

# Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Kirkham

For reporting year  
1 January 2020 – 31 December 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

2.1 HMP Kirkham is 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 more recent refurbishment has been carried out.

2.2 There are 24 occupied billets, which mainly provide single-occupancy, basic living accommodation. A further four temporary billets have been introduced during 2020, two of which are occupied, despite power supply issues. Additional generators are being used to boost the power supply until the main on-site supply can be upgraded. A care and support billet was brought into use in early 2015 and does have some capacity for double occupancy, although that is assessed based on medical needs (see section 5.1).

2.3 Two two-storey billets which were former oil rig accommodation have now been decommissioned and work is under way to build one new-concept residential unit to replace them. Once this is available in mid-2021, it will be adapted for new arrivals. This will replace the current 80-bed admissions unit, which in pre-COVID-19 times was double occupancy but has since been reduced to single occupancy. The current admissions unit will then be used for prisoners who are able to work outside the establishment prior to their release from custody (see section 5.1).

2.4 The overall capacity was 657. Along with the work above, a fire alarm replacement programme and associated refurbishment is also taking place. This is taking two billets at a time out of commission. However, the capacity has been fluid throughout the reporting period, to allow for the amount of accommodation available. At the end of the reporting period, the operational capacity was 533. The average population for 2020 was 553; however, that had dropped to under 500 by the end of the reporting period due to the accommodation issues above and the restrictions on the movement of prisoners throughout the estate. The majority of the prisoners fall into the 30-49 age bracket, with only 3% being over 60.

2.5 A number of old aircraft hangars have become unsafe and financial approval has recently been approved to allow demolition and the building of a new gym and timber workshop. It is proposed that work should start on building a new gym by the middle of 2021.

2.6 There are a number of workshops on site, run by outside agencies (Recycling Lives, Remade with Hope, and Calpac) as well as in-house – for example, 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. Due to the pandemic, very little education provision has been able to be delivered during 2020.

2.7 Healthcare services are 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. There is also a small team from the community rehabilitation company (CRC) offering pre-release advice for opening bank accounts, finding accommodation through Shelter, and on jobs and claiming benefits.

## **3. Executive summary**

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

3.1.1 This report is written from a COVID-19 perspective; in the main, the Board continued to visit the establishment during the pandemic, albeit on a reduced scale. The decision was made that Board visits could continue to monitor prisoners in the outdoor areas and meet the Governor. No billets have been visited during the pandemic, so the report is not able to comment on the condition of repair of the living accommodation which is currently occupied. Two members left the Board at the start of the year, but we gained two on transfer from HMP Lancaster Farms.

3.1.2 The reporting period started with work being done to introduce an abscond strategy. This offers additional support for prisoners on arrival at Kirkham, to help with settling in, while assessing the potential risk of abscond, and in line with the policy to reduce drug use. While these initiatives continue, the pandemic necessitated many changes to the regime, constantly reacting to the latest guidelines throughout the period.

3.1.3 Over the reporting period, there have been 13 absconds. Nine of these occurred before the March 2020 lockdown, with only four since. The low number since April reflects the fact that prisoners feel safer in the establishment than out in the community, for now.

3.1.4 This has been a year that has required clear and coherent handling of the communications both to staff and prisoners, to understand the constant regime changes reflecting the government announcements. The Governor has shown excellent and indefatigable leadership in ensuring that all staff and prisoners were kept safe, as well as fully informed each time quick changes had to be made to the regime. He also ensured that the Board was updated each time significant changes had to be made. The senior management team (SMT) is a largely settled group which has helped manage the constant changes required during the current pandemic.

3.1.5 Levels of drug use and drops were still high, especially during the first lockdown, when there were attempts to gain access by intruders, as well as items being dropped over the fence. The Governor ensured the involvement of the local police and local dog teams to help monitor and search the area to try to prevent further drops.

3.1.6 The creation of an outside gym and the rehoming of the main gym equipment to make a small, temporary gym required a huge logistical exercise of moving round workshops. This, however, meant that each billet could, on rota, access the gym for a period of time each week.

3.1.7 When significant changes were made to the regime, the Governor visited the billets to explain to the prisoners what the changes were and why they were necessary. Although prisoners were not always happy with the changes, they did show some respect for the Governor delivering the news himself. A number of prisoners have mentioned to Board members that they felt the Governor was keeping them updated and that they felt safe in the prison.

## **3.2 Main judgements**

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

3.2.1 The prison is next to busy main roads, a small industrial site and located next to a housing estate. This demographic makes it relatively easy for intruders. During the early months of the pandemic, there were a number of items brought into the establishment by intruders, and a number of drops were made. The poor quality of the closed-circuit television (CCTV) system made it difficult to identify intruders and their goods, but cooperation with local police and the siting of a mobile CCTV unit just outside the entrance to the prison helped with detection. Inadequate lighting around certain areas of the establishment has also made it very difficult to identify intruders and prisoners dropping off or collecting contraband in the evening.

3.2.2 Feedback received by the Board from some members of staff shows concerns regarding the behaviour of a small number of the prisoners not adhering to the regime and displaying behaviour below the standard expected in an open establishment.

