



Annual Report
of the
Independent Monitoring Board
at

HMP Kirkham

**for Reporting Year
January to December 2019**

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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

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1 STATUTORY ROLE

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 or centre is situated.

The Board is specifically charged to:

- (1) 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
- (2) inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom they have delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- (3) 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.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Main judgements

2.1 This report presents the findings of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at HMP Kirkham for the period 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019. Board evidence comes from observations and discussions on visits, scrutiny of available data, attendance at various meetings within the establishment, and regular contact both with staff and prisoners.

2.2 This has been a challenging year for the prison, given the requirement to progress the issues identified in the 2018 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) report, the continued moratorium on funding for key areas of the prison (the hangar project, upgraded closed-circuit television (CCTV) and replacement of the fire alarm system), and prisoners who are completely unsuitable for a category D establishment still being sent to Kirkham. Despite the best efforts of the governor and staff, there has been an increase in drug use and absconds, and, in November 2019, the closure of the old aircraft hangars because of health and safety concerns provided an additional and demanding challenge for the organisation (see paragraphs 9.5 and 10.3).

2.3 It is the belief of the Board that prisoners at the establishment are treated both fairly and humanely. Living conditions are good, but there were recurring problems with the heating and hot water supplies to some billets over the reporting period. Response times for reporting, rectifying these issues in a reasonable timeframe, and out-of-hours call-outs are managed by Amey. The Board had hoped that a long-term building maintenance schedule would have been in place over the reporting period but that does not yet appear to have happened. When all infrastructure is working as designed, living accommodation is of a good standard. Most prisoners are in single billets, although, due to an increased population pressure against demand across the country, doubling up on arrival is more frequent than in previous years (see paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2).

2.4 In February 2019, a new governor and deputy governor took up posts in what was largely a dysfunctional prison which, as we reported previously, was suffering from a lack of leadership, with many of the key positions filled by staff in an 'acting' capacity. During the reporting year, the deputy governor has moved to a new post. Since his arrival, the governor has progressed the findings in the 2018 inspection report, and in particular has provided clear leadership to the senior management team, staff and prisoners. This has ensured that the prison is now better managed, with clear direction provided to the key departments in the prison.

2.5 There has been an increase in levels of violence, with three incidents over the past 12 months requiring the opening of the command suite and attendance by the Board. In previous reporting periods, there had only ever been one such instance. This increase indicates the volatile mix of prisoners now in Kirkham (see paragraph 4.2).

2.6 There has been a large increase in the number of absconds, with a total of 36 for the reporting period, compared with 18 in 2018. This increase is attributable to a number of factors. Once again, despite assurances from the prisons minister, prisoners are arriving at the establishment who are not suitable for open conditions. The new governor took a hard line with prisoners who were involved in drug dealing or drug debt; many of them were quickly returned to closed conditions but others took matters into their own hands and absconded before being moved out. The age demographic of prisoners at the establishment has also changed, and there is a larger number of under-30-year-olds than before. That age group has proved to present the biggest risk of abscond, in many cases due to immaturity in thinking and reasoning (see paragraph 4.7).

2.7 During the reporting year, the size of the population varied; the lowest population was 581, in January, rising to 656 in July. A number of those who arrived at Kirkham were deemed to be unsuitable for life in a category D establishment, and over the 12-month reporting period an average of 30 prisoners per month were transferred back to closed establishments (see paragraph 4.5).

2.8 The Board is pleased that a formal building inspection of the old aircraft hangars took place during the reporting period; the report highlighted issues of health and safety for staff and prisoners alike because the roofs of these buildings are unsafe. This inspection led to the immediate closure of the gym, timber workshop and Recycling Lives area. Much work was hastily done to ensure that part of the gym (excluding the sports hall) could be reopened, and a rota was set up for the numbers allowed in the equipment rooms at any one time. Following subsequent inspections and surveys, it has been decided that the roofs will have indoor netting installed, to prevent any loose parts falling directly to the floor. This work is subject to agreed funding, and at the time of writing this report a decision on funding is still awaited.

