

# James Timpson and the Cultural Challenges of Contemporary British Justice

by [Sean Bw Parker](#) (August 2024)



**Immediately following Labour's election** win on 4th July, new Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer announced that James Timpson, CEO of Timpson key-cutting and shoe repair company, was to be his new Minister for Prisons and Probation. A new precedent had been set of course for appointing outside the elected politicians of Westminster when Starmer's predecessor Rishi Sunak appointed former PM David Cameron as foreign secretary.

Timpson's main success however has been in employing ex-prisoners, often noting these peoples' loyalty and reliability. It is true that most prisoners, having spent time inside, are grateful for regular work in the community, and the Very British Irony being in key-cutting, with its focus on security, is poetic. There is a fly in the ointment though, and that is in the categories of people with convictions *won't* employ.

They follow Going Forward Into Employment, the (Conservative) government's own initiative for ex-prisoner employment, in excluding people serving life sentences and people convicted of sexual offences (pcosos). In the case of lifers, surely they have more of an incentive to not misbehave; and why would it matter if someone convicted of marital sexual assault as part of a vicious divorce, as a very common example, cuts your new keys?

Pcosos seem to be in a special media class, and Timpson—along with his justice secretary colleague Shabana Mahmood—could help with working on removing this special class status. What pcosos have done or are alleged to have done in the past is no more egregious a moral sin than someone committing gross internet bank fraud against the elderly or selling Class-A drugs to addicts or children. The media-justice industry

should recognise this in its reporting, and these progressive new ministers should highlight this in their announcements.

Many people in our full prisons are autistic or somehow otherwise neuro-divergent. So as the legal-dominance activists have expanded the sexual assault laws to include staring, historical knee-touching and sex that doesn't have 'enthusiastic consent,' people on the autistic spectrum, with their complicated relationship with society, have found themselves banged up due to not having been able to express themselves properly in court or to the police. Evidence suggests that the authorities are more interested in keeping their conviction targets up for media and promotion reasons than properly investigating this sort of context.

Nowhere of course are false allegations or the wrongfully convicted mentioned, even following public outrage over the cases of Andy Malkinson, Johnny Depp, Kevin Spacey and the Postmasters (courtesy ITV drama). As the cases of Jeremy Bamber and Robin Garbutt have shown, the CCRC (Criminal Cases Review Commission) is still just propping up whatever the appeal court says, rather than scrutinising it in the spirit in which it was set up to do, 25-plus years ago.

The media-justice activism comes from academics at the College of Policing, itself only set up in 2012, which gives guidance to police forces in the UK. Wondering where all the spiking or stalking hysteria comes from, with scant evidence or just a couple of alleged cases trying to prove an epidemic? It's the publicity department at the CoP, understanding how to push the legal levers well after learning from Tony Blair's long march through the institutions—in the first New Labour social revolution.

Add identity politics to full prisons, neuro-divergent diagnoses to media-justice activism, and a media as always dependent on the most salacious story than the most true one, and the good James Timpson appears to have his work cut out

for him. But who knows, his firm has become a trusted household name by installing itself in the centre of every town in the UK, and offering a handy service—let's see if he can apply the same efficacy to a bent and broken prisons and probation system.

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