



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Buckley Hall  
Buckley Farm Lane  
Rochdale  
OL12 9DP

MoJ ref: SUB130055

22 December 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP BUCKLEY HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 AUGUST 2024 – 31 JULY 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP Buckley Hall. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work that has been put into pulling together this insightful report, particularly as you were short of members and continued to operate with some vacancies.

I was saddened to hear that three prisoners had died during the reporting year, two of whom had been resident on the same wing for a long time. This must have been particularly challenging to fellow prisoners and staff, and I offer my heartfelt condolences to all their friends and family. I would like to reassure the Board that any subsequent recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) will be taken very seriously.

I acknowledge the Board's continued concern regarding security at the gate, which was highlighted in the previous annual report and by HM Inspectorate of Prisons in 2024. Unfortunately, a full Enhanced Gate Security installation at HMP Buckley Hall would require significant structural changes and investment, which is currently unfunded. I want to reassure you, however, that security remains a top priority and local measures have been implemented to mitigate risks. A new Head of Operations now oversees gate security, staff searches have increased with support from regional and national search teams, clear bags have been issued to staff to enhance transparency and identity checks have been strengthened. HMP Buckley continues to work closely with colleagues to identify further improvements within the constraints of the existing infrastructure.

I appreciate the Board's concerns regarding the performance of the maintenance contract and the impact this has had on prisoners. Delays in repairs, particularly those affecting television signal and laundry facilities are unacceptable and undermine efforts to maintain decency and a positive regime. The value and performance of service providers are subject to ongoing review, and the Government has initiated a programme of work to introduce new contracts for prison maintenance that will deliver improved services and better value for money. In the meantime, Amey's performance has been managed under a Performance Improvement Plan. While this plan was closed after a period of sustained improvement, recent failures to meet key performance indicators have resulted in Amey being placed under a new improvement plan.

Locally, steps have been taken to address the most pressing issues. A new Amey site manager has been appointed to tackle backlogs and a proposal for a full digital television signal upgrade has been submitted and work began in October 2025 to replace head ends and signal receivers on all residential wings as part of an Area Executive Director funded project worth around £77,000, due for completion by the end of November 2025. MoJ Property has also escalated poor laundry maintenance performance through Amey's commercial route, with assurances from their subcontractor that repairs will now be completed promptly and monitored by the Area Property Operations Manager. Regarding the flushing mechanisms on D Wing, a stock of solenoids has been secured to ensure timely repairs in the future.

I was encouraged to read that the Board has recognised improvements in healthcare delivery, including the introduction of nurse-led triage clinics and the reduction in reliance on agency staff. The efforts to maintain a comprehensive Tier 2 activity programme and the creative initiatives in the Hive demonstrate the resilience and dedication of staff in promoting wellbeing and purposeful engagement, even in the face of staffing pressures. It is also positive to note the progress in supporting men serving indeterminate sentences, with increased releases and transfers to open conditions facilitated by the Aspire Unit. These developments reflect the commitment to rehabilitation and progression that lies at the heart of our work.

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 (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I recognise the vital role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we appreciate your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Buckley Hall.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', written in a cursive style.

**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending**

## HMP BUCKLEY HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 AUGUST 2024 – 31 JULY 2025

### **HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

#### **Property Management During Transfers**

HMPPS note the Board's concerns about the handling of prisoners' property. This can have a significant impact on wellbeing and trust. The findings of the IMB national thematic report and the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations have informed ongoing work to strengthen property handling processes across the estate. Governors and senior leaders have been reminded of key requirements, including strict adherence to volumetric control limits and consultation is underway to identify further improvements.

The Incentive Policy Framework provides a National Facilities List to promote consistency in permitted items but Governors retain discretion to allow additional items. While this flexibility supports local management, it can lead to variation. Where prisoners arrive with items permitted at their previous establishment but not listed locally, Governors are expected to consider these on a case-by-case basis unless the item poses a risk to safety, security or good order.

At HMP Buckley Hall, the high churn rate, currently around fifty per cent, has placed additional pressure on property systems. In response, all incoming property is now x-rayed and searched by the North West Area Search Team, reception processes have been streamlined and complaints are managed by Operations Managers. Direct liaison with sending establishments helps resolve issues promptly. For security reasons, parcels from family and friends are no longer accepted; instead, prisoners order clothing from approved catalogues with input into supplier selection and spending limits. Donated clothing is available for those in need and all prisoners may wear their own clothes regardless of incentive status.

We continue to monitor and refine these processes to reduce delays and improve prisoner experience.

#### **Transfer and Impact on Stability**

HMPPS understand the Board's concerns about the impact of transfers on family ties, education and rehabilitation. These decisions are made following multidisciplinary discussions and with consideration of individual circumstances.

The Independent Review of Sentencing, published earlier this year considered several key areas, including what more can be done to improve rehabilitation and reduce reoffending. Both the Independent Review of Sentencing and the Independent Review of Criminal Courts will have an impact on the prison population. The HMPPS Estate Configuration Review will consider the implications of these reviews and future requirements for the entire prison estate, including the function of prisons and offender flows.

HMP Buckley Hall is planned to operate as a one hundred per cent Category C training establishment by 2027, with a focus on progressive regimes. To achieve this, transfers of men to resettlement and open prisons are essential to support reintegration and strengthen family and community ties ahead of release. At the same time, space must be created within HMP Buckley Hall to offer training and development opportunities to others who need them.

HMPPS is committed to minimising disruption wherever possible. The Aspire Unit continues to provide specialist support for long-term prisoners preparing for progression and parole. Education and vocational training are prioritised during transfers and new careers advice and guidance contracts aim to ensure

continuity, although some variation in course provision remains inevitable. Family contact is recognised as vital for stability and successful resettlement and all prisons offer a range of provisions including social visits, extended family visits, video calling at no cost, letter writing, email services and parenting courses. We will continue to advocate for stability and rehabilitation in all transfer decisions, balancing operational needs with the individual circumstances of those in our care.