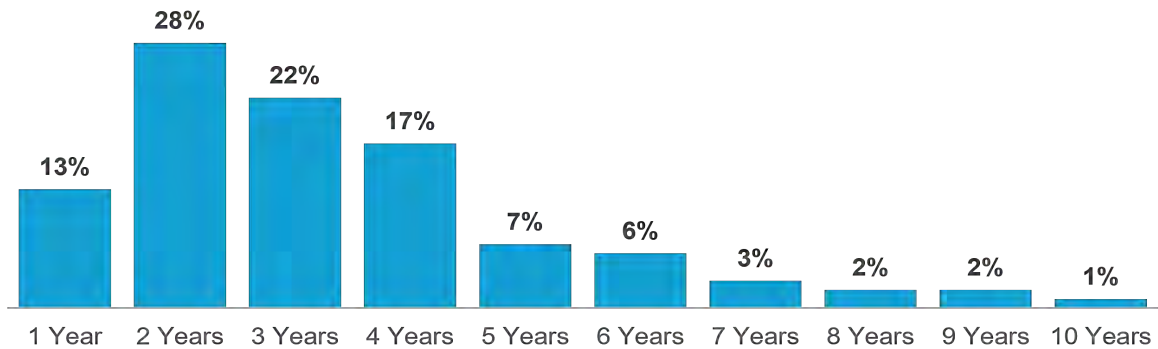
## PRISON BREAKDOWN



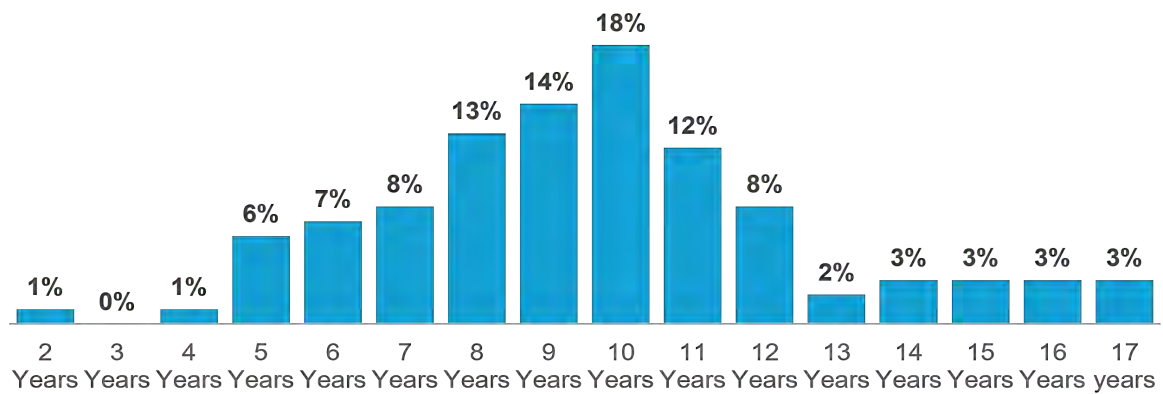


## CHAPTER 1: TIME SERVED

### LENGTH OF TARIFF



### TIME SERVED BEFORE FIRST RELEASE



**1 in 8 participants served ten years over their original tariff before their first release.**

This does not take into consideration the additional years spent in prison due to recall(s).

The largest difference between the length of the original tariff and the time served in prison before first release was noted by two individuals. Both were given an original tariff of **2** years and served **17** years prior to their first release, a difference of **15** years.

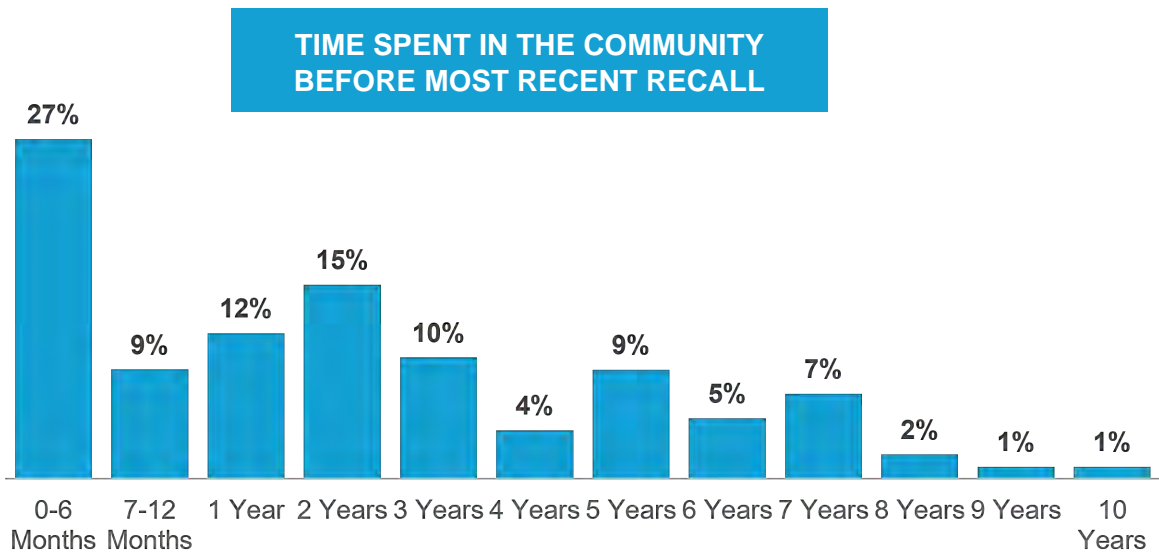
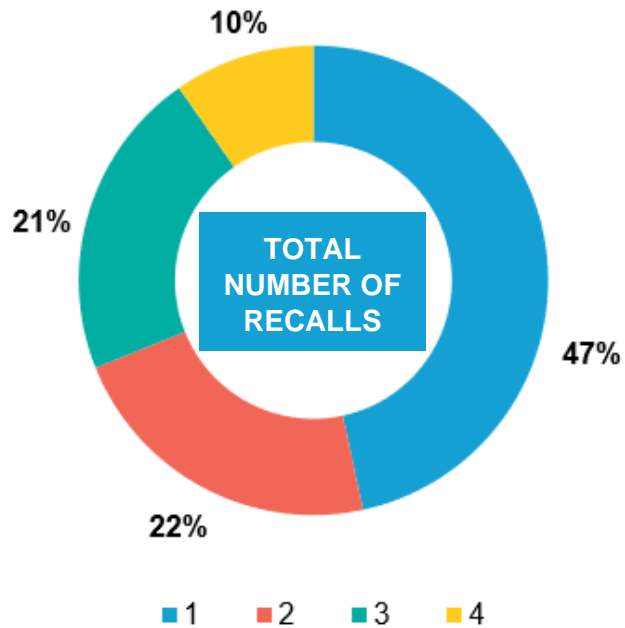
The smallest difference between the length of original tariff and the time served in prison before first release was less than **1** year. This individual was given an original tariff of **10** years and served **9** years prior to their first release. However, this individual has been recalled **3** times and has therefore served more time than their original tariff.

**More than half of the participants surveyed have been recalled multiple times.**

53% of participants stated that they have been recalled multiple times since their first release while serving an IPP sentence. Just over **1 in 5** participants stated that they had been recalled twice since their first release, and a small fraction less stated that they had been recalled three times. The maximum number of recalls experienced was four at a rate of **1 in 10**.

The amount of time spent in the community before their most recent recall varied across the sample. The most popular response was up to 6 months with over **1 in 4** participants. This may already speak to the difficulties faced by people serving IPP sentences in avoiding recall to prison.

**63%** of participants spent 2 years or less in the community on their most recent stint. Whereas **15%** had avoided recall for 6 years or more. Only one individual had managed to avoid recall for over a decade.

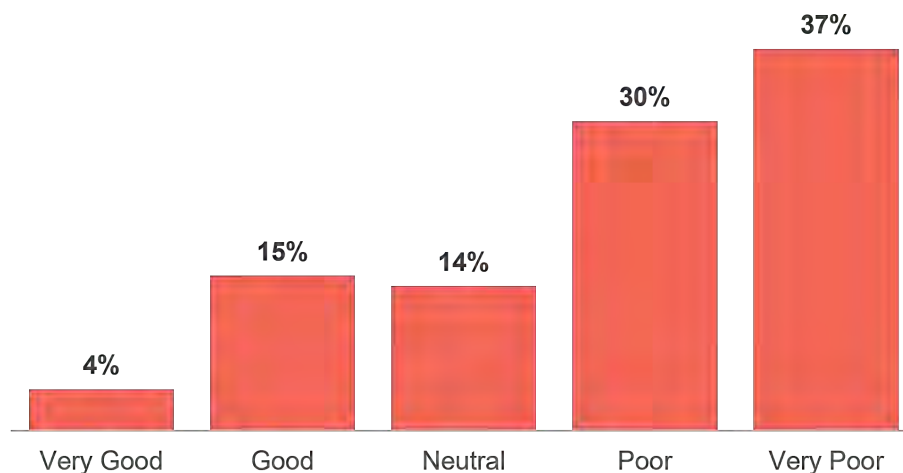


## CHAPTER 2: PREPARATION FOR RELEASE

**2 in 3** participants rated the quality of the support they received from prison and probation staff in the preparation for their most recent release as 'Poor' or 'Very Poor.'

### GOOD PREPERATION IS DOWN TO EFFECTIVE STAFF

**Q:** What was the quality of support you received for the preparation for your most recent release into the community?



**Just under 1 in 5** rated their preparation for release into the community either 'Good' or 'Very Good.'

When probation and the offender manager unit staff are consistent, people were more likely to rate the support they had in preparation for their release better.

An effective and trusting relationship with staff was seen to result in better preparation for release and a foundation from which to build. Participants stated that effective signposting, simple explanations, and an overall caring nature are key. These allow staff to build effective and trusting relationships with people serving IPP sentences preparing for release.

This is especially noted in those who have been in prison serving an IPP sentence for longer periods of time. Such individuals stated that although they are generally "buzzing" to be released, it comes with a sense of trepidation as they have adapted to the structure of life on the inside and in some cases are being released into a world that has changed drastically since the last time they were in the community.

Therefore, in all cases, but especially for those that have served more time, good preparation for release means good emotional support, support with finding accommodation, support with building relationships with peers, as well as, often overlooked, aspects of life such as help with getting identification and setting up a bank account.

