



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Kirkham**

**For reporting year  
1 January 2022 – 31 December 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

2.1 HMP Kirkham is a category D open prison holding adult male prisoners. It is located in north-west England, seven miles west of Preston and 12 miles east of Blackpool. The billets installed during the 1990s, due to constant use and their simple build at the time, are now looking tired and require a lot of maintenance and would benefit from replacement with a more modern fit for purpose build. Temporary accommodation units were installed due to a need during the Covid pandemic to create single accommodation.

2.2 There are 27 occupied billets, mainly providing single-occupancy basic living accommodation, including wheelchair accessible rooms with locally installed wet rooms.

2.3 The overall prison capacity is 699. At the start of 2022, occupancy was 470 and remained constant over the year.<sup>1</sup>

2.4 There are a number of workshops on site, run by outside agencies (Recycling Lives and OCD (formerly Calpac Ltd), as well as farms and gardens. Remade with Hope withdrew in 2022. Education provision is managed by the establishment and run by Novus. Courses include literacy, numeracy, and lifestyle courses. Library provision is provided by Lancashire County Council (LCC).

2.5 Healthcare services and the substance misuse team are provided by Spectrum Community Health (Spectrum). Substance misuse is a busy area suffering staff shortages throughout the year. Since phasing out the community rehabilitation company (CRC) a small Accelerator prisons project team has picked up elements of the work, looking to prepare prisoners for release with support in accessing jobs, housing and banking.

2.6 In 2022, HMP Kirkham celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a prison and remembered its previous history as a RAF station.



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<sup>1</sup> Figures included in this report are local management information. They reflect the prison's position at the time of reporting, but may be subject to change following further validation and therefore may not always tally with Official Statistics later published by the Ministry of Justice.

### **3. Executive summary**

#### **3.1 Background to the report**

3.1.1 A new Governor and deputy have been in place for the reporting period.

3.1.2 Over the reporting period, there have been 23 absconds. A spike in June led to an investigation ordered by ministers, and vetting checks are now in place to ensure those prisoners designated for transfer to open conditions are considered suitable. The IMB year on year is still reporting the unsuitability of some prisoners being transferred to open conditions. There were 187 prisoners returned to closed conditions during the reporting period.

3.1.3 The new Governor has prioritised action against drugs use, with a reasoned approach to reducing supply and demand and understanding the importance of those who need help and support. This was well received by members of staff.

3.1.4 The level of drug usage has decreased but is still a concern and an enduring problem. Evidence shows this is an issue across the north-west region in the closed and open estate, with 25-30% of prisoners in Kirkham having links to organised crime groups.

3.1.5 Construction of the new gym started at the end of 2022. The current gym has limited access due to structural problems.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

##### **How safe is the prison?**

3.2.1 The prison is next to busy main roads, a small industrial site and a housing estate. This location makes it relatively easy for those who wish to abscond to do so. Throughout 2022 the prison became less of a building site, with many of the major projects completing during the year.

3.2.2 The return to a working environment, following the lifting of Covid restrictions, caused challenges initially, with staff working incredibly hard to address the behaviour of some prisoners not adhering to the regime and displaying behaviours below the standard expected in an open establishment. This was a unique and difficult period for the prison, as a failure to reintroduce a workable regime could have had far-reaching consequences. The Board recognises the planning and careful implementation of a workable regime over a relatively short period, and the positive and proactive support from staff at all levels in the prison to ensure the prison was functioning properly without undue delay.

3.2.3 Overall, the prison is considered to be a safe environment, with low levels of violence and a positive approach to resettlement which is recognised by the majority of prisoners.

##### **How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?**

3.2.4 The Board believes prisoners are treated fairly and humanely. Living conditions in the main are good, but improvements need to be made around adding ventilation in the bathrooms to reduce condensation. The showers that have not yet been refurbished need to also take priority. There are still recurring problems with the heating and hot water supplies to some billets.

3.2.5 All billets have had a fire alarm system upgrade, with work still being completed in non-residential areas. In some older billets there have been issues with fire breaks in the roof space impacting on the new alarm system needing further work.

### **How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?**

3.2.6 Spectrum provides healthcare and recovery services at the prison, with Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust providing mental health services. Healthcare staff continue to provide essential services to the prison.

