



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Buckley Hall

**For reporting year
1 August 2021 – 31 July 2022**

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Introductory sections 1 – 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Prison Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an independent Board, appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

Under the National Monitoring Framework agreed with ministers, the Board is required to:

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison, and also to the prison's records.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen protection for people deprived of their liberty. The protocol recognises that such people are particularly vulnerable and aims to prevent their ill-treatment through establishing a system of visits or inspections to all places of detention. OPCAT requires that States designate a National Preventive Mechanism to carry out visits to places of detention, to monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees and to make recommendations for the prevention of ill-treatment. The Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

2. Description of the establishment

HMP Buckley Hall is a category C training prison for male prisoners, on the edge of the Pennines, near Rochdale, Lancashire.

The prison has four residential blocks and an operational capacity of 459. Although this makes it relatively small in numbers, the Board considers this a strength and not a weakness of the prison. At its most recent ranking, Buckley Hall was operating overall as a level 3 prison in the annual prison performance ratings.

During the reporting year a new deputy governor and two band 7 governors were appointed. All three are judged by the Board to be experienced, approachable and considered in their judgements. The Board continues to be impressed by the open, positive management of the Governor and his clear vision for Buckley Hall.

The induction unit for new prisoners is on one side of C wing, and the specialist Aspire unit on the other. The Aspire unit houses some 60 prisoners who are either complex or serving an indeterminate prison sentence and celebrated being three years old in October 2021. According to the Bromley Briefing papers, 16% of the whole sentenced prison population are serving an indeterminate sentence whereas the figure for Buckley Hall is nearly twice this number.

The prison is in the process of developing the work already begun on the drug recovery wing and establishing an incentivised substance free living unit.

The prison opened in 1994 as one of four contracted-out prisons, and was managed by Group 4 for a period of five years. In 2000, a 10-year contract was put out for tender and won by the Prison Service. During this period, the prison held category C men, then women for two years and then category C men again. In 2011, the Prison Service was successful in its bid to continue providing a category C male prison. In 2014, Buckley Hall was designated as a non-resettlement training prison, holding male prisoners with 16 months or more remaining on their sentence. In October 2019, the prison celebrated its 25th anniversary.

A number of services within the prison are subcontracted and include: education and library: Novus (formerly the Manchester College); healthcare: Spectrum Healthcare and Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH); visitors reception: Partners of Prisoners(POPS); drug and alcohol recovery: Change Grow Live (CGL); and facilities: Amey.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Emerging from the pandemic, it has felt as though, overall, the prison has been on a positive trajectory during this reporting year, even though there have been occasional setbacks when positive Covid cases were reported. Prison managers are judged to have been efficient and timely in responding to the outbreaks which did occur during the reporting year.

The mood, generally, among the men appears to be one of slightly less frustration and dissatisfaction with prison life compared to the previous reporting period and somewhat more positive and forward looking. Although things are not considered 'back to normal', there seems rather more willingness by many prisoners to accept their situation and 'get on with their jail'.

During the reporting year, the prison continued to provide a very good level of support to men on Open University and distance learning courses. The efficient administration of the offender management unit (OMU) during the pandemic was acknowledged by a regional award and prisoners are to be commended for continuing to raise substantial amounts for international, national and local charities.

The return of sports day, park run and family days during this reporting year, all presaged the new dawn that everyone had been waiting for, even if, for many, the pace of change was far slower than they would have liked or had been evident in the community. The education departments and workshops have now returned to being full-time and full-classes. However, going forward, the onus and challenge for this training prison is to provide meaningful work activities and education classes in which vacancies are promptly filled, by appropriate men, and attendance rates are consistently high.

The pressure on OMU staff has been high during the reporting year and makes the case even stronger for delivering a full key work programme to the men.

Financial constraints have made a significant impact during the reporting year. For example, in trying to reduce the overspend on wing cleaning products and other consumables, the prison has made noticeable cutbacks in this area and it is important this is not at the expense of cleanliness and decency. Financial constraints are also behind the failed bid for the installation of CCTV in healthcare, and it is hoped they do not delay the necessary shower upgrade on the wings.

Even though violence is relatively low at Buckley Hall, the intention is to mitigate its drivers, as the prison moves away from the austere regime of the pandemic in which men spent much of the day confined to their cell. To this end, the prisoners have seen some curtailment in their evening association during the reporting year. In compensation, the stated intention of the prison is to improve the quality and range of what is on offer on those evenings when the men are unlocked.

A significant change during the year was the appointment, in April, of a new healthcare provider. The change-over has not been without its trials and it is important that this vital service settles and becomes firmly embedded and accepted in the life of the prison.

Inaccurate roll-checks of prisoners have been a regular feature of the reporting year, together with the associated knock-on effect the recounts have on the daily regime of the prison.

The introduction of in-cell telephones is one of the highlights of the reporting year for the men and has been warmly welcomed by prisoners.

The new settlement hub has become more firmly established during the reporting year and gives every appearance of having a clearer sense of identity and purpose. It has the potential to provide a valued service to the men.

3.2 Main judgements

3.2.1 How safe is the prison?

The Board judges that Buckley Hall remains a safe environment for prisoners.

3.2.2 How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Positive and constructive relationships between staff and prisoners have been an undoubted strength of the prison in the past. An emphasis on treating prisoners with fairness and decency remains central to its mission. Going forward, it is crucial that the significant number of new and young officers 'buy into' the same philosophy as the prison returns to a full regime.

3.2.3 How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

With a new provider only in place since April 2022, it is probably too early to give a definitive answer to this question. For a number of men, their perception of healthcare provision and delivery has been unsettled since the new contract started. As its permanent staffing levels improve and the management become more attuned to Buckley Hall, it is to be hoped the healthcare department will become more securely embedded and positively viewed in the daily life of the prison.

3.2.4 How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

Prisoner movement to open conditions is much improved on the previous reporting year. The Aspire unit has also had its successes in contributing to the release of a number of complex prisoners. The newly established settlement hub has the potential to improve the situation facing men at the end of their sentence and, by better preparing men for release, can help reduce the likelihood of them reoffending.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

- A speedier response from the Department as to whether or not to approve a recommendation for a prisoner's move to open conditions. (7.3.2)
- Prioritise a further reduction in the number of prisoners serving an imprisonment for public protection sentence. (7.3.6)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

- Reduce the time taken to transfer prisoners' monies when they relocate from private to public sector prisons. (5.1.11)
- Provide the funding to install CCTV in the healthcare building. (6.2.2)
- Ensure that prisoners recategorised as category B are moved more promptly to an appropriate prison. (4.3.2)
- Provide additional funding for the prison's new incentivised substance free living unit.

TO THE GOVERNOR

- Ensure an effective and valued healthcare provision. (6.1.1 – 6.1.5, 6.2.1 – 6.2.3 and 6.3.2)
- Improve the accuracy of the daily roll checks. (5.1.7)
- Improve prisoner attendance at and allocation to activities. (7.1.11 and 7.2.2 – 7.2.3)
- Introduce a range of social activities during prisoners' evening association. (6.5.4)
- Restore an emphasis on equality and diversity within the prison. (5.4.6)
- Raise the number of key work sessions delivered per week. (5.3.2 – 5.3.3)

3.4 Progress since the last report

- The introduction of in-cell telephones on all wings. (5.1.5)
- Improvement to the fabric of the kitchens. (5.1.1)
- New showers on A wing. (5.1.6)

- New boilers on the wings. (5.1.6)
- The appointment of a governor-grade drug strategy healthcare lead. (6.6.2)

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 On a number of occasions during the reporting year, Board members monitored the arrival of new prisoners at Buckley Hall. The officers involved were courteous and good natured in their dealings with the men. The reception area is clean and tidy although there is still little to occupy the men while they wait. The reception orderlies are judged to perform a useful role. Reception interviews by medical staff and first night officers are conducted in private and the officers observed in the interviews were respectful, positive and gave a clear explanation of the immediate timetable for the men.