*"I now have a very positive working relationship with my POM and COM and have a really good chance of release in a few months through working together alongside other professionals."*

*"Really looked after me before my release and even signposted me to services. Foundation was very good."*

*"I've had my own probation officer since 2021, she's supported me well for release and on all of my recalls, as have the OMs in the jail."*

*"She, like, I was getting nervous, getting out. I. She worked with me like, walked me through everything. I went straight to rehab. I had the women from rehab, the staff, they drove down to the prison to meet me. So, in a way I was glad because if they wouldn't have met me, I had to make my own way there, I'd have spent money on drugs and used."*

*"I had a lot of support. I had family. Uh, probation obviously support me and, you know, I was referred to a group called Circles."*



## A DISTINCT LACK OF SUPPORT

The majority of people serving an IPP sentence who were surveyed and interviewed described experiencing little or no support in the preparation for their most recent release.

67% of participants stated that their preparation for release was either 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'. They described a distinct lack of support from probation or prison staff. People reported that they were often left to prepare themselves or utilise support from their peers for their release. Many stated that without the support of their peers serving IPP sentences, they would be completely in the dark about the processes and what to expect both prior to and upon release.

People serving IPP sentences spoke of an inability to prepare for their release, as they could be told at any minute they're leaving once parole has been granted without a plan being in place.

A significant number of people we spoke to struggled with their mental health, which they stated was worsened by the lack of preparation for release, especially due to the stress of rejoining society after long periods of time in prison. What should be a joyous day is often filled with worry and anxiety – anxiety that could be eased with the correct support mechanisms prior to release.

*"It is non-existent the help and support to prepare for release, any help is only a tick box exercise to make jails and stuff look like they care."*

*"I've never received any help really from inside probation or outside probation. As long as they tick their boxes, they're alright, I think it's not more of how they can help you it's how they can cover their backs."*

*"Nothing. I've been in 12 months and seen my offender manager 3 times. I said I wanted to see my outside probation officer to speak about my release. I ring her but she's never in."*

*"I wasn't given any support prior to my release and given that I served 12 years, I definitely needed it."*

*"They've never done nought for me I've always had to do everything me-self."*

*"Door opened and let out, could not prepare myself."*

*"After 10 years they just let me out with not enough support. Not enough discussion. They just came to my pad and told me to get my shit together, you're going home! I didn't even have a home!"*

*"Probation both in an out of Prison are very ill equipped to deal with IPPs and if like myself we have mental health it's even harder as you're just expected to get out and get on with life."*

## SUPPORT WITH ACCOMMODATION

### **No release date means there's a lack of help finding a place.**

Participants reported that because they don't have a specific release date, they face significant barriers to getting support with housing prior to their release.

Participants stated that they have been refused help by the housing team and that relevant staff "cannot work with" people serving IPP sentences in advance of their parole hearings, which often leads to no support with accommodation whatsoever.

It was common to hear that despite having a release date, people were spending months longer inside as they had to wait for bed spaces to become available due to their inability to prepare.

In some cases, people reported being released homeless, which left them both vulnerable and more likely to be recalled.

*“Nothing. Nothing at all. The trouble with IPP sentences, is you don’t know whether you’re going to be released or not. So, they’re not going to put all that work in for you to get out on that Parole Board decision and then it not be given, so they don’t do anything. You got how many weeks before you get into your hostel, it might only be a month or couple weeks. There’s nothing they can do. So basically, you get released, with no help whatsoever.”*

*“As an IPP prisoner I was unable to access housing support and the hostel/approved premises was a barrier rather than support.”*

*“After release I had nowhere to live, rendered homeless even though being so was the reason behind my index offence, I eventually got a hostel and with help from a charity, got housing for veteran.”*

*“There wasn’t much put in place to help us any different to any other prisoner to be honest, but we can’t access help with housing etc as we don’t have a release date.”*

*“No accommodation support in jail or move on accommodation support from the hostel.”*

*“I put it in to see the housing team and they said they can’t work with me; it has to be a closer date. Bear in mind, people are coming for employment, but they don’t touch you before you are closer to release.”*

## SUPPORT WITH FINANCES AND IDENTIFICATION

**It’s evident that there is a clear need for support with both opening a bank account and identification prior to release.**

A common theme that came from discussions around support prior to release was the perceived lack of help around setting up a bank account upon release and getting access to the necessary identification to do so.

Similar to issues faced with housing support, people reported an inability to get help with obtaining ID or a bank account due to not having a release date. Therefore, upon release, people are often left without a way to manage their finances and are reliant on others to do so. They feel like they’re set up to fail.

This inability to have either the correct identification or a bank account has a knock-on effect on other aspects of individuals’ lives and rehabilitation. For example, participants spoke about struggles in setting up and receiving Universal Credit and difficulties finding stable work – both of which increase the likelihood of reoffending and recall.

*“Asked for a bank account. I didn’t get one. I asked for a birth certificate. I didn’t get one, and I asked for a full ID and I didn’t get any. So straight away I was struggling. When I got out with no id, no birth certificates, couldn’t open a bank account to get me benefits or a job. So straight away I was stuck with, I couldn’t prove of, so I couldn’t open a bank account. I had to get me benefits in my mom’s bank account. Every time I wanted money outta the bank, I had to take me mam from the bank.”*

*“Could not got any ID prior to release as I didn’t have a release date. So, when released had to use my mother’s bank account every-time I wanted money, she had to come to the bank with me. Luckily, I had a job.”*

*“When released I could not open bank account, even with hostel and probation saying how it was not done by Prison as I don't get resettlement. So, I couldn't open a bank account, get ID, the only thing that was done was my appointment for the job centre.”*

*“Could not get any ID or open a bank account before being released as didn't have a release date like normal sentenced prisoners so could not prepare for release. I couldn't get a job or anything.”*

## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

**The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on both when people serving IPP sentences were released into the community, their experience preparing for their release, and their experience upon release.**

In response to the pandemic, prisons in England and Wales implemented a ‘lockdown’ that involved confining prisoners to their cells in some cases for over 23 hours a day. This decision undeniably saved lives under extremely difficult conditions. However, as User Voice’s report<sup>1</sup> ‘Coping with COVID in Prison’ outlines, the lockdown had considerable risks of its own, including on prisoners’ health, mental wellbeing, and rehabilitation journeys.

Our report found that maintaining family connections was considerably more difficult during COVID-19 which led to even greater isolation and instances of depression. Nearly 60% received no visits from the outset of the pandemic to the point of data collection, with 78% not receiving a visit for over 6 months.<sup>2</sup> The pandemic placed additional stress on these relationships and therefore further impacted the mental health of people serving IPP sentences and their families.

The inevitable and significant impact on the mental health of prisoners was one of the main takeaways from User Voice’s report. Participants outlined widespread feelings of despair and frustration, which could lead to self-harm, disruptive behaviour, and suicidal ideation.<sup>3</sup> Many of the people serving IPP sentences that we spoke to were in prison during the pandemic and reported that the “23 hour bang-up” affected their mental health severely, to a point where it impacted their release.

Participants reported that the restrictions put in place were a significant barrier in the preparation for their release, and further barriers were faced upon their release into the community and their time at approved premises.

Some interviewees reported that despite being granted release, they had to serve up to an extra eight months due to the impact of the pandemic. Again, something they reported seriously affected their mental health.

*"It was during COVID lockdown, and I had not much support except hostel staff and that was limited due to the fact I am a complex case, and no one knew how to deal with me. Basically, I was just kicked out at the prison gates and told I would get all the support in supported accommodation. Plus, my parole went on for two years - every hearing they said nothing has been done to prepare for my release."*

*"No support given at all, so not prepared. Released during COVID being in cell for 23 hours a day prior to release, mental health suffered for 11 months behind door."*

*"Released during COVID and had been used to spending 23 hours a day locked behind a door. I didn't get any support in the lead up and I needed it from what everyone in jail had just experienced. Madness."*

*"Didn't have any support, released and had to live in a hostel miles from any family so left all alone, didn't know anyone and it was during Covid. Had no help with my mental health issues."*

*“You can look at a lot down to COVID and I do you know, like I say I had to do an extra eight months because of COVID, and you can look at it and stuff like that do you know what I mean? Just mention it. Just get rid of IPP altogether because it’s like I said I’ve done like 14 years... I should be a free man.”*

## THE BENEFITS OF PROGRESSING TO A CAT-D PRISON

**Our study found that moving to a Category-D prison helps people serving IPP sentences transition to life on the outside.**

The vast majority of IPP prisoners end up serving long periods of time, often over their original tariff. As a result of long periods of incarceration, people often find it difficult to adjust to the outside world once released into the community. Society can change a lot across a decade, and notable differences can even be noted across a period of a few years. As a result, some people serving IPP sentences are released into a society they barely recognise. This means that people on IPP sentences need proper support as they readjust.

A way of helping people serving IPP sentences adjust to life on the outside world is by progressing to a Cat-D prison. Interviewees that progressed to a Cat-D prison with open conditions found great benefit in the time and freedom available to adjust to society through Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) and periods of paid and unpaid work in the community.

*“I was in D-Cat and received home leaves. That helped me readjust to society after a long time.”*

*“I was given a Cat-D and went to HMP Ford where I done numerous home leaves which prepared me for how much the world had changed.”*

*"I was in a D-Cat prison. Whilst I was located there, I was working full time and thus was able to save money and I had ROTLs before release which helped me adjust a lot."*

*"I had a new psychological assessment months ago and that came back saying I was perfectly good, go back into D-Cat. They said D-Cat would help again. But you know I don't mind D-Cat, I had a good experience there, fine by me... I think it'll be back to Layhill again. It helps you begin to feel normal again and interact with the outside world."*

*"I was in D-Cat, so I was working outside the jail... The support was alright because I was in a D-Cat. Then once I got released I had absolutely nothing in terms of support, I done a course but that was off my own back."*



## CHAPTER 3: PAROLE HEARINGS

### FREQUENT ADJOURNMENTS

**People serving IPP sentences experience a significant barrier with frequent adjournments of parole hearings, which means they are spending longer periods in prison.**

A common theme that came from the interviews with people serving IPP sentences was the shared experience of parole hearings being frequently adjourned. Many interviewees reported that they experienced multiple adjournments for the same parole hearing, in which they had to wait up to six months for the next one. Therefore, some people are spending more than a year extra in custody due to parole hearings being adjourned.

