



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

**For reporting year  
1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025**

**Published October 2025**



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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 IMB is part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

## 2. Description of the establishment

Buckley Hall is a category C training prison (which holds prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions but do not pose a high risk of escape, with a focus on rehabilitation and resettlement), with a progression unit for prisoners on indeterminate sentences. (Indeterminate sentences do not have a fixed end date but include a minimum term that must be served before the prisoner can be considered for release by a parole board.) It has an operational capacity (the maximum number of prisoners that can be held without serious risk to safety, security, good order and the proper running of the prison) of 469<sup>1</sup> men on four wings. Men are expected to attend employment or education full time, unless they are declared sick or retired.

For those who are unable to work, Tier 2 activities, which focus on hobbies, special interests and purposeful engagement that is not directly work or education, are available both during the day and in the early evening.

The prison is on the edge of the moors in a rural setting with a public right of way just outside the fence. This leads to problems with parcels being thrown over the fence, although drone activity in the reporting year has been minimal.

The type of men coming to Buckley Hall has changed dramatically over recent years with a much more transient population. Traditionally the prison would only accommodate men with more than four years to serve but more recently men are arriving with only a short time left of their sentences to serve. These men do not get the opportunity to gain experience in the workshops or to meaningfully take advantage of the educational courses on offer.

The men are housed in one of four wings. A wing is where the drug and alcohol recovery service (DARS) has its base. As with B wing, this is general accommodation. C wing contains the induction unit on one side and the progression unit, Aspire, on the other. Behind these units are the progression gardens, where men from all the wings in the prison can apply to work. D wing has traditionally been used for enhanced (the top level of the prison's incentives scheme) long-term men, but it is transitioning slowly into the incentivised substance free living unit (ISFL). Places on this unit are highly prized, because all the cells are single occupancy and have their own in-cell shower.

In-cell telephony is available throughout the establishment.

There is a large gym and a weights room, as well as a smaller facility for older men to use. The weights equipment has been updated recently and any of the old equipment that is still fit to use, is being distributed to the 'cardiovascular' (CV) rooms on the wings.

The multifaith centre supports all faiths, and services are available for men to attend. It is unfortunate that the Sycamore Tree course, which helped men to address their offending behaviour, has been withdrawn nationally.

The Board acknowledges that HMP Buckley Hall is a small establishment, with relatively minor problems compared with some of the larger prisons. However, we note that the huge impact on the prison of shortages of staff, poor accommodation and facilities and the regular influx of drugs.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures included in this report are local management information. They reflect the prison's position at the time of reporting, but may be subject to change following further validation and therefore may not always tally with Official Statistics later published by the Ministry of Justice.

### **3. Key points**

#### **3.1 Main findings**

##### **Safety**

The Board has observed more full staff searches at the gate in the second half of the reporting year. It also appears that specially trained sniffer dogs are more regularly employed in searches of the grounds and on the wings, as well as during the random searches when staff are arriving. Clear plastic bags have been provided and everyone is expected to use them to bring items into work. Security at the gate remains a concern and it has been observed that identity (ID) checks on arrival are not always carried out by the gate staff.

##### **Fair and humane treatment**

Throughout the reporting year, there have been issues with staff sickness and those returning to work on restricted duties. This regularly disrupts the regime, and wings are locked down on rotation throughout the week. It causes unrest amongst the men, who are losing association time and exercise. The establishment appears to make considerable efforts to minimise this disruption and to ensure that all the wings are treated equally, moving staff from other areas to the wings to accommodate movement and association. Unfortunately, this impacts on those areas, particularly property in reception, safer custody and key worker sessions.

##### **Health and wellbeing**

Members of the Board have noticed a marked improvement in the quality of healthcare throughout the reporting year, with nurse-led triage clinics on the wings most days. The department is avoiding the use of agency staff by running their own bank staff. From the Board's observations, the healthcare manager and all their staff demonstrate empathy towards the men and are helpful to members of the Board.

##### **Progression and resettlement**

Members of the Board have noticed an increase in the number of men being released who are serving IPP sentences (imprisonment for public protection): 14 between January and July 2025. It is also worth noting that once the parole board has agreed release or recategorisation, it happens more quickly than in previous years.

The employment hub provides support for men at least 12 weeks before their release.

#### **3.2 Mains areas for development**

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

- In our previous annual report, we noted the issue with security at the gate at Buckley Hall. This had been raised by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) in their last inspection report in 2024. Does the Minister have funding available to improve this ongoing situation, which was described as weak?
- The maintenance contract with Amey seems almost to deter staff at Buckley Hall from carrying out necessary work. The staff in the works department appear to genuinely want to get the work done, but they are hampered by restrictions imposed by the contract. An example of this is the television signal. It is inconsistent across the site and needs updating. The issue has been raised over the last 18 months but, so far, nothing has happened.

The laundry facilities are regularly out of order on the wings. In one case, Board

members were told by men on the wing that they were having to wash their clothes by hand for a number of weeks. Although two washing machines were on site in the stores, they were not installed on the wings.