3.2.3 Throughout the pandemic, the Governor introduced changes to the regime which focused on the safety both of prisoners and staff. It is a credit to this work that there has only been one short outbreak of the virus among the prisoners. This was quickly contained to one billet, with the support of healthcare and regime staff. Prisoners feel that the establishment is a safe environment. There was only one incident throughout the reporting period which required attendance by the Board. In 2019, there were three incidents which required the opening of the command suite.

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

3.2.4 It is the belief of the Board that prisoners 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. Approval, in principle, has been received for a programme of boiler replacements but this will not happen until 2022 at the earliest. It is imperative that this work is done as quickly as possible as there are constant issues with the boilers, resulting in a loss of heat and hot water to billets, with repairs being done on an ad-hoc basis (see paragraph 5.1).

3.2.5 All doors throughout the establishment have been fitted with intumescent fire strips and self-closers, as mentioned in the Crown Premises Inspection Group report. The Board is very pleased to see that work is now under way on installing a new fire alarm system in the billets. While billets are empty for this work, some general refurbishment is also taking place where it is COVID-19 safe to do so (see paragraphs 2.2–2.4 and 5.1).

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

3.2.6 Spectrum Community Health (Spectrum) provides healthcare and recovery services at the prison, with Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust providing mental health services. Healthcare staff have played an important part in many decisions made with regard to the pandemic. The good links and working relationships

between all departments have meant that the health and wellbeing of the prisoners have been a priority.

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

3.2.7 The prison has a good consistent rehabilitative culture. The pandemic has seen most of these initiatives paused to protect the prisoners and staff. The Governor has ensured that all changes have been communicated clearly to the prisoners and staff. The prisoners seem to understand that this reflects what is happening in the outside community.

## **3.3 Main areas for development**

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

3.3.1 As a Board, we understand the pressures on the Prison Service population but, despite assurances for the last three years from the minister that the 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 Kirkham. Prior to the lockdown, 85 prisoners were returned to closed conditions for security reasons. That figure is almost 50% of the annual total returns (189). During the regime changes, when prisoner movements were more restricted, it was obvious that a number were displaying behaviour which was more prevalent to closed conditions rather than showing signs of rehabilitation in an open prison. Such behaviour included:

- drug use and arranging of drug drops
- bullying, especially around drug debt
- immaturity in behaviour and work ethic
- use of potential COVID-19 symptoms to put the billet in isolation, to prevent having to comply with the prison regime. Some billets were regularly in and out of isolation; it should be noted that only one billet had a small number of positive COVID-19 results, none being seriously ill.

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

3.3.2 As mentioned below, a number of works are under way but more still needs to be done. The lighting around the site is poor, and there appear to be delays between reporting issues and getting them fixed. The Board is aware that there have been staffing issues, due to sickness with on-site Amey staff, which has necessitated drafting in staff to cover for them.

3.3.3 The Board was pleased to see that it was acknowledged that prisoners would be making more use of the telephones due to COVID-19. As a result, a weekly PIN credit of £5 per prisoner was granted. However, the Board considers that the charges for use of the telephone are too high, especially as prisoners in the open estate have access to telephones throughout the day, when charges are higher.

3.3.4 The introduction of 'Purple Visits' has not been received as well as hoped, mainly due to the restrictions on this service. Several prisoners have questioned the timings available. If they have families who are working, or children at school, they would not be available in the daytime and therefore, they would like early evening slots (see paragraph 7.4).

## **TO THE GOVERNOR**

3.3.5 There is an urgent need to find new office accommodation for the drug service and Custody to Work teams, who are currently housed in offices within the former oil rig buildings. These buildings are due for demolition in the very near future (see paragraph 6.5.2).

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

3.4.1 The Board is pleased that funding has been agreed to build one new residential unit on site, which will, once handed over, become a reception billet. This new billet is situated towards the rear of the site and should be safer for those who are at risk of abscond from an open establishment as they will be sited further away from the main gate and fences. In addition, funding has been agreed for the replacement of the fire alarm system, which is well under way. The Board also notes that funding for the demolition of the old hangars and replacement of the gym and timber workshop has been approved, in principle. It is hoped that work will start in early.





3.4.2 It was good to see the introduction of electronic visits, allowing prisoners to use mobile phones to make video calls to family. These phones are lodged with the prison and handed out when being used for making video calls under staff supervision. Mobile PIN phones were given out for those who were shielding, to help them maintain family contact.

Items from the last report	Progress
Implementation of the abscond strategy	This strategy was started in early 2020, when the establishment was having regular receptions. Prior to the pandemic, there were nine absconds, and there have been only four since then. The building of two new billets within the prison site to house new receptions, as well as careful risk management, should help reduce the risk of abscond
Installation of the new fire alarm system	Eventually, financial approval for this work was given and the work was started in August 2020, with completion due by the end of 2021
Job club	Jobs are being advertised for prisoners on release, and this has been well received

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

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

4.1.1 On arrival at HMP Kirkham, all prisoners go through a comprehensive induction process, including interviews with staff. Transferring prisoners are checked by healthcare staff for obvious signs of infection and given a 'first night information' pack prepared by the Partners of Prisoners (POPS) family support group. New prisoners are isolated from the main camp in a two-storey building, which allows for a separate quarantine period, by arrival week, before they join the main camp after two weeks. Each storey is segregated and, on a two-week rotation, populated in week 1, with the prisoners then moved on to the main area of the prison at the end of week 2, assuming that they have all returned negative tests. That storey is then deep cleaned, to allow the next cohort of prisoners to arrive.