2.9 The closure of the timber workshop in particular is having an impact on prison finances, with the establishment having to make up any shortfall from their existing in-year allocation. Given that it is now close to the end of the financial year and that the majority of the budget is ring-fenced (salaries, utility costs and contract costs), it is of concern how significant savings can be achieved without having an impact on the operational performance of the prison. The Board will be looking closely to ensure that the prison continues to meet its operational remit.

Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

2.10 As a Board, we understand the pressures on the Prison Service population but, despite assurances for the last two years from the prisons minister that categorisation of prisoners was being correctly carried out, there are still individuals who are unsuitable for transfer to a category D establishment being sent to the establishment. Indeed, a significant number of absconds have occurred during this reporting period due to unsuitability for an open prison regime. Robust multidisciplinary risk management meetings are held almost daily on prisoners who appear to be having issues coping with life in an open prison. Most of these meetings result in a plan of

action to try to support that prisoner at Kirkham, but despite these initiatives, it is recognised a number need to be transferred back to closed conditions (see paragraph 4.5).

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

2.11 Yet again, the availability and use of drugs have escalated within the establishment. It is essential that more detection of drugs and disablement systems for the associated mobile phones are made available. As an open establishment, where prisoners are working out, either supervised or not, or going on release on temporary licence (ROTL), it is easy for drugs to be brought back into the prison. Random searches are conducted when prisoners return but there is neither the staff nor the equipment available to search every prisoner on their return from work or ROTL. An investment in staff and detection equipment would act as a deterrent and help send out the message that drugs are not tolerated in prisons.

2.12 The location of the receptions wing near to the entrance to the prison and the main road appears to have contributed to the number of absconds from the prison. New prisoners arriving from closed conditions are easily tempted to take their chances, and there is little there to stop them. During 2019, proposals were submitted to move the reception wing to another part of the site, but this was deferred when the funding for the fire alarm replacement contract was withdrawn.

2.13 Despite raising this on a number of occasions and in previous Board reports, the fire alarm system is still faulty and yet further consultancy work is being undertaken with a view to eventual replacement. The Board is extremely concerned that the delays in this replacement could have an impact on the health and safety of prisoners and staff in Kirkham.

2.14 The apparent easy access to contraband, mainly drugs, continues to be of concern to the Board. Prisoners are using original drugs of choice like cannabis and heroin but the Board is concerned that there now appears to be a rise in the use of crack cocaine. The rate of positive results dropped over the summer period because of steps being put in place to counter drug dealing, but drug use has started to rise again. It is important that the Prison Service provides the governor with the resources to tackle more robustly the drug culture, and the consequent debt issues and threats to individuals, within the prison.

2.15 Further issues and shortcomings with the current CCTV system have been identified during the reporting year, and as reported in previous reporting periods. There have been occasions when unidentified members of the public have entered the establishment and contraband has been thrown over the fencing for collection by prisoners. It would greatly assist if the installation of a fit-for-purpose CCTV system was given greater priority, to enable those involved to be identified and dealt with appropriately, therefore making the prison safer and reducing the amount of contraband entering the prison.

2.16 The cost of making telephone calls using the prison telephones is very expensive but is determined by the contract with BT. Many prisoners are making calls to mobile phones as most families no longer use land lines, and these calls are the most expensive. On average, in excess of 30 mobile phones are confiscated per month by prison staff during regular searches of billets. While it is recognised that some of these phones will be used for illicit activities, a significant percentage are used simply to enable the prisoner to maintain contact with his family at a more reasonable cost. It is recommended that this contract be looked at with a view to a more equitable cost of making a call to family, an important part of prison life being able to maintain family ties.