Parole hearings are a big moment in the lives of people serving IPP sentences that come with a lot of stress and anticipation. Such frequent adjournments, as reported by participants, affect their mental health, and leaves some people “completely hopeless”.

*“And I explained that to the Parole Board yeah saying basically they were putting me in an impossible situation... what they did was they adjourned it... so we went through three adjournment processes which took me up until the middle of July. Then I finally got the decision through, deferred. Because one said yes, and one said no.”*

*“They don't help in any way. I know when you learn the hard way mate for the sentences that you go on the first parole hearing and you're not ready. You're just never ready, you've never done it before, you're in that first one, mate.”*

*"I've done in cell work. They're saying that's enough. I said what happens if I relapse? There's nothing on relapse prevention. I was in May, when they had it in May. I was ready for it. But when they adjourned it for 6 months, I was expecting it to be December. So, I was getting back into my head. But then they brought it forward again, so it ambushed me. My parole is in 3 weeks, and I've still got no bedspace, so it is absolutely pointless, and I'll be waiting god knows how long."*

*"I went on an oral in 2010 and yeah, and they had to like adjourn it because probation had fucked up. I went back 2010, so really 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, erm, 2018 I had one, so I was out for 3 1/2 year and then they had one in 2022. So actually, all the hearings together, that's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, that's all the hearings I've sat."*

*"I am not sure why I had to spend another 7 months waiting for the Parole Board to make a decision. My son died 2 months before I was released and therefore, I feel I needed a lot more support when I was released."*

*"You get yourself ready to the best of your ability, but you don't have much hope because you feel they will just knock you back. Then when it gets adjourned you feel completely hopeless, it messes with your head."*

## CHANGES IN STAFF AFFECT PAROLE HEARINGS

**Those serving IPP sentences experience a high volume of changes of community offender managers and probation practitioners, which affects their parole hearings negatively.**

Many of the people we spoke to experienced either a change in key staff members very close to their parole date or having an emergency stand for parole hearings. People perceived these changes in representation during parole hearings as having grave consequences for the outcome, and therefore, their freedom.

For those where this has been the case, they are repeatedly hearing that they cannot be released as they don't have an established working relationship with their probation practitioner.

*"How am I supposed to have a working relationship with my probation officer when I found out recently that I've got a new one.... the parole board see that, and I say I haven't got a working relationship with my probation officer. How's that fair for me?"*

*"They just fobbed me off erm, and it's because now it's my proper probation officer and not a stand in one, my proper probation officer would have helped me a lot more during my parole hearing because he's gone through everything with me, do you know what I mean. And he's going through my breakdown, he's going through me breaking down in front of him, he knows the issue about me son dying and watching my son dying. He knows the issue of, [name], my daughter, trying to kill herself."*

*"I had countless COMs before I was released, I spent 2 1/4 years in a Cat D and didn't have any home leave because of the COM problem. They sent a temp agency worker into my parole board. This is just a snippet of how I was failed by Probation."*

*"I did not get any help or support with housing. My probation officer outside was changed three times before release and had an emergency one for parole."*

*"I was waiting to go through to my parole hearing and then obviously knowing a new offender manager and the parole board might say, "Oh, well, you need more time get to know him and all that." You know what I mean?"*

*"While ever since I've been in here, it's [parole hearing] been cancelled and all that. But I've had about three different probation officers in here and they just don't give a monkeys."*

## MOVING THE GOALPOSTS

**People reported that the Parole Board consistently "move the goalposts" at each parole hearing to avoid releasing those serving IPP sentences.**

Participants reported that they often feel pessimistic going into their parole hearing as they feel they're going to be "knocked back". The reason for this pessimism is that people serving IPP sentences feel that the parole board often denies release and orders people to complete more courses and programmes within prison.

Participants reported that they're being made to "jump through hoops" and that many of the demands the parole board makes of them aren't relevant to them, because they have completed such courses already. They said due to this they aren't eligible, due to not having a release date, or that they don't see the true value in them as they're not going to make a difference to their rehabilitation.

*"I reckon they're trying to make me jump through hoops... I'm refusing to do any more courses. No matter what. All the courses are what I have already done. Nothing different."*

*"As an IPP I wasn't eligible to go on the courses that helped me to go out because I don't have a release date. So, the prison was saying to me 'you can't do it because we don't know when you're out'. Even though when I had my parole hearing he came back and said I need to do them."*

*"I had to do everything myself, the prison did nothing. I came to prison with no qualifications, and I come out prison with plumbing, carpentry, painting and decorating, industrial cleaning. I'm a qualified fitness instructor. I've done all my behaviour courses but that was me, seems like none of it helped with my parole hearing."*

*"The parole board kept moving the goalposts and setting extra targets and goals rather than having something initially that they require. It seems like they split out the tasks and objectives to stretch our sentences longer."*

*"What I need to do to be released is not clear in the slightest and constantly appears to change."*

## CHAPTER 4: EXPERIENCE UPON RELEASE

### RELEASE IS OFTEN OVERWHELMING

**After spending significant periods in prison, people on IPP sentences often find release to be an overwhelming experience in which adjustment to the outside world is difficult.**

More than **three-quarters** of participants spent over **8** years in prison prior to their first release. And more than **half** spent over **10** years inside prior to their first release. After such long periods in prison, people find it difficult to adjust to a world they “didn’t understand”. Interviewees told us of a clear lack of support in adapting to the outside world.

Some individuals found support from their families to adjust, whereas for others, the prospect of socialising again with friends and family was daunting. Some hadn’t seen their friends, parents, or children in over a decade. Building a relationship with their children is especially difficult for people serving longer sentences as their child may have been a toddler when they went in but is now a teenager upon release. Participants reported a distinct lack of support in managing relationships with friends and family prior to release.

Other interviewees reported that they didn’t have anyone close to them to go to for support upon their release. People serving longer sentences reported that they had grown accustomed to the noise of prison and having people around constantly. Those who do not have a support network upon release often struggle with loneliness and their mental health as a result. Managing loneliness and mental health, some participants resorted to being recalled on purpose because they could not handle the loneliness and didn’t have any support to adjust to life on the outside.

*“It felt a bit strange, you know, like new and all that. I felt happy and stuff, you know, I spent a lot of time with my family and friends. Um, I spent a lot of time with my family and friends. I was just happy to be out, you know what I’m saying?”*

*“I had nothing, I had no hot water, I had nothing, I couldn’t bath, couldn’t shower, couldn’t do nothing. And that, so, it made it hard for me. Living all by myself, again, it was hard for me, because obviously I’ve never lived all by myself before as I’ve been in here so long, they didn’t prepare me for it at all.”*

*"I mean I was absolutely buzzing to be released, we all are. But it then came crashing down as it quick becomes an overwhelming experience after so long inside, know what I mean?"*

*"I realized that I didn't understand the world no more because I'd done so long. I was confused and wasn't prepared. My son was three years old. I've come out and he's a teenager. So that was, that was a bit shocking for me to accept. And then obviously I'm in a building by myself. So I had to figure out like what kind of journeys I want to take from here and things like that."*

*"I got myself recalled to get access to services. I was pleading for help before."*

*"It was just because I wanted recalled. I caused it because of my loneliness and emotional issues."*

## CASE STUDY: ALAN'S STORY

After spending more than twelve years behind the door, Alan [pseudonym] found adjustment to the outside world very difficult. The lack of support for his inability to cope with loneliness upon release led him to getting recalled on purpose after less than six months in the community.

*“There was some support with housing and work etc. but there was no support for my mental health, emotional support and loneliness which was just as big of a priority for me.*

*...I think there should be a course explaining what things could be like for people because it was just something I wasn't expecting at all. One minute I'm in prison, next minute I'm in a hostel, and then suddenly I'm in... I'm in my own property and I felt like I was dumped, left, yeah that was a horrible feeling.*

*...Circles of Support would have been a good one because they send people down to your house to give you a bit of company 'cause I've got nobody.*

*... I had a good PO but he was off a lot so I got a lot of different people standing in which wasn't easy as I kept explaining myself a lot. I felt like the continual support wasn't there.*

*...I think probation could have been a bit more involved 'cause normally people have to go and see their probation like weekly and things like that. I wasn't, it was by phone.*

*.... The time I spent on the sentence meant that I couldn't cope with being alone.*

*...If I'd known that there was support out there, I'd have definitely chosen that route, like, I didn't want to commit this crime whatsoever, it was literally just to get me back in 'cause I couldn't cope... It was just because I wanted to be recalled. I caused it because of my loneliness and emotional issues. I think it was imposed on me because of the lack of support.*

*...It was the desperation of being alone and it was the feeling of it. I didn't like it all and not being able to pick up the phone and talk to somebody, it's like, it was worse in the evenings because obviously everything goes quiet. When you're around people all the time like prison, hostels and stuff like that, to suddenly you can hear a pin drop.*

*...I've lost everything again. I spent 12 years collecting it up, bits that I needed for when I got released, but getting recalled means I've lost everything again, so I've got to start completely from scratch.*

*...I completely regret it.”*



## FINANCIAL STRUGGLES AND APPROVED PREMISES

**Many people serving IPP sentences struggle with finances as a direct result of staying at Approved Premises upon release.**

Participants reported that they struggle with the financial implications of staying at Approved Premises, which often make their stay unmanageable. A small number of participants reported that they were chased for money that they owed Approved Premises for their previous stints in the supported accommodation prior to their most recent recall. Many of which did not have the funds to repay the debt.

*"In 2022 they tried pressurising me for £96 I owed them from 2018. I mean come on, man. So there's kids getting out of jail with 80 quid discharge grant and the hostels are on them for the money straight away."*

*"It's the housing officer and probation that get you a room in shared housing. I'm not paying £600 a month for a room when you can get a flat for that."*

## THE ENVIRONMENT OF APPROVED PREMISES

**A key theme that came from the interviews regarding people's experiences with Approved Premises was that they are often environments that are not conducive to rehabilitation.**

Participants often described Approved Premises as places that do not aid their rehabilitation but places that increase the likelihood of reoffending or leave them at risk of behaviours that will lead to reoffending.

