

Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Buckley Hall

**For reporting year
1 August 2020 - 31 July 2021**

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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 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.

The induction unit for new prisoners is on one side of C Wing, and the Aspire unit on the other. The Aspire unit houses some 60 prisoners who are either complex or serving an indeterminate prison sentence and celebrated its second anniversary in October 2020. The prison is in the process of developing the drug recovery work already taking place on A wing and establishing an incentivised substance-free living unit.

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 for two years 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 October 2019, the prison celebrated its 25th anniversary.

In 2014, Buckley Hall was designated as a non-resettlement training prison, holding male prisoners with sentences of four years or more. According to the Bromley Briefing papers, 16% of the sentenced prison population are serving an indeterminate sentence whereas the figure for Buckley Hall is twice this number.

A number of services within the prison are subcontracted and among them are:
Education and Library: Novus (formerly The Manchester College)

Healthcare: Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH)

Visitors Reception: Partners of Prisoners and Families (POPS)

Drug & Alcohol Recovery: Delphi;

Facilities: Amey.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

3.1.1 This reporting year for this annual report on HMP Buckley Hall has been dominated and defined by Covid-19. Prison management has managed a turbulent and uncertain reporting year which began with a lockdown, followed by a period where some of the restrictions were relaxed, then the reintroduction of lockdown and, finally, some easing again of restrictions. In the judgement of the Board, the prison is ably led by an experienced, approachable and committed Governor and Deputy Governor. However, in this uncertain and changing environment they have been far from in control of their own destiny. Staff and managers at Buckley Hall have coped by drawing heavily on their traditional reserves of 'can do' and 'getting on with it'. A senior manager summed the prevailing attitude neatly as 'all in its stride'.

3.1.2 Nevertheless, the effect of Covid on staff should not be under-estimated and during the reporting year, a number have expressed some degree of physical and emotional fatigue and drop in resilience. Those who manage the staff detail have told the Board that it has become increasingly difficult to find replacement cover for absent staff, even with the offer of Payment Plus overtime.

3.1.3 Between April 2020 and July 2021, there were 105 positive Covid-19 tests among staff. In the peak months of October 2020 to February 2021, there were an average of 18.6 positive tests per month, with the peak in January 2021 of 37. These numbers inevitably impacted on the daily regime and it is to the credit of the vast majority of the prisoners at Buckley Hall that they accepted the restrictions with fortitude and good grace.

3.1.4 No aspect of prison life has been unaffected by Covid-19 and, looking to the future, it seems likely that some of the lessons learned during the reporting year will have a permanent impact on the prison landscape. For example, a return to HMIP's ambition for prisoners to be out of cell for at least 10 hours a day seems a most unlikely possibility. In addition, a number of officers and prison managers believe that most prisoners prefer an earlier evening lock-up. It is said the men prefer the quiet and safety of their own cell and will accept a reduced time out of cell in the evenings as long as their contact with family, showers, telephone, food and work/employment is sufficient. The Board's own random survey of prisoners revealed that the majority asked concur with this view.

3.1.5 From April 2020 to July 2021, there were 87 positive Covid-19 tests among the prisoners and in the peak months of January and February 2021, 39 and 26 positive cases were recorded. Fortunately, there have been no fatalities. Healthcare staff have been proactive in encouraging the men to have the Covid vaccine and at the end of the reporting year, 59% of the prisoners had received their second dose. There has been some resistance to receiving the vaccine among the men and on the same date it was reported that 30% of the men had declined the vaccine. As in the community the decline rate tends to be higher among younger prisoners.

3.1.6 During the reporting year, senior management introduced, a significant change to the format of the daily briefing and as a consequence, these briefings have become far more detailed and informative. The meetings between governors and prisoner Covid representatives have continued throughout the reporting year and provided a valuable two-way channel of communication. In addition to using the electronic kiosk for community notices, the prison has also made effective use of the Wayout TV channel to communicate information and updates to the men.

3.1.7 In the last four months of the reporting year, the prison incurred Covid-related costs in excess of £25,000 and the Board is concerned because this will not attract any additional funding and a considerable sum of money will have to be resourced locally from the existing prison's budget.

3.2 Main judgements

3.2.1 How safe is the prison?

The Board judges Buckley Hall to be a safe environment for the prisoners.

3.2.2 How fairly and humanely are prisoners treated?

Positive and constructive relationships between staff and prisoners have been an undoubted strength of the prison in the past. Because of Covid restrictions over the reporting year, this contact between staff and prisoners has been reduced but, it is to be hoped, this situation will improve as lockdown conditions are eased. The emphasis in the prison from the top down on treating prisoners with 'fairness and decency' remains central to its mission.

3.2.3 How well are prisoners' health and wellbeing needs met?

The Board considers the provision of health and wellbeing to have been good over the reporting year.

3.2.4 How well are prisoners progressed towards successful resettlement?

The lack of movement to open prisons and the restricted numbers on the courses in programmes have led to some considerable frustration for men wishing to progress during the reporting year. Unfortunately, any resolution of this situation has not been within the prison's control.

3.3 Main areas for development

TO THE MINISTER

Ensure the return of the independent adjudicator (see paragraph 5.2.9)

Endeavour to reduce the number of prisoners with indeterminate public protection (IPP) sentences (5.2.6 and 7.3.3-4)

TO THE PRISON SERVICE

Ensure the speedy resumption of moves to open and resettlement prisons (7.3.5 and 7.5.1)

Provide sufficient additional funding for the new integrated drug recovery wing (6.5.1)

Install in-cell telephony (7.4.8)

Provide secure medication in-cell facilities (6.1.14)

Improve the transfer of prisoners' monies between prisons in the private and public sector (5.1.16)

TO THE GOVERNOR

Review the criteria for prisoners to reside on D wing (4.4.6)

Ensure that all prisoners have ready access to a cell courtesy key (5.1.13)

Improve the playback facilities for the use of force assurance committee (4.5.3)

Increase the number of key work sessions as soon as is practical (5.3.3)

Install CCTV in the healthcare waiting area (6.1.17)

Increase the number of prisoners enrolled on programmes courses (6.6.5 and 6.6.2-3)

Review the decision to confiscate Sony Giga Jukes from newly arriving prisoners (5.8.4)

Review the operation of the current challenge, support and intervention plan (CSIP) scheme (4.4.9)

Ensure that the cell-bell call data is downloaded and monitored (5.1.3)

Improve the prisoner showers on the wing (5.1.8)

Provide newly arriving prisoners with a means of transporting their property to the wings (4.1.7)

3.4 Progress since the last report

- The introduction of a body scanner in reception to reduce the number of illegal items being smuggled into Buckley Hall by prisoners. (4.6.5)
- The efforts made to improve the cleanliness of the wings (5.1.1)
- The erection of a car park barrier and fob entry system to reduce the likelihood of vandalism to staff cars noted in last year's annual report
- The detailed and informative daily briefings (3.1.6)
- Increased use of body-worn video cameras by staff (4.5.2)
- Improved monitoring of prisoner complaints (5.7.1)

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1 The induction of new prisoners has continued throughout the year largely based on their wing and primarily, by the induction orderly. The information and assurance group advisor should be commended for arranging face-to-face interviews - at which a future action plan is agreed - with every new prisoner since August 2020. The sequencing board for new prisoner arrivals resumed towards the very end of the reporting year when lockdown conditions were eased. It should be noted that on their remote inspection during the reporting year, the operational and system assurance group (OSAG) commented favourably, in their report, on the induction and early days processes at Buckley Hall.

4.1.2 The arrival of new prisoners at Buckley Hall has been monitored by the Board on a number of occasions. The men were spoken to by reception officers politely and respectfully. It is worthy of note that operational support grade (OSG) staff do not appear to be routinely used in reception and, arguably, could undertake some of the administrative tasks currently performed by prison officers deployed in reception.

4.1.3 After each new arrival has gone through the identification process, he is placed in front of the body scanner. The reception waiting rooms are clean and tidy and the reception orderly provides a useful and additional source of information to the new arrivals. While in reception, the new arrivals are interviewed in private by healthcare staff and first night officers.

4.1.4 The officers involved in those first night interviews monitored by the Board established a positive and good-natured rapport with the men being interviewed and explained clearly what would be happening in the first 24 hours at Buckley Hall. Some of the interviews were carried out in a rather cursory manner, typically, because many of the men were familiar with the questions asked and the procedures being described and it is important this approach is not applied to those who have been imprisoned for the first time. The Board monitored one group of men who arrived in reception at 1:40pm and were taken up to the wing at approximately 4:30pm – which was judged an acceptable time to complete the necessary administration.

4.1.5 During the year, the Board monitored the cells to be occupied by new intakes of men and, on each occasion, judged them clean, tidy and fully equipped. However, the Board also felt that some looked rather 'tired' and a little the worse for wear – some had missing wardrobe backs, one a broken wardrobe door, some with wardrobe rails missing and some with furniture not screwed to the wall. Whether this sets the scene for the high standards the prison will expect from new arrivals is, perhaps, in debate. However, when asked, the induction officers disputed the Board's judgement of the induction cells and felt that they were among the best in the prison.