2.17 Although the Board understands the need for restraint on the public purse, it appears that a large number of relatively small (in capital terms) cost jobs are being delayed owing to funding issues. Examples are billet refurbishments, the CCTV upgrade and fire alarm replacement. The longer the funding is delayed, the more the work will cost, as a result of further degradation of facilities. The Board is also concerned that delays may exacerbate health and safety issues for staff and prisoners alike.

TO THE GOVERNOR

2.18 Following the issues of staff/prisoner relationships highlighted in the HMIP report, and by the Board, a rehabilitative culture group was set up, to which the Board was invited. The initial meetings of the committee were positive and had clear expectations, and it is encouraging that this impetus has been maintained. It is also noted that the rehabilitative culture strategy has now been published and distributed widely within the establishment. Regular monthly equality action team meetings are held to lead and analyse all aspects of equality within the prison, and are well attended. Five-minute intervention training has been taking place but it is noted that, as yet, not all staff have been able to attend these training sessions.

2.19 Subsequent to the rise in positive drug tests, the Board is aware that there was a targeted removal of drug dealers from the establishment. While this hard line remains, disciplinary outcomes have been brought in line with those at other open prisons, which has initially not found favour with staff. The Board will monitor how these changes in the administration of the adjudication regime affect the stability of the establishment.

Improvements

2.20 There was a long delay in the vetting and approvals process for prisoners wanting to work out in the community. Some had already managed to get themselves paid employment, which exacerbated the problem. These delays in checking the work placements have improved greatly and there are very few prisoners now waiting to access employment. At the end of the reporting period, 107 were working outside the establishment, including charity placements.

2.21 The closure of key areas in the prison provided a significant and immediate challenge to the senior management team, and it is pleasing to report that the additional efforts by the governor and his staff ensured that, where possible, the work areas were up and running again in a very short space of time. A feature of this extra effort was the regular and clear communication from the governor to the prison staff and prisoners, thereby preventing any issues or frictions to arise. Furthermore, the reallocation of staff from the timbers area to Custody to Work was well received as this helped to clear a backlog of applications.

2.22 The induction process has undergone a full review and has been improved to better manage prisoner expectations as they arrive at Kirkham. Mental health assessments now form part of that process, as well as assessments on any prisoner who could be at risk of abscond by being a long distance from family. Those prisoners who have been in custody for a long time are given additional support to help with the transition from closed to open conditions.

2.23 The introduction of the new ROTL policy in mid-February 2019 was extremely well handled, especially as, for a period of time, both the new and previous policies were running side by side. Those prisoners on the existing system were transferred to the new policy in good time. Since then, the Board has not received any complaints about accessing ROTL, and communication on how the policy works has improved, so prisoners know when to expect access to it.

2.24 A prisoner-led 'Kirkham council' is held monthly and is attended by staff and prisoners from each area and group within the establishment. This is an excellent forum for prisoners to raise issues and for staff to feed back on matters of interest and importance. From an uncertain beginning, the council has developed into a pivotal organisation within the prison. Chaired initially by a governor, it has, with great skill and empathy, been turned from being staff led to prisoner led, supported by, and providing a real voice for, all the prisoners.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

3.1 HMP Kirkham, a category D open prison holding adult male convicted prisoners. It is located in North West England, seven miles west of Preston and 12 miles east of Blackpool. It occupies the site of a former RAF technical training centre. The site was taken over by the Home Office in the early 1960s and has been in use as a prison since 1962. With few exceptions, the infrastructure and services are World War II vintage. Prisoner accommodation is now looking quite tired, having been redeveloped over the period 1990–1999, although some recent refurbishment has been carried out. An additional billet, refurbished in 2014, to provide adapted accommodation (suitable for, but not exclusively for, the disabled and elderly) has increased capacity to 657.