### **How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?**

3.2.7 This has still been a challenge. The Governor and senior management team (SMT) have recognised the deficiencies in areas of employment and the availability of accommodation on release. Appointments made under the Accelerator project went a considerable way to addressing these issues. Challenges still exist and a greater interface is required between employment and Custody to Work (C2W).

## **3.3 Main areas for development**

### ***TO THE MINISTER***

3.3.1 As a Board, we understand the pressures on the Prison Service. Actions taken this year by the Secretary of State have been reassuring, following a number of absconds. Despite ministers' assurances over the last five years that the categorisation of prisoners was being correctly implemented, a total of 187 prisoners were returned to closed conditions, mainly due to drugs and behaviour issues. Trust plays a big part in an open prison, and those requiring closer supervision need to be returned to closed conditions. This figure has increased from the previous year (149), despite population numbers remaining low.

### ***TO THE PRISON SERVICE***

3.3.2 While a number of major projects (i.e. new timbers building, new gym and new concept building) have either been completed or are well advanced, the CCTV is in need of an urgent upgrade.

3.3.3 The Board is pleased that some of the work recommended in the disability review in 2019 continues to be undertaken as part of funding approved to repair roadways on the site, including dropping pavements for accessibility.

3.3.4 The lack of in-cell technology and telephony is a contributing factor to the use of illicit mobile phones and all its ramifications, concerning the use of drugs, debt and bullying. Feedback suggests that category D prisons are at the bottom of the list where funding is concerned. Whilst the pressure on budgets is recognised, this is considered a short-sighted approach, as the rollout of in-cell telephony would go a long way to reducing the level of illicit phones and providing a significant and well-received benefit to the prisoners.

3.3.5 With the Secretary of State being involved in parole decisions, the numbers of prisoners arriving at Kirkham has reduced significantly, with these prisoners having to remain in category C (closed establishments).

3.3.6 An emerging area of interest is the subject of prisoners' wages. There appears to be a significant difference in wages between the closed and open estates and

within Kirkham. This will be investigated further and a fuller report, together with any recommendations, provided in next year's annual report.

### **TO THE GOVERNOR**

3.3.7 The Board is pleased to see the introduction and implementation of the abscond strategy, with monthly meetings, chaired by the deputy governor. The HMPPS action plan was put in place after an abscond spike in June 2022.

3.3.8 The drugs strategy will see a new manager from January 2023. This should allow a stronger focus. A dedicated drug strategy manager would be most welcome and needed.

3.3.9 The Board is pleased to see the SMT and other parts of management functioning in a much more cooperative and cohesive manner.

3.3.10 The IMB is concerned that, whilst staffing is at a high level and the number of prisoners remains relatively low, various activities, including gym, C2W and the mail room, have been curtailed due to staff being redeployed to operational duties, such as escorts and checks on potential employers.

3.3.11 The disparity in prisoner pay between outworkers and those working in activities is a cause for concern. This is leading to issues within farms and gardens and timbers, resulting in discontent among the prisoners.

### **3.4 Progress since the last report**

3.4.1 The Board notes that the new residential billet is now in operation.

<b>Issue raised</b>	<b>Response given</b>	<b>Action taken</b>
Re-categorisation of prisoners	The categorisation is being carried out correctly	Intervention by the Secretary of State
Funding of the new gym	Funding has been approved	Work is now underway on the construction
Member of staff to support finance, banking and debt issues for prisoners		Appointed in October 2022

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception and induction**

4.1.1 On arrival at HMP Kirkham, prisoners go through a comprehensive induction process. Transferring prisoners are checked by healthcare and given a first-night information pack prepared by the Partners of Prisoners (POPS) family support organisation. New prisoners are located away from the main camp in a two-storey building, allowing induction to take place in a calm and more controlled environment.

4.1.2 New arrivals at Kirkham are from closed conditions and are inducted on day two into the life of an open prison. This process has returned to face-to-face meetings, with an induction officer in group sessions. The regime of an open prison is explained, together with opportunities for education and job training (outside and inside the prison), including release on a temporary licence (ROTL). Prisoners are advised on what is expected from them in an open prison.