4.1.6 The reverse cohorting unit (RCU) for quarantining new arrivals from the normal population is judged to have been well managed by the wing manager and staff. Not all the men have been at the same stage in quarantining and therefore staff had the complication of providing daily regimes for a number of different cohorts. The extremely limited time these men had out of cell at the start of the year was of concern but the prison did increase this over the course of the reporting year. Although Buckley Hall is now a 'green site', men arriving from 'amber' or 'red' sites are still required to spend time in an RCU.

4.1.7 New prisoners struggling to carry their heavy bags of property 'up the hill' from reception is an accepted practice at Buckley Hall, but not a very welcoming one. Less robust prisoners and those who have accumulated a lot of property over the years can find this initial experience of Buckley Hall off-putting. Given the Prison Service's generally poor record of managing prisoner property securely, the reluctance of the men to leave some of their belongings in reception and collect them at a later date is understandable.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1 Initially, the number of deliberate self-harm incidents fell during the lockdown. However, as the period of lockdown continued, the prison has seen an increase in the number of deliberate self-harm incidents.

4.2.2 From July - December 2019, there were a monthly average of 20.3 acts of deliberate self-harm recorded, whereas in July - December 2020, the monthly average fell to 7.66. This figure has risen and in the first six months of 2021, the average number of incidents of deliberate self-harm per month was 18, with a median of 18.5. However, the increase should be seen in context because, in relation to its comparator prisons between April – July 2021, Buckley Hall reported an average of 18 self-harm incidents, which equaled the median number of self-harm incidents for the comparators.

4.2.3 During the reporting year, the prison's management of one particularly serious incident of self-harm was observed by a Board member. The incident was reported to be well managed by staff who showed real concern for the prisoner concerned. The effective collaboration between healthcare, prison managers, uniform staff and paramedics involved was praised.

4.2.4 The safer custody department is commended for its detailed monthly analysis and report on self-harm within the prison and in their remote monitoring of Buckley Hall, OSAG judged the work of the prison on managing self-harm to be good.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction, self-isolation

4.3.1 As in many prisons, incidents of violence, debt and bullying fell during the reporting year and the real challenge is to maintain this as lockdown conditions are relaxed. Buckley Hall is judged by the Board to be a safe prison and in the Board's survey of 50 men carried out in February 2021, 95% of respondents said they felt their personal safety at the time was either 'good' or 'reasonable'. Following their remote visit, OSAG were pleased to note the low levels of violence at Buckley Hall.

4.3.2 Vandalism too in Buckley Hall is relatively low compared to other prisons in the north west. In June 2021, the cost of vandalism for the month was £2,427 which compares to a monthly average of £8,079 for each of the 10 other north west prisons. In July 2021, the corresponding figures were £3,793 and £8,324.

4.3.3 However, there can be no grounds for complacency and in the three months of May – July 2021, there were an average of seven violent incidents per month – including a number of assaults on staff by prisoners.

4.3.4 In December 2020, seven of the 'top 10' men on the safety diagnostic information tool had arrived at Buckley Hall within the previous three months. A second analysis in July 2021 of the 'top 10' showed that the overwhelming majority had arrived at Buckley Hall from the start of the calendar year. If this trend were to continue, there is clearly a possibility it may have an impact on the safe nature of the prison.

4.3.5 A number of officers have pointed out to Board members the high number of young and relatively inexperienced officers on the wings and expressed some concern that for the newest recruits, their only experience of managing prisoners individually and in large groups is during lockdown. One young officer spoken to by the Board said he was enjoying his job but felt it would be beneficial to have more experienced officers on the wing to support new staff. On that particular day, the maximum length of service among the other officers working on his wing was three years, with an average of two years.

4.3.6 In terms of violence reduction, OSAG commended the work of the prison. As part of its work, each month, the safer custody department publishes and circulates a detailed report and analysis on incidents of violence within the prison. All incidents of violence are fully investigated by a member of the safer custody department.

4.3.7 Few men choose to self-isolate at Buckley Hall but of those who do, the Board is satisfied they are offered the full daily regime, unless operational reasons have to prevail.

4.4 Vulnerable prisoners, safeguarding

4.4.1 During the reporting year, the absence of telephone contact details for the Samaritans and other support organisations in the vicinity of the wing phone hoods and kiosks was brought to the Board's attention. A new poster was commissioned by

the prison and up-to-date contact lists of useful numbers are now posted near the communal phones.

4.4.2 A new scheme bringing 'therapy dogs' into the prison for the prisoners began year in October 2020. Men who might benefit were identified and the scheme was well-received by those given access to the dogs. The scheme began with real promise but seems to have become less evident over recent months.

4.4.3 The safer custody department holds a weekly multidisciplinary safety intervention meeting (SIM). Board members have monitored a number of these SIM meetings and report they are well-attended by staff and look in detail at those prisoners giving cause for concern. The SIM meetings continued remotely even during the height of the lockdown period. Any member of staff can put forward the name of a prisoner for discussion by the group.

4.4.4 In the judgement of the Board, the safer custody department is a force for good within the prison and it has viewed with some concern the regular redeployment of its staff due to operational reasons. The Board, therefore, commends the Governor's decision in July 2021 to ring-fence some of the staffing in the department.

4.4.5 The Listeners scheme has continued during lockdown – albeit in a rather moribund fashion. There are now only six Listeners registered and, because of compartmentalisation, their work has largely been confined to working singly and informally on their own wing. Because of Covid restrictions, the Samaritans organization has provided the group with rather more limited support than has previously been the case.

4.4.6 Some of the men who are considered particularly vulnerable or have complex needs continue to be placed on D wing for their safety or wellbeing and given the general stability and calm of the wing this is a sensible decision. For a number of years now, prison management has debated the purpose and rationale of this particular wing.

4.4.7 The staff training for the new assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) version 6, for those identified as at risk of self-harm or suicide, is judged to have been thorough and comprehensive. During the reporting year, the number of open ACCT plans reached their peak of 17 in December 2020. For the first six months of 2021, there were a monthly average of 11 open ACCT documents. The Board is satisfied with the prison's organisation, management and delivery of the ACCT process.

4.4.8 Being confined to their cell for most of the day means that men may feel much more isolated than normal. A number of men receive a daily welfare check by officers and the completion of these checks is an agenda item on the staff daily briefing. However, the number of men receiving these daily welfare checks is limited and includes those who are already being monitored on an open ACCT document.

4.4.9 Men who have been placed on CSIP documents are discussed each week at the SIM meeting and the scheme has the potential to provide a valuable support to vulnerable prisoners. However, CSIP reviews are not usually a multidisciplinary

exercise and can seem fairly static documents. Moreover, not all sections of the prison appear to make use of the scheme and most referrals come from either the residential units or safer custody team. Taking a snapshot during the reporting year, the Prison National Offender Management Information System (P-NOMIS) entries of 13 men on CSIP on one particular day were inspected; five had an entry made the previous day, five had an entry made within the previous three days and for three men the last entry was more than three days previously.

4.4.10 There appears to have been some reduction in the number of restorative approaches referrals being made and in its overall profile within the prison. In the first six months of 2021, there was an average of three referrals per month.

4.4.11 A group of men who were regarded as being physically vulnerable by healthcare were interviewed by the Board during the reporting year. The overwhelming majority of these men were satisfied that the prison had looked after their safety and wellbeing. However, because of the increase in positive Covid cases in the community at the time they expressed some concern that social distancing was becoming less evident among both staff and prisoners.

4.5 Use of force

4.5.1 During the year, the new digital use of force (UoF) reporting system became live. The tool is seen as an improvement in terms of efficiency and in identifying any missing paperwork. The Board is satisfied that the amount of incomplete UoF paperwork is much reduced from a few years ago and that its administration is well managed.

4.5.2 This reporting year has seen a significant improvement in the number of body-worn video cameras (BWVC) taken by staff at the start of their shift and staff attending an incident are now reminded by control to activate them. The figures for activating the BWVC are rising but capable of improvement;- between April to June 2021, BWVC footage was available for 70% of incidents involving UoF. In a planned removal a video recording is invariably taken.

4.5.3 The UoF assurance meeting takes place regularly and monitors the paperwork and footage of incidents where force has been used. The assurance group carries out a careful review of video evidence and questions whether there are any lessons to be learned. Unreliable playback facilities continue to hamper their ability to do so.

4.5.4 The detailed analysis produced for the quarterly UoF meeting reveals no obvious 'hot spots' nor issues connected with UoF and the protected characteristics. Moreover, in July 2021, the equalities report stated there was no evidence of any disproportionate use of force on groups with protected characteristics.