3.2 There are 26 billets, which provide, in the main, single occupancy basic living accommodation. Billet C2, brought into use in early 2015, does have some capacity for double occupancy, although that is assessed based on medical needs. There is also an 80-bed admissions unit (double occupancy rooms), which has been adapted for all new arrivals. Once prisoners have completed the induction process, and been assigned to a workplace or education class, they are moved onto the billets in the main area of the establishment, assuming that there are vacancies.

3.3 A number of old aircraft hangars have been in use as workshops. Some of these have become unsafe and need to be demolished. Following a recent building inspection, a further two hangars were closed and cannot be reopened without much-needed remedial work.

3.4 There are a number of workshops on site, run by outside agencies (Recycling Lives and Calpac) as well as in-house – for example, a timber workshop, bicycle repairs, and farms and gardens. Education provision is managed by the establishment and run by Novus, part of Manchester College. The courses run include literacy and numeracy, as well as lifestyle courses.

3.5 Healthcare is provided by Spectrum, which also runs the substance misuse team. Substance misuse is a very busy area and has suffered with staff shortages throughout the reporting period.

Evidence Sections 4 – 11

4 SAFETY

4.1 Overall, HMP Kirkham is a relatively safe place for prisoners and staff alike. However, there have been a number of incidents of violence over the reporting period. Most of these have been down to bullying, drugs – including bullying to traffic drugs – and debt issues, as well as prisoners who just do not want to be compliant or adhere to the regime. Over the reporting period, there have been 11 incidents reported of prisoner-on-prisoner violence and three reports of violence against staff.

4.2 The command suite has been opened on three occasions, compared with one occasion in the previous reporting period. This increase demonstrates the change in the population at Kirkham: they are more volatile, with more demanding issues. The occasions were:

- A prisoner climbed on the roof of a billet and refused to come down because he was due to appear in front of the independent adjudicator. After a period of negotiation, he eventually came down peacefully and was placed in the secure holding building (SHRAB; see paragraph 6.1).
- A prisoner was found wounded by a sharp implement. He tried to conceal his injuries, but when discovered by officers was immediately treated by healthcare staff. The Board spoke to the victim/perpetrator at length. This warranted a complete lockdown of the establishment. Intelligence led to several billets being searched, and the prisoners involved were removed from the establishment that day.
- Following a risk management meeting, called as a result of verbal threats made to a member of staff, it was agreed the prisoner in question should be returned to closed conditions. When staff arrived to escort him to the SHRAB, he threatened them with a screwdriver. This resulted in all prisoners being locked in their billets for a few hours while negotiations took place to secure a peaceful conclusion. The prisoner was placed in the SHRAB and moved to a closed establishment.

4.3 On arrival at the establishment, all prisoners go through a comprehensive induction process, including interviews with staff, and are assisted to settle in by more experienced prisoners. The transfer to an open prison can be a daunting experience, especially for someone who has been in closed conditions for a considerable period. While every effort is made to make the transfer as smooth as possible, issues concerning property, canteen and telephone credits continue to feature, particularly during busy periods.

4.4 At the end of the reporting period, there was a team of 12 Listeners in place, with a further number being trained by the Samaritans. They have reported an average of 30 contacts per month, with no concerning issues raised.

4.5 In the reporting period, a total of 16 assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents have been raised, which is a small decrease on the number in 2018. During 2019, 52 referrals were made for challenge, support and intervention plans, and of these 26 were opened, covering two main areas – those requiring further support to transition to open conditions and those who were victims of assault or bullying.

4.6 There does appear to have been an increase in violence, bullying, and verbal threats, which is mainly attributed to drug debt, intimidation and immaturity in thinking skills. Risk management meetings are called to discuss the perpetrators and, if it is felt that the risk imposed cannot be managed at Kirkham, arrangements are made to transfer the prisoner(s) involved back to closed conditions. During the reporting period, an average of 30 prisoners a month were transferred back to closed conditions for various reasons, including bullying, possession of mobile phones, drugs and non-compliance with the regime. In the previous reporting period, the monthly average had been 20. A small minority of these transfers were requested by the prisoners themselves, who otherwise would have absconded.

