

JUSTICE PRESS RELEASE

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Report calls for new system for freeing prisoners in England and Wales and new sentences for ‘dangerous offenders’

A new report from JUSTICE has called for a new system for freeing prisoners in England and Wales, to replace the current Parole Board. The Parole Board currently decides whether and when to free all prisoners serving life sentences and those serving ‘dangerous offenders’ sentences, as well as some prisoners serving fixed-term sentences for older offences.

The current Board is insufficiently independent from the Ministry of Justice and also is not given the powers and resources it needs – it has been overloaded with cases, resulting in considerable delays and legal challenges.

In its report, the result of a year-long research project funded by The Nuffield Foundation, JUSTICE recommends that the Parole Board should be replaced by an independent Parole Tribunal – as part of the Tribunal Service. It should have full time members and be able to list its own cases, compel witnesses to appear before it and order documents to be disclosed. Journalists should be admitted to Parole Tribunal hearings.

The report also recommends the abolition of the controversial indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP and for children, DPP) under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and their replacement with a sentence with a definite final release date.

Sally Ireland, Senior Legal Officer (Criminal Justice) at JUSTICE said:

The Parole Board performs a vital task in protecting the public but is currently under-resourced and overloaded with cases – many of them indeterminate sentences, which have been a disaster for the criminal justice system. We need a new, properly resourced tribunal to concentrate on the most serious and dangerous offenders and decide upon their release. The Ministry of Justice is currently consulting on the future of the Parole Board and we hope that they will recognise the need for reform.

For further information please contact Sally Ireland on (020) 7329 5100 or admin@justice.org.uk

Notes to editors:

1. The report, *A New Parole System for England and Wales*, was launched at the Houses of Parliament on Wednesday 28 October and is available in electronic copy from the JUSTICE website www.justice.org.uk . Please contact us for a hard copy.

2. The research project and publication was funded by the Nuffield Foundation but the report represents the views of JUSTICE, not the Nuffield Foundation.

3. The Ministry of Justice is currently consulting on the future of the Parole Board. Copies of the consultation paper can be found here <http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/future-parole-board.htm> . The consultation closes on 20 November.

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