

**Annual Report of the  
Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Buckley Hall**

**For reporting year  
1 August 2019 – 31 July 2020**

**Published November 2020**



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## **Introductory sections 1 – 3**

### **1. Statutory role of the IMB**

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

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

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

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

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

## **2. Description of the establishment**

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

The prison has four residential blocks and has an operational capacity of 459. Although this makes it relatively small in numbers, the Board regards this as a strength and not a weakness of the prison. Before the onset of lockdown, Buckley Hall was operating overall as a level 3 prison in the Annual Prison Performance Ratings.

A dedicated drug recovery unit is on A wing. The induction unit for new prisoners is on C wing, as is the Aspire unit. The Aspire unit houses some 60 prisoners who are either complex or serving an indeterminate prison sentence.

The prison opened in 1994 as one of four contracted-out prisons, and was managed by Group 4 for a period of five years. In 2000, a 10-year contract was put out for tender and won by the Prison Service. During this period, the prison held category C men, then women and then category C men again. In 2011, the Prison Service was successful in its bid to continue providing a category C male prison. In 2014, Buckley Hall was designated as a non-resettlement training prison, holding male prisoners with sentences of four years or more. In the most recent edition of the Bromley Briefings, published by the Prison Reform Trust, 15% of the sentenced prison population are serving an indeterminate sentence – in Buckley Hall, the figure in July 2020 was 35%. In October 2019, the prison celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The staff profile at Buckley Hall is broadly similar to that in the Prison Service as a whole. Forty-eight per cent of the officers have three or fewer years of experience, compared with a national figure of 42%, and 45% have 10 or more years of experience, compared with a national figure of 44%.

A number of services within the prison are subcontracted: education and library: Novus (formerly The Manchester College); catering: Compass (UK & Ireland); healthcare: Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH); visitors reception: Partners of Prisoners and Families (POPS); drug and alcohol recovery: Delphi; and facilities: Amey.

### **3. Executive summary**

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

3.1.1 This has been an unprecedented and unique reporting year on which to comment. For two-thirds of the year, prison activity proceeded along relatively predictable lines and could be monitored accordingly. However, for the remaining third of the year, prison life changed dramatically and, in the circumstances, a report which comments on pre-lockdown may seem to verge on the irrelevant. However, in terms of Buckley Hall's reporting year, it would be wrong to overlook what happened before the lockdown and to focus exclusively on events of the most recent months.

3.1.2 The seismic changes made to the prison regime, undoubtedly helped keep the prisoners at Buckley Hall safe. The vast majority of the prisoners accepted the need for the lockdown with stoicism and forbearance and, indeed, the prison has received a number of letters from prisoners' partners, appreciative of the efforts being made to keep prisoners safe. Staff and managers should be applauded for their wholehearted effort to minimise the risk to the prisoners of the virus. Their success to date lies in the fact that, at the end of the reporting year, only two prisoners had tested positive for the virus, with no associated fatalities.

3.1.3 The now emerging frustrations of the prisoners at Buckley Hall are similar to those across the prison estate – namely, that the relaxation of the prison regime has been taking place at a much slower pace than is being seen in the community. In the opinion of some prisoners, the 'command mode' management of lockdown produced a response which was too centralised and allowed insufficient initiative to Governors.

3.1.4 A significant change during the reporting year involved the departure of the Governor to HMP Manchester. Fortunately, his replacement is approachable, highly experienced and shares the values and priorities which helped Buckley Hall secure the excellent Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection report, published in November 2019. In the judgement of Board members, the continuation in post of the Deputy Governor has helped maintain a valuable measure of continuity and reassurance for staff and prisoners alike. Communications between managers, staff and prisoners are judged to be full and open.

3.1.5 The unannounced HMIP inspection took place in July 2019. In terms of their 'healthy prison tests', the inspection team awarded Buckley Hall level 4 ('good') for safety, level 4 for respect, level 4 for rehabilitation and release planning and level 2 ('not sufficiently good') for purposeful activity. The assessments for safety, respect and rehabilitation had improved since the previous inspection in 2016, while the assessment for purposeful activity had declined. In the report, the Chief Inspector stated: 'Buckley Hall is a very good prison'.

3.1.6 HMIP's positive view of Buckley Hall was reinforced by the publication, during the reporting year, of a document entitled 'Prison Advisor – A Guide to UK Prisons', published by Stuart Miller Solicitors. Prisons were scored on an anonymous survey of current prisoners from the most recent report by HMIP and, based on the results, Buckley Hall was placed at number 4 in the top 10 prisons for prisoners in the country.

3.1.7 Given all the hard work, preparation and relief following the excellent HMIP report, any subsequent and temporary dip in performance perhaps comes as no

great surprise, and two examples were a drop in the high standard of cleanliness around the prison and the highlighting of a number of failings in a security audit in March. The Board is confident that the governors have addressed the situation and are intent on maintaining the high standards achieved at the time of the inspection.

3.1.8 The Board wishes to place on record their sympathy to the large number of staff whose cars were vandalised during an incident in May 2020. Given the unique and complex problems facing staff at the time, the vandalism must have seemed particularly hurtful and unjustified. A heartening camaraderie among prison staff was illustrated by the ‘whip-round’ organised for them by officers from a neighbouring North West prison – HMP Hindley.

3.1.9 During lockdown, in the judgement of the Board, staff at Buckley Hall have coped with a stressful and tiring situation with creditable and steadfast commitment. Staff take pride in a willingness ‘to get on with it’, even in difficult or exacting circumstances.

3.1.10 The Board would like to express its gratitude to staff and managers for their willingness to cooperate with them, and for the positive and patient way they have responded to the questions and issues raised by Board members, particularly during their period of remote monitoring.

## **3.2 Main judgements**

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

The Board considers Buckley Hall to be a safe environment for prisoners

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

The Board considers that prisoners are treated with a high level of fairness and humanity. Positive and constructive staff/prisoner relationships are an undoubted strength and there is a strong emphasis from the top down, running throughout the prison, on ‘fairness’ and decency.

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

The Board considers the provision of healthcare and wellbeing to be satisfactory.

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

Few prisoners are released directly from Buckley Hall. For many, their progress towards successful resettlement is in terms of achieving category D status and moving to open conditions. In the judgement of the Board, Buckley Hall is successful in helping prisoners progress in their resettlement plans. For the complex and indeterminate prisoners on the Aspire unit, there is a supportive but challenging environment in which to demonstrate their ability to change. A rehabilitative culture is firmly embedded throughout the prison.

### **3.3 Main areas for development**

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

- Ensure the long-term provision of Purple (video-link) Visits (see paragraph 7.4.9)
- The provision of in-cell telephones, to bring Buckley Hall into line with the growing number of prisons with this facility (see paragraphs 5.1.21 and 7.4.10)

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

- Agree a redistribution in the location of double and single cells within the prison (see paragraph 5.1.6)
- Bring the wing healthcare rooms into use (see paragraph 6.1.8)
- Improve the system for the transfer of prisoner property (see paragraph 4.1.4)
- Reassess the staffing levels for the security department (see paragraph 4.6.3)

#### ***TO THE GOVERNOR***

- Improve the playback facilities for body-worn video camera (BWVC) evidence (see paragraph 4.5.1)
- Provide more suitable dining tables and chairs on the wings (see paragraph 5.1.2)
- Reduce the number of cancelled outside medical appointments (see paragraph 6.1.4)
- Protect the provision of key work sessions within the prison (see paragraphs 5.3.3 and 5.3.4)
- Reduce the number of inaccurate roll checks and their disruption to the regime (see paragraph 5.1.14)
- Review the criteria for, and purpose of, D wing (see paragraph 5.1.7)

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

- The standard and delivery of education provision were showing real signs of improvement prior to the lockdown.
- The laminated and colourful posters now displayed throughout the grounds draw the attention of staff and prisoners to the prison's underlying ethos and principles.
- The quality of the responses to prisoners' complaints has improved.