4.1.2 During lockdown, the normal interaction between prison orderlies and newcomers was not possible. This had been a valuable part of the induction process. Throughout the pandemic, new arrivals have come from a variety of prisons, and often in large numbers on the same day of the week. This causes staffing issues and can result in delays to prisoner clearance.

4.1.3 Accurate property recording is essential, but is time consuming. More evenly distributed planned transfers throughout the week would ease periods of congestion. Only one abscond from the arrival suite was recorded during the year, compared with up to 20 in previous years.

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

4.2.1 There has only been one incident of self-harm during the year; this was by a prisoner who was being returned to closed conditions and threatened self-harm to try to prevent that return. Over the year, only six assessment, care in custody and treatment (ACCT) documents have been opened, which is a large decrease from 2019 (16). A number of challenge, support and intervention plans (CSIPs) have been opened, the largest number due to bullying, with mental health also being prominent.

4.2.2 The prison has a team of Listeners, which the Blackpool Samaritans selected from volunteers among the prisoners, and then trained. Pre-lockdown, there were 22 Listeners in place. During lockdown, a telephone system was set up, allowing continuing contact between the Listeners and the Samaritans. This allowed the service to continue, for those who needed it. A total of at least 430 contacts were recorded during the year, with 10 Listeners still in place at the end of the year.

4.2.3 There have been no deaths in custody in the reporting period.

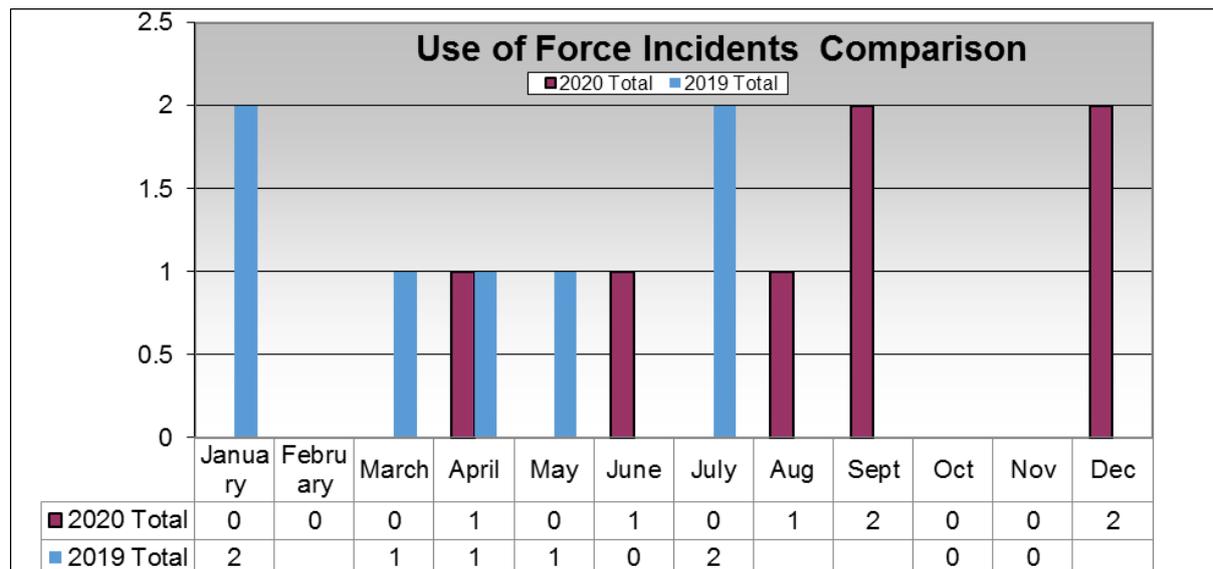
#### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation**

4.3.1 There have been seven reported incidents of violence over the reporting period, six being prisoner on prisoner, with only one prisoner-on-staff incident. On analysis, these incidents have been due to retaliation, drug dealing and debt issues.

The reduced access to the gym and exercise facilities, and work, and suspension of release on temporary licence (ROTL) have meant that prisoners are spending long periods of time in their billets, which can lead to frustration and an inability to 'let off steam', resulting in arguments and, occasionally, violence.

#### 4.4 Use of force

4.4.1 During the year, there were only seven incidents which resulted in the use of force, the same number as in 2019. These incidents all occurred after lockdown in March, which is consistent with the incidents of violence (see section 4.3).



#### 4.5 Substance misuse

4.5.1 Access to and use of drugs continues to be an issue at Kirkham. As stated earlier in this report, a number of large 'drug drops' were attempted during the lockdown; although some were intercepted, it is obvious that many were not. Over the year, there were 281 drugs finds, but it should be noted that 33% of that total happened before the March lockdown.