4.1.3 Prisoners, on arrival, bring limited amounts of property. Remaining property is sent on by courier. Property of prisoners leaving Kirkham for another prison is forwarded with successfully, but property of incoming prisoners still suffers delay.

#### **4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody**

4.2.1 There have been no deaths in custody.

4.2.2 There have been three incidents of self-harm during the year (three in 2021). One by ingestion, one cutting and one with the use of a ligature.

4.2.3 Five assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents were opened (eight in 2021). Three followed the self-harm incidents previously described, one was for a feeling of helplessness and one resulted from a medication issue.

4.2.4 Kirkham has a Listeners team, selected and trained from volunteers among the prison population, organised by the Blackpool branch of the Samaritans. There were 10 registered Listeners at the beginning of the year, and 11 at the end, with one Listener in the role of supervisor. As Listeners are released there is a need for constant recruitment and training. Currently four prisoners are going through the training. As all prisoners transferred to Kirkham come from other prisons, a proportion of them will already have been experienced Listeners elsewhere. Ten transferees and two existing prisoners are awaiting security and healthcare clearance before training commences.

4.2.5 There was a total of 397 Listener recorded interactions, higher than the previous year (253) but lower than previously. There are several reasons for this:

- There is an increasing number of prisoners who go out to work daily. This reduces the time “inside” to carry out their duties.
- There was restricted access during January due to Covid in the prison.

4.2.6 Recoop is a charity that, together with Lancashire County Council (LCC), offers social support to prisoners. Although primarily aimed at prisoners over 50, anyone with an identified need is included in the programme. Recoop trains prisoners to act as buddies. Posts are paid and financed by the prison and LCC. The number of

trained buddies reduced in 2022 following the pandemic but revived in the autumn. At year end there were two trained buddies, including the prisoner coordinator, with a further three in training and three awaiting training. An extra level of security is required for buddies. Together with the safer custody department, buddies help identify prisoners needing support.

### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

4.3.1 There were eight reported incidents of violence in 2022 (12 in 2021), four being prisoner on prisoner, one serious, and four being prisoner on staff.

4.3.2 Prisoner-on-prisoner violence resulted from issues around debt, tobacco, bullying, and retaliation. The incidents involving staff occurred when prisoners were found with unauthorised items and were non-compliant.

4.3.3 There was a total of 95 referrals during the year for challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) (96 in 2021). Of these, three were managed outside the CSIP process, nine resulted in no further action, two had no outcome and 61 progressed to CSIP, mainly for support purposes.

### **4.4 Use of force**

4.4.1 There were three incidents resulting in use of force: one when officers tried to break up a fight between prisoners, another when a prisoner was trying to abscond, and the third a prisoner being non-compliant when told they would be returning to closed conditions.

### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

4.5.1 Access to and finds of illicit items continue at Kirkham, with billet searches being increased. There were 318 drug finds (279 in 2021), 437 phone finds (271 in 2021), and eight alcohol finds (22 in 2021). No weapons were found (four in 2021).

## **5. Fair and humane treatment**

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food**

5.1.1 The major build programme approved in 2021 saw many projects completed during 2022, including:

- Work to resurface roads and paths, lower kerbs etc as part of the disability audit, and to line-paint the car park was completed.
- The new concept building was handed over in February and occupied in April.
- The major 18-month fire alarm project was completed in May.
- Hangar 4 was demolished in January and two billets (old ex-oil rig accommodation) were demolished in May.
- The new timbers building was completed in August – an amazing facility, complete with sound-proofed classrooms and an excellent ventilation system.

5.1.2 Funding of £10.5 million was approved in July for the replacement gymnasium, with work starting in October. The expected handover date is October 2023.

5.1.3 While operational prison capacity stands at 699, occupancy levels remain around 470. In early 2022 detailed plans were developed to manage the anticipated increase in numbers. However, with abscond rates increasing rapidly, ministers stopped further transfers to Kirkham for two weeks to identify and put plans in place to limit a recurrence.