For example, those interviewed who struggle with substance and alcohol misuse stated that the environment at certain Approved Premises puts them at great risk of relapse, as they reported seeing others using illicit substances on site.

*"Family were not informed of most recent recall but I was housed in accommodation full of drug users which was not good for my rehab."*

*"My PO keep putting me in shared accommodation with users and convicts, I may as well stay in jail."*

## HOUSED AWAY FROM THEIR SUPPORT NETWORKS

**Some participants reported that they are being housed long distances from their support networks.**

Participants reported being housed in locations that were upwards of 80 miles away from their hometowns and families. Some reported being housed "at the other end of the country". Given the issues already discussed regarding adjusting to the outside world, some individuals struggled with being housed so far away from those close to them.

Some people stated that they would happily go anywhere just to get their freedom back. However, others stated that they would prefer to stay in prison for longer periods until a bed is available for them closer to where they're from.

*"I won't go miles away me because what it is they keep me until the date the bed space becomes available, so I could have got out about two months earlier last time."*

*"The prison did nothing, no. And outside the probation just got me into an approved about 80 miles from my actual place where I resided."*

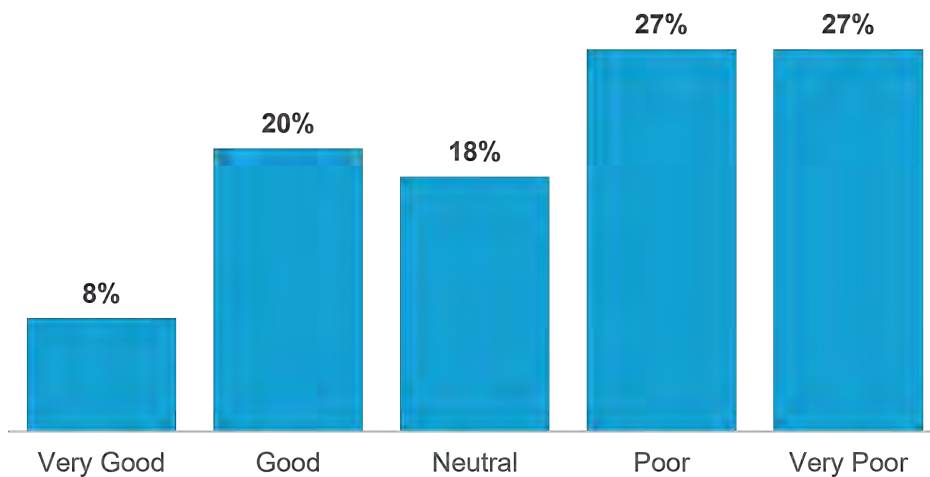
*"Then, I was given a space in a hostel, it's about, about 40 miles away. But, as support goes, that was all the support I received. When you go to the hospital, they tell you to sign on so they can get housing benefit. Um, but while you're in the hostel, I think they take some of your money as well."*

*"After release from a hostel, I had nowhere to live, rendered homeless even though being so was the reason behind my index offence, I eventually got a hostel and with help from a charity, got housing for veterans."*

## CHAPTER 5: EXPERIENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

54% of participants rated the quality of the support they received in the community as 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'.

Q: What was the quality of support you received from probation for your most recent experience in the community?



## LICENCE CONDITIONS

**In most cases, licence conditions were easy to understand for people serving IPP sentences but were deemed by some to be too restrictive.**

Most people stated that their licence conditions were easy to understand. However, some questioned the vague terms and the potential differing interpretations of the terminology.

For some, the list of their licence conditions was long and deemed unmanageable. In one case, a participant stated that the seven pages of license conditions he received were noted by probation staff and the Parole Board as impossible to stick to.

Many people stated that their license conditions were over the top and restrictive, especially in cases where people haven't offended in over a decade. People feel like they wouldn't have such extensive licence conditions if it wasn't for their label of an IPP sentence.

*"On my last parole, like the police, had an input into my licence conditions. There was like seven pages of licence conditions and like, the parole board were like, "I couldn't stick to these licence conditions, so how can you stick to them, how am I expecting you too" so they the parole board wrote out my licence conditions."*

*"Um, there's a few things on my license that really didn't make any sense. And I think that the probation service weaponised enough of my past and things, and without even looking into them."*

*"It [licence conditions] was pretty straightforward, but nobody went through anything it was just on the day of my release there's your license paper, off you go, that was it."*

*"I did understand it [licence conditions]. But it took a long time to sink in, to realise that for any little thing I could do, could recall me."*

*"It's the terminology probation use, the big problem is the way that each individual probation officer interpreted your license conditions."*

*"I could see all the reasons for giving me the licence conditions. The only one I could see as stressful, was the polygraph testing. Because they're not always right, you're all stressed out going in there thinking 'if I get anything that shows up, I'll be dragged back' and I was told 'they were going to work around that. They don't use polygraph test to bring you back,' but they did!"*

## A LACK OF SUPPORT WHILST ON PROBATION

**A significant majority of people serving IPP sentences felt unsupported by the Probation Service during their most recent spell in the community.**

The reasons for people serving IPP sentences feeling unsupported by the Probation Service were wide-ranging. However, some key themes did emerge: being left with no support whatsoever; issues around communication with probation staff; a lack of help with accessing services in vital areas such as substance misuse, housing, finances, employment and mental health; pointless appointments; an inability to be open with probation staff due to fear of repercussion; and probation staff being quick to recall people serving IPP sentences without taking the proper steps to support them.

*"Nothing. I just left my own devices to tell the truth. Yeah. I was just left. Left. No help with housing, no help with getting a job. No help. I had to do all of these things by myself."*

*"They have not helped me at all, I have really struggled especially with my mental health as I've been in prison for so long."*

*"Six years I had with them, and I didn't miss an appointment. When I went to probation for help, instead of helping me, they recalled me."*

*"No, communication wasn't that good. It annoyed me, because I'm thinking, well, you just talked, you just called me, and said that you're off for two weeks. But you're not telling me who I've got to go and see."*

*"Nonexistent, they haven't done a thing for me, and the appointments felt like general checkups. I wanted employment support, but they become obstructive instead."*

*"My support was just a 10 minute chat each week. There was no help to find accommodation, a job, claims or anything. And when I did find a job, probation would always just reject it."*

*"Probation were NO help, even when I went to them for help when I'd lapsed to drugs again, they didn't care."*

## A REVOLVING DOOR OF PROBATION PRACTITIONERS

**People serving IPP sentences reported that they're experiencing frequent changes to probation practitioners, which affects the quality of support.**

Many participants stated that they experienced a revolving door of probation practitioners which means that they cannot get the continued support they need.

Some interviewees reported having **6** or more probation practitioners in less than two years during their most recent spell in the community, giving participants little continuity in support. Participants recounted having to explain themselves and their life situation to multiple practitioners because of the lack of a handover and the inability to build a relationship with their practitioner.

Although these staffing pressures are affecting all people on probation countrywide, they may affect people serving IPP sentences in a more severe way due to the perceived 'high risk' nature of the sentences and their on average greater need for support.

Building a rapport with their practitioner is imperative for people serving IPP sentences due to the nature of the sentence and the ease of recall to prison. Participants stated that they need time to develop a trusting relationship with probation staff to aid understanding - something that isn't happening in the case of many, where the revolving door keeps spinning.

*"Regular probation changes meant I could not settle with one Community Offender Manager."*

*"I did not have the same officer, I got six different probation officers and I struggle with change. I get used to one probation officer, open up about all my shit, and then when I'm supposed to have another appointment with him, I get there, oh, someone else is sat there. You just get used to one. Hi, I'm, and they give you another one."*



*“Constantly changing probation officers, each with a new work ethic and many times duplicating things that had already been done previously.”*

*“The support wasn't good. Well, I had different probation officers. I didn't know how many probation officers. I must admit, this new probation officer, he was good. He did help me with bits and pieces.”*

## THE FEAR OF REPERCUSSION

**People serving IPP sentences fear being open and honest with probation staff due to repercussions for their honesty.**

Many participants stated they have previously been open and honest with their practitioner regarding their current circumstances and experiences but have been recalled as a result instead of being supported. For example, multiple interviewees stated that when they tried to get support from their practitioner for struggles with substance misuse or a relapse with alcohol, their openness on the subject led them to be recalled.

As a result, most people serving IPP sentences would rather stay quiet and “suffer in silence” rather than be open. Something that is ultimately hindering their progress and rehabilitation.

*“Everything I needed I had to do. And you don't want to speak to them anyway, because me personally, if I had anything wrong, I didn't want to approach them, because I'm scared you're gonna say that I'm unstable... So I didn't ask for help, just suffered in silence.”*

*"In appointments you can't open up. It will be used against you, everything you say, you know. I don't think, I could end up lapsing and then they would send you back. So, I had the alcohol tag on yeah, I didn't breach it once, but one day, I really did feel like drinking and I was I was very close to drinking and I had a line of Subutex, yeah. It's that the type of thing you can't, you can't speak to your probation officer about."*

*"If you're honest with them, they just set you up to fail. 'Cause they say to you, be honest with us and tell us, and when you are honest and you tell them, then they shoot you in the foot. They twist things what you say."*

*"I was honest with probation about what had happened that I had been assaulted, yet recall straight away."*

## WHAT A SUPPORTIVE PRACTITIONER LOOKS LIKE

**For people serving IPP sentences, they believe a supportive probation practitioner is one that is both flexible and understanding.**

**28%** of participants rated the support they received in their most recent spell in the community as 'Good' or 'Very Good'. The main reason given for participants rating the levels of support positively was their relationship with their practitioner.

People reported that when a probation practitioner is accommodating, flexible, and understanding, it fosters a positive and trusting relationship which provides a solid foundation for effective signposting and rehabilitation.

*"I had the same probation officer in the community for quite a few years and had monthly catch-up calls so I could tell her about my progress in prison, she knows me well and I trust her."*

*"If I wanted to chat to her I could. There wasn't a problem. Like I said she was accommodating if I was busy doing something or had to do something, she was accommodating, I could change the time or work round things."*

*"My appointments were really good, and I felt listened to. I did feel however that once I left the office, there was nothing."*

*"Actually, the only the one good thing he did do is he put me on to a guy to help me pay my fines. I've been trying to them for years and you can't just go in court and pay the fines no more, you need a card to pay.. that's what he was helping me try to do."*

## CHAPTER 6: EXPERIENCE OF RECALL

**3 in 4 participants reported that they ‘Disagree’ or ‘Strongly Disagree’ that their most recent recall was fair and just.**

**76%** of participants stated that their most recent recall was unfair and unjust. Whereas **18%** stated that they either ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Agree’ to the statement ‘My most recent recall was fair and just’.