4.1.2 On arrival at Buckley Hall, men are located on the induction wing. During the reporting year, reverse cohorting was still taking place on the wing because, even when Buckley Hall had no positive cases, some men were arriving from prisons where Covid was still prevalent. The logistics of providing a daily regime for the different cohorts proved a challenge for wing staff and frustration to some of the men.

4.1.3 New prisoners struggling to carry their heavy bags of property 'up the hill' from reception is an accepted practice at Buckley Hall, but not a very welcoming one. Less robust prisoners and those who have accumulated a lot of property over the years can find this initial experience of Buckley Hall off-putting. Given the Prison Service's generally poor record of managing prisoner property securely, the reluctance of the men to leave some of their belongings in reception and collect them at a later date is understandable.

4.1.4 The induction programme for new arrivals continued during the reporting year although, on occasion, in a slightly truncated, less formal style and with reduced face-to-face representation from the various prison departments. Men new to Buckley Hall have commented favourably on the induction programme when asked by the Board.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 During the reporting year, there was one death in custody involving a prisoner released from Buckley Hall on 17 May 2022 and who subsequently died in an approved premises on 23 May 2022. Prison staff have advised the Board that the prisoner had been thoroughly prepared for his release and the Prison & Probation Ombudsman investigation is ongoing

4.2.2 In terms of deliberate self-harm, there were an average of 11 incidents per calendar month over the reporting year with a significant spike during January 2022. One explanation for the spike was that it reflected the frustrations experienced by men because of the reimposition of a stricter temporary Covid regime. Figures from the HMPPS performance hub show a mean and a median of 19 incidents of

deliberate self-harm per calendar month in Buckley Hall's comparator prisons over the same period.

4.2.3 From April 2021 to June 2022, approximately 80 men were the subject of an open assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) document with an average of 6 – 7 per calendar month. However, this can be misleading as during the period, one man was on ACCT six times and 26 out of the 80 men had been on two or more ACCTs. The Board has attended a number of ACCT reviews over the reporting year and is satisfied that the supervising officers are thorough and sympathetic in their case management. Particularly complex and challenging men have been the subject of multidisciplinary case reviews over the reporting year.

4.2.4 The Board has expressed its concern, more than once during the reporting year, that a number of wing officers were not carrying out welfare checks when observed unlocking prisoners in the morning. Governors responded promptly when this was brought to their attention but, nevertheless, it still remains the case that not all wing officers make verbal or visual contact with the men when unlocking them in the morning.

4.2.5 Daily welfare checks are conducted on an extremely limited number of prisoners, including the very youngest men held in Buckley Hall. In addition, staff can and do bring the names of any men giving them cause for concern to the weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM). At the meeting, the vulnerable men, including all those on an open ACCT or being held in segregation, are a regular agenda item. The SIM is multidisciplinary and well-attended.

4.2.6 The Listeners scheme did not operate officially during the pandemic because of restrictions on the movement of prisoners – although it did continue on an informal basis. However, towards the end of the reporting year, the scheme restarted, a Listeners rota was issued and the advisors provided by the Samaritans were, once again, meeting with the Listeners. The Listeners believe that prison staff appointed since the pandemic may well be unfamiliar with their service and would benefit from some training in what they offer.

4.2.7 The safer custody department is commended for its detailed monthly analysis and report on self-harm within the prison and for its procedures for managing men who have self-harmed.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 In terms of violence Buckley Hall remains relatively calm and safe with little change in the number of men at Buckley Hall who were reclassified to category B for violent offences – in 2019 there were 11 men, in 2020 there were nine, and from January to October 2021 there were six.

4.3.2 The Board has expressed its concern in previous annual reports about the length of time it can take for these men to be transferred to an appropriate category B prison. During the current reporting year, one recategorised prisoner was placed in

the gated cell for his own safety, rather than the segregation unit, which could have been problematic if another man had been in crisis and needed the cell.

4.3.3 The Board is satisfied that violent incidents are the subject of a thorough investigation and men identified as being in the 'top ten' on the safety diagnostic tool are discussed at the weekly SIM. A significant number of these men are relatively new to Buckley Hall and it has been suggested that this could indicate that the character and nature of men arriving at Buckley Hall is changing and reflects a somewhat more volatile prison population.

4.3.4 From August 2021 to July 2022, a total of 12 serious assaults were recorded as having taken place at Buckley Hall. This places the prison at the median point among the eight other prisons in its comparator group for the period.

4.3.5 Another indicator of the level of violence and unrest in the prison is the security department's daily rating of the overall stability of the prison. Over a 100-day period during the reporting year, the department ranked the overall stability of the prison as 'low' on 93 occasions and 'low – medium' on seven days.

4.3.6 It is of note that security department officers have been regularly redeployed throughout the prison during the reporting year because of staffing issues and this is likely to have had some adverse effect on their ability to respond promptly to every security concern.

4.3.7 The implementation of formal restorative approaches has been slow to restart following the pandemic. Before the pandemic, Buckley Hall had an excellent reputation for fostering successful restorative approaches and the Board would hope that the scheme can be successfully relaunched.

4.3.8 The challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) system is adopted by the prison. The scheme and the periodic reviews should be multidisciplinary and centred on the needs of the individual, providing them with the right support to improve and manage behaviour. However, in March 2022, when 10 open CSIPs were monitored by the Board, half the reviews were not multidisciplinary and consisted of just a Senior Officer and the prisoner meeting – and in some cases they were completed in the absence of the prisoner. It is important that the behaviour of these men is regularly monitored in relation to their CSIP. but of the 10 monitored, although nine had a p-NOMIS entry in the previous week, in only three was the comment related to the rationale for their CSIP.

4.3.9 As the prison returns to a full regime', there is concern that levels of violence do not return to pre-pandemic levels. A significant number of new staff are unfamiliar with a regime in which all the prisoners are unlocked at once. Governors believe that evening association for all the men at the same time has the potential to lead to more violent incidents and requires greater staffing.

4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 In the first six months of 2022, use of force paperwork following an incident was opened an average of 11 times per month, with a range from six to 22 times. The logs show that batons were drawn on only one occasion during the reporting year.

4.4.2 The use of force assurance meetings have been attended by Board representatives and are judged to provide an impartial and thorough analysis of body worn video camera (BWVC) and CCTV footage. The increased use of BWVCs at incidents is commended by the Board as their deployment enables a more valid scrutiny of the event. Prison managers encourage the wearing of BWVCs and their daily usage is reported at the morning briefings.

4.4.3 The digital use of force reporting system is now embedded and is accessible to the Board for monitoring purposes. The tool is seen as an improvement in terms of efficiency and in identifying missing paperwork. The Board is satisfied that the amount of incomplete use of force paperwork is much reduced from a few years ago and that its administration is well managed.

4.4.4 It is clear the purpose of the use of force development and committee meetings is meant to be positive and establish learning points.

4.5 Preventing illicit items

4.5.1 The regular redeployment of security department officers has likely affected their capacity to conduct intelligence-led cell searches and undertake voluntary drug testing. Full and regular cell searches were reintroduced in the latter half of the reporting year as the pandemic restrictions were eased.

4.5.2 In two separate adjudications, men said it had been easy for them to source illegal drugs, and given the amount of money involved it is highly likely that a criminal element will continue to try to find ways to bring such substances into the prison.

4.5.3 The security department made a number of substantial drug finds during the reporting year and the body scanner has successfully identified a number of attempts to bring drugs and mobile phones into the prison. Similarly, the north west drug dogs team has played an important part by indicating the presence of drugs and identifying those attempting to bring them into prison. Some joint work during the year with Greater Manchester Police has also proved effective in disrupting supply.

4.5.4 During the reporting year, the Board expressed its concerns about what it considered to be the inadequate monitoring of men queuing each morning for methadone. In addition, it was felt too much free movement of men on and off the wing was possible while the methadone was being dispensed. The prison has put in place new procedures intended to manage this situation more effectively. The Board endorses the decision that methadone, in the future, will be dispensed from healthcare rather than on the wing and hopes this will be implemented in the next reporting year.

