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Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Buckley Hall  
Buckley Hall Road  
Rochdale  
Lancs  
OL12 9DP

MoJ Ref: SUB 083703

4 December 2020

Dear ████████,

**HMP BUCKLEY HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 AUGUST 2019 – 31 JULY 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 July 2020. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you were short of Board members during the reporting year.

I was pleased to hear that the use of video-link visits has been popular amongst prisoners since its introduction at HMP Buckley Hall. In line with the recommendations of the Farmer Review (2017) it has always been our intention to roll-out secure video calling technology across the entire estate. The suspension of social visits due to the pandemic led to the introduction of video calling at pace. The roll-out began on 15 May 2020 and is now available in more than 100 prisons. We are currently working on the policies/procedures to ensure that video calling remains embedded as a permanent resource in all establishments to help support and maintain family contact.

Like the Board, I recognise the importance of having In-Cell Telephony across the estate as it allows easier access to family/friends and support frameworks. The In-Cell Telephony project has now completed just over 60% of the estate. Installing infrastructure into the prison environment is, however, complex and can be time consuming due to local restrictions and security implications. It can take up to 12 months to install In-Cell Telephony into each prison.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) determines the priority order of deployment and unfortunately HMP Buckley Hall is not currently in scope to receive In-Cell Telephony. The establishments currently in scope are financially covered under an investment fund, meaning only a certain amount of sites can be completed due to limited funds available at this time. Additional establishments will be added to the scope for In-Cell Telephony if further funding becomes available.

I note that the temporary mobile phones issued to HMP Buckley Hall, and across the prison estate, have been a success and there are no plans at this stage to remove them. The withdrawal of the mobiles would happen as part of the wider withdrawal of Covid-19 mitigations over a period of 3 - 4 months from April 2021 at the earliest. Therefore, the mobiles are currently forecast to be in use until the end of July 2021 as a minimum.

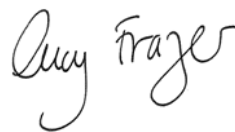
Despite the concerns raised in the report, I was pleased to hear that the respectful and positive staff/prisoner relationships are, in the Board's view, key to the success of HMP Buckley Hall. Your comments on the handling of Covid-19 were encouraging to hear. I would also like to express my sheer gratitude to our Hidden Heroes for their work behind the scenes and who continue to work courageously throughout the pandemic on the front line. I was particularly sorry to read that a large number of staff had their cars vandalised in May 2020. It was, however, heartening to hear about the camaraderie among prison staff at HMP Hindley who organised a 'whip-round' to support their colleagues at HMP Buckley Hall.

It was also pleasing to hear that prisoners at HMP Buckley Hall are encouraged to think of others less fortunate than themselves, and that during the reporting period close to £8000 was raised by prisoners for charitable causes, both in the UK and overseas. This really is an excellent achievement and all those concerned should be very proud.

I note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report which the Governor will continue to keep you aware of as work continues. HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Justice Secretary and I appreciate the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Buckley Hall.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**LUCY FRAZER QC MP**

## Annex

### HMP BUCKLEY HALL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 AUGUST 2019 – 31 JULY 2020

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

##### **Accommodation**

###### *Cell occupancy*

The configuration of single and double cells on A wing will be reviewed as part of a strategic review of the drug strategy at HMP Buckley Hall.

###### *Healthcare rooms*

Locks have been fitted restricting access to healthcare staff only and sockets have been installed.

##### **Prisoners' Property**

It is disappointing that the new Prisoners' Property policy framework has not been published. The project involving 14 prisons has been concluded and HMPPS is working closely with stakeholders to consult on proposed changes to the policy. However, in light of the pressures placed on Boards by Covid-19, HMPPS agreed with the IMB Secretariat to push consultation with Boards back until August 2020. Consultation with operational colleagues is also expected to resume soon. The feedback received from IMB members is being considered alongside the comments received earlier on in the year from other stakeholders, with the intention that the revised draft policy framework will be circulated for wider consultation at the beginning of 2021. While digital improvements are being explored, the nature of that work means that any digital changes are likely to take longer to develop.

It should be noted that all prisoners, irrespective of the local incentive level, can have access to the permitted items listed under Part 1 of the National Facilities List set out in Annex C of the Incentives Policy Framework which went live in prisons on 13 January 2020. Governors can then choose to make additional items available from Part 2 of the list to those on the Standard and Enhanced levels or any additional levels introduced locally above Enhanced. Allowing prisons to determine locally what incentive level prisoners must be on to have access to these additional items provides them with the flexibility to tailor incentives to their local needs and challenges. Should a prisoner be subsequently transferred to another prison where items which they have earned are not permitted, the Incentives Policy Framework and Prison Service Instruction 12/2011 - Prisoners' Property makes it clear that the prisoner would normally be allowed to retain these items unless it is considered a risk to good order, discipline, security, safety or would exceed volumetric control limits.

##### **Security Department Staffing Levels**

The whole establishment has been re-profiled at Band 3 prison officer level. Resource is sufficient to deliver drug testing and searching. In addition, a third Custodial Manager will be deployed to support the security function.