5.1.4 Given the abscond spike, coupled with the numbers of prisoners unsuited to being transferred to category D, as highlighted in our past four IMB reports, this intervention by ministers was timely. Following detailed scrutiny of issues, a variety of measures were introduced so that the background and suitability of potential transfers are now closely monitored before transfer approval is authorised. This process is labour-intensive, placing additional burden on staff. Whilst causing additional work, hard-pressed staff acknowledge the benefits and continue to manage the process diligently and efficiently. Proposed numbers for transfer from closed conditions have reduced considerably as a result of this detailed, almost forensic, investigation. The challenge to achieve operational capacity seems distant, with approximately 220 spaces creating further issues.

5.1.5 Clothing: prisoners wear their own clothes except when specialist clothing is required, notably on farms and gardens and the kitchen.

5.1.6 Food: external events have created serious challenges for the catering manager and team. Increased food and utility costs, and shortages of raw supplies in some areas, all place additional pressure, resulting in a tight but manageable budget. The food remains at a high standard, with all major events catered for. The highlight of the year was the prison's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. The catering provision for this was very successful.

5.1.7 A key challenge for the catering department is training and retaining orderlies, and it is to the credit of the catering manager that they have established a close

rapport with catering managers in other prisons to ensure prisoners with catering experience are being transferred to Kirkham. Other projects underway are to establish a bistro/café in visits, benefiting visiting families, and from a catering perspective to make catering in Kirkham cashless.

## **5.2 Segregation**

5.2.1 Kirkham does not have a segregation unit; instead, there is a building designated as the secure holding rooms and assessment building (SHRAB), where prisoners are held pending transfer to closed conditions. Ideally prisoners are held for a maximum of four hours before transfer; occasionally it has been necessary to hold a prisoner overnight for operational or safety reasons. The IMB is informed each time a prisoner is placed there.

5.2.2 The SHRAB has had new stainless steel toilet seats and sinks renewed, and record-keeping has improved.

## **5.3 Staff-prisoner relationships, key workers**

5.3.1 As reported last year, the introduction of the offender management in custody (OMiC) model has provided greater management presence in billets, resulting in regular and closer contact with prisoners. It is noticeable how staff are now more aware of issues individual prisoners may have and officers are now better positioned to deal with problems.

5.3.2 The prison makes every effort to promote key aspects of personal advancement and resettlement. This has not been easy after lockdown, as some prisoners found it difficult to engage with the regime.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 The absence (on long-term sick leave) of a key SMT member and the loss of a diversity and inclusion manager (seconded to Kirkham from HMP Preston) have made promoting equality and diversity difficult. It is clear the Governor and SMT are committed to promoting diversity and equality, but it is accepted, through no fault of prison management, that this crucial area has not received the attention it deserves.

5.4.2 Funding has been identified for a dedicated part-time post to commence early in 2023, and it is hoped that equality and diversity issues will progress, and plans be established, once the new appointment is made.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 The chaplaincy team is a well-established, pivotal part of the prison. They have the difficult job of delivering bad news relating to illness or death of a family member. In certain circumstances, they are able to provide an iPad to enable prisoners to make real-time contact with family members in certain circumstances, such as live streaming funerals.

5.5.2 The chaplaincy assists security and other departments with arranging activities such as family days during the school holidays, promoting family ties and wellbeing, a lifer group focussing on long-term prisoners who are close to release and an isolated prisoners' group for prisoners who are not receiving visits.

5.5.3 The team also provide much-needed support to staff and partnership agencies. Industrial chaplaincy visits raise their profile and demonstrate they are available to everyone.

## **5.6 Incentives scheme and disciplinary processes**

5.6.1 A reprofile of the operational staffing group was implemented in October 2022, which has improved staffing for evening activities. A four-tier system was introduced in January 2020, with support, citizen, advocate and ambassador levels, with movement through the levels by review. Each case is dealt with sympathetically, with an appeals system in place. This process was temporarily suspended during lockdown but has been reinstated and is working well. The ambassador level does not provide additional private cash, visits or gym sessions and has very little additional value beyond advocate. The policy is being reviewed, currently seeking staff and prisoners' views about levels and available incentives, with the possibility of delivering a noticeable range of incentives for ambassador level in the near future. Face-to-face review boards have been reinstated, helping to promote improved behaviour.