4.7 The number of absconds increased from the previous year. The Board feels that this is still attributable to the high turnover of unsuitable prisoners having an unsettling impact on the stability of the prison population. The main reasons for absconding were as follows:

- immaturity in thinking and reasoning
- a move away from the home area/transfer to a closer establishment refused/maintaining family ties
- drug debt
- pending adjudications
- not getting resettlement day release ROTL immediately.

An abscond reduction strategy has been implemented from the start of 2020, and the outcomes from this work will be monitored by the Board for the next report. This initiative, which is already having a positive effect, along with more robust checks at the sending prison, should help reduce the abscond level.

4.8 There was one death in custody in the reporting period: a prisoner had arrived at Kirkham feeling ill, and once seen by healthcare staff was sent to hospital. He died some weeks later in hospital. Excellent support was provided to his family by the family liaison officer, the chaplaincy team, and prison staff.

4.9 The chaplaincy team is a very busy group, which tends to see prisoners throughout the day, many of whom are unhappy about decisions taken regarding day or overnight releases and news received from home. The team also has the difficult job of delivering bad news relating to illness or death of a family member.

4.10 The team organised an excellent carol service, to which local residents and churches were invited. The event was well attended and received; a number of prisoners took part and received many plaudits for their contributions.

4.11 The team also organises family days during school holidays, for prisoners who are not yet able to access home leave. These are very successful, especially in helping to maintain family ties. Other groups run by the chaplaincy team are:

- a lifer group – this focuses on long-term prisoners who are close to release, helping them with financial challenges, modern technology and other issues that they may be facing on release
- an isolated prisoners group – this is for prisoners who are not receiving visits. The chaplaincy has a team of volunteer visitors, who ensure that these prisoners are seen every two months as a minimum.

4.12 The Board thinks that the use of the prisoner email system could be promoted more to help with family communication. The regular exchange of emails could help reduce the need for illicit mobile phones being used to contact families and other external agencies.

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

5.1 There are regular diversity and equality meetings, chaired by the head of safety and equalities or a nominated deputy. The quality of staff/prisoner relationship is still poor in some areas of the establishment, with a number of prisoners reporting feelings of victimisation, especially in the gym. During 2019, the governor introduced a rehabilitative culture strategy to address staff learning and development. The Board is aware of a number of ongoing initiatives in this area under the direction of the deputy governor.

5.2 In the reporting period, the number of discrimination incident report forms raised increased to 20, from 12 in 2018. Following changes introduced under the rehabilitative culture initiative, it is felt that prisoners feel more confident in raising concerns about discrimination.

5.3 Following concerns raised by the Board, a disability audit was completed in early 2019, which highlighted a number of areas which were unsuitable for those who have mobility issues. Following this audit, an action plan was drawn up, and it is very encouraging that a number of low-cost 'easy wins' have already been achieved. It is recognised that the more costly items are subject to funding bids and will take longer to implement. The Board will continue to monitor the action plan, to ensure that work is being progressed without undue delay.

5.4 Approximately 12.5% of the population is over 50, of whom a small percentage is 65+. Prisoners who have health or mobility issues are supported well by staff and other prisoners, who regularly act in the role of unofficial carer. The over-50 prisoners have set up an 'over-50s' group and regularly meet for coffee and a chat; they also hold quiz events. The prison also runs quiz nights, with proceeds going to charity. A joint prisoner and staff wellbeing strategic group now meets, utilising an NHS Wellbeing Calendar. In November 2019, a rehabilitative culture and wellbeing day took place, with a rich programme of activities for staff and prisoners.

5.5 The prison bid for, and received, four mobility scooters in April 2017. During 2019, these scooters have regularly been in use, which improves prisoners' ability to get around the site; however, as previously mentioned, not all areas can be accessed easily.