This chapter outlines participants’ experiences with their most recent recall across six themes in their own words.

### RECALL WITHOUT BEING CHARGED

**The most popular response as to why people thought that their most recent recall was unfair and unjust was that they were recalled without being charged for a further offence.**

*“It was a false arrest so no; it definitely wasn't just. I'm still stuck in here for something that I haven't been charged for.”*

*“Police came and arrested me and brought me here. I've been waiting over six months to be sentenced and I've been told it could be ten months plus.”*

*“I was accused of a crime, and I proved my innocence but was recalled anyway. I've been back in two years now.”*

*"No charges were brought. I was recalled in 2017, now it's 2023 and I have been told I need to do more courses if I want to stand a chance of release."*

*"The police came to arrest me, and I was taken to station. Charge unproven. There was no further action required but the following day got recalled. No warnings, written or verbal before this action by probation. Police and probation are eager to have you back inside if you're on IPP."*

*"My recall was NFA'd [no further action] yet three years later I'm still sat in jail rotting thanks to probation getting involved in family... For any other sentence if you get NFA'd your released straight away, but with IPP, probation only need to say "I think there's more work to be done" and we're knocked back."*

*"Not charged with any offence, someone said they saw me doing something and when the police looked at CCTV all the people on it were wearing masks, could not prove anything or that I had committed an offence."*

*"My charge has been dropped and I'm still fighting it. I feel like I'm stuck, I've been here for two and a half years with no charge."*

## RECALL DUE TO 'HEARSAY'

People serving IPP sentences recounted their experiences with being recalled for what they described as "hearsay". Many people stated that they were recalled without any evidence for being charged with a crime or justification of recall.

*“On this recall, there were alleged allegations from my ex-partner, which all got dropped. So now I’m getting held for, obstructing, it’s almost a suspended sentence. She picked the phone up, made a load of shit up down the phone basically. I’m recalled to prison, she doesn’t need to go to court. I’m stuck in prison anyway. It’s not like I’m getting out on my court date... I’m currently being held without a prison sentence, and it’s been that way for way too long.”*

*“My neighbours found out about my previous offence due to the routine police visits and started watching me. I raised the concern with probation because I knew I wasn’t doing anything wrong, but they made a complaint and I got recalled with no warning.”*

*“False allegations made against me, and I am on remand so cannot apply for bail. If I was to be acquitted I still have to remain in custody which isn’t right.”*

## **RECALL FOR BEING OPEN AND ASKING FOR HELP**

**During interviews, numerous people serving IPP sentences told us of their experience of being recalled because of being open and honest with their probation practitioner.**

Some people told us that they were recalled whilst asking for help and support from their probation practitioner – many of which were recalled because issues they’re facing may cause “unpredictable behaviour”.

*“I was honest with probation about what had happened and that I had been assaulted yet I was recall straight away.”*

*"Because [name] said he wouldn't recall me because I told him I relapsed, and I did a group off my own back. I got another probation officer coz [name] went sick and I got recalled for a piss test. They should help people recover isn't of recalling them."*

*"I have terminal cancer and in September 2021 I got told my cancer had got worse and I had 18 months to 3 years to live. I did not cope with this and had no support in the community, so I turned to crack to cope. After 3/4 months of use it was getting out of hand, so I knew I had to get help. I tried probation for that and broke down and I was told not to worry, and I would get the help I needed. He drug tested me for confirmation and recalled me. I had stuck to my conditions, just my drug use was bad. All I wanted was help and support."*

## RECALL FOR MISSING APPOINTMENTS

**To a lesser extent, people serving IPP sentences reported that they were recalled to prison for being late or missing their appointments - many of which described legitimate reasons for their absence or lateness that were not taken into consideration.**

*"I've been recalled three times for the same thing. Going to the hospital so I missed appointments. I did everything right! I phoned probation to tell them I was at the hospital. Plus, I got the doctor to speak to the staff and I still got recalled!"*

*"My recall was based on probation 'cause I was late back to an appointment. For that I've been on recall for two years."*

*"No offence was committed but recalled for missing an appointment. No chances given!"*

*"I was recalled by duty probation for being late. I was late after the death of my father and also because of the train times!"*

## RECALL FOR 'LEGITIMATE REASONS'

**18% stated that they either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' to the statement 'My most recent recall was fair and just.'**

Such participants described being recalled for what they referred to as "legitimate reasons" such as committing a further offence, breaking licence conditions, or being caught with illicit substances.

*"It was fair. I committed a serious crime."*

*"I committed a crime while released which broke my conditions. Got drunk and stole something, so it was my own fault."*

*"Well, I mixed with the wrong people, so I was drinking and taking drugs. It was fair."*

*"I did commit further offences by hitting a police officer so that justifies it."*



*"I was recalled for poor behaviour but I turned up to probation under the influence and used threats of violence. It was a cry for help but went about in the wrong way."*

*"I knew I was not supposed to take drugs and I still used. I broke all the rules."*

## BEING RECALLED WITHOUT FORMAL WARNING

**Prior to being recalled, people on probation should, where possible, be given formal warning that they are exhibiting behaviours that can lead to recall.**

In the experience of the people serving IPP sentences we spoke to, it was much more common for people to be recalled without receiving a formal warning.

*"Oh yeah, you do get warnings, I didn't get no warning this time though. They just came in and arrested me."*

*"Not really [given a fair warning]. I lost my phone, so they had no means of contacting me. I tried to contact them, but I wasn't successful. so automatically there was a warrant for my arrest."*

*"I didn't a warning, well, they'll probably say give me a warning but they never... You should have sat me down in a room and told me and said "anything more, anything else, and recall, there's your warning, your written warning"... I've read somewhere in one of my things that I got a warning and I've never got no written warning. And if they are saying that, it's just covering their backs because they're full of shit."*

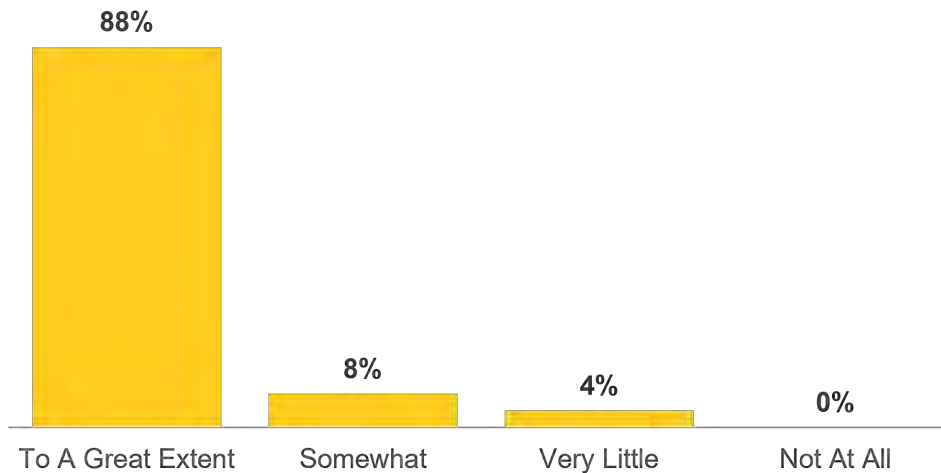
*"They gimme so many chances. I'll admit that, they gimme so many chances and warnings. People that get three chances, I got about six, and I still didn't learn."*

*"There's supposed to be a warning. A warning, a breach, and a recall. That's what they should stick to. That's what the process is, yeah. They've gone beyond that. They use IPP as an excuse to go straight to recall."*

## CHAPTER 7: IMPACT OF RECALL

**88% of participants stated that their most recent recall has impacted them and/or their families 'To A Great Extent'.**

**Q:** How has your most recent recall impacted you and the people around you? (i.e., friends and family).



### RECALL HAS A SERIOUS IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

**The most prominent theme found in relation to the impact of recall on people serving IPP sentences was the effect it has on their mental health.**

The vast majority of participants stated that their most recent recall impacted them and the people around them 'To A Great Extent'. During interviews and focus groups, participants were clearly distressed recounting their experiences but were happy to do so, as for all participants, it was their first opportunity to truly have their voice heard.

Participants told us that staying "positive and strong is a struggle" due to the abject hopelessness and despair they feel regarding their sentence and most recent recall. Not having a concrete release date takes away the comfort and hope of working towards release. It takes away their sense of direction.

Many participants stated they have developed various mental health issues since their most recent recall back to prison, such as insomnia, anxiety, and depression. A lot of people we spoke to stated they are now prescribed medication for their mental health that they had not needed to take before. Others described self-medicating to deal with their on-going mental health issues associated with their sentence and most recent recall. Some interviewees reported having self-harmed as a direct result of their most recent recall, and some reported having suicidal ideations.

*"My mental health has been affected massively [by the most recent recall]. I'm now on anxiety tablets, something I didn't struggle with before coming back in. My mum and dad are old, and my mum has Parkinson's and could do with me being there to help."*

*"Massively, I lost my brother to suicide, and I couldn't be with him or my family due to an unjust recall. It has had a massive impact on my mental health."*

*"It's devastating. I was a carer for my elderly grandmother so I can't be there for her. My mental health has taken a dive. My friends and family are worried for the future. I despair for what my future or lack thereof means."*

*"I have developed various health issues since recall. High blood pressure, anxiety, depression, vertigo, heartburn, headaches. I am on daily medication for them. Prior to recall I was not on any of these. I have given up hope of being released."*

*"I'm more anxious because of what happened on my last recall. That recall was in many ways worse than my 11 years 4 months in prison for the initial three-year tariff. I witnessed/experienced more mental trauma in eight months after recall in 2020 than the whole 11 years."*

## THE IMPACT OF RECALL ON RELATIONSHIPS

**Recall has a significant impact on people serving IPP sentences' ability to maintain close relationships.**

Participants reported that their most recent recall has impacted their relationships with their families and other people they are close to. 88% of participants believe their most recent recall had impacted their family, taking them away from the people they are close to and causing them to miss important life moments. This impact on an individual's ability to maintain close relationships with others has a knock-on effect for both their mental health, and the mental health of their family members.