5.6.2 While the incentives system overall is seen by prisoners as being procedurally just, face-to-face review boards now provide a genuine right to reply and the ability to discuss warnings and positive behaviour initiatives. This revised system is endorsed and is a positive and constructive approach to delivering a balanced and fairer system. It is acknowledged that not all boards result in downgrades, but it is considered that more could be done to promote the benefits of achieving positive incentives and earned privileges (IEPs).

5.6.3 Adjudications: there are significantly less suspended awards than during Covid and the prison has withdrawn suspended awards for a range of serious charges, including positive mandatory drug tests (MDTs) and drug possession. The prison has reintroduced the independent adjudicator (IA) and used the district judge for charges throughout the year. The result has been the award of 200 additional days. This is a facility the prison uses when considering significantly aggravating features, such as multiple MDT use charges or repeated possession of unauthorised articles such as smartphones. The Board believes this is having a positive effect, with a downturn in MDT rates in the prison, and a reasoned approach has not resulted in any absconds due to the use of the IA. Loss of gym remains a privilege not always applied due to the new facility still not being in place and access to gym facilities being limited.

5.6.4 The IMB will continue to monitor this pivotal area and in particular the outcomes once the review of incentives has completed and a way ahead identified.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 During 2022, 528 complaints were received. A dedicated member of staff manages the complaints system and proactively chases up late responses, contacting other establishments when appropriate.

## **5.8 Property**

5.8.1 Despite guidance for the Board not to attempt to resolve property issues, this is not always possible when faced with a frustrated prisoner, having exhausted the prison complaints system, with no one else to turn to except the IMB.

5.8.2 Acknowledging the significant increase in prisoners scheduled in the next few months, clearer guidance for property transfers between prisons would be well received and would reduce angst amongst prisoners. The volume of property received on transfer creates issues, as reported earlier in paragraph 4.1.3. It is recommended that prisoners are transferred with an overnight bag only, with remaining property delivered the following day or as soon as possible following transfer.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

6.1.1 The Spectrum healthcare team is a small, well-established team who work collaboratively year on year providing a much-needed service. Despite low staffing, the team has three nurses qualified in prescribing, with nurse leads trained in managing long-term conditions, acute and minor illnesses and tissue viability. This is in addition to all mandatory training being completed.

6.1.2 Healthcare has an excellent blend of knowledge, expertise and has invested relationships with the prisoners and prison staff. As a result, 70% of eligible prisoners have been fully vaccinated for flu, alongside the Covid winter booster programme.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

6.2.1 A band 5 nursing vacancy has been filled, Two have been in post for some time and a third was recruited and joined recently. A business case has been approved to employ a pharmacist two days a week and recruitment options are being reviewed. The administrative team has completed recruitment. A business case was successfully submitted for extra physiotherapist sessions for an interim period to reduce the waiting times, which have now been reduced to two weeks.

6.2.2 Items of note for health service responses are as follows:

- GP – waiting time was one week for non-urgent appointments
- podiatry – waiting time four weeks
- optician – no waiting time
- psychiatrist – no waiting time and rarely needed
- physiotherapist – waiting time two weeks

6.2.3 As well as providing healthcare services, health education has also been undertaken; healthcare and prison staff/managers work extremely well together.

6.2.4 Dental services are provided by Smart Dental Care. There is one dentist and one dental nurse, who work between Kirkham and another prison. Waiting time for standard check-ups is 21 weeks; emergencies can be seen on the day if the dentist is on site; otherwise, the prisoner will be sent to the local emergency clinic. Prisoners who are working out of the establishment are offered the first or last appointment of the day. Some appointments are wasted when prisoners forget to cancel them if they have been granted home leave.

### **6.3 Mental healthcare**

6.3.1 Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust provides mental health services using a stepped care approach. The team includes two registered mental health nurses, a psychological wellbeing practitioner and a psychological therapist.

6.3.2 The team has trauma-informed therapy and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing, to support those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and trauma. A counselling service continues; patients can self-refer or referrals can be made by staff. Cases are triaged and then directed to a trauma counsellor who deals with patients with anxiety issues, sleep deprivation etc. The Trust supports prisoners before release by liaising with external health professionals, ensuring continuity of care.

## **6.4 Social care**

6.4.1 Lancashire County Council (LCC) undertakes social care assessments. Spectrum provides social care packages once LCC has developed a care plan.