4.5.2 Regular drug testing was suspended from April but was reintroduced towards the end of the year, the positive rate running at around 33%.

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

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

5.1.1 Following the lockdown in March 2020, Board members have not been able to access any of the billets. Consequently, it is not possible to comment on the state of repair of the billets. However, it is understood that some prisoners have converted areas of the billet into makeshift gyms.

5.1.2 The operational capacity of the prison is normally 657 but stands at 533, significantly below maximum capacity, for the following reasons:

- the assessment of two two-storey billets as fire risks in July/August, resulting in the movement of prisoners to other billets within the prison. Following financial approval, a major building project is now under way to replace them, so they will be demolished
- the start of an 18-month fire alarm replacement project, which renders two billets out of use at any one time
- the restrictions placed on the transfer of prisoners between prisons and the need to for new arrivals to self-isolate for 14 days
- delays in the four new prefabricated temporary accommodation blocks being commissioned.

5.1.3 The installation of the new accommodation project has experienced a number of setbacks, including:

- an inadequate power supply from the sub-station
- delays in sourcing generators to provide power to the new billets
- repeated snagging
- delays in the installation of kitchenettes in each of the blocks; and
- waiting for additional funding to be approved.

5.1.4 As a result, the project was delayed by several months while funding was obtained to hire a number of (expensive) generators. It remains unclear why this critical issue was not identified at the planning stage. Of the four blocks, only two are currently being used.

### **Clothing**

5.1.5 Prisoners wear their own clothes, except where specialist clothing is required – notably, on the farm and in the dining hall. While clothing is not an issue, there were many challenges encountered during the lockdown in relation to the operation of the laundrette. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the efforts made by civilian and prison staff in manning the laundrette throughout the lockdown period.

### **Food**

5.1.6 The food at Kirkham remains generally excellent. As Board members conducting weekly rota visits were unable to visit the billets, the main opportunity to see the prisoners was at lunchtime. Consequently, Board members were present in the dining hall and were able to observe the menus and choices on offer – and the

reaction of the prisoners – over a prolonged period. There have not been any food complaints throughout the reporting period.

## **5.2 Segregation, special accommodation**

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

5.2.2 Originally, there were four traditional cells but now only two remain. The other two were converted into informal holding cells, which are carpeted, hold soft furnishings and have bookshelves with a supply of books.

5.2.3 While the SHRAB received a makeover in 2017, it is looking tired and would benefit from a refurbishment. In particular, the plastic screens around the toilets should be replaced, as several of the retaining plastic clips are broken and the screens do not provide adequate privacy.

5.2.4 As mentioned above, there were a number of occasions when the SHRAB could not hold all the prisoners awaiting transfer. While alternative accommodation was identified, it would help if a clear policy was developed to clarify the actions that staff should take if such an occurrence were to take place in the future.

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

5.3.1 Prisoners are treated both fairly and humanely, and the relationship between prisoners and staff has improved markedly over the past 12 months. Calm, clear and positive leadership from the SMT has contributed to a relaxed atmosphere and this quickly transmitted itself to the additional staff drafted in from other prisons during the lockdown.

5.3.2 However, there is, understandably, considerable unhappiness among the prisoners at not being able to take advantage of ROTL and family visits, and many of the prisoners have been unable to meet their families since last March. The introduction of mobile phones and laptop computers, and the increase in the telephone credits have gone some way to help. While still prone to grumble, prisoners are aware of the wider picture and acknowledge that the Governor and his team are doing everything possible to ensure that the daily regime reflects, to the fullest possible extent, the current tier/level in force.

5.3.3 The prisoner-led Kirkham council has been in place for some time now and has proved an exceptionally useful forum for the Governor to feed back on a regular basis about changes to the tier system and the consequent impact on the daily regime. As a result of the lockdown, monthly meetings were suspended but the Governor has held, often impromptu, meetings in venues that enabled social distancing to take place, to inform billet representatives of important changes.

5.3.4 In general, prisoners are able to approach staff and this was clearly apparent during extended outdoor exercise periods, when there was a good rapport between prisoners and staff.

## **5.4 Equality and diversity**

5.4.1 The equalities action team (EAT) is chaired by the head of community safety and equalities. Under normal circumstances the EAT meets on a monthly basis; however, because of the pandemic the group has not met since March 2020. Nevertheless, a proactive approach was adopted and there is a much stronger focus and greater awareness of equality and diversity issues through the regular publication of information to all the billets.

5.4.2 The appointment of new prisoner representatives has also provided a more positive impetus particularly in the way in which the major faith festivals were recognised. Ramadan and Diwali were managed successfully while maintaining social distancing and Black History Month, which was observed by Kirkham, was well received.

5.4.3 It is clear that the SMT is committed to ensuring that equality and diversity are seen as normal and not as an add-on. However, while it appears that considerable resources have been allocated to promoting these issues at HQ level, at ground level prisons require adequate resources, in terms of funding and staff, to ensure the success of this important initiative.

5.4.4 During the reporting period, 17 discrimination incident report forms were raised. In addition, a total of 59 CSIPs were raised, which resulted in 26 being opened. While this is slightly higher than in previous years, it is seen as a positive sign that there is confidence by the prisoners in the process and they are prepared to formally report incidents.