4.5.5 The prison has a psychoactive substance protocol which should be followed when staff believe a prisoner is under the influence of an illegal substance. During two months of the reporting year, the Board monitored five incidents where the daily briefing said this protocol had been followed. However, it was found that in none of the five cases had all the actions required by the appropriate Governor's order been recorded in the wing observation book. Anecdotally, the Board is aware that not all suspected incidents of psychoactive substance usage were officially reported by officers during the reporting year.

4.5.6 Mandatory drug tests (MDTs) were carried out during the reporting year but only a limited number of suspicion tests – usually because of staffing issues. The most recent HM Inspectorate of Prisons action plan for Buckley Hall said that the timing of MDTs was 'too predictable'. To determine the validity of the statement, the day on which tests were carried out during the reporting year was noted by the Board and the conclusion from this was that, indeed, tests were more likely on certain mornings of the week.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 In September, work began preparing for the installation of a temporary kitchen, in order to allow much needed repairs and improvements. The catering manager and his staff are commended by the Board for maintaining food standards during the following six months. During the reporting year, the catering manager was, deservedly, nominated for an innovation award in *Catering Magazine's* annual awards. In addition, the charity Clinks began an association, working alongside the kitchens and providing training together with catering and customer service qualifications to the men in this area.

5.1.2 The kitchen is judged to offer the men a healthy, varied and nutritional menu and does exceptionally well providing meals on the various festive occasions, despite disruptions to the food supply chain and inflation in food prices. In addition, it caters for a significant number of men who require special diets. At Eid al-Fitr in the reporting year, Muslim men for the first time in some years enjoyed their celebration meal together, and on Christmas Day one man told a Board member that his meal was 'better than being at home'.

5.1.3 However, while the standard in the kitchens is high, the standard in the wing serveries is often less so. On a number of occasions during the reporting year, Board members have reported servery workers were not wearing whites and that food hygiene and serving rules were not being scrupulously followed. For example, on one lunchtime, three out of six servery workers on one wing and six out of six on another were not wearing whites. There have also been complaints over portion size and not enough care taken by servery workers serving halal food.

5.1.4 While some 88% of all cells in the prison are single cells and approximately 78% of all the men have single occupancy, it continues to be the case that a sizeable number of prisoners are required to share a cell with another man and are unwilling to do so, especially if they have never shared a cell in their previous prisons. Given that the percentage of men who are high risk according to cell sharing risk assessment (CSRA) – and therefore need a single cell – rose from 30.4% in February 2019 to 44% in September 2021, this limits successful requests from standard risk men who have waited patiently for a single cell. There is also a suspicion that men who say they are racist, homophobic or violent, in order to be declared high risk, are not sufficiently challenged about their claim. The '10 cells project' designed to convert 10 single cells on C wing into double cells will further reduce the number of single cells available. The weekly SIM is judged to determine, fairly and decently, the CSRA level of men referred to it.

5.1.5 A major development has been the installation of in-cell telephones. At one stage in the year, the Board was informed the telephones had not even been agreed in principle, and so to see them in use by the end of the reporting period was a cause for major celebration.

5.1.6 The Board commends the installation of new and improved showers for the men on A wing and hopes that the funds will be found, as agreed, to make similar

and equally needed upgrades on B and C wings. The replacement of boilers should improve the efficiency of the heating and hot water systems on the wings.

5.1.7 The insufficient cleanliness of the wings was an issue which a number of prisoners brought to the attention of the Board. In part, this issue arose because incorrect roll counts meant that wing cleaning orderlies were confined to their cell while recounts took place. In October 2021, the roll was only correct on the first count on 46% of times in the month. There was some improvement in accuracy over the following months and in March 2022, the number of times the roll was correct on first count had risen to 58%. However, for a relatively small prison, such regular errors in something so basic seem hard to justify. Inaccuracies in the roll meant delays to the daily regime and a frustration to prisoners who wanted to get to gym, visits, work and healthcare.

5.1.8 In addition to the problems caused by these inaccurate roll counts, staff in the stores department confirmed that there had been a significant reduction in the amount of cleaning materials and consumables taken to the wing each week, because of financial cutbacks. Compounding the financial cutbacks, whether justifiable or not, was an apparent lack of stock control management on most wings over monitoring the levels and issuing of stock.

5.1.9 A number of prisoners have complained to the Board about the rising prices and the absence of specific items on the prison canteen list. Prisoners were aware that no one is immune from inflationary pressures and world events but a number have asked to transfer more from their private cash to the spends account, to reflect the increased costs. In addition, they have asked, not unreasonably, if products regularly unavailable on the canteen list can be sourced from other reputable suppliers.

5.1.10 The end of the reporting year was notable for an extreme heatwave and the temperature in some of the cells was intense. Prison managers dealt with the situation as best they could and issued bottled water, sunscreen, ice lollies and relevant advice, and allowed prisoners who could afford it a one-off 'drop-down' from their private cash to buy a fan.

5.1.11 Some prisoners arriving from private prisons continued to experience often lengthy delays in their financial accounts being transferred to Buckley Hall. This made it difficult for them to buy items on the weekly canteen list and increased the risk of them getting into debt with other prisoners.

5.1.12 During the reporting year, the management of the facilities team was replaced because of vacancies arising from promotion. The new manager and his deputy are judged experienced and approachable, and have established a good working relationship with governors.

5.2 Segregation

5.2.1 Board members were, as ever, impressed by the calm, empathetic manner in which the segregation unit staff manage the men in their care. One particularly

problematic prisoner held in the unit for some considerable time during the reporting year was demanding, provocative and verbally aggressive and yet staff were never seen to 'rise to the bait'.

5.2.2 Managers hold a regular weekly meeting at which the plan for each prisoner is discussed and updated. Unit staff are conscientious in notifying the Board of new arrivals and include the Board in their monthly analysis of movements. Rule 45 reviews are judged to be thorough and engage the prisoners.

5.2.3 During the pandemic, DVD players were made available to the men in the unit but subsequently withdrawn on the grounds that they were subject to deliberate damage. New ones were ordered but are no longer routinely issued to the men – a decision judged regrettable by some of the mental health staff for men who do not read and need distractions. While a small library is available together with jigsaws, radio, distraction packs and access to a small gym, the daily regime available remains limited and with too little stimulation for the men. When judged appropriate, Chromebook laptops can and have been issued to a few of the men during the reporting year.

5.2.4 It remains the case that the majority of the men held on rule 45 in the segregation unit have been transferred to other prisons during the reporting year rather than returned to the wings. In part, this can be because of the difficulty of relocating men who say they fear violence from others back on the residential blocks, as the layout of the prison limits the ability to restrict contact between prisoners.

5.2.5 The special accommodation was used once in the reporting year for a period of 45 minutes and the Board informed.

5.2.6 There have been relatively few instances where a prisoner was held in the unit for more than 12 weeks and the approval of the prison group director was required. The Board is pleased to report that the standard practice of strip searching all prisoners on arrival at the unit has ceased in favour of a risk-assessed approach.

5.2.7 In the reporting period, the infrastructure was put in place to enable virtual hearings by the independent adjudicator. However, although less stringent eligibility criteria for such hearings were reinstated during the year the facility has still not yet been employed. The technical upgrade also installed a computer terminal in the room which has enabled the adjudicating governor to access the prisoner's NOMIS file if and when necessary.

5.2.8 Adjudications have been observed on a number of occasions during the reporting year and Board members report that the governors have been courteous and fair, and listen carefully to the prisoner's point of view. The end of the reporting year saw a conscious effort on the part of some governors to go beyond their adjudication brief and engage the prisoner in a rehabilitative discussion as well. At the quarterly segregation monitoring and review group (SMARG) meetings during the reporting year, discussions take place on whether to increase the tariffs on charges which have seen an increase over the period.