- The staffing levels of the mental health team have increased.
- Late in the reporting year, Purple (video-link) Visits were introduced.
- There has been a continuing improvement in the standard of the food provided to prisoners.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

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

4.1.1 Before lockdown began, the Board observed a number of first night interviews. The interviews were conducted in private and the officers involved were courteous, thorough and welcoming. Healthcare staff assess all new prisoners on arrival, within the designated 72-hour window, and from August 2019 to March 2020 all prisoners were seen within this time frame.

4.1.2 The reception orderlies provide a supportive and useful first point of contact for the new prisoners.

4.1.3 One issue which continues to arise is that prisoners arriving at Buckley Hall have items confiscated which had been approved at their previous establishment. This inconsistency can be an understandable source of frustration for the prisoners concerned.

4.1.4 Another issue is that long-serving prisoners, in particular, often arrive at the prison without all their property, owing to the limitations imposed by GeoAmey on what can be carried aboard the van. Delays in forwarding their property or, on occasion, mislaying it, is a source of irritation to the prisoners involved and a significant reason for applications to the Board.

4.1.5 A useful and detailed induction booklet is available to new prisoners, and also an informative video. However, as has been noted in previous reports, the booklet's presentation and the standard of literacy required may reduce its value to some prisoners. Board members have attended a number of the induction sessions for new prisoners, and judge that the induction orderlies provide an invaluable source of information on navigating the prison and its regime. These induction sessions take place in a well-appointed and attractive room in the education department. There is some risk of 'information overload' during the induction period, and an argument in favour of revisiting the process six to eight weeks after arrival, when prisoners have adjusted to the new regime. The Board has been informed recently that the prison intends to review its delivery of the induction process.

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

4.2.1 In the prison estate as a whole, the incidents of self-harm increased by 11% between March 2019 and 2020, and Buckley Hall has also seen an increase; there were 61 acts of deliberate self-harm from January to July 2019, rising to 105 in the corresponding months of 2020. However, this gives a somewhat misleading impression of the level of self-harm at Buckley Hall as, for example, 22 of the 28 incidents in June 2020 were attributable to one individual. It is the judgement of the Board that, despite the increase, Buckley Hall staff place a high priority on the care of prisoners who self-harm.

4.2.2 The lockdown period has not been associated with a rise in the number of assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) documents opened, and the average number of open ACCTs stood at five per month in April, May and June

2020. Board members have attended a number of ACCT reviews and been impressed by the sympathetic and empathetic approach of the case managers.

4.2.3 During the reporting year, a BBC report stated that 'dozens of prisons were failing in their duty to operate emergency telephone lines' for family and friends to report concerns about a prisoner's risk of suicide or self-harm. In the judgement of the Board, the safer custody department's helpline at Buckley Hall is satisfactory. The answerphone line is checked daily for messages, a log of calls is kept and actions taken are evidenced. The recorded message informs the caller that the line is not continuously monitored and provides the central number to ring if the call is an emergency.

4.2.4 The Board has noted that safer custody staff have been redeployed in the prison on a regular basis and that, for example, 466 of its staff hours were lost from October to December 2019. Prison managers have reassured the Board that this is not at the expense of the department's care of vulnerable prisoners – something which has long been a strength of Buckley Hall. The reduced staffing continued during the lockdown but, fortuitously, coincided with a reduction in the number of ACCTs, incidents of violence and deliberate self-harm.

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

4.3.1 In the year ending March 2020, Buckley Hall is recorded as having an incident rate of 117.5 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults per 1,000 prisoners; the average for its comparator group of prisons is 259.0. In the year ending March 2020, Buckley Hall is recorded as having an incident rate of 44.3 assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners; the average for its comparator group of prisons is 107.0.

4.3.2 However, recent figures for violence suggest something of an increase from this low base. In the first three months of 2020, there were 29 acts of violence, compared with 14 in the same period in 2019. From January to July 2020, 33 acts of violence were reported, compared with 23 in the same months of 2019. Despite the increase, Buckley Hall is considered by the Board to be fundamentally safe.

4.3.3 Unsurprisingly, the lockdown period has seen a reduction in the frequency of violent incidents in the prison. From May to June 2020, only two instances of violence were reported, and at the end of the reporting year no prisoners were being held in the care and separation unit (CSU). One prisoner being released spoke favourably about Buckley Hall and its relative calm compared with other prisons. In his opinion, the prevailing ethos was to try to talk issues through, rather than resort to violence.

4.3.4 It would appear to the Board that the formal process of restorative justice has been less widely used during this reporting year, with fewer referrals or mediations. Indeed, one officer was heard to tell a governor that restorative justice was no longer offered in Buckley Hall. Although the safer custody department told the Board that this is not the case, clearly not all staff are aware of this.

4.3.5 The safer custody department publishes a detailed monthly analysis of violent incidents, which is circulated throughout the prison and made available to the Board. All incidents of violence are thoroughly investigated by the department.

4.3.6 The prison makes full use of challenge, support and intervention plans – aiming at both the perpetrator and the victim – and the associated documents are quality checked by a safer custody officer. However, having established the initial intervention plan, how often staff return to monitor and review it is less evident to the Board.

4.3.7 Part of the prison's debt reduction strategy involves allowing prisoners £20 credit on arrival for canteen. In the judgement of the Board, this makes a useful contribution to reducing incidents of bullying and the prospect of violence.

#### **4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding**

4.4.1 Board members have observed meetings of the inter-departmental risk management team and judge that the meetings are now better attended by the relevant departments. Those present demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the prisoners under discussion, and any decisions reached are carefully considered. The Board has been informed that, during the lockdown period, there has been no backlog of telephone or postal monitoring of prisoners who are the subject of public protection issues.

4.4.2 There is a weekly safety intervention meeting (SIM), at which there is a detailed discussion of prisoners considered vulnerable. This multidisciplinary meeting is well attended and the Board has access to its detailed minutes. The meetings have continued throughout the lockdown period, albeit with fewer staff in attendance.

4.4.3 In order to assess whether vulnerable prisoners have received regular wing welfare checks during lockdown, the recent Prison National Offender Management Information System (P-NOMIS) entries of some 20 potentially at-risk prisoners were reviewed. The prisoners were chosen either because they had been discussed at the July 2020 SIMs or had been named to the Board by wing officers. It was found that in July 2020, the number of entries per prisoner ranged from 0 to 16, with an average of six and a median of five entries made during the month. The overall quality of these entries was judged to be good. By contrast, in the July 2020 P-NOMIS entries of 10 prisoners drawn at random from the normal prison population, the average number of entries in the month for these prisoners was 2.5, with a median of 2.0.

4.4.4 The SIM also confirms the cell sharing risk assessment (CSRA) for prisoners, which is done in a careful and thorough manner. In February 2020, 35.9% of the prisoners at Buckley Hall were judged to be high risk in terms of cell sharing, which compares to a figure of 30.4% for February 2019. Over this period, the total population of Buckley Hall rose by 5.6% but the number of high-risk CSRA prisoners rose by 24.6%, which may presage a change in the nature of the prisoners resident in Buckley Hall.

4.4.5 While it is necessary to allocate single cells to high-risk CSRA prisoners new to Buckley Hall, this is a source of frustration to those prisoners already at the prison, who have applied and are waiting to move into a single cell.

4.4.6 Prisoners have had access to the 12 Listeners during the lockdown, although conversations with them cannot take place inside the prisoner's cell. The Listeners are encouraged to log their engagements, and their record-keeping is improving. Similarly, telephone access to the Samaritans has continued throughout the period.

## **4.5 Use of force**

4.5.1 The Board is satisfied that the use of force is monitored appropriately by the prison. The use of force scrutiny committee draws together a number of relevant departments, meets regularly and is attended by a Board member. Those attending have access to the paperwork of incidents involving the use of force and also review video or BWVC recordings. It has to be noted that the playing back of video evidence at the meeting continues to be plagued by technical difficulties.

4.5.2 In the first six months of 2020, an average of 60% of incidents involving the use of force were evidenced by video or BWVC. This percentage has risen but can be improved upon. When use of force incidents are analysed for these months, there was no increase in the percentage of video or BWVC evidence when there was an increase in the proportion of planned to spontaneous use of force, which should have been expected.