*"I built up a business in three years. I was working and providing for my family. My partner was 6 months pregnant at the time of recall. Now I have a 2 1/2-year-old son who I have watched grow in visits and photos. He and the family have needed me to be a father."*

*"I was given IPP back in 2010 and I've only had six months of freedom since then. I've lost all sense of self, and I don't know who I am anymore. I fear my mam may die while my life is being robbed from me. My mental health is rock bottom. I've been building bridges with family but as soon as I do, I am recalled again."*

*"Yes, I've lost my dad. Family and friends have started to lose contact."*

*"My family has given up on me because they think I've committed more crime, but I haven't! I was in hospital!"*

## THE AFFECTED OTHERS OF IPP SENTENCES

### **Recall impacts the loved ones and family members of people serving IPP sentences gravely.**

The impact of an individual's imprisonment on family members and close relationships is an under-researched area. Family members are said to be impacted in a myriad of ways, including sustaining relationships; communication and information; facing economic disadvantages; health implications; and experiencing both exclusion and stigma.<sup>4</sup>

Family members of people serving IPP sentences are subjected to the same challenges as others with loved ones in prison, with the additional burdens of what comes with the indefinite licence. The ease at which people serving IPP sentences are recalled back to prison and the unknown length of time they will serve impact family members and close relatives just as it does the individual serving the sentences.

Participants reported the impact of their most recent recall on their loved ones and family members. People spoke of the impact upon the life experiences and mental health of their siblings, parents, and children at length – experiences that are best described in their own words.

*"I've got a little girl who cries for her daddy every day."*

*"My family are devastated. They never expected to see me back in prison and now I have a daughter who is being affected by this."*

*"Me and my family think that the system has failed me by putting me back. I already served a long time in jail, over three times my original tariff. Now I'm gonna be in jail for more time for splitting up with my partner even though there's nothing to prove I've done anything wrong. Now my family and kids are suffering because of it."*

*"It has mentally broken my mum, especially with the time of recall not long before recall father passed away."*

*"My whole family are stressed as they don't believe I should be in this time. Being back in has affected my mental health massively."*

*"My family are devastated and live lives of ambiguity. Some have developed health issues, i.e. depression and stress. One is giving up hope of me being released again."*

*"Me and my partner can't plan for the future 'cause we don't know when that will start. Family members are greatly disappointed in probation and the government."*

*"I've missed out on my wedding day. My partner lost her father, uncle, and auntie, and I've not been there to support her."*

*"My father is 80 years old with cancer and another serious illness. My mother is 79 they are distraught. I can quote my mother who says "so we won't ever see you again, haven't you suffered enough.""*

## LOSING “EVERYTHING” BECAUSE OF RECALL

People serving IPP sentences reported losing houses, possessions, pets and in some cases “everything” because of their most recent recall.

*“It has caused psychological harm and again I've lost everything I own; personal belongings, home, family relationships.”*

*“I lost my home. The person I was with sold everything. I've lost it all. I've nothing to live for when I get out now, so I don't give a fuck anymore if they release me or not.”*



## CHAPTER 8: MOST RECENT PRISON EXPERIENCE

### A LACK OF SUPPORT FROM PRISON STAFF

Most of the people serving IPP sentences we spoke to describe a lack of support from prison staff since their most recent recall back to prison. Some go as far to label the support as “non-existent.”

*“They got no support for us at all. They got nothing, they don’t understand. If you’re a lifer, you feel completely isolated.”*

*“The new staff are straight out of college and not trained properly. They’ve got no chance of being able to manage IPP and lifers in prison. They got no experience at all whatsoever in any capacity.”*

*“Non-existent. Hand on heart, they really like the swap and drop when they’re coming in and working for a year some of them. It doesn’t pay like the same as it used to, but the staff are all brand new, all of ‘em.”*

*“I’ve been dealing with bad mental health and stuff like that. One of the worst things to do is keep trying to keep me in the loop. Nobody can tell me anything. They don’t give you support.”*

*"I don't even have a key worker really. I don't know if you know what a key worker is. Nothing. I went yesterday and looked at my C number. There's no charges... I'm lost."*

## STAFF DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT IPP SENTENCES

**Participants overwhelmingly reported that prison and probation staff do not know enough about IPP sentences.**

A significant majority of interviewees and focus group participants reported that both prison staff and probation staff are not well informed about IPP sentences. People serving IPP sentences often reported having experience trauma because of their sentence and therefore have specific needs. They reported staff are often not aware of these needs due to their lack of understanding regarding the sentence.

Many people we spoke to attributed this to an inexperienced and younger workforce in both the Prison Service and Probation Service. The people we spoke to stated that staff inexperience makes the journey through the criminal justice system more difficult, something which is only heightened by their IPP sentence.

In most cases, interviewees did not feel like they had a way to find out more information about IPP sentences. They often rely on their peers in prison and loved ones in the community for updates. However, two prisons we attended did offer Lifer/IPP groups which allowed people to be better informed and offered peer support.

*"Not very well. A lot of the staff unfortunately don't know what the IPP is or don't know how to deal with us they treat us more like short termers. There's no criteria for long term jobs, there's nothing there for us for IPPs. It's like we don't exist, but we do if you know what I mean? We're still there, but it's as if we were forgotten."*

*"I think they know what they are, perhaps they don't understand the trauma it causes I don't think they quite understand how bad it is for people."*

*“A lot of these new staff, like, three 19-year-olds on the wing today, yeah. I asked them about IPP, and they all looked at me like I’m talking gibberish.”*

*“When chatting to a prison officer, and I’m saying, I’m back because of something other than a crime, they’re like, “well, how can that be? So even the officers don’t understand IPP.”*

*“No. I was talking to someone this morning about my sentence, and she was like that’s ridiculous, how can they do that. They are not really clued up... Some of them are, the old timers are, the ones who have worked here for a long time. But the new ones are absolutely clueless. Never even heard of IPP some of them.”*

## LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESSION

**People serving IPP sentences reported that there are limited opportunities for them to progress their rehabilitation in prison.**

When asked about their current opportunities for progression, most participants responded that there are either limited opportunities to progress or none whatsoever. Many have exhausted the limited courses available to them, some of which they are not eligible for due to not having a release date. Long waiting times for courses and programmes were also reported as a barrier to progression.

*“My sentence plan is with mental health. They signed it off because they put me on my medication. They said there’s nothing for me to do because I’ve done in cell work. I’ve been here 12 months and they turned around and said nothing.”*

*“There’s no courses in this prison. There’s thinking skills and that, but there’s no Kaizen. You’ve gotta go down the road, you’ve gotta go to Holme House.”*

## AN INCREASED LIKELIHOOD OF BULLYING

**Interviewees reported that people serving IPP sentences are more likely to experience bullying due to an inability to retaliate.**

As it is notoriously difficult for people serving IPP sentences to be granted parole, they are less likely to retaliate to hostility or bullying from other prisoners. Some of the people we spoke to stated that they have been victims of bullying since their most recent recall and stated that their IPP label is a big reason for this as it makes them more vulnerable.

If a person serving IPP sentences is involved in fights or acts of violence as either the victim or perpetrator, the likelihood of their release decreases significantly. Through this, people described that they must have an ingrained distrust for many of their peers and simply keep their head down to avoid getting involved in any situation that will reflect badly at a parole hearing.

*“Like even for instance in here, if I was to have a fight with someone, if I am the victim or the perpetrator, they run it to my parole board saying I used violence. Where I demonstrated it or was a victim of it, it goes against me. And then if it goes against me, I am not putting myself into no situations whatsoever. But in here, sometimes you have to defend yourself. But the panel won’t or don’t look it like that.”*

*"It makes you more vulnerable too, you want to keep your head down but others know you can't retaliate because of your sentence."*

*"I think that they should have a wing for lifers and IPPs only. So that we're not around people that go and come every two minutes. And we're not around people that are taking drugs all the time. Not around people that want to fight all the time. I'm seventeen and a half stone, I'm six foot five, I'm probably the strongest person in the prison. Still, I get people trying to start trouble with me because of my label."*

## ISSUES WITH ACCESSING MEDICATION

**People reported experiences of not being able to access the medication they need in prison after their most recent recall.**

From the 111 people we spoke to, there were a handful of people that experienced not being able to get access to the necessary medication they were prescribed in community upon recall. People described not being able to get medication for such conditions as depression and ADHD amongst others which led them to spending weeks, and sometimes months, without it. Although these experiences were for a minority, the significance of not accessing the medication they need had a big impact upon these individuals' physical and mental health.

*"I have ADHD, Borderline Personality Disorder, Depression. They didn't even give back my medication when I was recalled, they never gave them back. I've been without 35 weeks and counting. It has driven me insane. If I didn't have me partner on me phone, I don't know what I would do. I was prescribed them outside before I came to jail and they said, "we can't give them back." But no real explanation. It was the highest dose as well. I'm still battling with the mental health service here!"*

## CHAPTER 9: THE IPP STATE OF MIND

### LIVING IN A STATE OF FEAR

**People serving IPP sentences are living in a state of fear due to their sentence.**

The people we interviewed said that they live with a constant fear of being recalled whilst in the community, and a fear of never being released when in custody. For many, release into the community doesn't come with a sense of freedom, it comes with paranoia and pessimism. They believe any situation can lead to them being back in prison at the drop of a hat and stops them from living their lives.

*"When you're out there you're living in fear, because on a weekly basis you have to return to probation, you know, and they can send you back here."*

*"Due to fear of recall, I just left. So having that hanging over me was stressful which made me drink alcohol. Which wasn't doing myself any good or benefit."*

*"Feeling free, need resentencing. That's what we need. I was out nine years and was recalled. We're living a life sentence, I have to tip toe round and cannot be myself."*

*“Jubilation [on release], but at the same time I still had anxiety as anyone knows you can basically be recalled for absolutely anything. Despite the fact I was jubilated to be out, I was getting to the point where I was paranoid to do anything wrong. It kind of actually affected me... it was getting to the point where I was getting scared to go out of the house because I was that worried about breaking any conditions.”*

*“Living your life in fear. That's how I feel like I'm living. I forget about myself.”*

*“The support is there but scared to use it in case they recall you.”*

*“Any little thing I could do could recall me. Even being late for an appointment, an argument with somebody, anything. And then that made me just isolate myself. I hardly came out of my house.”*

## HOPELESSNESS

**People serving IPP sentences are left without hope and feel trapped.**

If there is one word to summarise the collective feeling of people serving IPP sentences during interviews and focus group, that word would be “hopeless”. Many feel that they are without a path to get out and have no hope of being released. Some have stopped accepting parole hearings as they feel like there’s no point. People reported sensations of being in “limbo on this sentence” and the sense of being completely trapped in the system with no hope. Recall

of people serving IPP sentences not only leaves the individual's feeling hopeless but leaves their family with a sense of hopelessness too.