6.4.2 Social care needs are identified during prisoners' initial health screening and buddies are assigned if appropriate. Recoop are completing one-to-one training with buddies (see 4.2.6).

6.4.3 A challenge for Kirkham will be the increase of the population during 2023 towards capacity of 699, which may well see an increase in social care needs.

## **6.5 Exercise, regime**

6.5.1 Exercise regimes remain reduced due to lack of suitable gym facilities and operational staffing issues.

6.5.2 Whilst the main sports hall is unusable, the weights room, snooker room and cardio vascular room are available for use. The former stores are still being used as a small gym, with a number of pieces of equipment installed.

6.5.3 The prison has secured funding for a new gym, and works have already commenced on this.

6.5.4 Parkrun was embedded in November and is now a regular feature in the Saturday morning programme. On average 16 prisoners participate and an increase is expected as the weather improves.

## **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

6.6.1 Substance misuse services are provided by Spectrum. Group work has recommenced alongside one-to-ones. Prisoners have access to breaking free on-line. Access to the 12 steps programme is available, as well as mutual aid services that visit the establishment once a week. A support worker and senior practitioner have been successfully recruited.

6.6.2 Buvidal prolonged release prescribing for the treatment of opioid dependency has been introduced at Kirkham as an alternative substitute opioid recovery treatment. This has had a positive impact on the population, providing more opportunities for the men wanting to work out. This enables greater flexibility with home leave and ROTL.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

7.1.1 Education was a main concern in our last report. However, the prison has taken significant steps to stabilise the management and improve the offer to prisoners.

7.1.2 The Novus contract was under review throughout the year, with the quality of content and management of staff being issues of concern. These were addressed with regular meetings with Novus. An education manager was appointed on an interim basis; this is now a permanent post. Staffing issues and attendance dips and competing activities such as gym and paid work by prisoners were the main issues impeding attainment across the board. After some delay, an IT teacher is now in post. There have been similar difficulties in recruiting a teacher of mathematics, an area where performance is below standard.

7.1.3 Direct claims status has been regained, with the prison now able to issue its own qualifications without external accreditation. Prisoners are now working beyond level 2 qualifications, and progression pathways to level 3 and beyond are being explored. With a diverse prison population, the list of educational provision ranges from basic literacy, in conjunction with the Shannon Trust, to higher-level degree courses through the University of Central Lancashire and Lancaster University, funded mainly through the Prisoners' Education Trust.

7.1.4 The library had difficulties re-establishing itself after the pandemic. Whilst experiencing a slow start, activities have improved, with Storybook Dads and Raising Readers becoming well supported. Christmas and Valentine's cards sales exceeded expectations, and a chess club is proving very popular. In conjunction with library staff, the Shannon Trust holds training sessions for reading mentors. The library is well staffed, with two experienced librarians who, in addition to looking after the books, also create a regular newsletter and coordinate other activities such as mentor training, popular chess competitions and language and art classes. They are well supported by a team of knowledgeable and reliable orderlies.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

7.2.1 With the arrival of a learning and skills manager and greater stability within education, more opportunities for vocational training have become available. Mutually beneficial links with Starbucks, Greene King and Crown Paints are being developed. Painting and decorating, plastering, and bricklaying are on offer, and proving increasingly popular. More places on the construction side are desirable but limited by the shortage of space available.

7.2.2 The new and impressive timber workshop is now fully functioning. Work on flatpack furniture continues. Garden fence panels, sheds, picnic tables and wooden planters are made and sold in the prison's farm shop. In addition to joinery skills, forklift truck driving, stock control and warehouse management, activities provide ancillary skills highly desirable in the workplace.

7.2.3 Work within farms and gardens continues to struggle to attract a stable workforce. This is largely due to the low wages, an issue shared with other activities. The competing attraction of external work with higher wages is hindering establishing a full complement. In spite of these issues, the greenhouses raise an impressive amount of produce which, along with livestock, provides a steady source of income for the prison and is sold at the prison's farm shop, which is well supported by the local community.

7.2.4 Off-site working is extremely popular, with over 100 prisoners utilising ROTL to gain employment. This is under C2W. Several employers have been identified by prisoners themselves and others through existing employers, such as Calpac and Laylas Foods.