4.5.3 Recording the use of force incidents serves the best interests of staff and prisoners alike. In one recording of the relocation of a non-compliant prisoner, the supervising officer can be heard to say, 'mind his head ... (the) camera's on'. Equally, the recordings can assist staff subject to unwarranted complaints. During the reporting year, Board members have viewed recordings where the patient and calm efforts of officers to de-escalate a violent situation have been praiseworthy in the extreme.

4.5.4 In the opinion of staff, levels of use of force are relatively low in Buckley Hall, compared with other prisons. Nevertheless, there has been some increase in its frequency. In the calendar year 2018, there were 169 use of force incidents, and in 2019 there were 264. In the three months from January to March 2020, there were 46 either planned or spontaneous incidents involving the use of force, compared with a total of 26 in the corresponding three months of 2019.

4.5.5 It continues to be the case that batons are rarely drawn by officers. From July to December 2019, they were drawn only once and between January to June 2020, they were drawn three times. On each occasion, they were not deployed. Staff appear to be good at calming tense and potentially violent incidents. One experienced officer told the Board that in 10 years at Buckley Hall, he had drawn his baton only once.

4.5.6 The three officers trained as instructors have been issued with PAVA spray. However, it has not yet been deployed and, when asked, one of the instructors told the Board, that the positive staff/prisoner relationships are likely to mean that its future use will be highly exceptional.

## **4.6 Substance misuse**

4.6.1 The availability of unauthorised drugs remains an issue in Buckley Hall, as it is throughout much of the prison estate. The prison is surrounded by green belt land and public footpaths, which means that it is particularly susceptible to throw-overs, and in the early part of the reporting year specific areas for these were a major concern. This particular source of supply was disrupted, and since the onset of the lockdown throw-overs have reduced to virtually zero. During the reporting year, the security department has organised a number of successful operations but, inevitably, has been unable to reduce the supply to zero, given the value of the illicit items involved. There have been a number of joint operations with Greater Manchester Police during the reporting year, to disrupt the supply of unauthorised articles – principally, unauthorised drugs and mobile phones – into the prison.

4.6.2 The annualised rate in 2019 for positive mandatory drug tests was in the order of 18.4%, against a target of 22.6%. According to the latest Bromley Briefings, in the prison estate as a whole, psychoactive substances accounted for 51% of all positive drug test samples in the year to March 2019, whereas in Buckley Hall the figure is closer to 25–30%, and cannabis the most widely used drug.

4.6.3 Staffing levels in the security department are important and the Board views with some concern the potential effect its re-profile may have on the number of suspicion drug tests and intelligence-led cell searches completed. The new Governor has stressed the importance of intelligence-led initiatives in the efforts to disrupt illegal activity, and the department has a high rate of success in the number of finds from targeted cell searches. If officers are to continue submitting intelligence reports, it is important that they are confident that their suspicions of possible illegal drugs or mobile phones will be acted upon promptly by the department.

4.6.4 Access to the North West search team and its dog teams remains an important resource but it is also important that all other suspected supply routes into the prison are being effectively and regularly targeted.

4.6.5 Even during the lockdown period, there have been some drug finds and prisoners found under the influence of drugs. However, the numbers of both have declined and, taken together with the increase in finds of 'hootch', suggest that the availability of unauthorised drugs has declined significantly during lockdown. There is some concern among officers that relaxing the current regime will mean easier access to illegal drugs for prisoners, and that their tolerance levels will have been reduced by the inability to obtain supplies over recent months.

4.6.6 Of necessity, the security department must retain a degree of separateness from the rest of the prison but, equally, it relies heavily on information and intelligence provided by the rest of the prison. To this end, the publication of its two-monthly 'Jigsaw' magazine provides a useful and informative link with staff, as does its invitation to other departments to attend the monthly security committee meeting.

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

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

5.1.1 The incoming residential governor made a number of small changes to what constituted acceptable clothing when prisoners are on association, and communal microwaves and toasters are now available on all wings. Ideally, these facilities should be in a separate room rather than on the wing landing. In addition, before lockdown, all prisoners could order cheese, butter and eggs on their canteen and had been allowed to buy more vapes. The slow transfer of their funds from private prisons to Buckley Hall remains an issue for new prisoners, even though finance staff will advance money to these prisoners – but only if they are informed about the problem.

5.1.2 During lockdown, the unsuitability of the communal dining tables and seats has not been an issue because meals have been eaten in cells. However, when the regime is relaxed and prisoners can eat together once more, the need for a more robust and suitable alternative will become an issue.

5.1.3 The wings have been kept extremely clean and disinfected during the lockdown period. Earlier in the year, the standard of cleanliness was judged by the Board to be reasonable but not exemplary – particularly first thing on a Monday morning. During the lockdown period, prisoners have reported having sufficient access to cleaning equipment. It has been noted in previous annual reports that a successful bid for high-level cleaning would make a considerable improvement to the appearance of the wings.

5.1.4 An ongoing problem with rodents has occurred during the reporting year, despite the best efforts of the waste management team and external vermin contractors. Greater care is needed in the disposal of food waste.

5.1.5 In their replies to the Board's questionnaire, prisoners in double cells said that they have experienced a particularly stressful time during the lockdown period. However, the constraints of the current operational capacity, and the fact that all the cells on the Aspire unit are single, limit the ability of the prison to alter this situation.

5.1.6 During the reporting year, the Board has been informed by some officers that a reconfiguration of the location of single and double cells throughout the prison would be of benefit. In particular, they have suggested reducing the number of doubles on A1&2 and a compensatory increase in the number of doubles on A3&4 – in order to retain the same operational capacity. It has also been suggested to the Board that an increase in the number of doubles on the induction wing would make it less likely that prisoners would want to remain on it when it becomes necessary to move them elsewhere in the prison. Given that all the cells are of an equal size, these seem sensible suggestions.

5.1.7 The Board has been told on a number of occasions by staff that the purpose of D wing and the criteria for the prisoners residing on it should be reviewed because the current waiting list bears little relation to who is allocated next. Men are often allocated to the wing because they are in temporary crisis but then remain there on a permanent basis, with no apparent exit plan in place.

5.1.8 For the prisoners, one of the most difficult aspects of the lockdown period has been the restrictive nature of the regime – with boredom and a lack of any variety in

their daily routine a significant issue for many. Initially, prisoners were allowed out of their cell for just 30 minutes each day, and in their replies to the Board questionnaire, a number of the prisoners complained that they did not even receive this, as they were delayed while waiting for cells to be unlocked. Managers investigated the possibility of increasing the daily exercise time to 60 minutes but decided, logistically, that it was not feasible to do so, although they did facilitate an incremental increase of 10 minutes.

5.1.9 The limited time and number of prisoners allowed out of cell at any one time proved stressful for prisoners and wing staff – prisoners had only a limited time for their ‘domestics’ and staff were involved in the non-stop locking and unlocking of prisoners. The expansion of the regime at the end of the reporting year – to two 40-minute out of cell sessions daily, together with an increased number being unlocked at the same time – has been welcomed by both prisoners and officers. Concern over prisoners not adhering to social distancing rules and not following a hand hygiene regime meant that it was some weeks into lockdown before prisoners were allowed access to the outdoor gym equipment on the yards.

5.1.10 Prisoners had daily access to showers and telephone calls even during the most restrictive lockdown period, and laundry was still routinely washed. In the judgement of staff, both they and prisoners settled into a daily ‘COVID-routine’.

5.1.11 The provision of fans and radios was appreciated by the prisoners, as was the availability of ‘distraction packs’. A number of prisoners replying to the Board’s questionnaire were grateful that the prison continued to pay their wages during lockdown.

5.1.12 Waste management staff believe that the amount of recycling on the wings is capable of being significantly improved, and it is to be hoped this issue can be addressed when a more ‘normal’ regime is re-established.

5.1.13 The weekly meeting of the prisoner consultative committee during the lockdown period provided a useful two-way channel of communication and an outlet for any frustrations or grievances felt by the prisoners.