6 SEGREGATION/CARE AND SEPARATION UNIT

6.1 The establishment does not have a segregation unit; instead, there is a secure holding building (SHRAB), where prisoners are held awaiting transfer to closed establishments. Ideally, prisoners are held there for only up to four hours before transfer but, occasionally, it is necessary to hold a prisoner overnight for operational or safety reasons. The Board is informed each time a prisoner is placed in the SHRAB.

6.2 During 2017, the SHRAB received a makeover. Originally, there were four traditional cells, only two of which now remain. The other two were converted to informal holding cells, which were carpeted, and hold soft furnishings, bookshelves (with a supply of books) and a wall-mounted television. This was meant to provide a more humane experience for prisoners traumatised by the prospect of removal.

6.3 Following the stabbing incident, the SHRAB could not hold all the prisoners involved, and the victim and alleged perpetrators had to be kept separate. A lockable room in the offender management unit (OMU) was quickly identified as a suitable alternative for holding the victim in the short term, after discussions with specialist teams and the Board.

7 ACCOMMODATION (INCLUDING COMMUNICATION)

7.1 Accommodation in the prison is mainly in 26-cell accommodation blocks which were built during the Second World War. There is one large building, which is made up of recycled prefabricated ex-oil rig buildings. There is also a newer building, used to accommodate older and infirm prisoners, and a reception wing, which is also relatively new.

7.2 During the reporting year, there have been minimal refurbishments in the billets due to the population numbers, which do not allow for a billet to be emptied for work to be undertaken. While the billets are generally clean and habitable, the shower and toilet areas are in need of a deep clean and refresh. This would considerably improve the living conditions of the prisoners. In addition, it would assist if billet cleaners were provided with comprehensive training and a billet cleaning supervisor was appointed with responsibility for all billets. This would ensure that the billet cleaners are supported on a regular basis and that the standard of cleaning is consistent throughout the prison.

The distribution of cleaning supplies for the billet is now undertaken by prison staff, who get the supplies from Amey. Most billets are as clean as can be expected, considering that there are around 20 prisoners on each, who are constantly using showers, toilets and kitchen areas.

7.3 The food provided at the establishment is generally excellent. Some prisoners have raised issues over the lunchtime menu – in particular, the inability to have second helpings and the portion sizes for those working in high-energy jobs. The catering manager has since conducted a survey and, as a result, introduced new menus, which appear to be working well. There have not been any food complaints in the latter part of the reporting period.

7.4 Staff and prisoners in the library produce a monthly booklet, 'The Kirkham Chronicle'. This communication is going strong and now contains photographs of the senior management team, so that they can be recognised. It also includes important information for prisoners, as well as quizzes, crosswords and items of interest that have taken place in the previous month.

7.5 Communication with local residents and organisations continues to be positive and, where possible, they are invited into the prison to take part in social occasions and, of course, visit the farm shop. The prison maintains a good proactive rapport with the local media, though articles concerning drug use and unsuitable prisoners being sent to Kirkham feature on an occasional basis.

8 HEALTHCARE (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE)

8.1 Spectrum provides healthcare and recovery services for the prison, with dental services provided by Smart Dental. There has been a recent increase in non-attendance at dental appointments, and this is being investigated.

8.2 The Spectrum team is very hard working, and keen to upskill as much as possible. It is recognised that many prisoners arrive at Kirkham with complex health needs. The team has established good links with local hospitals and the local hospice.

8.3 Recovery services is a busy area, which has suffered from recent national events, mainly the London Bridge incident, curtailing the ability to take prisoners out to events. Instead, staff and prisoners are running local events, with a view to raising funds to support the homeless.

8.4 A weekly community café is being run on an appointment basis for those with mental health concerns. Prisoners can make an appointment and come along to meet the mental health team, which will assist with their issues.