5.2.9 The Board monitored the outcome of 17 appealed adjudications during the reporting year and established that none had been upheld for procedural errors. Prisoners who appeal against their adjudication discover that the casework unit has six weeks in which to rule on their appeal. This is likely to mean, for many, that their award will have been served by the time they receive the outcome of the appeal – an outcome which is difficult to justify if the adjudication is upheld.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 The positive relationships between staff and prisoners remain one of the strengths of Buckley Hall. However, this judgement is tempered somewhat by the consequences of the pandemic, during which there has been less need and opportunity for the sizeable number of new recruits to cultivate a positive and open engagement with the men. Some older and more experienced staff have told the Board that younger officers can be less inclined to spend time developing a good rapport with the prisoners and honing their expertise in defusing and deescalating situations. It is to be hoped this opinion is not borne out in reality.

5.3.2 The significant staff shortages during the reporting year had a deleterious effect on the provision of key work. In August and September of the reporting year, nearly 300 men had no key work entry on their NOMIS file and during the two-week 'firebreak' period of increased restrictions to the regime, the scheme was suspended entirely in order to deliver a reasonable regime for the prisoners. In the judgement of the Board, reduced staffing levels are primarily responsible for this shortfall, because one of the Governor's priorities is the importance of delivering and protecting an effective and meaningful key work scheme.

5.3.3 The percentage of key work sessions completed in a week compared to the target has varied considerably during the reporting year – ranging from 16% to 74% and largely in response to staffing levels on the day and the subsequent need for redeployment. Only rarely have the number of actual sessions come close to the planned sessions – in the first six months of 2022, only an average of 47% of planned sessions were actually completed.

5.3.4 The staff shortfall was not only among officers; operational support grades (OSGs) were also in limited supply. A random survey by the Board during the reporting year of 22 wing officers revealed that 40% of them had less than three years' experience, 28% had between three and 10 years' experience and 32% had over 10 years' experience. By the end of the reporting year, staffing levels were – at least in theory – much improved with a full complement of officers and OSGs. However, the situation was clouded by a number of these officers being off-site on training while others were on leave, detached duty, sick or on restricted duties.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 The quality and delivery of work in this important area is judged to have rather ebbed and flowed during the reporting year. A consistent approach throughout the

reporting year has been disrupted by staff turnover and the significant number of times staff assigned to this area were redeployed.

5.4.2 Despite the difficulties there have still been some excellent examples of good practice during the reporting year. A moving and well-attended Armistice Day memorial service was organised for prisoners who were veterans, together with past and present staff who had been members of the armed services.

5.4.3 The Governor's determination to have a more open attitude in the prison towards LGBTQI culture was demonstrated by him requiring relevant periodicals to be made available in the library, while staff and prisoners showed their support by baking and selling cakes for an LGBTQI charity.

5.4.4 Black History Month was celebrated with displays and appropriate meals on the prisoners' menu choice. Men taking part in Ramadan and Eid were well catered for. During the reporting year, separate forums have been held for older, younger and Black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners. The limited number of foreign national prisoners held at Buckley Hall explains why no forum has been held to identify their specific needs. In the judgement of the Board, forums can play an important part in providing a voice for those with protected characteristics as long as they remain focused and do not become a vehicle for individual and unrelated grievances.

5.4.5 In one survey carried out by the Board during the reporting year, 35 men disclosed on arrival at Buckley Hall that they were care experienced. It has been suggested that such men may have specific needs and that, currently, there is no forum within the prison for their shared experiences to be heard and represented. Although some question whether or not these men would want to make public their upbringing, the Board is pleased to report that the prison is considering the appointment of a reception orderly who would try to identify these men on arrival and ask what support, if any, they need.

5.4.6 During the reporting year, the Board received a complaint from a prisoner that those who submitted a discrimination incident reporting form (DIRF) were likely to be punished by being 'shipped out' of Buckley Hall. The Board established that from January to May 2022, 14 men had submitted DIRFs and of these three had been moved from Buckley Hall. The explanation given for their removal was their violent or aggressive behaviour and the Board could find no evidence to support the view that the reason for removal was retribution. However, the independent scrutiny of DIRFs forms has been, at best, somewhat haphazard during the reporting year.

5.4.7 It was suggested to the Board that those employed on the wing serveries were predominately White British and the Board did establish that it was indeed the case: 19 out of the 20 were White British. The governor who looked into this particular finding said he was confident that, overall, there is no systematic racial discrimination in terms of prisoner employment. However, he did accept that there appeared to be 'pockets' of employment where one ethnic group predominate and the Board will continue to monitor this area over the next reporting year.

5.4.8 In October 2021, 89 men had disclosed a disability to the prison. The personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) reports on a group of these men were inspected and found to be up to date. On a night visit by a Board member the reports were readily accessible by officers.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The chaplaincy team is respected and highly visible throughout the prison and all the major faiths are well-represented in the prison. During the reporting year, the chaplaincy team are to be commended for continuing to offer religious services even during periods of severe Covid restrictions – albeit with reduced numbers and on a rotational basis.

5.5.2 As the reporting year progressed, there was a welcome return to full communal services and the reintroduction of some of the courses the chaplaincy offer to the men, such as Living with Loss. The men who completed this particular course in December 2021 told the Board how helpful they had found it.

5.5.3 During the pandemic the chaplains have played an important and supportive role for those men faced with bereavements in their family. In addition to their religious duties, members of the chaplaincy are regular in attendance at ACCT reviews and make important contributions at the family strategy meeting.

5.6 Incentives schemes

5.6.1 The prison's return to a more typical regime saw an increase in the number of men on the basic incentives scheme level. In August 2021, 1.3% of men were in this category; a figure which rose to 3.9% by November 2021 and stood at 3.6% in April 2022.

5.6.2 During the reporting year, it was agreed to introduce a three-strike rule for less serious offences before reducing a man's status and to give them, first, a verbal warning rather than go straight to a written NOMIS negative entry. However, it is unclear to the Board whether this is being consistently and uniformly applied.

5.6.3 The Board continue to hear the complaint from prisoners that they were not informed about a negative entry on NOMIS until their adjudication or incentives downgrade. If so, this does not follow the policy of the prison. It has been suggested to the Board that greater use of incentives scheme referrals, rather than placing men on an adjudication charge, would be a more effective and immediate method of dealing with lower level misdemeanours.

5.6.4 The Board received a number of complaints, particularly during the periods of a restricted regime, that there was insufficient distinction between the privileges of the different incentives levels to reward those who demonstrated good behaviour and conformed to prison rules. For example, a number of prisoners suggested that the

differential for the weekly drop down from private cash to their spends account should be widened.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 In March 2021, the Board calculated that 17% of complaints were overdue a reply. The number of overdue complaints is provided to the Governor at each morning briefing and action is taken where appropriate. The number of complaints has remained broadly similar to the previous reporting year – from January to March 2021 222 complaints were submitted, compared to 207 over the same period in 2022.

5.7.2 From August 2021 to the end of July 2022, Buckley Hall men submitted an average of 64 complaints per calendar month. This is the lowest among the comparator prisons, which between them had a monthly average of 115 and a range from 76 to 210 per month.

5.7.3 The system for Prison Applications during the reporting year is not judged by the Board to be of a high enough standard. On a monitoring exercise during the year, the Board found three different forms for recording applications in use by the wings. Basic information such as 'date reply received' was not being recorded on the logs and weekly management checks were not evident. The system was relaunched in April of the reporting year and the Board will monitor the revised system to judge whether it represents an improvement.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 Not a year goes by without major problems for prisoners involving the loss or damage of their property. The current reporting year is no exception and the Board is not confident that the new national policy will lead to any material improvement.

5.8.2 Property remains a major problem for many men who move prison. Between August and the end of October 2021, 25 complaints were sent by men, now at Buckley Hall, to other prisons regarding missing items of property. Over the same period, Buckley Hall received 15 complaints regarding men's property which had not been sent by it to their new prison. In the first six months of this calendar year, 28% of all applications to the IMB concerned property issues – the single largest category of IMB applications. During the reporting year, Board members have been witness to situations where frustrated prisoners, whose property had not been transferred, were verbally aggressive and confrontational towards Buckley Hall officers.