5.4.5 It is noted that the four mobility scooters are still being used to enable prisoners to get around the site. However, not all areas can be accessed easily and it is recommended that the issues identified in the action plan drawn up following the publication of the 'disability audit' in 2019 are progressed when funding allows.

5.4.6 Similarly, the rehabilitative culture strategy group under the direction of the Deputy Governor, to address learning and development issues, has also not been able to meet since the lockdown in March 2020.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

5.5.1 The small chaplaincy team has been through a torrid time during the reporting period. At the outset, the team met prisoners throughout the day to discuss any issues they had. Following the initial lockdown in March 2020, the team, ably led by the managing chaplain, redoubled their efforts to ensure that the needs of the prisoners were catered for.

5.5.2 The team also had the difficult job of delivering bad news relating to the illness or death of a family member, and was provided with a tablet computer to enable the prisoners to make real-time contact with family members.

5.5.3 Virtually all the extraneous activities organised by the chaplaincy team have had to be cancelled this year. These included family days during the school holidays, a lifer group focusing on long-term prisoners who are close to release, and an isolated prisoners' group for those who are not receiving visits. Nevertheless, the team managed to organise an excellent carol service. A small group of singers, accompanied by the Bishop of Burnley and a few members of the local Salvation Army band, walked around the prison playing carols outside every billet. This event was well received by the prisoners, who appreciated the efforts made to improve morale at a very difficult time for everyone.

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

5.6.1 A new system was introduced in January 2020. There are four levels: support, citizen, advocate and ambassador. Movement up through the levels is achieved by review. Each case is dealt with sympathetically and there is an appeals system. The IEP system was temporarily suspended during the first lockdown period but has since been reintroduced. Prisoners are informed in writing of any issues and can submit written responses before a final decision is taken; more serious cases are seen formally. The ambassador level is considered a worthwhile achievement, with access to higher levels of personal cash, more visits, additional gym sessions and so on.

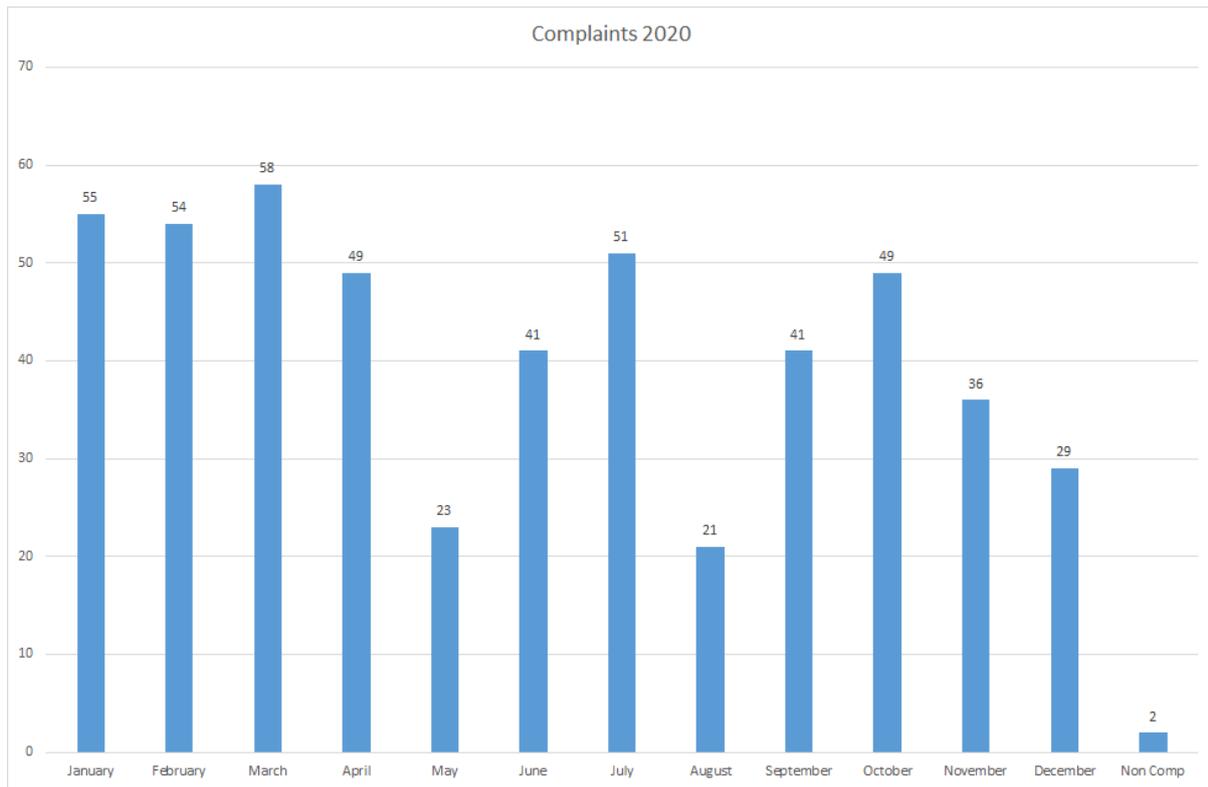
5.6.2 While the IEP system is seen by the prisoners as being procedurally just overall, feedback indicated that there was a slight imbalance in the way it was managed, with petty issues resulting in the loss of privileges while little credit was given for any positive actions.

