



Ministry of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Buckley Hall
Buckley Farm Lane
Rochdale
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2 January 2025

Dear Chair,

HMP BUCKLEY HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 AUGUST 2023 – 31 JULY 2024

Thank you for submitting your Board's annual report on HMP Buckley Hall, which I have read with care. It is clear, that as always, you and your colleagues have put a huge amount of work into capturing your helpful observations about the prison. This is particularly commendable given that you have been working with as many as fifty per cent fewer members than your recommended complement.

I understand the Board's continued concerns about prisoners subject to Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP), which is an issue that has also been raised by other IMB Chairs working across the prison estate. I share your frustrations regarding the significant time that men, including the example you cite, have spent in prisons such as HMP Buckley Hall beyond their tariff. Significant steps have already been taken to ameliorate the situation and the Lord Chancellor is continuing her collaborative work with a range of organisations to ensure the appropriate course of action is taken to support those impacted. A newly published IPP Action Plan emphasises the importance of effective frontline delivery in our prisons and Probation Service to ensure that those serving IPP sentences are actively engaging with their sentence plans and are in the correct prison to access the right interventions and rehabilitative services. This will provide better opportunities for individuals to demonstrate to the Parole Board that their risk is manageable in the community which in turn will support defensible decisions to release. I was encouraged to read that you have observed delivery of meaningful frontline support to men still serving an IPP sentence at HMP Buckley Hall, facilitated by the excellent relationships that have been developed with the specialist key workers.

The series of reforms we have now implemented mean that anyone who was released on IPP licence five or more years ago and has spent at least the last two years of that period in the community without being recalled, will have their IPP licence terminated without the need for a review by the Parole Board. The remaining reforms will be implemented on 1 February 2025, when the reduced qualifying period for consideration of licence termination will see around 600 additional referrals made to the Parole Board. I am pleased to read that the former prisoner you mention is doing well in the initial months after release and hope that he may have taken heart from these changes to licence termination arrangements. The Secretary of State also has two new 'Risk Assessed Recall Review' powers. The first enables her to re-release people who have been recalled at any point without referring the case to the Parole Board, where safe to do so and the second enables her to not reset the two-year period after someone is re-released from a recall. These measures will make an overall difference to the number of IPP prisoners held across the estate and mark a positive first step.

In relation to early release schemes for men serving longer sentences, whilst initial release decisions for those serving indeterminate sentences will remain with the Parole Board, the scope of Home Detention Curfew (HDC) was extended in June 2024 to include those serving Standard Determinate Sentences of more than four years. This will enable those serving longer sentences to benefit from resettlement opportunities in the same way as those serving shorter sentences, subject of course to the application of robust risk assessment and suitability criteria. In addition, the Lord Chancellor has announced plans to extend the maximum period of HDC from six to twelve months, a change which will primarily impact those serving longer sentences.

Further to the above, you may now be aware that the Government has recently launched an Independent Review of Sentencing, which will report in Spring 2025. The review will consider several key areas including how best to ensure prison sentences are used effectively for the most serious offenders, what more can be done to improve rehabilitation and reduce reoffending, and options for robust and effective sentences as alternatives to imprisonment to both keep communities safe and make the best use of public money. The latter in particular encapsulates the insightful question you ask about potential redirection of resources from prison to community approaches. This is an exciting and necessary review during which there will be learning taken from a range of jurisdictions across the world, which have faced similar challenges.

You may know that supporting prisoners on release and taking steps to facilitate their continued progress in society is something of particular importance to me. This Government remains committed to reducing reoffending and protecting the public by delivering evidence-based rehabilitation. As such, HMPPS has been working through the new manifesto commitments, of which a pre-release plan for all prison leavers is included. This work is a priority and will be addressed as part of the commitment to improve outcomes for people on release from prison. I share your view that rehabilitation in all parts of the system is critical to addressing needs, cutting crime, increasing safety and preventing victims and there needs to be a focus on taking the right approach with the right person at the right time.

I was encouraged to read that the new Governor at HMP Buckley Hall has been focused on improving the regime to encourage increased purposeful activity attendance and has made improvements to the activities available in the evening. You recognised his commitment to providing positive employment and training opportunities and I was most interested in his discussions with KPMG to attract industries into HMP Buckley Hall with the long-term goal of providing every man with employment which could continue on release. This is commendable and I look forward to hearing what progress has been made in your next annual report. You also mentioned the importance of the varied physical activities available. The “park run” facilitated by the staff, membership of which can be transferred with the man on release sounds excellent, as does the staff run yoga session for neurologically diverse men.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HM Prison and Probation Service comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex. The Lord Chancellor and I appreciate the valuable role played by members of boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Buckley Hall.



Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending

**HMP BUCKLEY HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 AUGUST 2023 – 31 JULY 2024**

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

External contracts

The issues with regard to contracts, specifically with maintenance contracts held by Amey are acknowledged. Over the past year Amey have not had their full staffing resource, and this has inevitably had an impact on the service that they have provided and they have been too slow in resolving issues, for example in response to required catering repairs. As a result of failing Key Performance Indicators, Amey are currently being managed via an improvement plan. Their performance in relation to these measures is subject to monthly scrutiny by the Governor at HMP Buckley Hall who is supported by the Area Property Operations Manager. As Amey now have a full staffing commitment it is rightly expected that performance against these measures will improve.