7.2.5 There was a hiatus due to staffing issues, which prevented checks on workplace safety, leading to delays which have now been largely overcome, with a new staff appropriately trained. C2W is a prison-run venture under the direction of custodial staff, whose primary responsibilities must be to ensure the secure running of the prison. This can on occasion leave this important area of a resettlement prison unmanned. It is considered that C2W would function more effectively if it was located in closer proximity to both education and employment.

7.2.6 The location of the business and community engagement manager within the C2W building is a significant step forward in providing managerial oversight of this crucial area of prison life, and benefits are immediately proving fruitful.

7.2.7 There are opportunities for employment within the prison – in particular, Recycling Lives, and Calpac. Both engage a significant workforce, with the former offering employment opportunities inside and outside the establishment. A programme of pathways to employment has been put in place. A traffic management course has also been offered to prisoners, with the promise of a qualification pre-release. All are popular, with substantial waiting lists.

### **7.3 Offender management, progression**

7.3.1 Custodial managers were moved out of the OMU as a result of OMiC and replaced with an additional hub manager and dedicated prison offender managers (POMs). As a result, POMs are now more readily available to prisoners to deal with their concerns and progress their sentence plans, which has had a positive impact on the prisoners.

7.3.2 OMiC has been largely successfully rolled out over the year. Meetings with prisoners are held 12 weeks prior to release, with handover between the POMs and community offender managers (COMs) taking place seven and a half months before release. High-risk offenders are given priority. CRC staff do not form part of the OMiC structure. One member of staff is based in the OMU but carries out resettlement work. There are two Head of Offender Management Delivery in place.

7.3.3 There is now a full complement of POMs and 2.2 probation officers in post.

7.3.4 There is clearly a shortage of approved premises (AP) places available, with prisoners released on licence taking priority. The provision of approved premises

(APs) has improved, but allocation can still be challenging. Representatives from APs regularly visit the prison to discuss what is involved in having a place at an AP.

7.3.5 ROTL has been increased over the year, subject to fluctuations in response to the national situation. Before restrictions were lifted, 200 applications had been approved and were ready to go. Subsequently, by mid-May, 340 ROTLs had been activated, with a further 80 on accompanied resettlement day release.

7.3.6 OMU staff meet with new receptions within 48 hours of arrival, specifically to myth-bust any ROTL misconceptions and to provide realistic expectations. This has been very well received. Staff worked particularly hard in preparation for Christmas, when it was possible to allow over 60 prisoners to have overnight release over the weekend.

7.3.7 The OMU has made great strides in achieving procedural justice, particularly where ROTL is concerned. Clinics are held regularly and case notes are continually updated, providing up-to-date prisoner information. Regular team meetings are held discussing areas of concern.

7.3.8 A ROTL tracker is in place, ensuring any prisoner can identify where on the ROTL process they are at any time. In 2022, an impressive 32,454 ROTLs took place. The number of absconds remains at a consistently low level, with 23 absconds over the past year compared with 17 in 2021. Abscond strategy meetings are held regularly.

7.3.9 The number of ROTL failures remains relatively low, with 20 in 2022. All cases are scrupulously investigated. Many are contrived breaches, with prisoners surrendering themselves locally with a view to being located closer to home.

7.3.10 Parole hearings are held regularly both in person and virtually. The OMU prepares prisoners carefully for the process, in ways in which they can demonstrate not only progression but also readiness for parole.

7.3.11 Risk management meetings are held when required and the prison makes every effort to retain prisoners. For some, however, a return to closed conditions is unavoidable.

7.3.12 Resettlement boards led by COMs and the OMU have taken place throughout the autumn and are multidisciplinary. They include the prisoner concerned and ensure all requirements and preparations are in place pending release.

## **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 For part of the year, family contact was restricted to social video calls and phone contact – the latter proving more popular. As things improved, it was possible to reinstate face-to-face visits. This was done on a restricted basis in line with government guidelines.

7.4.2 Regular face-to-face visits took place three days a week, being extremely well supported by the POPS manager, who oversees the operation and goes to great lengths to make them as fulfilling as possible.

7.4.3 Family day visits within the local community take place, affording the opportunity to those with no identifiable family the benefit of wider socialisation.