5.8.3 Many Buckley Hall prisoners are serving long sentences and, over the years, have accumulated property far in excess of what is technically allowed by volumetric control. If they are not allowed to bring all their property with them on the day because of space limitations on the prison van, this invariably creates delays and problems.

5.8.4 The decision not to confiscate Sony Gigajuke games machines from prisoners who bought them in Buckley Hall before a ban was introduced is judged to be a fair response. However, to confiscate them from those who arrive at Buckley Hall having bought them in good faith at their previous prison seems unfair and inconsistent to the men affected.

5.8.5 The Board has expressed its concern on a number of occasions about procedures not being followed when clearing a prisoner's cell of his property – often when a man has been relocated to the segregation unit. There have been a number of instances during the reporting year when the paperwork has not been completed promptly, bags of property have not been taken to reception and prisoners have not received a copy of the cell clearance form. Poor procedures create understandable frustration for the men concerned and lead to compensation claims for the prison. Asking the other prisoner in a double cell to carry out the cell clearance is not considered good practice by the Board.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

6.1.1 The significant change in this area was that the provider – Greater Manchester Mental Health and NHS Foundation Trust – was replaced in April 2022 by Spectrum Healthcare.

6.1.2 Prior to the change, in February 2022, the Board carried out a survey in order to compare prisoners' opinions of healthcare at Buckley Hall with that from a survey on HMPPS healthcare of the whole prison estate. The overall conclusion was that healthcare provision at Buckley Hall compared very favourably to that in the rest of the prison estate. For example, in the HMPPS survey 21% of prisoners said it was 'easy' to see the doctor, 45% said similarly for the nurse, 10% for the dentist and 31% for the pharmacist – with 36% thinking 'the overall quality of the Health Service (in my prison) is good'. The corresponding figures for Buckley Hall were 40%, 80%, 20%, 35% and 60%.

6.1.3 Prisoners had been advised they would experience little change from the handover. However, not all healthcare staff wished to continue with the new provider and the result has been that the new management team have had to contend with a shortfall in the number of permanent nursing staff, and a dependence on agency nurses.

6.1.4 Because the provision of good healthcare is so fundamental and critical to their wellbeing, prisoners have been reluctant to accept the view that initial teething problems in any change-over are regrettable but inevitable. These frustrations have led on occasion to confrontation with nursing staff which is regrettable.

6.1.5 Under the new provider, the Board has been told by prisoners that their complaints are not being replied to within the stated time. Prisoners have also questioned what level of quality assurance is taking place over their complaints and not all have confidence in how thoroughly their complaint will be investigated. The introduction of a regular patient representation forum would be a particularly welcome initiative and could help reduce some of the tensions and frustrations currently being experienced.

6.2 Physical healthcare

6.2.1 During the reporting year, there have been significant issues with the distribution of medication. On one day in July 2022 at 8.20am – ten minutes before the men had to return to their wing – 18 men were observed by the Board queuing in healthcare for their medication. The lengthy wait times present men with an invidious choice between having their morning exercise or queuing for their medication.

6.2.2 Given the large numbers of men in healthcare at any one time and with often no close officer supervision, it is considered regrettable that the funding to install CCTV in the unit has not been found.

6.2.3 For a number of years it has been agreed that double cells would have lockable cabinets installed for men to keep their in-possession medication. This decision was stymied by the pandemic and has not yet resurfaced as more normal conditions returned. Buckley Hall prides itself on the numbers allowed in-possession medication and, as the staffing in the department improves, there should be an opportunity to initiate more checks that the privilege is not being abused.

6.2.4 Men with long-term medical conditions are judged to be reasonably well looked after, given that the healthcare department is too small to employ specialist nurses. However, members of the department told the Board in January that the prison was receiving a growing number of these prisoners with complex, chronic and long-term conditions, and too often without sufficient advance notification.

6.2.5 The Board has received a number of complaints from men on long-standing medication scripts who have been told that their medicine will be reduced on health or efficacy grounds.

6.2.6 The department and prison have had to manage outbreaks of Covid during the reporting year. For example, 70 infected prisoners in January 2022 led to the introduction of a two-week 'firebreak' of a restricted regime, during which the department was still trying to honour dental, doctor and hospital appointments. The men responded positively to the vaccination programme and the Covid testing regime with over two hundred returning voluntary lateral flow tests at the end of the first week in October 2021. There was another good response to the mass testing on the wings in January 2022. The prison is judged to have managed Covid well and, indeed, the member of staff supervising the prison's response was awarded the Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire Regional 2022 Award for Business Excellence for her efforts.

6.3 Mental healthcare

6.3.1 Given that in August 2021, 38 men at Buckley Hall had a mental health-related Quality and Outcomes Framework read code and 131 had a depression-related QoF read code, the proposed expansion of the mental health team and its increased resources under the new contract are welcome. The improved finances will enable a larger team who can offer a wider range of services to include wellbeing, neurodiversity, group work and social prescribing. The department will also be able to take advantage of a larger input from the psychiatric service.

6.3.2 However, the prospect of recruiting additional members of staff to provide this improved service for the men has been hampered by the lack of space currently available to the department. Plans are in place to rehouse the team but until this is actioned, a restricted and unnecessary status quo prevails.

6.3.3 In the judgement of the Board, the opinions and judgements of the mental health team are valued by prison staff and their contributions to SIMs, ACCT and rule 45 reviews are considered important. They are well-respected throughout the prison.

6.4 Social care

6.4.1 The Board is satisfied that prisoners with specialist or additional social care needs are being identified and referred appropriately to Rochdale adult social care. From the Board's conversations with ward councillors and Rochdale social care during the reporting year, it would appear the men are being treated comparably to those with similar needs in the community. There were a few instances during the reporting year when specific social care needs were identified which would not be funded by the council, and in some of these cases, the prison was willing to purchase the item itself. The Board believes that ensuring such men are being treated decently is a hallmark of the prison and the Governor.

6.5 Exercise, regime

6.5.1 At the start of the reporting year, stage 2 began – the bubbles of men were expanded for work and visits and there were structured on wing activities once per week in the evening involving use of the gym and library. However, during the reporting year, there have been periods when only a limited and austere regime was offered with no education, work placements, social visits or key work. Only 30-minute slots were provided for prisoners to exercise and complete their domestics, plus restricted access to the gym.

6.5.2 Towards the end of the reporting year, wing closures were being announced on a daily basis. The closures were rotated and announced in advance but remained a source of frustration for many of the prisoners. This situation was due to staff shortages brought about by a combination of staff sickness, members of staff on restricted duties or leave, the training off-site of new officers and cutbacks in overtime payments.

6.5.3 In terms of the timing of the daily regime, Board members have monitored morning unlock and can report that it is invariably within a few minutes of being called. At the other end of the day, not all prisoners objected, when asked, to an early 5.00pm evening lock up. The Board surveyed 20 men during the reporting year and 14 said they preferred the earlier time because it meant 'peace & quiet' in their cell together with less opportunity for violence and bullying. Not all prisoners dislike early evening lockdowns, especially now they have in-cell telephones.

6.5.4 Going forward, the intention is to offer each wing evening association twice a week in order to free up staff and allow the prison to offer the men bespoke activities such as guitar, crochet, reading clubs, choir, Duke of Edinburgh awards etc. In the year ahead, the Board will monitor whether this intention is translated into action.

6.5.5 The gym remains as popular as ever among many of the men. During the reporting year and despite Covid, the department offered in-house courses to the men and will, once again, be delivering externally accredited courses early in the next reporting year. The reintroduction of the weekly park run at the beginning of the reporting year was a sign of things returning to normality – even though it had to be

temporarily withdrawn because of Covid restrictions. The numbers in gym classes also increased for a time but then had to be reduced during the reporting year, as did the range of facilities available to the men. It is good to report that the gym is now back to full numbers.