5.6.3 **Adjudications** - the presence of an independent adjudicator to consider adjudications was in the process of being reviewed at the beginning of lockdown. Since March 2020, governors consider all adjudications and a more relaxed, sensitive and measured approach is evident. Of necessity, a large percentage of charges is suspended and this is seen as a pragmatic response, given that there is little point in awarding a prisoner loss of gym facilities (for instance) when he is unable to access the gym because of the lockdown.

5.6.4 The Board will continue to monitor this pivotal area, and in particular the decisions made once the review into the future management of adjudications is completed and a way ahead identified.

## **5.7 Complaints**

5.7.1 A total of 508 prisoner complaints were received during the year. A dedicated member of staff manages the complaints system and proactively chases up late responses when necessary, contacting other establishments for a response. The greatest majority of complaints are property based but a breakdown between categories was not available. The chart below shows the total number of complaints received on a monthly basis.



## 5.8 Property

5.8.1 Property issues still leave prisoners clearly frustrated, having exhausted the prison complaints system and with no one else to turn to except the Board. As a result of the lockdowns and the relatively small number of prisoners being transferred, property has not been a major issue this year.

5.8.2 Nevertheless, the long-term issues associated with property, across the prison estate, continue to present issues. This was highlighted in one particular instance when a prisoner was returned to closed conditions with several bags. The receiving prison refused to accept more than the regulation three bags. It has to be remembered that many of the prisoners transferring between prisons may have been in prison for many years and as a result have accumulated personal items well in excess of the permitted allowance.

5.8.3 Clearer – and more realistic – guidance on the transfer of property between prisons would be well received, and as a result would reduce the angst among prisoners and provide clearer directions to staff.

5.8.4 At a more local level, and acknowledging the issue raised above, a large amount of property was held in Kirkham at the beginning of the year. It is noted that a major effort has been made to transfer the property to other prisons, and the property now held is within manageable proportions.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Physical healthcare**

6.1.1 The Spectrum healthcare team is well motivated and cohesive. Training is a priority for the team, which has been upskilled to provide care and support to prisoners with long-term health conditions.

6.1.2 Training has been undertaken to provide a nurse prescribing service. A healthcare support worker has been trained to provide health promotion. This has been an especially useful tool when promoting the COVID-19 vaccine both to prisoners and staff. Although a small team, it provides a well-trained service that puts the prisoners in its care at the centre of everything it does.

6.1.3 Of all the teams at Kirkham, healthcare has probably been most affected by the pandemic, due to COVID-19 testing. At the time of writing, the team is planning a COVID-19 vaccination service for prisoners, in line with NHS policy. The healthcare team has been especially busy during 2020. One of the key aspects has been the provision of a high-quality service to the prisoners shielding during this pandemic. As well as providing healthcare services, health education has also been undertaken with this group. Healthcare and prison staff/managers work extremely well together.

6.1.4 Dental services are provided by Smart Dental. At the time of writing, there is a waiting list to access dental care (impacted by COVID-19). Emergency treatment is being given, and an extra dental session has been allocated per week. Aerosol generating procedures are performed at the end of a clinic session, in line with infection control guidelines.

### **6.2 Mental healthcare**

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

6.2.2 The Trust supports prisoners before release by liaising with external health professionals, thus ensuring continuity of care.

### **6.3 Social care**

6.3.1 Lancashire County Council (LCC) undertakes social care assessments at the prison. Spectrum provides social care packages once LCC has developed a care plan.

6.3.2 Social care needs are identified during prisoners' initial health screening. Mobility and health aids can be accessed through the healthcare department and LCC.

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

6.4.1 Due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, exercise regimes were curtailed at times this year. Time out of billets was dependent on the prison regime at the time and the tier/level mandated by the Prison Service.

6.4.2 The sports hall was closed for all of 2020 due to structural issues, although the gym and equipment area were available for use when restrictions allowed. The floor in that area was damaged following heavy rains, so a temporary gym was built in the former stores area which would allow up to four prisoners from different billets – more if they are from the same household billet – to use the gym at one time (social distancing regulations). This also is now defunct due to the COVID-19 national lockdown. Plans for a new gym are in hand.

6.4.3 The 'trim trail' was in use for some of the year but was taken out of use for safety reasons while building work was ongoing in that area. Other areas of the grounds were made available for some outdoor exercise provision. This was greatly appreciated by the prisoners.

## **6.5 Drug rehabilitation**

6.5.1 Substance misuse services are provided by Spectrum Healthcare Services. There are currently four full-time equivalent staff members and one manager.

6.5.2 The team has three vacancies (two at NHS band 5 – an individual is currently undergoing pre-employment checks for one of these roles – and one at NHS band 3). Its current building has been condemned due to fire safety issues. The service is currently awaiting relocation. At present, no new premises have been identified for use. New premises require computer access for NHS systems.

