

IPPs

Indeterminate Sentences for Public Protection (IPPs) were brought in as part of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 as a means of detaining people who might pose a risk to public safety. If such a person was given a prison sentence, an IPP would be added to it. This meant that these people could not be released until the parole board was satisfied that they no longer posed a risk. Despite the scheme being scrapped in 2012, there are still 3,300 IPPs in force.

You can use IPPs as a synoptic example when writing an essay to make references and links to other topics in your course.

PM and cabinet

IPPs were pushed forward by then home secretary, David Blunkett, against the advice of Home Office staff. Labour needed to be seen as 'tough on crime', so forced its political agenda onto officials. By the time IPPs came into force in 2005, Blunkett had been moved to another department. This

meant no one person had overall control of the policy from beginning to end. Although IPPs were abolished in 2012, people already serving an IPP remained in prison. In 2017 Liz Truss was criticised by the Parole Board for not doing enough to deal with those left in jail.



Parliament

IPPs were introduced as a small part of a 400-page Criminal Justice Bill in 2002 — too long for most MPs to read. At the time Labour had a huge majority and tight control over its MPs. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats

did not want to challenge the government over crime. The Lords felt unable to oppose a well-supported bill from the Commons. As a result, the law was not scrutinised and Parliament failed to act as a check on the government.

Judicial conflict

Former Supreme Court Justice, Lord Judge, argued that the rules on how to apply an IPP removed judicial independence, as an IPP had to be issued if any conviction from a set list was present. Government ministers argued that it was the judges who were overly keen to use IPPs and that they handed them out far more than the government had originally intended.

Pressure groups

The Prison Reform Trust has campaigned against IPPs. Through its work, IPPs were reformed in 2008 and abolished in 2012. The Trust continues to campaign for the release of all IPP prisoners. The group has been a check on the government and represented those without a voice.

Democracy

One reason why IPPs remain an issue is because a majority of the public support tougher sentences and the removal of people who may pose a threat. While IPPs are the sort of measure supported by a democratic majority, they show why liberal democracies require politicians to protect vulnerable minorities.

Rights

IPPs raise concerns for democratic rights, as they change the burden of proof. Instead of the prosecution having to prove a person is dangerous, it is up to the prisoner to prove they are not a danger, which is hard to do while serving a prison sentence. Effectively, IPPs make a person guilty until proven innocent.

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