8.5 A number of group courses are being run to help prisoners with general life skills, looking to change behaviours which will lead to better health outcomes. The main courses run are:

- 'Building Healthy Life Skills' – looking at coping mechanisms, and discussing trauma and resilience
- 'Sleep Skills' – discussing sleep routines, hygiene and personal care
- 'Smoking Cessation' – advice on changing behaviours, leading to a better health.

8.6 Over the next reporting period, the Spectrum team, in conjunction with prison staff, is looking to get 'parkruns' introduced, along with physical activity training, which will look at all aspects of physical and mental health. The Board will be monitoring how these activities are received.

9 EDUCATION AND OTHER PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

9.1 In April 2019, the prison education contract, to provide educational and training facilities, was awarded to Novus. There are still issues about information being passed on from previous establishments, and prisoners are being asked to complete courses which they have previously done at another establishment. Once the details can be obtained and shown to be correct, then prisoners can move on from these courses.

9.2 As part of the Learning Together initiatives, the prison is partnered with the University of Central Lancashire, holding regular debates on legal topics in the prison. Prisoners and students alike find these stimulating and challenging.

9.3 A number of initiatives are being planned for 2020:

- a link-up with Lancaster University students studying criminology
- Lancashire Adult Learning has completed a taster evening in the prison, with a view to providing a variety of courses
- Forest Schools, as Kirkham has a large conservation area which would lend itself to this project. This work would initially focus on ex-servicemen, especially those who suffer from post-traumatic stress.

9.4 Some of the newer, and most successful and innovative vocational training opportunities at the establishment are:

Barbering – This course was suspended for most of the reporting period, while waiting for a new provider to be in post. That happened in late 2019, so has recently reopened.

Chef training – Prisoners are trained in the staff kitchens to recognised national vocational qualification levels.

Bicycles – Prisoners are trained to repair, strip and rebuild all types of bicycle to a highly professional standard. It is disappointing that Halfords has now decided to recruit internally to their organisation, making it virtually impossible to provide a custody-to-work pathway. It is recommended that alternatives are identified, in order to provide a clear pathway to employment on release.

Railtrack – During the reporting period, courses have started with this supplier, and the Board will monitor and report on the outcomes in the next report.

AFC Fylde – The local football team community team is providing courses in football leadership.

Blackpool Buildup – Courses on construction, with a view to helping prisoners to obtain their Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCC) card, which will help lead to employment on release.

Forklift truck licence – This is a six-day full-time course, which is popular with the prisoners as a skill for use on release.

9.5 The gym facilities are currently restricted owing to the building safety issues. Prisoners are able to access the gym equipment on timed slots, given that the equipment is housed towards the front of the building in smaller rooms. The larger sports hall will not be accessible until the remedial work is completed.

9.6 The library continues to be a hub of activity, always looking for new interests to involve prisoners and promote their development. The production of greeting cards has gone from strength to strength, with a large variety of cards for all occasions now being produced. These are offered for sale throughout the establishment and in the farm shop.

10 WORK, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

10.1 There is a wide range of work opportunities in the establishment, from skills-based courses, such as painting and decorating, to more unskilled work in food packing and recycling. There is something to suit everyone. Unfortunately, the group providing the barbering course withdrew from the prison, and it has taken until the end of 2019 for a new provider to be found and vetted. The new provider started work from early 2020.

10.2 Due to operational priorities, there were long delays in checking outside employment offers for prisoners. Following complaints to the Board about a long waiting list, some staff were moved to the Custody to Work area, and this has helped to clear the backlog. By the end of the reporting period, there were 107 prisoners working out, and there was no waiting list.

10.3 After the building inspection of the old hangars in late 2019, some areas of employment were closed immediately. Recycling Lives was able to move to a smaller hangar and resume work within a week of the inspection. The timber workshop has had to close until remedial work can be carried out to make the building safe. Unfortunately, there is not another suitable building on site with the correct ventilation channels for dust and sawdust. This loss of employment for prisoners has also resulted in a financial loss to the prison because much of the work being done was generating an income.