6.6 Drug rehabilitation

6.6.1 The new contract saw the previous provider replaced by CGL which has introduced its own programme of courses and interventions and increased the number and range of groups offered to the men. The new provider is no longer responsible for the prescribing of controlled medication which is now the responsibility of healthcare staff.

6.6.2 The appointment of a drug strategy healthcare lead is commended by the Board and reflects the priority attached to this area by the prison. The development of the incentivised substance free living unit is a long-term goal of the prison and, currently, remains in its infancy.

6.6.3 A specialist drugs strategy governor has been appointed by the Governor to drive forward this particular initiative. Prison management is keen to establish an Incentivised Substance Free Living unit with a positive and supportive ethos and sense of community. Voluntary drug tests (VDTs) were introduced on the unit during the reporting year, with the intention of introducing random daily drug tests. However, this initiative ceased because of a fresh outbreak of Covid and its reintroduction has been delayed until more settled times on the wing. The intention is that any man who tests positive on a VDT will not be automatically removed from the wing but, instead, will be counselled on how to learn from the situation.

6.6.4 The prison is also keen to introduce rehabilitative adjudications where the award is suspended to see if the prisoner responds favourably to the drugs work required of him by the governor. Ideally, this should become standard practice for all governors. Board members have attended a number of adjudications over the reporting year in which the governor has gone beyond their adjudication brief to explore with the prisoner how best to address his drug issues.

6.6.5 The previous provider had trialled weekly injectable buvidal to replace daily subutex tablets. Men were invited to make the switch and those who did spoke to the Board favourably about doing so. Those asked felt they experienced less stigma and pressure from others. A significant number of men have continued with buvidal under the new provider.

6.6.6 The pandemic and financial constraints have slowed down the pace of change and the proposed strategy in this area but, it is to be hoped, not the long-term enthusiasm among managers, officers and prisoners.

6.7 Soft skills

6.7.1 Therapy dogs are now a frequent sight in the prison and popular among those men who come into contact with them. Indeed, the good work they do has seen one of the dogs being nominated for a national award for his contribution to the wellbeing and mental health of those he comes into contact with.

6.7.2 A limited amount of social prescribing is provided in the prison but is an area capable of development. One example of what is being planned in this area is that in the next reporting year, it has been agreed a wing officer, who manages a local charity organising a Christmas pantomime, will invite a group of vulnerable prisoners to prepare the props and outfits for the performances.

6.7.3 Manchester Survivors continues to provide an invaluable counselling service in the prison for men who have experienced trauma in their life.

6.7.4 At the end of the reporting year, the prison restarted its sports day event in which combined teams of staff and prisoners compete against each other in Olympic style competitions such as 'welly wanging'. The positive effects from such an exercise cannot be overstated.

6.7.5 The prisoners' charity committee continues to do sterling work, raising sizeable sums of money for local, national and international charities. During the reporting year, the prisoners donated money to the Poppy Appeal, Manchester Children's Hospital, Christmas presents for two local families on benefits and made regular contributions to the Rochdale foodbank. For their part, officers raised over £4,000 for a colleague in another prison who had been severely injured.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 The prison and education department are judged to work together purposefully and in relative harmony and the education department is now held in higher esteem by the prison than in the past. This improvement owes much to the collaboration, commitment and enthusiasm of the head of learning and skills and the education manager and her deputy.

7.1.2 At the start of the reporting year, all education classes were reported to be running, albeit on reduced numbers and days, because of compartmentalisation. Learning packs and in-cell work were provided for the time the men were not in class but could be no substitute for the 'real thing'.

7.1.3 By the end of the reporting year, classes were full time and back to normal numbers. Prisoner–staff relationships are judged to be good and the mood in classes appears calm, purposeful and respectful. A large majority of the men seem committed to their learning and proud of their achievements. In the learner feedback survey conducted in October 2021, 90.4% of those interviewed either 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that the teaching and learning was good.

7.1.4 A specialist functional skills entry level instructional officer was appointed during the reporting year. The Board has attended a session of the 'skills for life' classes which takes a small group of men who are judged to be entry levels 1-3 daily for English and mathematics. The group has a reading corner and reading forms part of their English curriculum, as does spelling, presentation and writing.

7.1.5 Reading is a crucial skill and the time in prison represents an ideal opportunity to teach those who cannot read or have poor reading skills. The Board judges that the department, in conjunction with the information, advice and guidance service (IAG), provides an effective induction programme which can identify men who need a basic education package. The high number of entry level 3 prisoners in June of the reporting year – 97 in English and 161 in Mathematics – was of some concern to the Board. However, the Board has been reassured that this situation was due, in large part, to compartmentalisation reducing the numbers on courses and of the courses taking longer to complete. Also, it was said that to raise many of these men from level 3 to level 1 could be achieved fairly quickly now full-time courses were back in place. A particular target for the deputy education manager is to embed and integrate functional skills more firmly throughout the curriculum in the coming year.

7.1.6 In the area of literacy, the work of the Shannon Trust, teaching men to read, has restarted during the reporting year and library orderlies are once again working with a small number of men. The orderlies say they have suitable and sufficient resources for their purposes. Men who have been helped to read at Buckley Hall have told the Board that this was the first time a prison had bothered to do so.

7.1.7 It has been suggested to the Board that a basic IT qualification is, arguably, of equal importance to level 1 functional skills in English and maths. It is, therefore, pleasing to record that the education department has successfully piloted and is now

running a digital IT course aimed at long-term prisoners, unfamiliar with IT. Men from entry level 3 and upwards can be accommodated on the course.

7.1.8 Some of the new initiatives planned for the reporting year did not see fruition, largely because of the limitations and uncertainties imposed by the pandemic; these include hairdressing, a prison radio channel, a joint modular course with York University undergraduates and the intention to introduce multi-skilled rather than specialist building modules. All are judged worthwhile and it is hoped will be revisited as more 'normal' conditions prevail.

7.1.9 Despite the constraints during the year, the prison maintained an excellent record of supporting men on Open University and distance learning courses. A broad range of OU degree courses were being taken including astronomy, Spanish, business and psychology. One student achieved a Master's degree with merit during the reporting year. A large number of laptops are available for men on a range of e-learning courses.

7.1.10 The extent of library provision altered during the year dependent on the regime restrictions caused by Covid, and in December 2021, evening access to the library ceased altogether due to stage 3 and 4 restrictions. The library reopened at stage 2 in March 2022 and has been available throughout the main core day and evenings ever since.

7.1.11 The reporting year has been a relatively taxing one for the department. Nevertheless, prisoner attendance and allocation rates in education remain capable of improvement. It can be argued that it is too easy to accept 'authorised absences' especially when these have been brought about by teacher absence and because no replacement cover is being provided. The risk is that a disjointed delivery will have an adverse effect on attendance, completion rates and student motivation.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 During the reporting year, the workshops have had to contend with restrictions brought about by the pandemic and for part of the reporting year, men in a workshop could only be drawn from the same 'bubble', while, during another period, movements to and from work had to be in 'bubbles'. Inevitably, this had a significant effect on the numbers in work. However, the figures for men attending work have been low during the reporting year, and not all the blame can be attributed to the vagaries of Covid.

7.2.2 At one count during the reporting year, there were 423 work spaces in the prison leaving 26 without any work or education activity. Allocation to employment is capable of improvement, and to take three random days: on one date in November 2021, unemployment was 114 men in the morning and 116 in the afternoon; on one date in December 2021, unemployment was 97 men in the morning and 101 in the afternoon; and finally on a date in June 2022, unemployment was 86 in the morning and 88 in the afternoon.

7.2.3 Arguably there are also insufficient work places which directly improve employability on release even if they do foster important qualities of reliability, commitment and punctuality. A significant number of the men in the prison are employed in recycling workshops or on prison wings.

7.2.4 The Board has reported to the Governor on a number of occasions that some men do not wear the requisite PPE such as ear protectors, safety glasses and suitable footwear in the workshops.