6.5.3 The facilities have been made COVID-19 safe, according to the service providers, but staff are not permitted to use them to see prisoners due to the need to reduce footfall in the area – the entrance area is shared with a residential billet. Use of a room in the healthcare building is provided instead. Currently, the service has 150 prisoners on its files. This figure is arbitrary as there may be prisoners with substance misuse issues unknown to the service.

6.5.4 Normally, the service would offer an open-door policy, but this has stopped due to COVID-19 restrictions. Moreover, prisoners are not getting the full substance misuse service they would normally be given by Spectrum due to the need to limit numbers and appointments, so staff were not able to see those using the service as regularly as they would have previously done. A practitioner assesses all new arrivals. Joint working between the substance misuse team and the wider prison is good. Prescribing for those with clinical needs is flexible, and all treatment is personalised.

## **6.6 Soft skills**

6.6.1 There is an over-50s group which, prior to COVID-19 restrictions, was well attended. Other group sessions which were being run by Spectrum have also had to

be postponed for now, but it is hoped that these group therapies can be reintroduced when safe to do so. Gatherings/social groups were severely curtailed this year due to the COVID-19 virus restrictions.

6.6.2 Recoop, an organisation that promotes the care, resettlement and rehabilitation of older prisoners, offenders and ex-offenders, primarily focusing on those over the age of 50, has, together with Lancashire County Council, entered into a three-year agreement with the North West Prison Group. This enabled them to set up a group at Kirkham during the year and to start training 'buddies' within the prison from volunteer prisoners with good security and behaviour records. Being classed as an essential service, it was able to operate within the prison during lockdown. A total of four buddies have now been appointed and are being trained. They hope to instigate a mental health strategy, identify new prisoners who may need help and provide end-of-life counselling.

## 7. Progression and resettlement

### 7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 Due to COVID-19, in-cell learning became the only option for providing education to prisoners. This consisted initially of activity and distraction packs. There was generally a poor take-up.

7.1.2 As things eased, lessons and other training elements were delivered on a one-to-one basis, with work being completed in cell. These measures complied with the prison's quality assurance requirements. Later in the year, activities moved to being delivered on a one-to-three basis, with the basic functional skills courses taking priority and vocational activities continued. Some lessons were held remotely, with prisoners' work being scanned and sent to the tutor at home. Feedback was provided regularly. The expectation is that all prisoners improve by a minimum of one level.

7.1.3 With such a diverse prison population, the range of educational provision ranges from basic literacy, in conjunction with the Shannon Trust, to higher-level degree courses through the University of Central Lancashire and Lancaster University, funded mainly through the Prisoners' Education Trust. Blended learning, utilising evening and weekend activities together with the development of the virtual campus and other media streams, presents the potential for increased educational provision in the near future.

7.1.4 The library, in its previous form, pre-COVID-19, has been forced to close. Initially, boxes of books were placed in each billet. This progressed to a trolley service, and ultimately a satellite library was formed in an accessible area and was subject to the usual COVID-19 restrictions. This is relatively well stocked and popular with the prisoners.

7.1.5 Some of the artwork created in the library was entered for the Koestler Awards for arts in criminal justice and two of the items below received Commended awards.



### 7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 The pandemic has prevented any off-site working, although opportunities for employment still exist within the prison – in particular, Recycling Lives and Calpac. Waiting lists to join these operations are growing in the absence of ROTL. Similarly,

Custody to Work has suspended its operations but continues to have a dialogue with those outside companies which employ prisoners, to ensure that the employment can continue once regulations allow.

7.2.2 Most vocational courses were suspended for much of the year but, thankfully, are now beginning to resume. Barbering and forklift training have resumed, as has Railtrack. Workshop facilities were necessarily closed but have now reopened on a phased basis, with groups' access being staggered. A Civil Engineering Academy is planned for 2021. In-house employment opportunities are regularly displayed around the prisoner support centre.

7.2.3 In 2020, a total of 52 prisoners undertook internal work-related courses, while 45 were placed on external (college) courses.

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

7.3.1 After some initial issues, mainly involving incomplete offender assessment system (OASys) documentation from former establishments, things have improved markedly over the year. An increasing number of OASys assessments have now been updated prior to arriving in open conditions. Reviews are now held routinely. Staffing is adequate and is soon to be improved with the appointment of six additional offender managers.

7.3.2 The Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model is in the course of development and is soon to be rolled out. Parole hearings are often deferred, and when active take place virtually. Links with probation services are good and will be further enhanced with the implementation of OMiC. Due to the pandemic, ROTL has been, regrettably yet necessarily, suspended, although home detention curfew (HDC) has been able to continue. The number of absconds over the year has decreased significantly compared with that in 2019. There is still a residual number for whom frustration over the absence of ROTL is the main cause. Risk management meetings are held on a frequent basis, and result in a large number of returns to closed conditions.