The flushing mechanism in some of the toilets on one of the wings was broken for several months, due to an inability to obtain spare parts. Since locating these parts and fixing the toilets, a stock of the solenoids needed has now been obtained for future repairs.

Does the Minister have any plans to review what, in the Board's view, is a very expensive and ineffective contract?

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

- As with most establishments, Buckley Hall has problems with property during transfers in and out of the prison. Bags of property fail to arrive with the men and it is often difficult to locate them and have them sent on. Valuables held in finance are not always collected and sent with the rest of the property. This problem has increased with the increased movement of men around the prison estate. In addition, different rules often apply at establishments, leading to frustration when an item allowed at the previous prison is denied at the next one. Does the Prison Service plan to streamline property and improve the process when men are moved? And will this involve adequate training for staff?
- It has been noted by Board members that increasing numbers of men are being transferred out of Buckley Hall without apparent cause, as directed centrally by the prison management team. The Board has seen long-term residents sent to other establishments against their will, with disruption to family ties and progress in education and vocational training. Is the Prison Service likely to continue this policy and will more consideration be given to the reasons when men protest about the move?

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

- The men at Buckley Hall have not been allowed to have birthday parcels sent into them by family members and friends since last year. They can, however, have money sent in once a year to enable them to purchase items from the catalogue. This can have a detrimental effect on men who don't have sufficient money to buy items. Is this policy to be reviewed? And, if so, how and when will that happen?
- As noted in our previous report, the Board understands that a 'handyman scheme' (an initiative that allows prisoners to perform minor repairs and odd jobs in the prison) is to be introduced. When is it likely to happen and how many men will be invited to apply for the role? Given the recent quote for updating the television signal, is this now likely to be proceeded with?

### 3.3 Response to the last report

Issue raised	Response given	Progress
1. Support for IPP prisoners.	Some changes to licence introduced.	More support for parole hearings. More men being released.
2. Contract with Amey.	More scrutiny of performance.	Minimal improvement in performance. Staff sickness monitored.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception and Induction**

The transient population at Buckley Hall has led to problems in reception. Transfers in and out of Buckley Hall have increased to the point where staff are so busy processing them, property is being left for far too long before it goes up to the wings. This is exacerbated by continuous staff shortages. A Board member spoke to two new arrivals on the induction wing, who had been waiting for two weeks for their belongings to come up to the wing.

Too often, the transport is arriving late in the day and men are being processed after lock-up. IMB members struggle to speak to new arrivals on arrival in reception, because of this situation, but will see them on the induction wing and check their wellbeing there. Men are seen in reception by a member of the healthcare department and someone from the chaplaincy team before being moved to the induction wing. Again, this can be hampered by a late arrival. Records of first night checks are recorded in the wing office for the first 72 hours.

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

Sadly, there have been three deaths in custody at Buckley Hall since the beginning of the year (2025), two of whom had been resident on the same wing for a long time. This has had a profound effect on men on the wing and the staff. Full support is being offered. The third incident occurred on a separate unit.

There were two serious incidents of self-harm, both involving the same man. He was relocated to the constant watch cell on D wing on an open assessment, care in custody and teamwork (ACCT) document (which is used to support prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide).

The safer custody team has reported that incidents of self-harm are high at Buckley Hall, with 81 reported in the final quarter of the reporting year.

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

Members of the Board are aware of an apparent increase in the number of men self-isolating at Buckley Hall in the reporting year. During the safety intervention meetings (SIMs), ways to assist these men, within the confines of the regime, are regularly discussed. It was observed at the meetings that staff were genuinely trying to help the men at Buckley Hall who have more complex issues. At the end of June, three men were still self-isolating.

Throughout the year in review, 90 violent incidents were reported, with the highest number - 13 - being in December 2024 and the lowest number of 6 each in April and May 2025. It is considered that the last quarter of the reporting year has seen fewer incidents of violence (14 in 90 days) and a more settled atmosphere. However, during this time, two separate incidents occurred where men were assaulted in their cells by a group of other prisoners.

The number of men who are classified as 'complex cases' has, again, varied throughout the year, with eight in September 2024 being the highest and four in June 2025 being the lowest. These are men who have a higher level of need and require additional management to those on ACCTs. They are often dual harmers (both violent and self-harming) and at Buckley Hall their case manager will usually be a member of the senior leadership team (SLT).



There are regularly between eight and 12 men on an open ACCT at any given time. Regular ACCT reviews (where staff who meet with the prisoner to assess their needs, decide on appropriate support, and determine the level of observation required to ensure their safety) are held and IMB members try to observe these as often as possible.

#### **4.4 Use of force**

At the monthly use of force meeting, which the Board observes, body worn video camera footage (BWVC) of a number of incidents is reviewed. These incidents are then discussed by the multi-disciplinary team and learning issues identified. Although, generally, it is seen that these incidents are carried out very professionally, there are occasions when it would appear that the situation could have been handled differently if staff had had prior understanding of the prisoner involved. The Board has discussed this with the Governors and appreciates that we do not always understand the security risks, which must be protected.