10.4 Towards the end of 2019, some new workshops opened:

- Remade with Hope now has a base at the establishment, and some of the prisoners who lost their jobs at the timber workshop were able to be employed there.
- A new call centre has opened and is slowly building up the number of prisoners being trained to work there. The Board understands that one prisoner has been offered employment on release.
- Another new employer to Kirkham is Railtrack, which has been running courses for prisoners who are interested in gaining employment with them on release.

10.5 It has been a busy year for the farms and gardens area, which keeps the prison grounds tidy and the flower beds well stocked. It also provides a number of hanging baskets around the area during spring and summer. All flowers and produce are also for sale in the prison shop. In August 2019, the prison entered the Southport Flower Show, where it won the Gold Award. This area is the biggest employer in the prison and, as well as producing flowers and vegetables, also manages sizeable herds of rare breed animals. Prisoners who work in this area can gain qualifications in:

- use of pedestrian-controlled mowers
- use of brush cutters and trimmers
- handling and application of pesticides
- application of pesticides, using hand-held equipment.

11 RESETTLEMENT PREPARATION

11.1 It appears to the Board that there is now a more understanding, supportive and consistent approach to all prisoners within the OMU.

11.2 There are weekly ROTL clinics, where prisoners can ask general questions regarding access to day or overnight leave, but not on the specifics of their own case.

11.3 Home detention curfew (HDC) is regularly used where prisoners meet the eligibility requirements, with 16 prisoners being eligible in 2019. A total of 414 of the eligible population consistently accessed ROTL over the reporting period, covering all aspects of release.

11.4 Prior to release, all prisoners are interviewed as part of the 'through-the-gate' work; these interviews are carried out by the local community rehabilitation company as part of the reducing offending initiatives.

11.5 Jobcentre Plus provides the same comprehensive and support to prisoners approaching release as it does to people looking for work in the community. Due to changes in staffing in this area, it was not possible to obtain figures for earlier in the reporting period, but towards the end of the year 37% of those released had secured employment, with the balance claiming benefits. Although 63% being released without employment seems a large figure it should be remembered that 12.5% of the population at the establishment is aged 50 or over.

11.6 Following a successful job fair with external employers, a 'job hub' has recently opened, which advertises jobs on release. Prisoners are signposted to these advertisements, and help is available, if required, to apply for these jobs. A further selection of job advertisements is planned for later in 2020 for those looking for Custody to Work posts in the final part of their sentence.

11.7 Shelter has been successful in finding local landlords who are prepared to offer accommodation to prisoners leaving custody. Those who are potentially homeless are offered support by Shelter; if accommodation cannot be found, then, as a last resort, hostel places are offered. Some are also offered supported accommodation in multi-occupancy properties.

11.8 Shelter has set up links with Halifax Bank to get bank accounts set up for prisoners prior to their release.

C Section – Work of the IMB

The Board completes rota visits, attends various meetings throughout the establishment, and meets informally with prisoners while doing rota visits in places such as the library, the prisoners' support centre and while walking round the establishment. This year, the Board visited Manchester Prison and has hosted a visit from the Lancaster Farms IMB.

During 2019, the Board has increased by one member; of three new members, one later changed his mind and one resigned.

BOARD STATISTICS	
Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	5
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	167
Total number of segregation reviews attended	N/A

D Section – Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Current reporting year	Previous reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing and ablutions	0	1
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP and sanctions	0	0
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime and time out of cell	2	1
E 1	Letters, visits, telephones and public protection restrictions	0	1
E 2	Finance, including pay, private monies and spends	0	2
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental and social care	3	2
H 1	Property within this establishment	1	0
H 2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	6	5
H 3	Canteen, facility list and catalogue(s)	0	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates and recategorisation	6	10
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	1	3
K	Transfers	1	2
L	Miscellaneous	1	0
	Total number of IMB applications	21	27