7.2.5 The weekly labour board performed a useful function, discussing men who had been dismissed or refused to work and in managing unfilled vacancies. However, the board has not always been well-attended and, indeed, towards the end of the reporting year ceased to meet.

7.2.6 During the reporting year, the plastering workshop was closed because of the discovery of asbestos in the walls and window frames. Replacement pods have been built in another workshop to enable men continue to acquire this employable skill. However, this has drawn even more attention to the missing plastic roof on this particular workshop.

7.2.7 The intention at the start of the reporting year was that the building courses should become shorter six-week modules rather than lengthier courses resulting in a single qualification, with the intention of generating men who were multiskilled rather than specialists on release. Planning for the introduction of the clean, rehabilitative, enabling and decent (CRED) painting programme in the next reporting year is underway and offers the prospect of not only meaningful and useful skills for the men involved but an improvement to the cleanliness and décor of the cells and wings. In addition to the remedial furniture work which workshop 9 plans to do for the British Heart Foundation, the men will also endeavour to repair any broken furniture taken out of the repainted cells.

7.2.8 A special mention should be made of the gardens workshop. Although working on reduced numbers during most of the reporting year, the men and instructor have worked hard to keep the grounds looking relatively tended and tidy. By the end of the reporting year, they were beginning to make real inroads and restoring the grounds to the high standard reflected in previous awards from the Rochdale in Bloom campaign. The workshop has bold plans to encourage biodiversity across the site by planting hedges and fruit bushes in the coming reporting year.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 The stricter rules on whether to recommend men for a move to open conditions is likely to impact on men at Buckley Hall. The early evidence is that dismissal from work, a positive MDT or evidence of non-compliance following the period when category D status has been awarded, will have the status removed.

7.3.2 The Board has some sympathy for those life-sentenced prisoners who face uncertainty and often a wait a period of months before being told whether the Ministry of Justice will approve the recommendation for their move to open

conditions. Similar uncertainty can face those men who are waiting to hear the date of their parole hearing.

7.3.3 Probation Service prison offender managers (POMs) are still working from home for part of the week which, inevitably, leaves them less visible in and around the prison and not as accessible to the men. This leaves the Prison Service POMs facing more of the general enquiries from staff, prisoners and the IMB.

7.3.4 The senior probation officer told the Board that the current case load of approximately 70 men for each of his staff is too high and that this forces them to prioritise transactional activities such as OASys assessments, parole reports and recategorisation reports, and means the prisoners receive less one-to-one time with their POM. The prison currently has 3.8 probation staff for offender management in custody (OMiC) against a recommended complement of six, which significantly affects its capacity to deliver OMiC. The offender management team are to be congratulated for their efficient administration and in winning the 2022 Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire team of the year regional award for parole delivery, administrative collaboration and legal visits during the pandemic restrictions.

7.3.5 Because of this pressure on POMs, the role of key worker becomes an ever more critical part of offender management in custody (OMiC). Key workers represent the frontline contact for the prisoner while the role of the POM becomes rather more 'back-office'; writing reports and liaising with outside agencies. Because it is in the best interests of prisoners, the Board therefore endorses the Governor's priority to reinforce and protect the importance and delivery of key work, as staffing levels improve.

7.3.6 In its last annual report, the Board highlighted the plight of imprisonment for public protection (IPP) prisoners. This problem has not gone away a year later and the men subject to this sentence, together with their families, continue to face the same uncertainty and frustration. An instance of this from the reporting year is when one IPP prisoner told the adjudicating governor that he was totally indifferent as to whether the governor awarded him five or 15 days in cellular confinement. He told the governor 'I am 15 years over tariff, what more can you do to me?'. During the reporting year, Board members took a local MP on a tour of the prison and, like the Board, he had sympathy for their sense of grievance and the uncertainty they and their families felt over their future.

7.3.7 The enhanced behaviour monitoring (EBM) boards which each man attends in the presence of his key worker, POM and a member of the north west psychology team are judged a valuable, detailed and challenging opportunity for him to reflect on his behaviour and agree objectives for the coming months. However, in the judgement of the Board, these objectives would be improved by being rather more individual and specific, rather than generic.

7.3.8 The Aspire unit continues to do good work with complex men, recalled prisoners and those who have previously failed in open conditions. The unit does not

shy away from accepting men who are likely to prove challenging. The officers on the wing have a particularly good rapport and knowledge of the men.

7.3.9 Board members found it particularly heartening to see one group of the men on the Aspire unit preparing and cooking their own lavish and appetising Christmas Day meal. In a large plot behind the Aspire unit, men grow an impressive array of vegetables and fruit and the fruits of their labour are a credit to the men and the instructor.

7.3.10 The Board has attended a number of the monthly interdepartmental risk management team (IRMT) meetings and judges that it carefully monitors men subject to public protection monitoring because of a restraining or harassment order. Public protection monitoring of some prisoners' communications continued throughout the reporting year and, indeed, has risen since the introduction of in-cell telephones. The Board is satisfied the monitoring logs are readily available to OMU and other staff but believe there is no guarantee the monitoring is undertaken by those with a good knowledge of the individual cases. It was unclear from the monitoring logs whether non-English calls are being routinely translated by the prison.

7.3.11 During the reporting year, the two programmes offered by the prison – Resolve and the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) – were merged nationally into TSP. Given that Resolve was a nine-week course and TSP is six weeks, a slight increase in the number of programmes in the future might be hoped for. A significant number of the men held at Buckley Hall are required to complete TSP as part of their sentence plan and, at one stage during the year, over 100 men were on the waiting list for it.

7.3.12 The number being enrolled on a TSP course has been limited during the reporting year because of Covid restrictions, such as compartmentalisation, but is now returning to pre-pandemic levels. Staffing levels in the department have also been lower than normal for much of the reporting year.

7.3.13 Programme staff say that there is a national policy which requires them to prioritise for men with less than 12 months to release for the course. However, this can give rise to considerable frustration among those with longer to serve who need to complete the course in order to improve their prospects with the Parole Board or of being accepted by an open prison. The men point to an apparent anomaly in that they can apply to move to open conditions with three years or less left on their sentence, but if they are also required to complete TSP beforehand they can only take the programme with one year or less left on their sentence.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Maintaining family ties has been an important priority of Buckley Hall over many years and, inevitably, the very high standards dropped during the pandemic. The reporting year has seen visits run the gamut from one-hour visits with a ten minute gap between visitors, to one and a half hour visits with a reduced stagger, and finally to two-hour visits with no stagger. There have also been different

restrictions during the reporting year on the number of visits allowed each month per prisoner, on who was allowed to visit a prisoner, what food and drink was available for purchase, what physical contact was allowed and whether masks had to be worn. At best, the situation facing staff and prisoners could be described as extremely fluid and the frustration of the men was not difficult to understand as the regime restrictions were relaxed at a far slower pace than in the community.

7.4.2 Visitors attending Buckley Hall to see their friend or relative continue to speak positively to the Board about their experience and how well they have been treated by both prison staff and those who work for Partners of Prisoners (POPs) in the visits lodge. However, the lack of suitable food for purchase is disappointing and particularly so at weekends. Sandwiches are still not available, and to offer children attending visits on a weekend morning a choice restricted to either chocolate or crisps is not acceptable.

7.4.3 The aviary and outdoor area need substantial work to be undertaken before they can be made available to visitors. Unfortunately, the remedial work on them was not completed because of staffing shortages and more pressing priorities but, hopefully, they will become available again for family days in the next Reporting year.

7.4.4 The parental contact visits on a weekend were reintroduced and proved popular, and are valued by prisoners who have young children. The reintroduction of a calendar showing nine forthcoming family days between July and December 2022 was a welcome sight for men with families.

7.4.5 Social video calls continued during the reporting year but were scaled back to one morning a week as the number of social visits increased. The Board judges these video calls to be important for men whose relatives and friends live a distance away. In the last three months of the reporting year an average of six men per week had a social video call. However, the number of cancellations over the period – at 33% – is judged relatively high and worthy of investigation by the prison.