### **7.4 Family contact**

7.4.1 Visits were curtailed at the beginning of the pandemic. Visits have taken two forms – 'Purple Visits' and mobile phone contacts. Much technical and logistical work had to be undertaken to enable Purple Visits to take place. Phones are provided by the prisoner, checked and kept in a secure place, to be used solely for family contacts. The latter has proved more popular than the former, for a number of reasons. Calls can be of a longer duration, are less contrived and are not susceptible to technical difficulties, such as a lockout due to rapid unpredictable movement by one of the parties. The take-up of the Purple Visits is therefore very low. There is concern, however, that only those with sufficient means are able to purchase a phone and thereby take advantage of the opportunity. Thus, those who cannot afford a phone are forced to fall back on the alternative.

7.4.2 The POPS manager oversees the operation of visits and goes to great lengths to make them as fulfilling as possible. They also place the Governor's

newsletters on the POPS website and Twitter. POPS has been active in the prison during the year, particularly during periods when family visiting has been restricted. Although alternative contact between prisoners and families is readily available via telephone and virtual visits, not all prisoners find this to be an easy experience. POPS has been instrumental in making these contacts run as smoothly as possible and distributing 'diversion' literature to all billets.

7.4.3 Serious illness and bereavements within prisoners' families are difficult issues, which the prison deals with sensitively. Telephone and video calls are provided and attendance at funerals is facilitated, subject to risk assessment, time and geographical constraints.

## **7.5 Resettlement planning**

7.5.1 'Through the gate' services, operated by the CRC, have mainly worked remotely during the pandemic. CRC staff have had some limited presence in the prison but communication with the prisoners has been, necessarily, undertaken on a written basis. Twelve weeks prior to release, each prisoner is contacted, and asked to complete a detailed questionnaire. This then becomes a working document for the CRC to determine whether suitable accommodation is available and if financial arrangements have to be put in place for the opening of bank accounts and payment of benefits. All of these processes are undertaken prior to release, coupled with the provision of a formal letter of introduction. Support is also available in accessing mental health and addiction agencies in the community.

7.5.2 Shelter, in addition to assisting with accommodation, offers advice on debt management and will expedite the opening of bank accounts. In 2020, 131 applications were made on behalf of prisoners to open bank accounts, of which 111 were successful. In some circumstances, mobile phones are provided, to enable prisoners released with no fixed abode to maintain contact with probation staff and other external agencies. Links are maintained with charities and local authorities, which are generally positive in their support for securing accommodation for ex-prisoners – but private landlords less so. Shelter staff go to great lengths to accommodate prison leavers. In 2020, 111 prisoners were in settled accommodation, from a total of 114 applications, leaving 3 prisoners who were given appointments to report to their local authority housing departments. Letters from released prisoners bear ample testimony to this.

7.5.3 If there is no prospect of employment on release, prisoners are referred to the information, advice and guidance (IAG) service, which will offer advice as well as directing the prisoner to the job vacancy board in the prisoner support centre. Custody to Work offers a similar service for those who have secured employment themselves. When available, ROTL provides a useful vehicle in securing outside employment. The prison works closely with Recycling Lives in providing employment both internally and on release.

7.5.4 Under normal circumstances, Jobcentre Plus sees prisoners six weeks prior to release and offers advice on benefits and employment. During the pandemic, however, issues have largely been dealt with over the telephone. Regular newsletters are circulated within the prison, detailing job opportunities and also advice and guidance on benefits and pension issues, together with details of the

support available from local councils. The relevant Jobcentre Plus telephone number is included in the discharge packs provided.

7.5.5 The prison has embarked on discussions with the New Futures Network and Achieve NW, with a view to investigating further opportunities for job brokering in addition to the work currently undertaken by the IAG service. It is intended to increase the complement of IAG workers in the course of 2021. In 2020, IAG successfully placed 78 prisoners in full-time employment, while Achieve NW placed a further 12.

## 8. The work of the IMB

8.1.1 The Board is a small but enthusiastic team with a broad mix of skills. Only one Board meeting was cancelled during the year (the first meeting after the March lockdown), others taking place by teleconferencing. Once the prison had put the regime changes in place following lockdown, the Board continued to visit actively, with 105 visits made, as shown in the table below. We were able to talk to prisoners (socially distanced) when they were on their exercise times but it was agreed that we would not go into any of the billets.

8.1.2 There was a recruitment campaign towards the end of 2020; two applicants were interviewed and deemed suitable. It is hoped that they will be able to join the Board in early 2021.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6 (includes 2 resignations and 2 transfers in)
Total number of visits to the establishment	105
Total number of segregation reviews attended	n/a

## Applications to the IMB

During the initial lockdown, when members were not able to visit the prison, application forms and envelopes addressed to the Board were placed in the dining hall and were posted in the IMB post box in the prisoners support centre. On receipt of the envelope, the IMB clerk scanned the application and forwarded it to the Board member on rota, who dealt with the issue and provided a response to the clerk, who forwarded the response to the prisoner. Once members were able to resume visits to the establishment, they were able to deal directly with any applications.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Previous reporting year</b>	<b>Current reporting year</b>
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	0	3
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	0	0
C	Equality	0	0
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	2	1
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	0	1
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	0	1
F	Food and kitchens	0	0
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	3	4
H1	Property within this establishment	1	2
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	6	2
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	0	0
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	6	3
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	1	0
K	Transfers	1	1
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system	1	1
	Total number of applications	21	19



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