5.1.14 Throughout the reporting year, there have been a significant number of occasions when staff have failed to achieve an accurate consolidated roll count. Inevitably, this has had an impact on the timing of the daily regime and access to activities, programmes and healthcare services. It is to be hoped that when lockdown is eased, this count, together with the end-of-day roll reconciliation count, can be managed more successfully.

5.1.15 The Board received a number of complaints during the year that morning unlock was regularly and unjustifiably delayed. However, the Board visited the wings on a number of occasions and found no evidence to support the claim. When the Board was present, the average time for morning unlock was at 8.04am rather than 8.00am.

5.1.16 The Board is satisfied the cell bell call system on C wing is now being routinely monitored by staff. Between August 2019 and June 2020, all cell bells were answered within the required five minutes, apart from one or two identified electrical faults. It is less apparent that the same monitoring occurs with the cell bells on D wing.

5.1.17 The Board welcomes the funding to improve the pipework and infrastructure of the showers. The pipework throughout the prison is badly corroded, which affects water and heating supplies. While the facilities team manage this as well as they can, inevitably, their response is largely one of 'firefighting' rather than addressing the underlying problem. While the appearance of the shower blocks has not been particularly enhanced by the capital work, their reliability and functionality should be.

5.1.18 The high quality of the food served continues to be a real strength and was recognised during the reporting year by the Butler Trust Award to the prison's catering manager. The use of fresh food and the availability of healthy options on the daily menu are standard. The kitchen has operated with fewer prisoners during the lockdown period but coped well. The food for religious festivals – in particular, Christmas and Eid – is particularly good. During the lockdown period, the prisoners appreciated the increase in portion size of meals and the regular distribution of 'goody bags'. In the reporting year, the Board received only one Board application concerning food, and in our random questionnaire – distributed to prisoners in June 2020 – which asked about their experiences during lockdown, only one out of 40 had an issue with the food provided. However, there appears to have been very limited progress during the reporting year on the long-awaited refurbishment of the kitchens and the installation of a temporary replacement.

5.1.19 The Board commends the daily staff briefings on each wing, which now appear to occur on a regular basis. The briefings should raise standards and the level of consistency on each wing. Board members have been impressed by the enthusiasm and positive ideas put forward by the wing officers at these briefings.

5.1.20 The Board is grateful to the Governor for allowing the prison to be among the first to introduce use of the IMB 0800 freephone application line. The system is now firmly established and sits comfortably alongside the paper IMB applications. During lockdown, prisoners have been allowed to call the number outside their assigned association time. It is worthy of note that the number of IMB freephone applications for Buckley Hall is considerably lower than in prisons with in-cell telephony.

5.1.21 Access to in-cell telephones could have provided additional support for men at risk of self-harm or with mental health issues during the lockdown. It would have also facilitated contact with family and friends, legal representatives, the offender management unit (OMU), probation staff and the healthcare team. It seems inequitable that a facility available in a number of other prisons is currently denied to the prisoners at Buckley Hall, many of whom are serving long sentences and for whom maintaining family ties can be even more critical.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

5.2.1 The special accommodation cell is located in the CSU. In the opinion of CSU officers, it is used infrequently, for a short period of time, and not as a punishment but to defuse a situation. In the first six months of the reporting year, the cell was used on four occasions. One of these was for a particularly refractory prisoner and involved him being held in the cell overnight. The other three occasions were more typical of its use, and, on average, each of the three prisoners was held for 210 minutes. In the second half of the reporting year, the special cell was used on three occasions, for an average of 255 minutes.

5.2.2 The paperwork associated with the use of the special accommodation has been checked by the Board and appears to be completed thoroughly. On all but one of the seven times that the cell has been used in the reporting year, the Board was directly informed, as is required.

5.2.3 The Board continues to be impressed by the professionalism and care of the CSU staff. They manage prisoners who can be complex, demanding and violent but retain a sense of calm, humour and humanity. The 10 cells in the unit are judged by the Board to be in a satisfactory state of repair and decoration. The CSU orderly provides an excellent service to the unit and, as well as keeping it clean and tidy, is a calm influence on the prisoners being held there. The replacement shower in the CSU is a big improvement, as will be the proposed gym equipment.

5.2.4 The time taken in transferring prisoners from the CSU to other prisons remains an issue. Most prisoners accept the situation, but even the taciturn can find the time taken irritating. During lockdown, the two category B prisoners being held in the CSU were, in the opinion of the Board, held there for far longer than could be considered reasonable. Prison managers did endeavour to move both prisoners but Gold Command did not consider their transfer to be a sufficient priority.

5.2.5 The Board commends the weekly meeting between healthcare; OMU; observation, classification and allocation; and safer custody staff and governors, at which the intended plan for each prisoner in the CSU is discussed. The Board is invited to the segregation monitoring and review group meeting, and at the last meeting attended by a Board member, in November 2019, they reported no significant issues or concerns.

5.2.6 Before lockdown, Board members attended a number of adjudications and reported positively about the adjudicating governors' commitment to procedural justice. Governors are judged to be fair and flexible in their awards. Few adjudication appeals are successful, which suggests that the process is fair and transparent – from August to October 2019, only 12% of the adjudication awards were dismissed. Delays in charges sent to the police for investigation have been a continuing feature in the reporting year, and on a number of occasions charges laid at a previous prison have had to be dismissed as 'out of time' or because of the absence of the reporting officer. Adjudications have continued throughout the lockdown period, although the ability of governors to make awards against proven charges has been severely limited.

5.2.7 Adjudication officers ask for healthcare department reports, in advance, when they deem it appropriate to do so but it is not, apparently, standard practice to send the healthcare department the names of all prisoners about to face an adjudication, as per the recommendation of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman.

5.2.8 Half-way through the reporting year, the independent adjudicator retired, after a number of years in the role. The early impression of the Board is that the replacement is fair and thorough.

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

5.3.1 Respectful and positive staff/prisoner relationships are, in the view of the Board, key to the success achieved by the prison, and it is reassuring how quickly

new and newly qualified staff subscribe to the prevailing philosophy. Staff are on first-name terms with the prisoners, and it is interesting how just this simple courtesy can take some new prisoners time to be comfortable with. During the reporting year, only 1.4% of the Board applications made allegations against staff. In the judgement of the Board, there are good communications within the prison between staff and prisoners, although they have been put under some strain during the lockdown, when managers have not always been in a position to provide prisoners with the answers to their questions.

5.3.2 In the replies to the Board's questionnaire about their lockdown experience, over 80% of respondents provided a positive comment on the staff. To quote just a few: 'they handled a difficult situation very well'; 'they tried their best to keep us as safe as possible'; 'the staff are genuinely interested in my welfare'; and 'staff have gone above and beyond'. Out of the 40 prisoners replying to the questionnaire, only two claimed that some staff were unsympathetic, inconsistent, inflexible and unfair. Some respondents complained that staff did not keep an appropriate social distance from prisoners or from each other, however, and the Board has seen instances where too many officers have been congregating in a confined area.

5.3.3 The overwhelming majority of the prisoners value their key work sessions, and the prison is to be commended for the scrupulous manner in which it reports weekly on the number of key work sessions that have taken place. During the reporting year, there has undoubtedly been pressure on officers in completing their key work sessions. For example, from July to December 2019, an average of 40.5% of sessions were completed and recorded, and, on occasion, the weekly figure has been as low as 33%. This has arisen for a number of reasons, including staff redeployment, sickness, bed watches, constant watches, unfilled vacancies and sessions not being recorded because of insufficient time to do so. The detail office has assured the Board that they do their best to protect the key work sessions but say that they are unable to ring fence them. Regular key work sessions continued during lockdown for some 60 prisoners.

5.3.4 Given the pressure of work that the OMU has been under during the reporting year, the role of the key worker can be seen to have an even greater significance than before, and the Board supports the intention for closer direction and supervision of it by the OMU.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 Before the start of lockdown, the prison had planned and organised a wide-ranging calendar of events promoting diversity and inclusion – National Inclusion Week, Black History Month, Veterans Day, Mental Health Month and Pride, to name just a few. The equalities officer is experienced and committed to the role, and, as part of their duties, organises forums on a regular basis, for groups of prisoners with protected characteristics.