4.5.5 From April to June 2021, there were 38 reportable incidents involving UoF. However, it was stated that 26 of these were considered relatively low level, such as the use of handcuffs. The drawing of batons is extremely rare at Buckley Hall – taking two periods at random, none were drawn from July to September 2020 and none again in April to July 2021.

4.5.6 The use of PAVA in the establishment is restricted to the three officers currently trained in its use and has yet to be deployed.

4.5.7 In May 2021, there was a rather worrying rise to six in the injuries caused to staff, during spontaneous UoF incidents. Board members have observed a number of incidents involving UoF by staff during the year and reported that officers acted professionally, have been proportionate in their use of force and tried first to deescalate the situation.

4.5.8 Healthcare have always attended the UoF incidents observed by the Board during the reporting year. However, it is the case that the F213 forms, which report any injuries arising from UoF incidents, are not always completed promptly and in August 2021 14 were reported to be outstanding from July 2021.

4.6 Substance misuse

4.6.1 During lockdown, even though the supply of illegal drugs fell, in the absence of social visits and the reduced time prisoners spent out of their cell, disrupting the supply and availability of illegal drugs remained an ongoing battle for the prison. Prisoners continue to claim that illegal drugs are readily available and in the final month of the reporting year, 36% of the random MDTs recorded positive for either cannabis or synthetic cannabis.

4.6.2 The security department have had some considerable successes during the year and between April – July 2021, an average of 630g of drugs were found by staff per month and in two of these months, total finds in excess of one kilo were seized. The sums involved can be considerable and one find alone during the reporting year, had an estimated prison value in the region of £80,000.

4.6.3 However, just one parcel evading discovery can lead to a spike in cases of drug misuse, overdoses and 'Code Blue' and during the reporting year there have been cases where prisoners were perilously close to being a fatality statistic.

4.6.4 The North West search team has made a valuable contribution throughout the year to the effort to reduce the quantity of illegal drugs within the prison and the newly laid tarmac path around the external perimeter fence should, hopefully, assist staff in their efforts to limit the amount of 'throwovers'. Joint exercises with Greater Manchester Police have had some positive effects on dampening the supply of illegal items finding their way into the prison

4.6.5 The body scanner, which has been in use since February 2021, has disrupted some of the supply of illegal drugs. Indeed, on the first day of use it identified a prisoner trying to smuggle tobacco into the prison and it is now routine for all new prisoners to be scanned.

4.6.6 The ease with which some prisoners still seem able to acquire five-litre containers on the wing in which to brew 'hooch' remains of concern.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.1.1 Staff and wing cleaners are to be commended for their efforts to maintain standards of cleanliness throughout the reporting year and in the IMB survey in February 2021, the overwhelming majority of the men said they were satisfied with the cleanliness and hygiene of their wing. Achieving high hygiene standards on the wings has not been easy because compartmentalisation required the constant locking and unlocking of different groups of men throughout the day. New cleaning schedules were introduced on the wings at the start of the reporting year to raise the standard of cleanliness together with the appointment of a cleaning officer with responsibility for the work of the cleaners on each wing.

5.1.2 It is fair to report that during the reporting year, social distancing and the wearing of face covering have not been scrupulously observed by all prisoners on the wings. Wing officers have pointed out to the Board that they have to balance the health aspect against the risk of confronting a large number of non-compliant prisoners.

5.1.3 The in-cell call bell system was replaced on two of the wings at the start of this calendar year. However, it is not apparent that the electronic data it provides on officers' response times to cell bells is yet being downloaded and monitored by wing managers. It is, therefore, not possible for either the Board or the Prison to know whether cell bells are being responded to within the recommended five minutes.

5.1.4 OSAG reported favourably on the structured wing activities offered at the start of the reporting year. In August 2020, prisoners were again allowed use of microwaves, pool tables, barbering and more time out of cell. However, at the start of this calendar year, these activities had to be withdrawn a second time because of the fears about the continuing spread of the Covid virus. The end of the reporting year saw the reintroduction of some of the facilities which had been withdrawn.

5.1.5 In a number of previous Annual Reports, the Board has recommended there should be fewer double cells or, alternatively, that they are located on the Induction Wing. This year has seen a significant number of cases where prisoners have refused to move into a double cell. Some of the men new to Buckley Hall who are standard risk on a cell sharing risk assessment (CSRA) and have enjoyed a single cell in their previous prison(s) feel frustrated when they are told to share in Buckley Hall. In addition, there is a group of men who feel that for medical, psychological or decency issues they too should be allocated a single cell. The weekly SIM meeting considers carefully the CSRA of each new prisoner but is required to focus on the risk a prisoner poses to themselves and others and not the possible medical grounds for allocating a single cell. This issue is likely to continue as the prison returns to full capacity and the pressure for places in the prison estate generally rises.

5.1.6 At the SIM meeting the reasons why a man is considered high risk CSRA are discussed but what, if any, programmes they may have completed to reduce their risk levels is not often considered. The possible disadvantages of continuing to be

assessed as high risk CSRA do not appear to be discussed with a prisoner prior to their annual review.

5.1.7 It has been suggested to the Board this reporting year has seen an increase in the number of adjudications for men refusing to move into a double cell. However, taking a snapshot, there were nine adjudications related to this charge in February 2020 for 'disobeys a lawful order' and the same number in February 2021.

5.1.8 Throughout the reporting year, the Board has received complaints about the washing machines on the wings; a number of which are near the end of their economic life. The machines are expensive to replace but the prison accepts that it is necessary and important to do so on the grounds of decency and good order. Similarly, the Board has had frequent complaints about the showers on the wing – that a number of them are broken, the water temperature is too hot or too cold and shower doors missing. In terms of missing shower doors, the Board considers this to be a decency issue and does not accept the view of the facilities contractor Amey that repairing them is a relatively low priority.

5.1.9 Inevitably, the amount of money raised for charity by the prisoners has fallen during the reporting year but the men are to be congratulated for still helping those less fortunate than themselves. Christmas presents were given to a number of deserving local families, donations of food were made regularly to a community food bank and £1,500 was given to the Christie Hospital and Manchester Children's Hospital, in recognition of their care for a prisoner's niece. Staff, too, have continued to raise money for charity over the reporting year.

5.1.10 The upgrade planned for the kitchens has been delayed by the restrictions imposed and is now likely to go ahead in the next reporting year. During the reporting year, the management and control of the kitchens was handed to HMPPS but there appears to be no change in the high standard and healthy food provided to the men. A number of men leaving Buckley Hall have commented favourably on the quality of the food being provided.

5.1.11 The large number of men on special diets are well catered for by the kitchen staff and a commendable effort is made to provide food to celebrate the various religious festivals. It is pleasing to report that men working in the kitchens are now able to gain catering qualifications in food production and cooking alongside developing their practical skills.

5.1.12 Although the food is good, the standards in the wing serveries can, on occasion, be less so. Those serving the food were not always seen to be wearing appropriate attire and there have been issues to do with the distribution of halal and non-halal food. Responsibility for standards on the serveries lay, in the past, primarily with the wings and the decision for the kitchens to take more ownership of this in the future is welcome and will, hopefully, lead to an improvement.

5.1.13 A number of men have complained to the Board that they do not have a key to their cell. Their issue is not without merit because a random check of 20 men across A, B and C Wings revealed that nine did not have a cell key. Being confined to their cell for most of the day was made even harder during the periods of warm

weather during the reporting year and the prison is to be commended for making electric fans available. In the winter months, vitamin D tablets were offered to the men because of their limited time out of the cell.

5.1.14 Amey has experienced its own staffing problems throughout the reporting year, which, inevitably, had some impact on maintenance programmes and the speed with which repairs were completed. The newly appointed site manager has made an encouraging start and is quickly coming to terms with his role.

5.1.15 The lawns and flowerbeds have always been an attractive feature of Buckley Hall and play their part in fostering a positive and healthy outlook. Not surprisingly, given the limited numbers allowed out to work during the reporting year the grounds have looked a little forlorn and unkempt. However, as lockdown conditions have been eased and the number of men working has increased, they are being restored to their former glories!

5.1.16 Some prisoners arriving from private prisons continue to experience often lengthy delays in their financial accounts being transferred to Buckley Hall. This makes it difficult for them to buy items on the weekly canteen and increases the risk of them getting into debt with other prisoners.

5.2 Segregation, special accommodation

5.2.1 The care and separation unit (CSU) staff are thought of highly by the Board. They regularly face some of the prison's most difficult and demanding men and do so calmly, respectfully and with empathy for those with mental health issues. During the reporting year, one prisoner, in particular, took part in a prolonged 'dirty protest' and throughout was treated by staff with respect, compassion and concern for his wellbeing. However, the incident also highlighted the fact that CSU staff are not mental health nurses and yet, on occasion, are expected to manage men with severe psychoses. The staff are scrupulous in informing the Board whenever a new prisoner is brought down to the unit and circulate to the Board and prison management a detailed and regular monthly analysis of prisoner movements into and out of the unit.