7.4.6 The introduction of in-cell telephony during the reporting year is considered a major step forward in allowing the men to maintain their family ties and the email-a-prisoner service is judged another successful initiative – in October 2021, for example, over 250 emails were received via the service.

7.4.7 The centrally provided PIN credit was tapered to disappear by the end of September in the reporting year and the prison-issue mobile phones allocated to each wing were withdrawn. However, these changes must be offset against the introduction of the in-cell telephones. Officers and prisoners have expressed their frustration to the Board about trying to arrange inter-prison phone calls during the reporting year.

7.4.8 The reporting year has not been without some pleasant surprises. A raffle saw the winning men enjoying afternoon tea with their mother. The Mental Health team organised a successful scheme called 'Family Ties' at weekends, where some 20 men painted their own designs on babygrows and tee-shirts for their children.

7.4.9 More than a hundred prisoners were reported not to have had a social visit for over one year and so the appointment of two official Prison Visitors is welcomed by the Board, as is the pen-pal scheme for prisoners, organised by the chaplaincy.

7.4.11 It's Storytime continued, after a fashion, during the reporting year, and the education department has also launched a new scheme called Raising Readers. Both are commended for fostering the vital link between a father and his young child through reading.

7.4.12 The Board commends those involved in establishing and embedding the family strategy more deeply into the life of the prison. Meetings of the group now take place regularly and family strategy sits far higher, as a result, in the thinking of the prison.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 Although not designated a resettlement prison, it would be wrong to think that men are not released from Buckley Hall: for example, 16 men left in February and March of the reporting year – the majority to approved premises. Board members welcome the increase in the subsistence payment being made to released men and the decision to link the payment to increases in the consumer price index for the next three years. The Board has been assured that the OMU has a system in place to highlight any man being released who is registered as of 'no fixed abode'.

7.5.2 It is commonly felt that releases on a Friday should be avoided because of the difficulties men are likely to experience over a weekend registering for benefits, obtaining their medication and finding accommodation. From 1 January to 16 June during the reporting year, 95 men were released from Buckley Hall and of these 33% were released on a Friday.

7.5.3 The appointment of a community engagement manager and the establishment of a 'settlement hub' were judged appropriate initiatives by the Board. IAG delivers a valuable service to the men on arrival at Buckley Hall and at the end of their sentence. The involvement of a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) work-life coach in the settlement hub to assist with arranging a benefit interview on release and universal credit loans, and with good links to local JobCentre Plus, was judged welcome. In addition, the representative from Achieve can help the men obtain identity cards together with access to a wide range of courses around warehousing, heavy goods vehicle driving, forklift truck driving and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme. Work had also begun on offering the men the opportunity to open a bank account. This is important, because when the Board interviewed 10 men about to be released, five said they would need to set up a bank account.

7.5.4 The advice and information which the representatives of DWP and Achieve offer to men continued, although staffing issues during the reporting year saw some disruption to their services and rather conspired to halt the early impetus of the settlement hub.

7.5.5 The organisation and delivery of the settlement hub's services changed during the reporting year. Most of its activities will now be provided from the education building because the initial location of the settlement hub was not judged particularly convenient for ensuring easy prisoner access and footfall. The decision to relocate the main service to the education building is judged appropriate. The intention is that the present office will also be retained and used as a discharge hub for men being released. Quite how well this idea will work, only time will tell.

7.5.6 The Board is impressed with the enthusiasm and drive of the new settlement hub manager and the organisational support provided by the settlement orderlies.

The work of the IMB

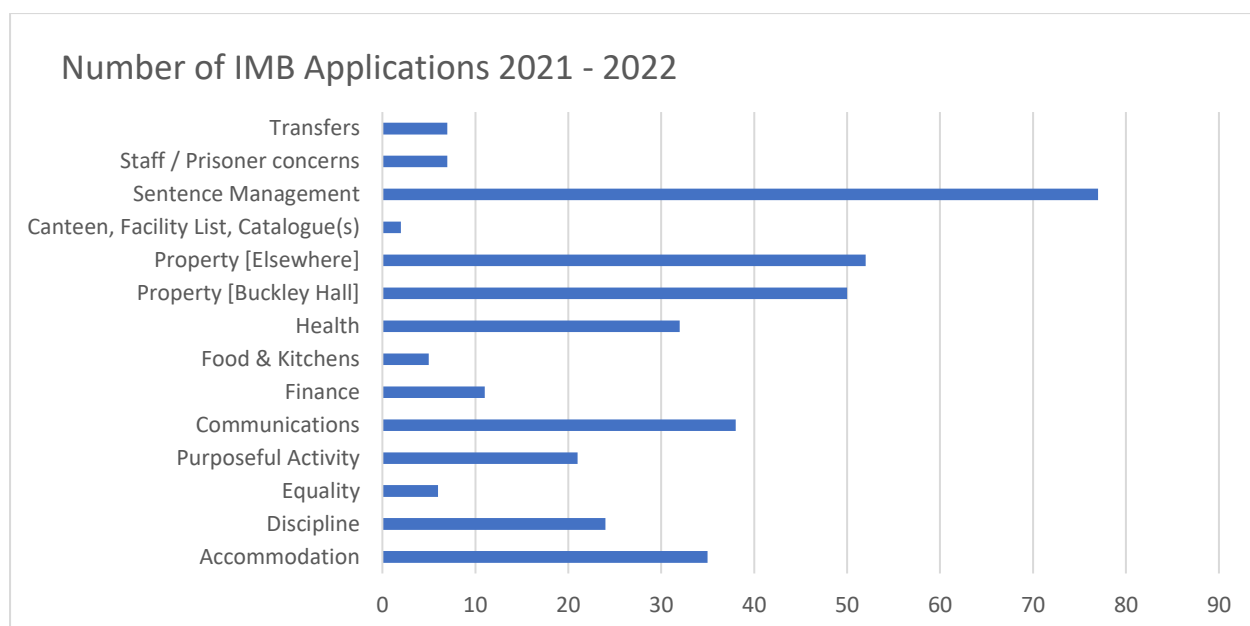
The Board has continued to perform its monitoring role during the reporting year, albeit with a very reduced number of members. Despite these depleted numbers, Board members are to be commended for endeavouring to undertake the full range of their duties as conscientiously and thoroughly as possible. Some much-needed new members are due to be appointed during the next reporting year.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	4
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	4
Total number of visits to the establishment	264
Total number of segregation reviews attended	35

Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	2019-2020 reporting year	2020-2021 reporting year	2021-2022 reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	14	15	35
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	10	35	24
C	Equality	4	5	6
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	10	16	21
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	23	31	38
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	11	5	11
F	Food and kitchens	1	4	5
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	19	28	32
H1	Property within this establishment	19	44	50
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	38	41	52
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	8	1	2
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	40	51	77
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	9	22	7
K	Transfers	6	17	7
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system			
	Total number of applications	212	315	367



Glossary of abbreviations used

Initials	Meaning
ACCT	assessment, care in custody and teamwork
BWVC	body worn video camera
CSIP	challenge, support and intervention plan
CSRA	cell sharing risk assessment
CSU	care and separation unit
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
DIRF	discrimination incident reporting form
EBM	enhanced behaviour monitoring
Hooch	fermenting liquid
IAG	information, advice and guidance
IPP	imprisonment for public protection
IRMT	interdepartmental risk management team
MDT	mandatory drug test
NOMIS	National Offender Management Information System
OASys	offender assessment system
OMU	offender management unit
OpCap	operational capacity
OSAG	operational and system assurance group
PAVA	pelargonic acid vanillylamide (an incapacitant spray)
PEEP	personal emergency evacuation plan
POM	prison offender manager
POPS	Partners of Prisoners
PPE	personal protective equipment
QOF	Quality and Outcomes Framework (NHS)
ROTL	release on temporary licence
SIM	safety and intervention meeting
SMARG	segregation monitoring and review group

TSP	Thinking Skills Programme
VDT	voluntary drug test



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