5.4.2 Undoubtedly, there are a small number of prisoners at Buckley Hall who contend that they are being treated unfairly, and, in large part, their claim is of racial discrimination. However, there is no strong evidence from analysis of IEP Levels, Use of Force or Segregation to support their argument of any inherent racial bias. In the opinion of the Board the prisoners at Buckley Hall are, overwhelmingly, treated

fairly and equally. During the reporting year, just 2% of the Board applications were related to equality issues, and most of these emanated from just one prisoner.

5.4.3 Between January and June 2020, a total of 11 discrimination incident report forms (DIRFs) were submitted and, of these, only one was partially upheld. There is an external scrutiny panel of the DIRFs, and the Board is represented on this. In the judgement of the Board member on the panel, most of the DIRFs were dealt with in a professional manner and with in-depth investigations. However, the panel did judge that the system was not without its weaknesses – in some cases, closing documents were not signed by the complainant and it was not always apparent that a one-to-one meeting had been organised at the end, to explain the results. The Board's representative commends the inclusion of two prisoners on the panel and, although these prisoners have limited access to the data, their presence provides the others with a valuable and relevant insight.

5.4.4 During the reporting year, the prison has managed a prisoner undergoing gender transition with sensitivity and sympathetically. In the judgement of the Board, the prison and the individual officer with oversight deserve considerable credit for the way in which the process is being managed.

5.4.5 In June 2020, the prison held five foreign nationals. They are known, monitored and English speaking. June 2020 was 'Roma Month', and all the prisoners who had identified as W3 (Gypsy, Roma or Traveller) were sent relevant information and a newsletter. The Equality Community Newsletter is a positive initiative. In June 2020, 90 prisoners had disclosed a disability to the prison and, where appropriate, personal emergency evacuation plans are in place for them on the Wings.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 In the judgement of the Board, the chaplaincy team provides a good level of support to, and contact with, the prisoners, and this is well documented in P-NOMIS. All the major faiths are represented, and the team members are visible throughout the prison, and active in the lives of the prisoners. Religious festivals are well catered for and a large number of courses are offered by members of the chaplaincy. In the opinion of the Board, the role of the managing chaplain in helping to stem the spread of fundamentalist extremism among prisoners should not be overlooked.

5.5.2 Despite, reduced staffing during the lockdown, the chaplaincy team has worked hard to ensure that faith literature and support are available to all, and that, for the Muslim prisoners, Ramadan and Eid could still be celebrated. Chaplaincy members have continued to provide support for bereaved prisoners during the lockdown period.

## **5.6 Incentives and earned privileges (IEP)**

5.6.1 In the year to March 2020, 3% of Buckley Hall prisoners were on the basic IEP level, 27% were on the standard level and 70% were on the enhanced level. The corresponding percentages for all prisons were 6%, 49% and 45%, respectively. In June 2020, 21.8% of the prisoners were on the standard IEP regime and 78.2% were on the enhanced level; in mid-July 2020, the overwhelming majority had

enhanced IEP status. During the lockdown period, only one prisoner was reduced to the basic IEP level because of his offensive behaviour towards a member of staff, and the decision was recorded in the defensible decision log

5.6.2 During the reporting year, and some months before lockdown, a series of 'fair process' forums were held with prisoners, to encourage their endorsement and support for the IEP scheme. At the forums, the prisoners broadly accepted the fairness of the scheme at Buckley Hall but did repeat a number of issues raised in the past: they were not being informed by staff about negative P-NOMIS entries; good behaviour did not result in positive P-NOMIS entries; basic IEP status had become a norm for some prisoners; and the application of the scheme was inconsistent between the wings. During the year, some prisoners continued to argue that there was insufficient differential between the enhanced and standard IEP levels. The decision to allow all prisoners access to a television over the Christmas period is welcomed by the Board, as is providing all of them with one during the lockdown period.

5.6.3 A common view among the prisoners was that the emphasis of the IEP scheme should be on incentivising good and appropriate behaviour, rather than on punishment. To this end, Board members have seen a number of instances in which wing managers were prepared to restore a basic IEP prisoner to standard before the full 28 days' award had elapsed, if they felt he was endeavouring to comply with the regime.

5.6.4 In one particular week before the lockdown, there were nine prisoners on the basic IEP level. Five of these were for possession of a mobile phone, which attracts a full and automatic 28-day award. Of the other four, the Board was told that two were likely to serve less than 28 days, if they engaged with the regime. The Board has been present at excellently conducted IEP reviews, in which the basic IEP prisoner was fully engaged and which, hopefully, had every prospect of leading to improved behaviour on his part.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 The prison operates an effective system for recording and monitoring prisoner complaints, to the extent that the complaints clerk won a regional Prison Officer of the Year award for the improvements made to the complaints database. The ready access which the Board is allowed to the database saves members a considerable amount of time when making their enquiries.

5.7.2 Managers have insisted that replies to complaints are detailed and relevant to the issue raised in them. In addition, they make regular quality checks. This more rigorous approach helps to explain the fall in the number of Comp1As and Comp2s, between April – June 2019 and the same period in 2020, with Comp1As down from 15 to 12 and Comp2s from 18 to eight.

5.7.3 Between April and June 2019, a total of 175 complaints were submitted. In the corresponding three months of 2020, the total was broadly similar, at 167. In the two three-month periods, residential and property issues accounted for 34% and 40%, respectively, of the complaints submitted. During the lockdown period, prisoners have told the Board that the length of time it takes to receive a reply to a complaint

has increased. In the circumstances, it is not perhaps surprising that an analysis of the complaints submitted from mid-May to mid-June 2020, compared with the same period in 2019, reveals that the percentage of final replies received after their due date rose slightly, from 29% to 33%.

## **5.8 Property**

5.8.1 In order to reduce the risk of viral transmission during the lockdown period, administration staff reduced their presence in the prison, which meant that prisoner catalogue orders could not be processed. The prison's subsequent decision to allow relatives to send in authorised goods from approved suppliers was welcomed by prisoners. The prison will need to give consideration as to how it will proceed with catalogue orders once the companies concerned become exclusively online.

5.8.2 Property issues remain of major concern to the prisoners. In April and May 2020, 15% of all the submitted prison complaint forms related to property issues, while in the reporting year 27% of all Board applications concerned property – two-thirds of which were about property issues arising at other prisons or on transfer to Buckley Hall.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Physical healthcare**

6.1.1 The dispensing of morning medication has been observed by Board members on a number of occasions and they report that the process is completed quickly and efficiently.

6.1.2 In addition to GP services, prisoners can access physiotherapy, optical treatment, dental treatment, podiatry and a number of clinics. While there are no specialist asthma, diabetic or vascular nurses, because of its relatively small size the healthcare department does have lead nurses in these fields.

6.1.3 The waiting time for a dental appointment fell initially during the reporting year, from 56 days in August to 28 in October 2019 – with an average waiting time of 37.6 days between July and December 2019. However, the reporting year also saw the end of the dental contract, and in its final months there was a noticeable decline in the number of appointments made and patients seen. From October to December 2019, an average of 132 appointments were made each month, while in the first three months of 2020 this fell to an average of 112. The Board commends the decision to include a prisoner among the seven panellists charged with evaluating the two bids for the new contract.

6.1.4 Cancellation of outside hospital appointments is a significant issue for prisoners. From October 2019 to February 2020, a total of 52 hospital visits were cancelled by the prison and, over the period, the number of monthly cancellations was regularly into double figures. Sixteen per cent of outside hospital appointments were cancelled by the prison from August to November 2019, and 31% from

December 2019 to March 2020. Only one prisoner escort in the morning and one in the afternoon are detailed, and the prison has, on occasion, found it difficult to attract sufficient uniform staff to escort more than this. When this happens, it can place healthcare staff in the unenviable position of having to decide which prisoner's health should be prioritised. There has been a significant increase in the use of telemedicine during the reporting year, which has helped alleviate some of the problem.