5.2.2 A sample of men returning to the wings after spending some time in CSU on good order or discipline (GOOD) were asked about their experience. All were complimentary about; the staff, receiving their full daily regime and the regular access to a doctor, governor and chaplain. They were rather less positive about the activities on offer to them and it seems that many of the men spend much of their day lying in bed.

5.2.3 The issuing of DVD players to men held in the CSU provided a useful diversion to their very limited routine. During the reporting year, CSU staff have worked hard to ensure that the men received their daily regime of shower, access to the telephone and outside association. For part of the reporting year, the small gym was closed due to Covid restrictions.

5.2.4 The weekly meeting at which prison managers discuss the plan for each man held in CSU is valuable. However, the progress made in moving them to another prison has often been slow and frustrating for all concerned. The element of 'horse-trading' in some of the moves between prisons is not the most edifying.

5.2.5 The Board notes that the practice of routinely carrying out full body searches on men being taken to CSU has stopped and is now, rightly, based on suspicion or intelligence. It remains the case that none of the men in the CSU are allowed in-possession medication, even though it was assessed safe for to do so when they were on the wing. The Board has been advised that the stressful nature of the unit justifies this blanket ban.

5.2.6 In a recent report, the Prison Reform Trust suggested that prisoners with indeterminate public protection (IPP) sentences are more likely to be taken to the CSU because of poor behaviour caused by frustration over their sentence. However, the Board could find no evidence that a disproportionate number of IPP prisoners were taken to the CSU on GOOD or held there on cellular confinement (CC) during the reporting year. From August to November 2020, of the 19 men held in CSU on GOOD or CC, and still at Buckley Hall in December 2020, only three were IPP prisoners.

5.2.7 The monthly equalities reports do not suggest anything untoward in terms of the number of men with protected characteristics taken to CSU during the reporting year.

5.2.8 The Board is notified on those occasions when a prisoner is kept in special accommodation. The use of this cell is exceptional at Buckley Hall and, for example, between April to June 2021, was used on only one occasion for a total of one and a half hours. The Board has monitored the paperwork associated with the use of the special accommodation cell and is satisfied with the entries made.

5.2.9 Board members have attended a number of adjudications held throughout the year. In its judgement, adjudicating governors have been thorough, fair and given the prisoner a full opportunity to put forward his explanation of events. The absence of an independent adjudicator for the reporting year, due to Covid-19, has significantly limited the options open to governors. It is not immediately apparent to the Board why the urine sample of men pleading guilty to taking a psychoactive substance has to be sent off for confirmation testing, whereas this is not required for those pleading guilty to cannabis.

5.3 Staff/prisoner relationships, key workers

5.3.1 Healthy and positive staff-prisoner relationships have been one of the cornerstones to Buckley Hall's success and safety over the year. Most of the prisoners, when asked, say that the overwhelming majority of officers have done a difficult and demanding job particularly well over the past year. In the IMB's February 2021 survey, nine out of 10 respondents said that staff treatment of them had been either 'good' or 'reasonable' and only 10% said it had been 'poor'.

5.3.2 However, inevitably, with the prisoners being confined to their cells for the overwhelming part of the day, there has been less opportunity for staff to engage with the men and talk to them. It is to be hoped that new officers in particular do not underestimate the importance – on so many levels – of establishing good communication with the men. As the restrictions imposed by Covid are relaxed, hopefully, this particular strength of the prison will be restored.

5.3.3 Due to Covid restrictions and staff shortages throughout the reporting year, it is not surprising that the amount of key work by officers has fallen significantly, as these sessions are among the first to be dropped when there is a staff shortage. In the first three months of 2021, key work case notes on P-NOMIS fell by 69% compared to the same period in 2020. Although the overall amount of key work has dropped, the prison carried out a limited number of daily welfare checks.

5.4 Equality and diversity

5.4.1 During the reporting year, the work of the external discrimination incident report form (DIRF) scrutiny committee was suspended, due to Covid-19 restrictions but plans were put in place, at the end of the reporting year, to restart the committee. The Board is represented on the committee by one of its members and they have commented favourably on the presence of prisoner representatives at part of the meeting and the insight they provide.

5.4.2 In previous years, the equalities team has held a number of forums for groups with protected characteristics. These too have been suspended for much of the reporting year but are now beginning to restart. During the reporting year, the prison managed a transgender prisoner and, in the judgement of the Board, did so extremely well. In the opinion of the prisoner, the treatment she received at Buckley Hall was as good as she could have hoped for anywhere.

5.4.3 Some black prisoners have told the Board that they feel unfairly treated and cite that few of them are in orderly positions. However, in July 2021, unit workers were 11.07% of the white population and 14.8% of the black, Asian and minority ethnic population which would suggest that ethnic minorities are not clearly discriminated against in terms of these jobs.

5.4.4 Rastafarian prisoners have raised a number of issues during the year and, where they can, the prison has spent considerable time and effort addressing them. Equally, there have been Asian prisoners who have told the Board that they are under-represented on D wing and that insufficient care is given to separating halal and non-halal food at the wing serveries. The latest equalities report suggests there may be some substance to the complaints about D wing in terms of the representation of Asian prisoners but not in terms of black prisoners.

5.4.5 In July 2021, 87 men had disclosed a disability to the prison. The personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) reports have been inspected and were found to be up-to-date and, on a night visit by the Board, readily accessible to officers. There

are less than 10 foreign national prisoners in Buckley Hall and almost without exception, the monthly equalities report shows they are English speakers and have maintained some social contact.

5.4.6 In the opinion of the Board, the investigation of any DIRF is taken seriously by the prison. While prisoners should feel free and unafraid to submit a complaint about any infringement of their protected characteristics, this reporting year has seen an increase in the number of potentially vexatious DIRFs which, if unchecked, could undermine respect for the system.

5.4.7 Each month the equalities officer produces and distributes a detailed analysis related to equality and protected characteristics in the prison.

5.5 Faith and pastoral support

5.5.1 The Board holds the multifaith manager and his team in high regard and they are familiar faces around the prison. Not surprisingly, the absence of communal faith services throughout the reporting year has frustrated many of the team and prisoners. However, the staff have been resourceful and risen to the restrictions imposed in a number of different ways. A brass band was organised for outdoor Christmas carols, there was an outdoor Remembrance Day service, there have been services on the prison's Wayout TV channel and faith literature has been distributed on the wings. Towards the end of the reporting year, communal services and some of their group activities restarted but with wing compartmentalisation in order to try and halt the spread of Covid. Not surprisingly, OSAG reported favourably on the chapel and its activities.

5.5.2 The prison should be congratulated for helping the different faiths to celebrate their religious festivals. This can often require considerable and prolonged effort by staff – for example, for the Muslim prisoners during Ramadan and Eid. The managing chaplain has made a real effort to ensure that men of every faith have a chaplain appointed for them.

5.5.3 In the past, the chaplaincy has facilitated the Sycamore Tree scheme which brings together prisoners and victims of crime and is often a requirement in a prisoner's sentence plan. Unfortunately, this valuable scheme has had to stop during the reporting year because of Covid restrictions.

5.5.4 During the reporting year, the chaplaincy team has continued to provide emotional support for bereaved prisoners; helping to arrange funeral video links and by spending time with men who have lost loved ones.

5.6 Incentives

5.6.1 This has not been a contentious issue among prisoners during the reporting year as men have not been reduced to the basic level of the incentives scheme. At the end of the reporting year, 76.4% of the men were recorded as being on the enhanced level and 23.3% were on standard.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1 There were some issues at the start of the reporting year concerning the number of complaints where a reply was overdue. However, the prison has taken steps to address this by including the number of outstanding complaints as an agenda item on the daily staff briefing.

5.7.2 The Board has some concerns now there is no longer a dedicated complaints clerk in the business hub department. However, there is no evidence, to date, that the standard of the service is deteriorating as a consequence.

5.7.3 There were 88 complaints submitted in July 2021 and 87 in June 2021. From April – July 2021, the monthly average of complaints submitted was 66.5. This compares favourably to the median number of 113 monthly complaints for Buckley Hall's comparator group.

5.8 Property

5.8.1 Board members have expressed some concern over the prison's procedures when conducting cell clearances. The policy is that all cell clearances should be carried out with BWVC activated but the security department was unable to state categorically this was always the case and it was confirmed that members of the North West search team do not have BWVC. The Board continues to receive complaints from prisoners about the damage they claim has been done to their property during cell searches and cell clearances. BWVC footage would help to throw light on the accuracy and veracity of the claims.

5.8.2 Record keeping of cell clearance forms on some wings leaves much to be desired. On occasion - often for operational reasons - the contents of a cell have been emptied and bagged by staff but without contemporaneous completion of the cell clearance form against the man's property card. To then leave this bagged property in unlocked back rooms on a wing is not considered good practice.