*"Never felt truly free. I feel like there is a noose in me neck and that in any point someone is going to kick the chair from under me. It's horrible. No hope."*

*"Because right now there's no path to get out, I do not see it. It was there last time I had a plan. I Just see destruction and I can't see a way of that path."*

*"The effects of recall have already broken families to the point of no hope for me or for them."*

*"Just devastated. Devastated. They feel like there is no hope at all and there's nothing anybody can do. It's like we keep getting a little bit of hope with the government, Justice Committee etc, and we're still pinning our hopes on something like that... I've spent most of my adult life in prison because of this IPP, I was 18 years old when I got put inside and I'm now 36."*

*"Being on an IPP sentence it's like being in an abusive relationship. The abuser knows it's wrong but the victim is powerless so it keeps happening. I've stopped accepting parole hearings because there's no hope and you just get knocked back anyway."*



*"I feel trapped. I feel what, what they're doing is totally illegal. It's inhumane. The IPP sentence was abolished because it's inhumane."*

## UNHEARD AND FORGOTTEN

### **People serving IPP sentences don't feel heard, they feel forgotten.**

For the vast majority of the people we spoke to, taking part in interviews, focus groups, and surveys it was the first time they had been asked about their experience serving an IPP sentence. Many remarked that it was the first time they had truly felt heard regarding their experience. Some people remarked that being acknowledged offered them relief and gave them hope.

*"There's nothing there for us for IPPs. It's like we don't, exist but we do if you know what I mean? We're still there but it's as if we were forgotten."*

*"No, definitely not [feel heard]. I mean, it's the voice of many. It's just plain white, illegal, inhumane, and totally unjust."*

*"I don't feel like our voice is heard us IPPers. Not at all."*

## CASE STUDY: PETER'S STORY

Growing up, Peter (**pseudonym**) shared many comorbidities with other young people that end up in the criminal justice system. He has various neurodiverse conditions including Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); he comes from what he describes as a challenging upbringing; and is in recovery for substance and alcohol misuse.

When Peter was 18 years old, he set fire to a blanket under the influence. Nobody was harmed and he confessed to the police and was taken into custody for arson. Peter was told that he would have a shorter tariff if he accepted an IPP sentence which he did under the advice from a legal professional. He was given an original tariff of less than 2 years but served over 11 years before his first release and has been recalled 4 times.

*“My life ruining defining moment came in August 2008. Led by drugs and alcohol that I started taking at a really young age due to neglect and a problematic household, I set fire to a blanket and the fire got out of hand. No one was harmed.*

*...As I was young and naive and new to the criminal justice system I was entirely unfamiliar to what an IPP was and I never appealed against it as it was never explained to me what it meant. I later found out that at the time of the sentencing no Psychiatric or Psychological report or assessment was presented to the judge which would have [had] a huge impact on the sentencing guidelines.*

*...Once in prison I applied myself to every educational course and received a large number of qualifications. I also applied for personal development courses such as Thinking Skills program, Resolve, PASRO, Restorative Justice, Enneagram, etc., to try and better myself, understand myself and deal with my mental health.*

*...I received multiple rejections for release such as my level of maturity wasn't satisfactory. That's why 2 years turned into 9 years before my first release. Due to all of this and feeling lost and hopeless my mental health deteriorated rapidly and I was diagnosed with depression and ADHD, and I was self-harming as a coping mechanism, which led me to another rejection from the Parole Board. Apparently, I wasn't mentally ready.*

*...When I did eventually get out, I felt great, I felt included in the world. It was amazing. I loved every second of it. Some people do get nervous but not me, I love it. I like being free, being able to make me-own decisions, be me-own boss and eat decent food. I loved it, I loved it. Obviously, besides the area I was going because I knew nothing and knew no one really.*

*...My PO, I'd seen her three times and the rest of it were on the phone really. I'd seen her twice and she said alright I'll increase you to monthlies now. And I was like that's progress. But she's hard to get hold of, she's always just unavailable. The one I got now, I've never even spoke to him, he's never even phoned me to excuse himself or nothing.*

*...I can't even reach my new PO. I don't know what he looks like, don't know what he sounds like because he is not answering no calls from me or my partner, or the TC*

*staff. He is not accepting emails from my partner, I can't ring him, its going straight to voice mail. I just got a letter today saying my parole is going to be listed between November and March next year. And I've been here since January.*

*...I turned my life around in May of 2022. I had my fiancée visiting all the time, I was doing a Rail Engineering Course and living in a Approved Premises. I was doing well, I was free of substances, I was happy. But after 3 months they needed the bedspace and Probation relocated me to a place where I couldn't even attend my course.*

*...Every single thing I did there I did by myself, on me-own back. I did the rail engineering, I got a diploma for that with Network Rail. I was trying to get a job doing that but then they moved me from the AP so I couldn't finish the PDS part of it.*

*...I argued with probation to move me back to the AP down here and ended up getting to warehousing. So managed to get a job down here for a while. Which I found really, really good, and I love working.*

*...I had to deal with the pain of loosing my brother and the guilt of not being there for him. I tried to cope. I got a job as a manufacture operative, I was going to church every Sunday, I was going to all alcohol meetings. But the drinking urge was stronger and that led me to be recalled once again.*

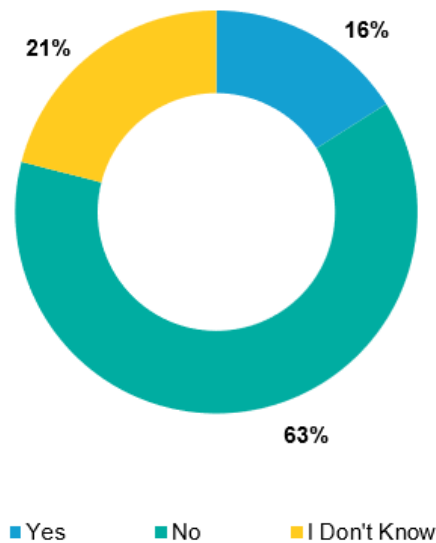
*...I've done every single thing imaginable in jail, there's no more educational things to do, I've done all the fucking behavioural courses, there's none, nothing at all I can do in jail now.*

*...Everything is shifting around me whereas I'm still sat here. People can't take it. That's why like 80 people have killed themselves on IPP. There's no hope is there, there's no light at the end of the tunnel. Theres just another obstacle to turn over. You end up with nothing very slowly."*

## CHAPTER 10: GOOD PRACTICE

**Less than 1 in 6 have experienced good practice in relation to their IPP sentence at any point whilst serving their sentence.**

**Q:** Have you experienced any 'good practice' either whilst in prison or on probation in relation to your IPP sentence and/or your most recent recall?



Most of the people serving an IPP sentence we spoke to (**63%**) responded that they have not experienced any good practice whilst serving their IPP sentence. **1 in 5** responded 'I Don't Know' to the same question.

The majority of those that responded said they had experienced good practice whilst either in prison or on probation cited reasons that are standard expectations of proper delivery. For example, most people cited that they got along with their probation practitioner, that they were signposted well or that the wing staff were easy to get along with.

True examples of good practice were few and far between. Two themes emerged as evidence of good practice across all **111** engagements.

## LIFER/IPP GROUPS

**People find real benefit in attending forums for Lifers and people serving IPP sentences.**

Multiple interviewees and survey respondents in HMP Leeds said they found great benefit in attending regular group sessions held by the Offender Management Unit (OMU), specifically for individuals either serving a life sentence or an IPP sentence.

We heard it gives them a regular opportunity to ask questions of the OMU staff on the latest news regarding IPP sentences and allows for regular updates. One individual said that it helps them “find out where you stand”.

People also found great benefit in sharing experiences. The environment facilitates the ability to learn from people in the same or similar circumstances to themselves, it’s an opportunity for them to be heard.

It can be argued that people serving life sentences and people serving IPP sentences should have separate meeting groups as they have different needs and experiences. However, such groups like the one in HMP Leeds can and should be replicated across other prisons nationwide.

*“Meetings for people on life sentences and IPP sentences is an example of good practice within this prison...It’s finding out where you stand. Finding out what may happen in the future even though they keep changing their mind but also being able to air your voice as well.*

*There’s other people in the room and things I haven’t even thought of and I think ahh that’s a good point yeah. But I’m sure they’re thinking the same about me you know what I’m saying, it is probably something they haven’t thought of too...*

*...It’s an opportunity to share experience.”*

## SPECIALISED WINGS

**Specialised wings and enhanced programmes offer better environments and tailored support for people serving IPP sentences.**

Examples of such specialised wings that offer these better environments are Drug recovery wings; the Psychologically Informed Planned Environment (PIPE) Unit found in HMP Stafford; the Q BRANCH in HMP Leeds; and The Gateway Unit in HMP Northumberland.

On such wings, participants reported that the staff are easier to get along with and provide better and tailored support to them on a regular basis. Participants that have experience of these wings stated that there are less incidents of violence and incidents of bullying which fosters a more rehabilitative environment.

*"The staff here on this wing are all alright. If you've got a bit of a problem or anything, I can go to certain staff where I'll open up. That's not too bad."*

*"I've witnessed three murders whilst I've been in prison, not actually witnessed it, but been on the wing when it's happened. So I have that stuff going round in my head and basically I finally got to the PIPE unit and I start to see the light at the end of the tunnel."*

*"The officers down here [Q Branch], there's not that tension between officers and prisoners. That's no barrier between officer and prisoner. It's a bit different. It's all like one part of one team."*

*"I moved on to the Gateway Unit one year ago. Since I moved on here, support's been immense. Officers have been supportive. But apart from this unit, in this prison, there is nothing for life as an IPP here. And we're mixed in with everyone else. So, there'll be people around me fighting and taking drugs. People who have got nothing to lose. I have to live in and around that all the time."*

## CASE STUDY: DAVID'S STORY

David [pseudonym] experienced good practice whilst serving his IPP sentence in the Scottish criminal justice system that could be replicated in England and Wales.