6.1.5 The Board continues to report on the significant number of prisoners who fail to attend appointments with both the doctor and the dentist. Between July and November 2019, 14.5% of the monthly appointments with a doctor were missed and 21% of those with a dentist. The average waiting time over this period was 12 days to see the doctor and 37.6 days for the dentist. Triage systems in both are available for emergencies.

6.1.6 In the judgement of the Board, healthcare staff have coped extremely well during the unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak. Staff have been flexible and adaptable in their working procedures, and the overwhelming majority of prisoners have appreciated the efforts to keep them safe and well. The nursing staff have been described by the prisoners as having been 'brilliant' and 'supportive' during the lockdown.

6.1.7 New arrivals have been separated from the rest of the prison population for 14 days, in a designated reverse cohort unit. Ten prisoners were advised that they should be shielding during lockdown and, although there was no separate unit for these prisoners, their daily regime meant that they could be kept safe on the wings.

6.1.8 Some limited use of the healthcare rooms on the wings took place during the lockdown but it remains the case that, years after being commissioned, they still cannot be fully used because they lack an electricity supply and separate locks.

6.1.9 The fact that, during lockdown, locum GPs have been located in a separate room, while the nurse is next door with the patient and acting as an intermediary between the two, seemed, initially at the very least, unusual.

6.1.10 It is worthy of note that, during the lockdown, healthcare staff reported no increase in requests for antidepressants but did see an increase for sleeping tablets. Much as in the community, after an initial shortage of staff personal protective equipment, there now appears to be sufficient availability.

## **6.2 Mental healthcare**

6.2.1 The mental health team is well led and fully involved in the life of the prison, and their judgements of prisoners are widely respected. The Board is pleased to record that the team experienced an increase in staffing during the reporting year and, as a result, started providing a seven-day service. During lockdown, staff in the department reported that a number of the prisoners in their care had been less adversely affected than might have been expected, and that some prisoners with personality disorders found the isolation and separation from others produced a less stressful environment. However, other prisoners have told the Board that they missed the emotional support they received from fellow prisoners. The lockdown

period has meant a delay in the team's introduction of social prescribing activities for the prisoners in their care.

6.2.2 The Survivors Manchester organisation has continued to provide an invaluable counselling service to prisoners who have experienced trauma – over 70% at Buckley Hall related to issues from childhood. In 2019/20, Survivors Manchester engaged with 108 prisoners, only 15% of whom had previously sought help elsewhere. The clinical outcomes of the therapy sessions are impressive, with significant average falls in the levels of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. Manchester Survivors continued to provide their service during the lockdown – albeit delivered in a modified manner.

### **6.3 Social care**

6.3.1 During the reporting year, the prison introduced a local policy in order to appoint a prisoner carer and determine their duties, for a prisoner requiring support. The two prisoners involved have told the Board that they are satisfied with the arrangement.

### **6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gym**

6.4.1 Prior to lockdown, the gym had a number of proposed initiatives to be introduced, including yoga and links with Cycle UK and Soccer Link. The department also celebrated the first anniversary of its weekly 'parkrun' – which was as popular and well organised as ever.

6.4.2 The role of the department took on a critical importance once lockdown started, offering prisoners the opportunity of outside physical exercise with a daily 30-minute session. For many of the prisoners who replied to the Board questionnaire, this was the highlight of their day, and over 50% of those replying to the questionnaire about their experience of lockdown were complimentary about the session and the good-natured manner of the gym staff. This commitment of the gym staff should be applauded, and also their willingness to hold the sessions regardless of the weather conditions! The prison has appreciated the importance of these sessions to the prisoners and done its best to facilitate them. The Board can confirm that there is rigorous cleaning of the gym equipment between sessions.

### **6.5 Drug rehabilitation**

6.5.1 During the reporting year and before the lockdown, the drug and alcohol recovery service introduced a new Drug Recovery Pathway course. Board members spoke to prisoners who had completed the course and they were very positive about it. In the opinion of the Board, the structure of the course improved on each subsequent occasion it was offered. One prisoner told the Board member that the course had 'woken us all up'. In addition, the service held successful motivational days, with external speakers. Board members who were present reported that the prisoners were attentive and that there was a positive and enthusiastic atmosphere.

6.5.2 Some 60% of the prisoners on A wing were engaging with service before lockdown, and, ideally, this figure would be increased. Being able to offer prisoners more single cells on the wings, rather than cells with double occupancy, should attract more clients. The drug recovery wing is welcoming, with attractively decorated communal areas.

## **6.6 Soft skills**

6.6.1 The prison continues to offer Resolve and the Thinking Skills Programme, although the delivery and numbers on the courses will change considerably in the next reporting year, as it responds to the changes required by COVID-19.

6.6.2 During the reporting year, POPS commissioned an external organisation to provide a Restorative Approaches course, which consisted of seven weekly sessions. The group looked at the effect of imprisonment on the prisoners' relationships with their family, and those involved spoke very positively about the course. In addition, students from Manchester University Drama Department took a group of prisoners for a three-day course designed to help them develop their skills of negotiation, team working and confidence. Again, the course was well received by the prisoners taking part.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

7.1.1 The Board's expectation in the last annual report that the appointments of a new education manager and head of learning and skills would lead to improvements was being justified before the lockdown. There was an emphasis on raising the standard of the education department's provision, with regular walkthroughs, lesson observations and quality checks becoming a feature of the department. As a result, course completions and attendance were improving. In the last two academic years, attendance has risen from 64% to 71%, course completions from 236 to 468, and the number of qualifications gained from 202 to 379.

7.1.2 The department is giving consideration to altering the length and delivery of functional skills classes and increasing the use of the virtual campus. There has been an improvement in the way each prisoner is able to record their educational and vocational experience at Buckley Hall. The department was exploring new educational initiatives prior to lockdown. The excellent link with York University was maintained, and those taking part were given access to laptop computers to complete the work set. A contact with the local tertiary college was fostered, to try to develop courses which bridged the gap between level 1 and 2 courses and those aimed at levels 6 and 7. Equally, there has been a desire to look for education activities which might appeal to a wider audience – such as training in barbering, a sound studio, a radio station and a television channel. Another welcome initiative, put on hold by lockdown, was the decision to start delivering education qualifications to the prisoners working in the prison kitchen. Fork-lift truck and warehousing

qualifications were provided, and an industrial cleaning course was due to restart. There has been an increase in the number of prisoners studying with the Open University. Education forums were becoming a more obvious feature of the department.

7.1.3 Board members were impressed by the range and quality of the work produced by students in the art class. In the plastering workshop, the students were very complimentary about the quality of the teaching received, and in the small repairs workshop, the prisoners were involved in a number of real-life and interesting projects. However, the gardens compound outside C wing has been looking extremely neglected for some time now and requires some attention.

7.1.4 In order to provide wing and OMU staff with a rounded and complete view of a prisoner, it is the opinion of the Board that education staff should be routinely recording on P-NOMIS when prisoners successfully complete a course and achieve a qualification.

7.1.5 The accurate transfer of data on educational qualifications between prisons can be inconsistent. A number of prisoners have claimed to possess the required functional skills qualifications but, because this cannot be confirmed, they are unable to access certain employment opportunities at Buckley Hall.

7.1.6 During the lockdown, the education department has made a noticeable effort to keep prisoners occupied. Weekly distraction packs and general distraction activities have been made available and, among the various options, prisoners have had the opportunity to collect workbooks introducing them to various foreign languages. Workbooks for the vocational and educational classes were issued. However, with education staff absent from the prison, these workbooks were not being marked.

7.1.7 The library's ability to provide data on the profile of its borrowers was, initially, very limited. Although this has improved, it remains a work in progress. During the year, it was brought to the attention of the Board that there was a reluctance on the part of library staff to provide prisoners with up-to-date paper copies of Prison Service Instructions – citing the cost and time involved in photocopying. The Board was told that the information was available to the prisoners on the virtual campus but it was soon established that very few of them could do so. Prisoners have a statutory right to this information and it is important that ready access to the documents is provided.