5.8.3 Long-term prisoners often acquire a large amount of property over their sentence, far in excess of the volumetric control limit. One prisoner arriving at Buckley Hall during the reporting year arrived with 14 bags of property which required a reception officer to spend a whole day recording all his belongings on the prisoner's property card. The reception area at Buckley Hall has only a limited

amount of space for stored prisoner property. The question of enforcing volumetric controls is a problem for the Prison Service as a whole and not just Buckley Hall.

5.8.4 The decision not to confiscate Sony Giga Jukes games machines from prisoners who purchased them in Buckley Hall before a ban was introduced is judged to be a fair response. However, to confiscate them from those who arrive at Buckley Hall having bought them in good faith at their previous prison seems unfair and inconsistent to the men affected.

5.8.5 Missing and delayed property is, as ever, an issue for a number of the men arriving at Buckley Hall. The present paper-based system used by the Prison Service for recording and managing prisoner property is considered outdated, inefficient and not fit for purpose. One in four of all the IMB applications received by the Board during the reporting year concerned prisoner property.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

6.1.1 The relatively small number of staff in the department has been exacerbated during the reporting year by the effects of Covid and yet, despite this, the Board has been informed by a number of prisoners that healthcare staff are to be praised for their efforts over the past year. In the February 2021 IMB survey, 80% of respondents described their dealings with healthcare as either 'good' or 'reasonable'. Medical staff have been flexible in their working practices during the reporting year and at one stage were dispensing medication to the men on the wings during lockdown.

6.1.2 The prison has tried to ensure the men adhere to Covid advice on face covering and social distancing. The prison has experienced a number of positive Covid cases among both staff and prisoners during the reporting year and indeed, for a period, was classed as an 'outbreak site'. There has been a clear and well-established regime for Covid testing and for men isolating due to the virus or on the RCU.

6.1.3 Despite the risk of contracting the virus themselves and taking it home to their families, staff have worked diligently to maintain a decent – albeit limited - physical regime and to ensure the safety of the prisoners. However, the men too should be commended for their phlegmatic response to the limitations imposed in order to control the outbreak. One of the reasons cited for the relatively low numbers of positive Covid cases at Buckley Hall was that the men have been willing to disclose their contacts when they have tested positive.

6.1.4 During the year, men who had been advised to shield were asked by the Board if the prison had done enough to protect their safety and, for the overwhelming majority, the answer was 'yes'.

6.1.5 In the judgement of the Board, the number of prisoners maintaining social distancing and wearing face-coverings on the wing fell considerably over the course of the reporting year. In addition, the number of family members and friends on social visits wearing face coverings also declined, with most claiming to be exempt on medical grounds. During the year, officers too have had to be reminded, on more than one occasion, about the need to wear face masks and practice social distancing.

6.1.6 Healthcare staff – and in particular the health & wellbeing advisors – have been proactively offering hepatitis C tests and the Covid vaccine to prisoners on the wings. There are named nurses with training in conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and diabetes, but the department is not considered large enough to have a lead nurse in such areas. A growing number of men appear to have long-term medical conditions and there can be a problem of managing their specialist needs because of the relatively low staffing numbers.

6.1.7 It is still unclear, even after a number of years, whether the wing based medical rooms are the ‘white elephant’, which some staff describe them as, or a work-in-progress. Making use of the rooms for dispensing medication and face-to-face consultations would only be possible with an increase in the current staffing levels.

6.1.8 Prisoners and instructional officers have complained to the Board on a number of occasions throughout the reporting year that medical appointments are being missed because the men are not being escorted to healthcare on time by ground patrol officers.

6.1.9 A night visit by the Board revealed that the OSGs on the wings had not been shown how to use a defibrillator. All thought it would be straightforward, but none had any experience of deploying it.

6.1.10 The prison has the technological capacity to employ ‘telemedicine’, but this facility has been relatively underemployed and telephone appointments have been the norm throughout the reporting year. Most GP appointments have been carried out by remote consultation, but with the possibility of physical examinations by the doctor in full personal protective equipment (PPE).

6.1.11 The waiting time for outside hospital appointments increased during this reporting year. At one stage, 44 out of 101 men had been waiting more than 18 weeks for their appointment, which healthcare staff said was a big increase on the same month in the previous year. However, such a delay mirrored those of patients waiting for appointments in the community.

6.1.12 As in the community, the dental waiting list increased significantly during the reporting year as aerosol generating treatments ceased. This situation was compounded by a faulty dental chair and generator for part of the year. Aerosol generating work has restarted and the faults repaired but it has left, by the end of the reporting year, a waiting list of at least eight weeks for treatment. The Board has been assured however that any dental emergencies are prioritised.

6.1.13 At one stage during the reporting year, physiotherapy, optical and ultrasound services were restored but then had to be withdrawn during the second lockdown.

6.1.14 Men risk-assessed to have in-possession medication still have no means of keeping it safe in their cells and, as stated earlier in the report, a number have no courtesy key for their cell, which means the medication is even less secure. It is to be hoped that the employment of a pharmacist and pharmacist technician will enable regular spot-checks of in-possession medication to be resumed.

6.1.15 A number of prisoners have complained to the Board about the reduction in their pain medication. However, such complaints have to be balanced against the potential for illegal trade in such medication and the long-term disadvantages of dispensing this medicine without periodic review.

6.1.16 The absence of working CCTV in the waiting area of healthcare has been reported in previous Board reports. During this reporting year, a fight took place in the waiting room at which no uniformed officer was present nor any video footage of the incident available.

6.1.17 The current healthcare contract is due for renewal at the end of the reporting year and so, with it, the possibility at least of a new provider in the next reporting year.

6.2 Mental healthcare

6.2.1 The manager and his team are considered by the Board experienced, approachable and to have an impressive knowledge of their clients. It is clear from observation that their input regarding a prisoner is respected and sought by officers. The increase in their staff numbers and introduction of a seven-day service is welcomed by the Board and it is to be hoped that the bids in the new contract for an occupational therapist and increased services of a psychiatrist are successful. A member of the team is always present at ACCT and rule 45 reviews

6.2.2 In May 2021, 136 of Buckley Hall's men were allocated a depression-related code which would imply that some 30% of the men are located somewhere on the depression spectrum. The Board has been advised by the staff that personality disorders rather than mental health issues dominate among the prisoners at Buckley Hall.

6.2.3 Members of the mental health team are of the opinion that a significant number of the prisoners have felt safer during the periods of lockdown and prefer the more restrictive regime. The team say they have observed no increase in the number of men with deteriorating mental health during the reporting year and no increase in of self-referrals. However, any optimism derived from these statements should be tempered by the replies to the IMB's February 2021 survey, in which a number of

men expressed concern over the negative effect Covid restrictions were having on their mental health.

6.2.4 Manchester Survivors has continued to provide a counselling service to men who have been affected by trauma – albeit with a different method of delivery.

6.2.5 In the judgement of the Board, the prison needs to provide more structured dual diagnoses between mental health and drug recovery staff as most of the current links between the two appear relatively informal. Related to this is the introduction of the social prescribing and therapeutic initiatives which will focus on the planned communal activities at the back of A Wing. Both have been held back during the reporting year by the Covid restrictions. The appointment of a governor with responsibility for this aspect of prison life will, the Board is hopeful, address this issue.

6.3 Social care

6.3.1 One man on D wing who has another prisoner as his appointed carer told the Board he is very satisfied with the level of care and support he is being provided with. During the reporting year, there have been instances in which some men have claimed that, for health reasons, they need specially adapted items. Although these needs are not always met – sometimes not at all and other times slowly – after contacting local social services and the Rochdale councillor with the portfolio for social care and ageing, the Board is satisfied that the men receive the same level of provision as those in the community.

6.4 Exercise, time out of cell, gym

6.4.1 The daily regime under Covid-19 has been markedly different. The amount of time out of cell has been very limited and for much of the reporting year amounted to two periods of 40 minutes per day. Indeed, for part of the year it was confined to two thirty-minute sessions. In the February 2021 IMB survey, 78% of the men described the amount of time they had out of cell as either ‘reasonable’ or ‘poor’ while 80% said their sense of feeling busy and occupied was either ‘reasonable’ or ‘poor’. Lock-up at 5:15pm leads to a very different experience for those now visiting the wings in the evening.

6.4.2 Staffing levels, due to sickness, self-isolation and the need to update mandatory training, have had a further impact on an already restricted daily regime, but the prison has made every effort to explain and inform the men of any necessary changes to the regime and to do so on a rota basis.

6.4.3 Gym staff and the prison are to be congratulated for continuing to offer gym sessions throughout the reporting year, even during the lockdown periods. Outdoor

gym sessions were the norm and often held in weather conditions one associates with being on the leeward side of the Pennines Indoor gym sessions did take place for parts of the reporting year with separate stations for the men to maintain Covid precautions. Because of Covid restrictions, the gym equipment in the upstairs fitness suite has been out of use and the popular weekly 'parkrun' suspended - although there are plans to reintroduce it early in the next reporting year. The successful accredited gym courses and qualifications have been suspended during the reporting year.