7.4.4 Serious illness and bereavements within prisoners' families are difficult issues, which the prison deals with sensitively. Telephone and video calls are provided and attendance at funerals is facilitated, subject to risk assessment, time and geographical constraints. The chaplaincy in particular plays an essential role in overseeing these arrangements

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 The two major roles in a resettlement prison concern accommodation on release and employment. These were filled with secondments under the Accelerator programme. Over the year these have become substantive posts.

7.5.2 With accommodation, there was concern that, with the loss of Shelter, the specialist advice in this area would not be forthcoming. Consequently, the position regarding prisoners being released to no fixed abode (NFA) became a concern. With the arrival of the accommodation adviser (to replace Shelter), things have improved significantly, with no prisoners being released NFA. Since becoming a Prison Service employee, however, the adviser now works across several prisons, diluting the effect at Kirkham. This has been stabilised, due to their professionalism. In 2022, 100% of prisoners were accommodated on release. The concern is with that person now having a wider brief it is hard to see how a drift back to the previous undesirable position can be avoided.

7.5.3 A highly successful and well supported homelessness prevention week was held, with input from many sources working in this area.

7.5.4 On employment, there have been major staffing issues. The employment adviser from the Accelerator programme left soon after their appointment. A replacement adviser is now in post, who comes with a wealth of experience, being instrumental in working with staff in refining processes within the prison and seeking contacts and opportunities in the wider community. Prior to their appointment, 35% of prisoners were in employment six weeks after release. From April onwards that figure rose to 45%

7.5.5 All staff engaged in this area meet regularly to discuss individual prisoners and review processes. Recent figures were encouraging, with 59% securing employment post-release – though due to some issues with inputting data, 62% is a more realistic figure.

7.5.6 Employment boards are held weekly, with the local employment advisory board having a new chairman, both should improve the situation. A community project team has been reinstated, with a team of prisoners being approved for ROTL. This affords a means of reintegration into the community, supporting charities and gaining or rediscovering tangible work skills in preparation for employment.

7.5.7 Jobcentre Plus has an officer permanently located on site. In addition to providing benefit advice, assistance is given with CVs and providing employment advice. This involves signposting to various partners within the prison, including

Achieve Northwest and Connect. The information, advice and guidance (IAG) service also feeds in contact information from within its department.

7.5.8 Prisoners are interviewed on the day of their release to check benefit claims and ensure a subsequent appointment with Jobcentre Plus externally.

7.5.9 The IAG service continues to offer advice as well as directing the prisoners to the job vacancy board in the prisoner support center and job brokering and matching externally. There has been a change of staff, with two new members settling into their roles

7.5.10 A significant deficit in the service at Kirkham concerned the provision of ID verification and the issues around finance, banking and debt management. It is pleasing that appointments have been made in these crucial areas. From September, over 40 accounts have been set up in the national prisoner account programme. A relationship with a local HSBC has been established for prisoners working out on ROTL.

7.5.11 With employment advice coming from numerous sources – the employment adviser, Jobcentre Plus, IAG, C2W and Achieve Northwest – it is difficult to identify a management structure to coordinate these similar and overlapping initiatives. Location in a single hub should go some way to ease this and avoid duplication of work or potential underlying tensions. It is interesting to note, however, that C2W is not included in these arrangements. The appointment of a learning and skills manager should assist in mitigating concerns, easing the workload of the current head of reoffending, allowing them to concentrate fully on this important area of the prison.

## 8. The work of the IMB

8.1.1 The Board remains small, with six members with a broad mix of skills. One joined following a successful recruitment campaign.

8.1.2 There were two recruitment campaigns during the year, adding four new members, three of whom will start in 2023. There has been one resignation.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	5
Total number of visits to the establishment	145
Total number of segregation reviews attended	n/a

### Applications to the IMB

Throughout the reporting period IMB members were able to regularly visit the establishment; they were able to deal directly with any applications.

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	2	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives, sanctions	0	2
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	1	2
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	3	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	2
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	3	0
H1	Property within this establishment	1	0
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	4	7
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	7	5
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	0	1
K	Transfers	0	0
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	0	1
	Total number of applications	21	22



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