## **7.2 Vocational training, work**

7.2.1 The reporting year before lockdown saw a noticeable decline in the number of learners withdrawing from vocational courses, largely because of an improvement in the allocation of prisoners. In tandem, there was also a firmer line taken on requests to withdraw but the Board is satisfied that a sufficient degree of flexibility has been retained and used when appropriate. The level of coordination between education and activities staff is judged to have improved during the reporting year.

7.2.2 Prisoners new to Buckley Hall attend a sequencing board, to discuss their work or educational aims. The sequencing board was provided with background information on each prisoner by education staff and the information, advice and guidance worker. The intention was for sequencing to be carried out three times a

week, in order to progress prisoners more quickly into work or education. In addition, there was an offer of a six-week follow-up interview for prisoners requesting it. Board members attended a number of sequencing boards and reported that they were positive and inclusive experiences for the prisoners. However, it was not always apparent that the individual's sentence plan was as central to the sequencing board discussion as it should have been. On a positive note, a Board investigation showed that, in September 2019, 83% of the prisoners who had arrived at Buckley Hall within the previous four weeks had been placed in either full- or part-time education or employment.

7.2.3 The Board was pleased to note during the reporting year that a second instructional officer was finally appointed to workshop 1 – sewing trousers for male prisoners throughout the prison estate. The department has remained open during the lockdown period and is also making bed sheets. The workshop has found some difficulty in recruiting its full complement of prisoners because the skilled nature of the work was not reflected in a sufficient pay differential.

7.2.4 In the absence of a repair to the granulator in workshop 3, the efficiencies and potential income stream it offered could not be realised. Before lockdown, the fitted interiors workshop was reopened as a shop-fitting workshop, and the first cohorts had successfully completed the course. The 'Remade with Hope' and 'Recycling Lives' workshops offer prisoners the prospect of attractive bonus payments. However, in return, they demand the same working ethos and commitment expected in the community. Very few prisoners in either workshop complain about the high standards required of them.

7.2.5 Waste management has continued to operate during the lockdown and, although on reduced staffing, has done a good job in keeping the prison clean and tidy. The instructional officers are keen to increase the level of recycling across the prison but need more space in which to do so. An area to carry this out has been identified but its development was put on hold by the lockdown. Not only would increased recycling be better for the environment, it also has the potential to generate income for the prison. Arguably, too much use is being made of the prison's rubbish compactor, with not enough recycling. It has been suggested to the Board that because the cost of emptying the compactor is paid centrally, Buckley Hall has little financial incentive to reduce its use.

7.2.6 Before lockdown, the gardens work party was instrumental in ensuring that the grounds of the prison were well planted and maintained. Visitors to the prison have always commented most favourably on the appearance of the grounds. However, inevitably during lockdown, nature has begun to reassert itself.

7.2.7 As a training prison, Buckley Hall has the capacity to engage all prisoners in either employment or education during the working day. Any prisoner unwilling to engage is discussed at the weekly labour board, spoken to by their key worker and monitored by a senior officer. In January 2020, it was decided that, as a last resort, such prisoners would no longer receive 50p per day unemployment pay. In the judgement of the Board, activities staff have a detailed knowledge of which prisoners are unemployed and the reasons why.

7.2.8 The implementation of the prison's pay policy has rumbled on for a number of years and has still not been achieved. This year, its introduction was put on hold yet

again – this time by COVID-19. Balancing the overall prisoners’ pay budget remains an elusive goal for the prison.

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

7.3.1 For many of the prisoners, their time at Buckley Hall is primarily about progressing to an open prison, and so it is hardly surprising that 19% of all Board applications in the reporting year related to sentence management.

7.3.2 The Aspire unit on C wing, which celebrated its first-year anniversary in October 2019, is aimed at prisoners serving an indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP) and those who have previously failed in open conditions. Unfortunately, but inevitably, not all can respond to the commitment required, and a few end up returning to a general population wing. Prisoners on the unit sit regular enhanced behaviour monitoring boards, a number of which the Board has attended. At these multidisciplinary meetings, the prisoner faces a challenging, in-depth review of his progress and plans for the future. Prisoners who successfully move to the next stage are allowed certain privileges and incentives, such as access, on association, to the back of C wing. However, it has to be noted that some of the privileges and incentives initially promised have yet to materialise.

7.3.3 Following substantial set-up expenditure and prior to lockdown, the prisoners working in the gardens at the back of the unit have shown considerable enthusiasm and endeavour, and the results of their efforts were impressive.

7.3.4 Before lockdown, the new Governor determined that recommendations on future category D reviews would now be under the purview of the OMU, rather than governors. The rationale for this was the unit’s expertise in assessing risk to the public and the adequacy of release plans. Recategorisation boards were to operate if there was a degree of uncertainty about the decision. The Governor was extremely open and transparent when informing the prisoners of this change. Before lockdown, regular reducing reoffending meetings were held between the head of the OMU and prisoner representatives. The meetings were well organised, thorough and informative. The appointment of an OMU orderly to deal with general enquiries opened up another positive line of communication between the OMU and the prisoners.

7.3.5 These category D reviews, which assess the suitability of prisoners for open conditions, have been completed within the official timescale, and the general impression among the prisoners is that Buckley Hall is a ‘good’ prison for gaining category D status. However, prisoners who have achieved category D often complain to the Board about the length of time they have to wait for their move to an open prison. In October 2019, there were approximately 20 category D prisoners in the prison, and a there was a similar figure at the end of the reporting year. Following enquiries made by the Board, it is clear that delays are typically outside the control of Buckley Hall staff. Transport issues, a lack of places in the open estate and parole board permission can all delay movement. During the lockdown, the requirement for Gold Command to approve moves added another hurdle to this. In the first six months of 2020, a total of 169 category D reviews were undertaken – 67 of which were outside the normal two-year ‘window’. Of the remaining 102, category D was awarded to 33 prisoners.

7.3.6 In theory, eligible prisoners can apply for release on temporary licence (ROTL) but there have been very few instances of it being awarded, even for those applying for a special permission licence.

7.3.7 The reporting year saw the introduction of the second phase of the new Offender Management in Custody model. The OMU is fully staffed, according to its official complement, but whether or not this level of staffing is sufficient will become more evident when the prison returns to 'normal'. The intention was that key workers would relieve prison offender managers of some of the more mundane and routine enquiries; however, for this to succeed, the link between the OMU and key workers will need to be more coordinated and cohesive. The Board has been told that there is likely to be an increase in the number of prisoners arriving at Buckley Hall within a short space of sentencing, and without a completed offender assessment system (OASys) assessment or sentence plan. If so, OMU staff will be under pressure to complete the initial OASys assessment.

7.3.8 In order to reduce the risk of virus transmission, the majority of OMU staff have been working remotely during lockdown. Inevitably, this has led to a fall in the number of face-to-face appointments, and some frustration among prisoners with imminent parole hearings or release dates. The department has tried to respond creatively to this difficult situation, and prisoners with a category D review have been invited to complete a contribution form and outline their resettlement plans. The prisoners can complete a self-assessment questionnaire when an OASys assessment update is required.

## **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 Maintaining contact between prisoners and their family remains central to Buckley Hall. Visitors appreciate the considerable amount of money spent on the refurbishment of the visits hall and its bright, welcoming atmosphere. Visitors are made welcome by staff and there is a satisfactory choice of food and drinks. Prison managers are keen to improve visitors' experience, and during the year bought and installed two £800 games consoles the day after the idea was put forward by a member of the POPS team. One prisoner's partner told a Board member that her experience of visiting Buckley Hall was 'the best she has ever had'. However, it should be noted that delays in starting visits on time causes understandable frustration to visitors.

7.4.2 On arrival at the prison, all visitors report to 'the lodge', managed by POPS staff. The Board has been given positive feedback from visitors on the friendly and helpful nature of the POPS staff, who organise a regular family forum attended by a governor and the POPS manager, and to which the Board send an observer. One prisoner told the Board that POPS was 'brilliant' in helping him maintain contact with his family.