6.5 Drug rehabilitation

6.5.1 The communal areas of A wing are attractively decorated, well-maintained and filled with inspirational quotes on the wall. However, the high number of double cells on this wing can discourage men from moving on to it and gaining the full experience of being on a drug recovery wing. From his appointment, the Governor has been committed to appointing a governor to focus on drug strategy and during the reporting year the post has been filled. The new appointee is experienced, enthusiastic and the Board expects him to drive forward a number of new initiatives planned. It is to be hoped that a lack of finance or future Covid restrictions do not impede their introduction. Inevitably, these initiatives may present some concerns, but both the new Governor and the security department believe they can be managed successfully.

6.5.2 The drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS) provides an effective service within the prison. The service has a caseload of some 135 men with 27 clinical patients and 18 on methadone. The service normally delivers a number of courses but has been unable to do so for much of the reporting year. They have replaced these with one-to-one work with clients, but this too has been affected. Towards the end of the reporting year, a successful weekly drug recovery café was introduced for men. The drug strategy orderly attends part of the drug strategy meeting, which improves the two-way flow of information.

6.5.3 DARS staff have been resourceful in their efforts during lockdown and employed the prison's Wayout TV channel and used booklets to replace their reduction and motivation programme (RAMP) course. For the DARS staff, compartmentalisation has presented some difficulties involving men in activities who are not located on the drug recovery wing. For part of the reporting year, staff dispensed methadone on each wing, although this practice has now stopped.

6.5.4 DARS staff arrange a harm reduction meeting with any prisoner suspected of taking illegal substances and those meetings monitored by the Board have been a positive, encouraging but challenging experience for the prisoner; as they and the member of staff look together at triggers and strategies which might be usefully employed in the future. It is important that all cases of suspected illegal drug taking are recorded on the prison's daily bulletin, so that they can be acted upon by the service.

6.5.5 The Board commends the intention of its staff to work more closely in the future with healthcare in cases of dual diagnosis because after attending the harm reduction meetings, it is clear that drug taking is often only one of the issues facing some men.

6.5.6 During lockdown the emphasis of the DARS team has been on maintenance rather than drug reduction for their clients because of the difficulty of providing the necessary one-to-one support for those trying to reduce their drug dependency. It is to be hoped that, as a long-term prison, the focus will change as lockdown conditions are eased.

6.5.7 Voluntary drug testing and mandatory drug testing (MDT) have been suspended for much of the reporting year due to Covid restrictions.

6.6 Soft skills

6.6.1 Safer custody staff arranged for two therapy dogs to visit the prison each week – one for group work and one for individual sessions, with the eventual aim of possibly widening this into men organising kennels and dog grooming. One of the prisoners who was taking part said ‘it has been 11 years since I’ve stroked a dog’ and it was clearly quite an emotional experience for some. However, this initiative had become rather less evident towards the end of the reporting year.

7. Progression and resettlement

7.1 Education, library

7.1.1 During the year, the prison took out a subscription to the Wayout TV channel and has produced some of its own material for Buckley Hall. The promising introduction of the planned radio station, to be run by the prisoners, has, been delayed by Covid restrictions..

7.1.2 During the reporting year there was some criticism that the resumption of education courses was delayed. However, Education staff the instruction not to restart courses until Buckley Hall moved to Stage 2 of the Covid exceptional delivery model came from HMPPS and not local prison management. At the start of the reporting year, education staff were not in attendance until October when they began to visit the wings, speak to the men and encourage completion of the workbooks which were being sent up.

7.1.3 Motivating men to complete the in-cell workbooks has been an issue and at one stage during the reporting year, low numbers were being returned. This situation improved considerably during the reporting year and in January 2021, it was reported that 66% of learning packs had been completed – a rise from the 50% recorded in November 2020.

7.1.4 Ofsted did question whether the use of in-cell education packs had continued for rather too long and the issue for a number of the men spoken to by the IMB was whether they had sufficient drive and self-discipline to do in-cell work on their own rather than in a classroom supervised and encouraged by the teacher.

7.1.5 During the reporting year, Open University (OU) tutorials continued by telephone and the prison was commended by the OU as being the best in the North West for OU applications, enrollments and completions. To assist these men, the prison invested in a number of digital notebooks which it loaned out. It is commendable that despite the upheaval of the reporting year, distance learning opportunities have continued and been encouraged.

7.1.6 At the end of the reporting year, education classes had resumed but with reduced class sizes - to accommodate social distancing and compartmentalisation. The pre-Covid model of education delivery is unlikely to resume and, going forward, the emphasis is to be on 'blended learning' rather than time spent exclusively in the classroom. Delivery is to become a combination of classroom, in-cell work and supported by the virtual campus. By making better use of in-cell work for the theory elements of a course, it may be possible to partially offset the longer time needed for course completions due to the reduced number of classroom sessions per week. In addition, the aim is to develop unaccredited learning opportunities so as to enrich the curriculum on offer and make education a positive choice among the men.

7.1.7 The library has introduced a database which is now able to show users by age, ethnicity and disability and its staff have endeavoured to create a more user-friendly environment and service. Although the library suite has been unavailable to prisoners for much of the reporting year, the staff devised a practical system for men to order books and request copies of prison service orders/prison service instructions (PSOs/PSIs) which were then taken to the wings for them.

7.1.8 Some effort was made by education staff to identify and assist those with learning difficulties, but the department accepts the judgement of Ofsted that some improvements in the delivery of functional skills and support for those with learning difficulties are needed. However, when a group of men on these courses were interviewed by the Board their feedback was positive and all said their work was being carefully marked, returned promptly and with useful feedback provided. They said that the education staff were approachable and supportive.

7.1.9 The work of the Shannon Trust during the reporting year has been relatively limited and the support it provides to men with problems of literacy has been largely informal in nature because of compartmentalisation and the restrictions on prisoner movements between wings. Covid restrictions have meant that, the training of prisoner mentors for the scheme is not as advanced as hoped for.

7.1.10 In the judgement of the Board, the department has enthusiastic and capable leadership and is clearly heading in the right direction. The Ofsted inspection at the end of the reporting year praised the department for its vigour and vision to change the education, skills and work curriculum to better prepare men for release. Ofsted approved the comprehensive plans in place once the move to Stage 2 was

authorised and particularly liked the proposed enrichment activities; such as the prisoner-run radio station. It is commendable that, despite all the difficulties of the reporting year, some qualifications were still gained during lockdown; in warehousing, pump trucks, horticulture and shopfitting – albeit with reduced numbers. In Ofsted’s judgement the great majority of prisoners were allocated to an appropriate course or activity for their intended career path.

7.2 Vocational training, work

7.2.1 As lockdown conditions were eased towards the end of the reporting year, the work of the sequencing and labour boards resumed. The sequencing board performs a valuable role in discussing with each new prisoner their career ambitions and how best to achieve them. The role of the labour board is to consider how best to deal with prisoners who are reluctant to attend work or education or who may need to be disciplined or even dismissed.

7.2.2 In the judgement of the Board, workplace vacancies should be filled first by the unemployed rather than those already in work and if the activities department is to effectively coordinate this field it is important that it is they who allocate men to the jobs and not wing staff. If wing jobs are not being allocated on the basis of the waiting lists held by the activities department, the prison is unable to prove there is no discrimination in the selection process, as some black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners believe, and prisoners may not be paid appropriately.

7.2.3 After a considerable time, the prisoner pay policy was finally introduced in the last month of the reporting year. Changes to some of the pay rates have caused a few men to feel aggrieved but, overall, the new policy has led to far fewer complaints that might have been anticipated especially as it coincided with the withdrawal of the ‘Covid bonuses’.

7.2.4 Board members have commented on how relatively quiet it has been in those workshops operating on reduced numbers because of compartmentalisation and social distancing. It is likely that some form of compartmentalisation will continue in the future and that the number in work is unlikely to return to pre-Covid levels. When work was resumed, 58 places were available, whereas previously there had been 130. However, hopefully, the number of times a week a man attends work or education will increase to at least twice a week when Stage 2 begins. Although the actual number attending work is far lower than before Covid, the attendance rates for the workshops and education are regularly in excess of 80%. The reduced numbers in work or education on any one day should make it more likely that wing staff have the time to challenge non-attendees. On one occasion, during the reporting year, the P-NOMIS entries were checked of 13 men who did not attend work on the morning and afternoon of the previous day - five had an entry related to their non-attendance but there was no mention of it for the other eight.

7.2.5 The workplaces on offer to the men are judged rather too heavy on recycling activities and some diversification from this base is to be encouraged. The possibility of renovating second hand furniture, developing the 'handyman' service and of the Amey painter taking prisoners on a painting party are all initiatives to be encouraged

7.2.6 Even during lockdown, a number of essential workers still went to work each day. For example, in December 2020, just under 100 men were recorded as going to work for part of each day: In workshop 1, waste management, the kitchens and wing orderlies. It should be noted that men in some of the workshops open during the reporting year have complained to the Board that ground patrol officers were frequently late in returning them to the wings for showers, phone calls and food.