*“My case is pretty unique because I ended up getting a transfer to Scotland, I believe that was in 2010 to be closer to my mum, up till then my sentence plan was in the English system, was a complete farce basically. I had to do one course, that was it, I did that course and then when I got to my parole hearing they wanted me to do other courses. There was nothing there about potential release, that was never discussed at all, it was always “this guy needs to stay in custody, we need to give him another course, one course isn’t enough.*

*I never got anything like that from probation even from the beginning of my sentence till the end of my tariff. It was always a case of there was just nothing there. It was like it just didn’t exist; my release didn’t really exist at all. Fortunately for me I managed to get a transfer up into Scotland to be closer to my family and fortunately for me the system up there is more proactive.*

*So it was, they seem to do everything in Scotland for you in terms of trying to prepare you for release, so when I got up there it seemed to be more positive and that’s where things for me started changing around, everything was being changed.*

*...I started to get more support from outside probation, because up there they call them social workers, so I was getting more support from them, they were discussing what they would expect from me on release. It was a complete difference, this was even mentioned at one of my parole hearings in Scotland by my social worker, which is the equivalent of a probation officer. He actually mentioned at my parole hearing that something I can clearly see from David's case prior to moving to Scotland, there was no progression whatsoever, despite the fact he done all he could to address his risks and reduce his risks, there seems to be no progression whatsoever in terms of moving to open conditions, a Cat D, there was nothing. It was like it didn’t really exist. You know there seems to be too many barriers, I think he used the word, placing barriers in front of me unnecessary barriers that shouldn’t of been placed in front of me.*

*...There was something I really wanted to say about mental health in terms of the differences in England and Scotland. Because in England when you go to mental health they say that everything is confidential but its not and they use it against you and that’s why there’s so many people, IPPs who don’t use mental health because, they can pour their heart out but then it gets brought up at parole hearing, so whatever your saying is not confidential.*

*...In England, I didn’t want to see mental health for that reason. But in Scotland I was speaking to mental health regularly and I received so much rapport with that person and support knowing full well that anything wasn’t going to be used against me. That was the difference...*

*Yes. When I was in the Scottish system, I definitely felt supported for my release. Yeah, got everything that I needed, and there was a complete difference in how I was treated as well, in the Scottish system you’re allowed to have documents, legal documents photocopied anytime. So. staff will photocopy your dossier, your legal documents. Whereas in England, it’s pretty much impossible to even do that, basically it’s a ‘we*

*don't really care', you'll have to send them out to your family get them to photocopy them or send them to your solicitor. So, there was no support whatsoever.*

*...They were very proactive and accepted me going straight to my mums house. If I was in the English system that definitely wouldn't have happened, I would have had to go to an AP.*

*I had full confidence in my social worker in Scotland, I could tell him anything, I felt comfortable, I knew he wasn't going to use anything against me to try and manipulate anything, because obviously as we all know for some unknown reason, in the English system it's not about helping it seems to be about placing barriers in front of us and using anything they can to keep us in custody. And I felt that the social worker in Scotland, had my back 100%, whereas the one in England, no. There was, it was just like he didn't treat me as human, just detested me, the fact I was IPP as well it just makes it even worse.*

*...I wasn't charged with the original offence, which I was arrested for so I was kept in the police station, I was arrested on the Saturday and I was expecting to leave on the Monday, because they found out who done the offence so on the Monday I was expecting to leave, it turned out when I went to the desk, probation England had recalled me and when I asked "Why?" because I not been charged, he said "well we had to notify your social worker over the weekend to let him know that you were in police custody, he's emailed the English probation service to let him know. The English probation service has emailed back straight away and said I want him recalled. I'm recalling him", without even waiting till the Monday.*

*Now in Scotland there's a process where you go into court if you're a lifer you go into a courtroom and speak to a judge and a judge can put you on a 28 day lay down, which is they can decide if they put your recall on hold. So, I went in and this guy explained that I'm not on a Scottish licence its English, so the judge was like "Right, I understand that but why he is being recalled when he's got no charge?' But even the judge turned around and said, "why has this man been recalled when he has no charge?" The probation officer should have waited until the Monday. So yeah, I was basically recalled.*

*...I've spent most of my adult life in prison because of this IPP, I was 18 years old when I got put inside and I'm now 36. I've spent most of my time in custody because of this IPP and I've lost so many family members during this time."*



## CHAPTER 11: PEER-LED SOLUTIONS

### WHAT PEOPLE WANT OUT OF THIS CONSULTATION

We asked people serving IPP sentences what they wanted this consultation to achieve. Below is a selection of the responses that summarise the key themes. The majority of which focus on the need for resentencing.

*“As my sentence, as all IPPs, was abolished in 2012. Why am I still serving a sentence which is physically, mentally and emotionally cruel? Why after 11 years have I not been resentenced? Start releasing people one by one and reviewing each case.”*

*“The injustice of being treated like a criminal before a conviction. How can I be recalled on a law that doesn't exist anymore. The solution is to re-sentence IPPs and get people released based on what they have served.”*

*“Well to be honest with you I think they should scrap IPP altogether. They need to just- they need to get you back to court and resentence you... The Ministry of Justice can take it off. do you know what? I mean they don't need to actually go to court.”*

*"They need to rethink about the resentencing policy because in the long run its' not just money you got to pay out, yeah. There's gonna be many more deaths. It's never going to end. The sentence is never going to end unless you change it, that's basically it. It's a sad affair but there's many ways you can deal with IPP prisoners, instead of just locking us away and throwing away the key."*

*"I'd like to see it abolished. Yeah. Like, like it should have been in 2012 with the IPP. How can you abolish something and, and keep it going?"*

*"I feel like if you were being recalled, then a judge must decide whether you're recalled. This should be when you commit a crime, but don't send someone to prison after seven years and without good reason."*

*"Housing. They need to look at alternatives rather than sending you to a bail hostel. You can be monitored in your own home. You got the same, you got a room in your own house. Those key workers at Rippon House don't have much to do with you, unless you ask them."*

## PEER-LED SOLUTIONS

All our work is solution orientated at User Voice. We ask people what their issues are and how to solve them. 7 key peer-led solutions emerged from our interviews and focus groups.



### THE ISSUE:

People serving IPP sentences have served up to 17 years over their original tariff and have often been recalled multiple times. The impact of IPP sentences on individuals and their families is grave and costs the taxpayer large sums of money annually.

### SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

People serving IPP sentences want to be resentenced. They would be happy to sign a waiver to any compensation after being resentenced, people just want their lives back.

In one of the earlier interviews, an individual stated that they felt that the reason people serving IPP sentences haven't been resentenced is because the government fear the amount of compensation that would be required to pay out to people because of the significant amount of time served over their original tariff.

From that point onwards we asked other participants whether or not they would waive their right to compensation if it meant that they would be resentenced. All participants, apart from 1 individual, stated that they would waive their right to compensation to be resentenced. They just want their lives back.

*"The IPP sentence was scrapped and seemed inhuman we should all be re-sentenced, the push for this should start ASAP. I don't want compensation; I just want to be treated fairly and what's fair is to listen to the court of human rights and resentence all IPP prisoners."*

*"The biggest worry is the money, thinking everyone's going to put a claim in, "oh, you owe us this." We don't want the money!"*



### **THE ISSUE:**

Prison and probation staff often aren't aware of IPP sentences or do not have a good enough comprehension of them and the impact they have on people to provide proper support to people.

### **SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:**

Specialised training for prison and probation staff on IPP sentences.

*"Officers should be trained. They should have probation officers that are trained to deal with issues just with IPP. They do have prisons that train officers on it already."*

*"There's a bigger problem with people just not being stuck. Not going anywhere. So maybe there needs to be specialised staff that are trained in probation and in the prison service just solely to deal with us."*



### **THE ISSUE:**

People serving IPP sentences are subject to bullying and are vulnerable. People on IPP sentences also do not have many others for which they have a shared experience.

### **SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:**

Specific houseblocks/wings for people serving IPP sentences with staff that understand their sentences and how to support them.

*“An IPP wing would mean people of a like mind and sentence can share experiences and resources and look after themselves in their own community.”*

*“I suppose they could set up a house block where there would just be IPPs but they won’t do it. I don’t want to go on some house block like 5 or 6 where, you know, like TC and PIPE where they do talks and do psychological bullshit.”*



### **THE ISSUE:**

There is no clear path of progression for people serving IPP sentences. The goalposts are often moved by the parole board. People often can't access programmes and courses because they don't have a release date.

### **SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:**

Implement a clear progression plan for each individual person serving an IPP sentence.

*"You'd think it was the IPP itself. It's never ending and that does have my belly in constant knots. I'd have to say for me, it's been the hostels. You're there too long and you end up getting lots of warnings which leads to recall. Give me six weeks in a hostel and then my own flat and I'd be fine. I'm not bad, just broken."*



### **THE ISSUE:**

People serving IPP have told us that Approved Premises are often not an environment conducive to rehabilitation and are sometimes away from a person's support network.

### **SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:**

Where possible, Approved Premises to be located near a person's support network and managed to be a supportive environment.

*"I have a home, I have a family, why do I have to stay at an AP surrounded by junkies and people up to no good, I just want to keep my head down."*



**THE ISSUE:**

People serving IPP sentences are struggling with their mental health, especially after being recalled.

**SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:**

Better access to mental health services that are tailored to the needs of those serving an IPP sentence.

*“My mental health is my biggest issue. I now suffer with it daily and struggle with these new feelings. There's not much help for it. We need access to better mental health services.”*



**THE ISSUE:**

People feel uninformed about the current situation with IPP sentence. People serving IPP sentences want to interact with others that have a shared experience.

**SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:**

People serving IPP sentences want group forums specifically for people serving IPP sentences where they can share experiences and hear updates from a staff member that is in the know.

*“It's finding out where you stand. Finding out what may happen in the future even though they keep changing their mind but also being able to air your voice as well.”*

## REFERENCES

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