7.4.3 The POPS staff would welcome the creation of an outdoor area with tables and seating, to provide a safer environment in warm weather for adults and children than standing in the carpark.

7.4.4 The Board has noted for some time that a number of visitors book visits but do not attend, and fail to inform the prison beforehand. It would appear to the Board that

because these visitors have their visiting order returned, there is, presently, no incentive for them to contact the prison. As an example, on one particular Saturday during the year, six sets of visitors did not attend and only three had informed the prison beforehand. The prison has begun to monitor this situation.

7.4.5 The prisoners are encouraged to think of others less fortunate than themselves, and considerable credit must be given for the large sums of money raised for UK and overseas charities. During the 2019 Christmas period, a group of prisoners were entertained by the Bethany Choir from Tanzania, at whose orphanage the prison financially supports a child. Two local families came into the prison to receive £1,000 worth of Christmas gifts for their children, and a group of local senior citizens were invited in for a full Christmas dinner. One prisoner raised over £1,500 for Manchester Children's Hospital – £1,100 of which came from fellow prisoners. In addition, the charity committee has made generous donations to Oldham and Blackburn Hospitals. Over the past year, close to £8,000 has been raised for charity by the prisoners.

7.4.6 Before lockdown, the prison had ambitious plans in place for family visits, and a total of 23 were organised for the calendar year. This is an impressive number, even if the length of some was being reduced because of staffing issues. Included in the proposals was an intention to introduce family days for life sentenced and IPP prisoners. The Board welcomed this intention, as the families of these prisoners may be disproportionately affected compared with those of determinate sentenced prisoners. This large number of family days was in addition to the excellent four parental contact visits arranged each month. The visitors to the family days which did run were whole-hearted in their praise of them.

7.4.7 Before lockdown, some considerable work had gone into improving the outdoor garden area for visits. This outdoor area would be enhanced further by the installation of play equipment for the children.

7.4.8 'Storybook Dads' is managed by library staff and continues to be offered to prisoners. It remains a popular way in which fathers can maintain contact with their young children.

7.4.9 During the lockdown period, the absence of family visits has been the most keenly felt issue for many prisoners. Initially, there were some technical issues with the Purple (video-link) Visits but they have been popular among some of the prisoners since being introduced. Even though Buckley Hall was among the first tranche of prisons offering the service, it is commonly thought among the prisoners that it should have been offered by the Prison Service much sooner than mid-June.

7.4.10 At the height of the regime restrictions, and given the absence of in-cell telephones, a number of prisoners complained to the Board that they were not allowed sufficient time on the telephone, or flexibility as to when the call could be made. However, the problem for wing staff was in trying to ensure that all the prisoners had access to the telephone within their limited time out of cell. The prisoners did appreciate the increased telephone credit they received and the unlimited number of stamped envelopes they could request. The prison-issue mobile phones placed on each wing were very successful and, in many ways, it is regrettable that they will be withdrawn.

7.4.11 The Board applauds managers for their efforts in trying to ensure that social visits restart as soon as possible, and, hopefully, this will be early in the next reporting year.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 Buckley Hall is not a resettlement prison and few prisoners are released directly. However, there are a number of prisoners for whom a successful parole hearing may mean release at very short notice. Effective release planning then needs to be done and appropriate advice given in the limited time available. The information, advice and guidance (IAG) adviser informed the Board that she carries out a 12-week scan of all prisoners due to be released. Each of these prisoners are interviewed and offered support, in terms of CVs, training, employment coaching and applying for a Construction Skills Certification Scheme card. IAG and Achieve North West are considered by the Board to have provided valuable services to the prisoners.

7.5.2 To reduce the size of the prison population during the lockdown, the Government announced the end of custody temporary release scheme and extending compassionate ROTL. Few prisoners at Buckley Hall were eligible for the schemes, and none were released.

7.5.3 Ideally, before release or a move to an open prison, issues of debt, National Insurance numbers or the opening of a bank account have already been dealt with. However, before lockdown, the responsibility in Buckley Hall for ensuring that these were in place was by no means clear-cut. In October 2019, six prisoners with release dates in that month or the next were interviewed by the Board. They all said that they had accommodation on release. However, two of the six did not have a bank account and one had an account that was last active in 2014. Five of the six had transport from the prison arranged but one was unsure about how he would make his way back to London. It would appear to the Board that there is no clear process in place to ensure that prisoners about to be released know their National Insurance number or possess a bank account. Reception staff will, if asked, telephone for a taxi but do not have any published information available on accessing local bus or train travel for prisoners being discharged.

7.5.4 One of the Board observed the discharge process for a prisoner. The release was carried out in a polite, good-natured and efficient manner, and he was provided with a good-quality holdall for his property. The licence conditions were described in a rather perfunctory manner but, to be fair, had already been outlined by the prisoner's offender supervisor. The prisoner was then escorted to the main gate, where he received his travel warrant and discharge grant. A number of prisoners being released have complained to the Board about the inadequacy of this discharge grant. When asked, this particular prisoner said that he had been treated courteously and helpfully by the staff involved.

7.5.5 Some officers have told the Board that a number of Buckley Hall prisoners prefer the very restrictive regime experienced during lockdown because it has meant that they have all been treated the same, and they have felt safer from issues of

bullying, debt, violence and the availability of illicit drugs. In the opinion of the Board, such views focus on the physical containment and confinement of prisoners and very much do not take into account the rehabilitative, transformative and resettlement role of prisons.

## 8. The work of the IMB

8.1 From the start of the prison lockdown to the beginning of July 2020, Board members have undertaken remote monitoring of Buckley Hall. We have contacted functional heads on a weekly basis, joined the daily morning staff dial-in and, at one Board meeting, asked a group of prisoners about their experiences during lockdown over the telephone. During lockdown, the Board distributed a random questionnaire, asking the prisoners to comment on the effects of lockdown.

8.2 From the beginning of July 2020, the Board began a mixture of direct and remote monitoring of Buckley Hall.

8.3 Board members should be congratulated for maintaining a commitment to their monitoring role in such unusual circumstances. The new and very different regime which is likely to emerge as prison lockdown eases means that the monitoring role of the Board will, if anything, become even more significant in the immediate future.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	12
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	11
Total number of visits to the establishment	301
Total number of segregation reviews attended	85

## Applications to the IMB

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Previous reporting year</b>	<b>Current reporting year</b>
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>
C	Equality	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	<b>36</b>	<b>23</b>
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
F	Food and kitchens	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>
H1	Property within this establishment	<b>42</b>	<b>19</b>
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	<b>32</b>	<b>38</b>
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	<b>37</b>	<b>40</b>
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>
K	Transfers	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system		
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>212</b>

## Glossary of Abbreviations Used

Initials	Meaning
ACCT	Assessment Care in Custody Teamwork
BWVC	Body Worn Video Camera
CSiP	Challenge, Support Intervention Plan
CSRA	Cell Sharing Risk Assessment
CSU	Care & Separation Unit
DIRF	Discrimination Incident Reporting Form
EBM	Enhanced Behaviour Monitoring
Hootch	Illegally brewed alcohol
IAG	Information, Advice & Guidance
IPP	Indeterminant Sentence for Public Protection
IR	Intelligence Report
IRMT	Inter-departmental Risk Management Team
MDT	Mandatory Drug Test
NOMIS	National Offender Management Information System
OASYS	Offender Assessment System
OCA	Observation, Classification & Allocation
OLs	Outside Letter
OMU	Offender Management Unit
OpCat	Operational Capacity
PAVA	Pelargonic Acid Vanillylamide [Incapacitant spray]
POMs	Prison Offender Manager
POOTY	Prison Officer of the Year
POPS	Partners Of Prisoner & Family Support Group
PPE	Personal Protection Equipment
PSI	Prison Service Instruction
ROTL	Release on Temporary Licence
SIM	Safety & Intervention Meeting

SMARG	Segregation, Monitoring & Review Group



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