7.2.7 In the opinion of the Board, the prison's policy on self-certification for those not attending work or education is currently not consistently understood nor applied by all staff. Some staff were unaware that prisoners who felt unwell could self-certify.

7.3 Offender management, progression

7.3.1 With many of the Probation Service prison offender managers (POMs) working off-site for most of the week, to reduce the risk of bringing Covid into the prison, the Prison Service POMs tended to get besieged with questions when they went to the wings and the Board has received a number of complaints from prisoners during the reporting year about the difficulty of meeting their POM. Staffing has been extremely tight within the offender management unit (OMU) throughout the reporting year and although the Probation Service POMs have been less visible around the prison; probation and recategorisation reports, oral hearings by telephone & video-link and offender assessment system (OASys) assessments were being completed on time. The Board wishes to thank the OMU manager and her staff for their patience and willingness to answer the many questions which Board members bring to them.

7.3.2 The interdepartmental risk management team (IRMT) continued its important work during the reporting year on a remote basis and men posing a risk to those in the community were discussed carefully and thoroughly at the meeting. The presence at the meeting of a member of the security department is considered important by the Board. In December 2020, the Board was assured there was no backlog of phone calls or letters waiting to be monitored by men on the public protection register.

7.3.3 In September 2020, 30 men with indeterminate sentences who had spent time on the Aspire unit had made progress - 14 had been released, 13 transferred to open conditions and three transferred to other units in the country and in November 2020, 129 men had been on the unit over its two years of existence. Board members have spoken to men moving off the Aspire unit and the majority are positive about the experience and acknowledge that their time on it has helped them progress in their sentence. This is not to say, however, that all the men on the Aspire unit make progress and, regrettably, some have returned to normal location.

7.3.4 Buckley Hall has 37 men with an indeterminate sentence for public protection [IPP] and the Board shares the concern expressed by many about the number of men still in prison serving this sentence. The figures for Buckley Hall show 17 of these men are 10 years or more over tariff, and the uncertainty and powerlessness this creates among prisoners and their family is hard to imagine.

7.3.5 The prison continues to offer Resolve and Thinking Skills (TSP) programmes and completion of these courses is an important element in the sentence plan for some men at Buckley Hall. In October 2020, courses restarted on a wing compartmentalisation basis and with smaller groups of five men. Staff and prisoners found delivering the course to smaller group sizes had challenges with the potential to change the dynamics and intensity of the group. In addition, the smaller numbers on each programme, meant, inevitably, that men were having to wait longer to access the course. For a number of prisoners, this had significant and frustrating implications in delaying the completion of their Sentence Plan targets

7.3.6 Men granted category D status and a move to open conditions have felt particularly frustrated if they were required to complete these courses but were unable to do so. The Board appreciates why they should consider it unfair they were denied category D for not completing the course when they were in no position to do so. Equally, the Board understands the argument that completion of the programme may be necessary to reduce the risk to the public before a man can be moved to open conditions or into the community. Only 13 course completions were recorded between August 2020 and January 2021 and those beginning the courses were significantly closer to their release date than had been previously the case.

7.3.7 The department prioritises men closest to release for enrolment on the two programmes and in an audit during the reporting year it was reported that participants for both were appropriately selected. The rate of completions for Resolve was 93.8% and for TSP was 91.3%, both of which are above the accepted completion rate of 90%.

7.3.8 In October 2020, over 20 men were waiting to begin each course before programmes were suspended for a second time, although the prison was, at least, able to ensure that those partway through the course were able to complete it. At the end of the reporting year, the two programmes have been reintroduced but, looking forward, if numbers on the courses cannot be increased, this has the potential to become a significant pinch point for a number of men at Buckley Hall.

7.3.9 For many of the men at Buckley Hall progression to category D and open conditions is the goal. During the year, a number of men have been awarded category D status but are then waiting to go to open prisons, and have found the delay extremely frustrating. In October 2020, there were 14 men waiting to move and later in the reporting year, it was stated the figure was over 20. For part of the reporting year, there were virtually no movements at all to the open estate. Many of the complaints to the Board were less about the lack of movement and more around insufficient communication between OMU staff and the men as to what progress, if any, had been made over their move.

7.3.10 During the reporting year, a group of 10 men leaving for the open prison estate were interviewed by the Board. Without exception, all said their time at Buckley Hall had been positive and gainful. The agreement engineered by Buckley Hall for men waiting to transfer to an open prison to reverse cohort at Buckley Hall was eminently sensible.

7.4 Family contact

7.4.1 Before Covid, Buckley Hall took great pride in the effort made to enable prisoners to maintain family ties – with family days, parental contact visits, etc. However, since the onset of the epidemic it has been subject to the limitations imposed on the rest of the prison estate.

7.4.2 Social visits, which restarted during the reporting year, were suspended at the time of the second lockdown but have subsequently resumed. When they were running, the OSGs and officers were observed to be polite to visitors and carried out their searches in a respectful manner. In the last month of the reporting year, when asked by the Board, visitors were positive about their experience, given the limitations imposed on safety grounds. It has to be reported that few visitors wore masks, with the majority claiming to be medically exempt from doing so. In the last month of the reporting year, physical contact between visitors and prisoners was allowed if the former could show a negative Covid test within the past 24 hours.

7.4.3 Numbers attending visits have been low for a number of reasons – visits have been compartmentalised by wing and so the day of a visit could not be chosen, some objected to the lack of any physical contact, some did not want family or friends to bring the virus into the prison, food or drink was unavailable and others were unhappy because the length of the visits was reduced. In one week in September 2020, there was an average of only five visitors per session and some days no visits occurred at all. All of the restrictions were imposed on Buckley Hall by the Prison Service.

7.4.4 Purple (video) Visits took place throughout the reporting year. A group of prisoners who had been on a Purple Visit were asked their opinion and 75% rated their experience as either 'good' or 'satisfactory' and only 25% rated it as 'poor'. For most they were a preferable alternative to no contact at all with family and friends. However, they did not appeal to all everyone and, for example, during one four-week period in the reporting year, only 22% of the available places were booked. There were still some technical problems with the system, but their incidence seemed to fall as the reporting year progressed. A number of partners asked for Purple Visits at weekends for those in employment or who did not want to take their children out of school.

7.4.5 Legal representatives have been asked for their opinion of visiting Buckley Hall and none raised any negative issues or criticisms. Rather, they said staff were friendly, helpful and that their visit took place on time.

7.4.6 During the reporting year, the prison has appointed a family strategy manager and he has begun to reinvigorate a strategy, which had become rather dormant.

7.4.7 'It's Storytime' has been introduced and, with some similarities to 'Storytime Dads' enables fathers to read and send an animated digital story to their children. The end product is of an excellent quality and although it is still early days it is a little disappointing that it has not generated a greater interest among the men.

7.4.8 During the reporting year, men on the wings have had bookable access to two mobile phones for 25-minute sessions. This proved invaluable for contacting family and friends when men were spending virtually all day behind their door. It is a common perception among the men that the cost of using these mobiles is greater than the cost of using the wing's landline phones but finance staff have assured the Board that this is not the case. The additional £5 per week put on each prisoner's telephone PIN number was very well received. In the February 2021 IMB survey, 85% of respondents said their access to phones on the wing to contact family and friends was either 'good' or 'reasonable'. In last year's annual report, the real need for in-cell telephony to maintain family ties in this long-term prison was set out and the Board would wish to stress again the importance its introduction would have.

7.4.9 The POPs manager and her staff have been rightly praised by the prisoners' families and friends for their friendly and welcoming manner. They have established a family forum and tried hard to maintain it during the reporting year through remote meetings.

7.4.10 There have been some complaints about the difficulty of booking visits over the phone and that the booking line is regularly engaged. The explanation given is that visits can no longer be booked electronically and have had to be arranged manually because the IT system cannot accommodate compartmentalisation. In addition, each call now takes longer because more information has to be given to each visitor about Covid restrictions. The prison is aware of this problem and is endeavouring to introduce new procedures which will, hopefully, enable greater access to the phone line.

7.5 Resettlement planning

7.5.1 There have been very few moves to resettlement prisons in the final stages of a man's sentence in the current reporting year. The Inter-prison moves which have taken place during this reporting year have prioritised moving men to the open estate and also those who are in local prisons following sentencing. For some of the men in Buckley Hall, who have been in prison for a long time, the absence of a structured resettlement programme is of concern.

7.5.2 One very promising initiative for the coming reporting year is the intended establishment of a settlement hub where prisoners will be able to access specialist advice and information from outside agencies on debt, benefits, employment, education and accommodation. Progress to opening up this facility has been

hampered principally by the effects of Covid but once live it offers the prospect of providing a really valuable service to men, accessible at any time in their sentence.

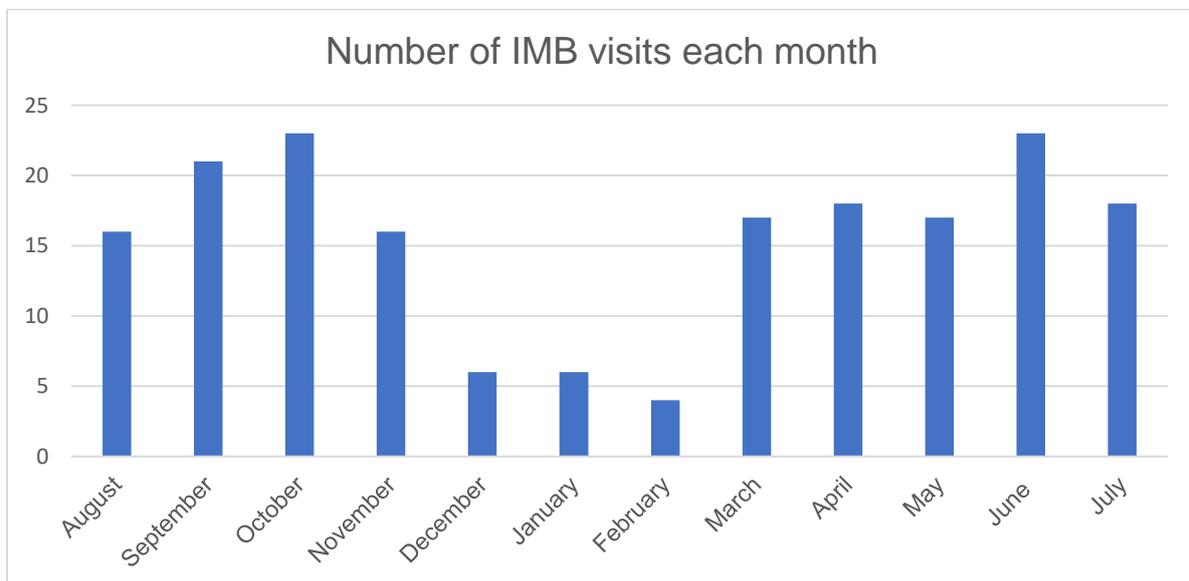
7.5.3 Buckley Hall is not resourced as a resettlement prison and yet some prisoners do complete their sentence here – either because the Parole Board has released them or they have reached the end of their sentence. In the period, April – July 2021, an average of four men per month were released from Buckley Hall. Over the reporting year, the Board has spoken to a number of those being released and, in each case, the men have stated they had accommodation and transport arranged. An additional support is that the information and assurance group’s advisor offers a pre-release interview to any man about to be discharged. The Board has monitored a number of the discharge interviews and can confirm they were conducted in a positive and friendly manner – although perhaps, unsurprisingly, the focus was primarily on making sure the correct man was being released.

8. The work of the IMB

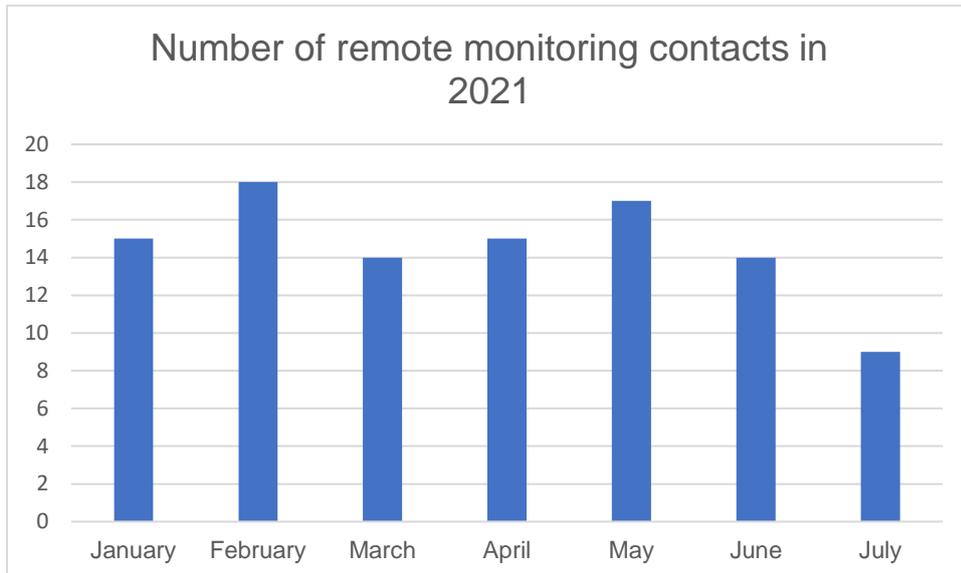
The Board has experienced some collateral damage from Covid-19 which have included resignations, requests for extended sabbatical leave and members who will carry out remote monitoring but do not yet feel comfortable about returning to the prison. As a consequence, by the end of the reporting year, the number of Board members directly monitoring Buckley Hall has been significantly depleted. As the graph below shows, monitoring visits were affected by the Covid restrictions throughout the year and the total represented 61% of the visits made in the previous reporting year.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	14
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	11
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	185
Total number of segregation reviews attended	35

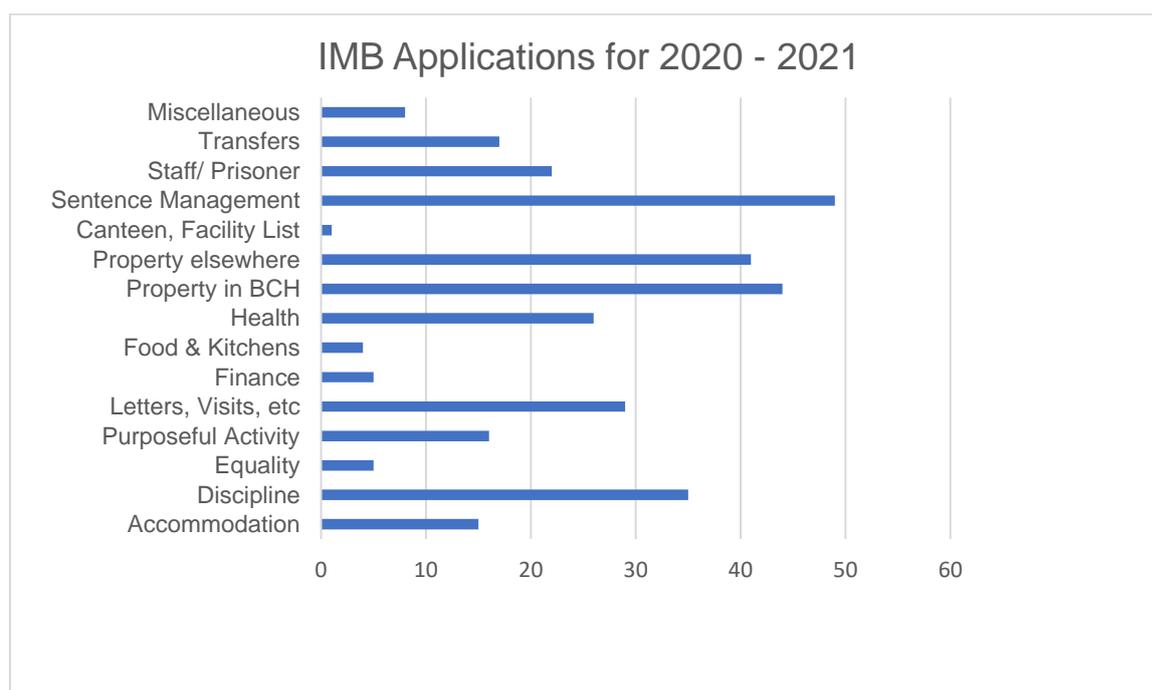


In addition to direct monitoring of HMP Buckley Hall during the reporting year, Board members also undertook remote monitoring. A rota was drawn up and each week a specific department or function within the prison was telephoned to provide an update. The information gathered was then circulated to the rest of the Board. During the period when the prison was classed as an 'outbreak site', the Board maintained contact with prisoners through the 'email a prisoner' service.



Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	2018 - 2019 reporting year	2019-2020 reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	17	14	15
B	Discipline, including adjudications, IEP, sanctions	11	10	35
C	Equality	7	4	5
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, library, regime, time out of cell	14	10	16
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection restrictions	36	23	31
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	15	11	5
F	Food and kitchens	8	1	4
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	27	19	28
H1	Property within this establishment	42	19	44
H2	Property during transfer or in another establishment or location	32	38	41
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogue(s)	6	8	1
I	Sentence management, including HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, recategorisation	37	40	51
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	11	9	22
K	Transfers	13	6	17
L	Miscellaneous, including complaints system			
	Total number of applications	276	212	315





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