The number of use of force (UoF) incidents has varied throughout the year, with 40 in October 2024 and 37 in March 2025 being the highest numbers. Apart from August 2024, when there were 18 incidents, and November 2024, when there were 21, all other months have recorded around 30 incidents. During the first half of 2024 (January to June), there were a total of 114 incidents, with a further 18 in July 2024.

#### **4.5 Preventing illicit items**

Sniffer dogs are more frequently used for searches at Buckley Hall, with the north west regional search team seen regularly around the prison.

The security team is often on the wings before unlock, carrying out random and intelligence-led searches. When the IMB has been able to observe their work, they have found them to be professional and considerate.

Mandatory drug testing (MDT) is carried out at morning unlock, with men selected randomly from the list of prisoners. A total of 24 are conducted each month and the men are taken down to the testing suite. Again, this has been observed by the Board to be professionally conducted, with officers showing patience and courtesy to the men. Any refusals are 'backfilled' from the random list and the men who refuse are taken for an adjudication (a disciplinary hearing when a prisoner is alleged to have broken prison rules).

Random searches of staff are now carried out at the gate at the start of the working day. This involves a sniffer dog search, body search and any bags being emptied and checked. The gate house at Buckley Hall is not suitable for more regular searches, so the visits hall has to be used on the days when these are carried out. This involves a different access route, which then means that staff have to return to the gate to collect keys, and this can occasionally delay the morning regime.

The new Drug and Alcohol Framework is being implemented at Buckley Hall, with measures such as a revised 'under the influence' (UTI) policy and a comprehensive review of the incentivised substance free living (ISFL) policy. This should promote a rehabilitative, non-punitive response to incidents of UTI, and ensure clear eligibility and selection and deselection procedures on the ISFL unit. Regular ISFL wing consultation meetings will be held and an ISFL representative has been appointed on the wing. Social events will regularly be arranged to follow the very successful ISFL barbecue in July 2025.

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

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

The accommodation and facilities at Buckley Hall are tired. Repairs carried out are not always of a high enough standard and quickly fail. The showers are regularly out of use, with water either too hot to stand under or running cold. The boilers have also failed throughout the year. The television signal is inconsistent across the prison and has been waiting for over a year to be updated. The Governor has expressed his frustration with the situation, which he has been unable to resolve.

The laundry equipment has been constantly breaking down throughout the year. The Board have been told by men on the wing that they have had to wash underwear and socks in mop buckets. When the dryers failed on one of the wings, some of the men said they were given wet washing to dry in their cells as best they could, as there was insufficient space to hang them up in the laundry room and they were not supposed to use the railings. The Board has witnessed the frustration on the wings when laundry is not being facilitated and, on one occasion, the laundry orderly (a trusted prisoner who takes on work to provide services that contribute to the running of the prison) reported feeling threatened and an officer on the wing had something thrown at him.

Several of the in-cell toilets on D wing would not flush for several months, waiting for spare parts for the flushing mechanism to be sourced. This meant that men had to carry buckets of water upstairs to flush their toilets in the morning. It should be noted that once the solenoids had been sourced, a supply had been ordered for future use.

The Board has been informed by the maintenance staff that some of the problems with delays in repairs being carried out is down to staff not reporting them correctly on the system.

The cells are small for two people to share and single cells are at a premium. It has become common throughout the reporting year for men to be taken to the care and separation unit (CSU) for refusing to share a cell. This causes issues as, if they are forced back onto the wing in a double cell, they create further problems. Occasionally, they get what they want. Decisions about single cells are made at the SIM each week, using the cell share risk assessment (CSRA). This involves input from the healthcare department, mental health and safer custody teams and offender managers. Men who are deemed high risk and placed in a single cell have that decision reviewed annually.

The kitchen staff work hard to provide hot, wholesome food for the men, but transporting it up to the wings can mean that the presentation of the food is diminished by the time it is served. When we have observed service of the evening meal, members have been impressed with the quality and quantity of the food offered.

The Board has raised concerns regularly throughout the year about the hygiene in the serveries, as food is often left out uncovered overnight. Towards the end of the reporting year (June), the kitchens employed servery cleaners on each wing to address this problem. They are given training and support from the kitchen staff and there does appear to be an improvement. On some of the wings, this is hampered by late service of the evening meal and the cleaners being locked up before they can clear away the leftover food. This happens most frequently on the induction wing, due to the late arrival of transfers.

There have been issues with men demanding special dietary requirements, which have to be supported with evidence before they are accommodated. For example, a man asking for a vegan diet will have his canteen and food orders checked for animal products for a month before he is approved for the diet. Kosher food requests will have

to be supported by the Rabbi and allergies confirmed by the healthcare department. However, the Board notes that kitchen staff are always willing to discuss dietary issues with the men and try to find a solution.

Equipment in the kitchen has failed throughout the year and repairs have been slow to happen. A temporary mobile freezer has been hired, as the main kitchen freezer has been out of action for some months.

A 'big clean-up day' was held in June, with a prize being offered to the cleanest wing. Staff and men were then treated to hot dogs in the yard.

Rats have been a big problem around the establishment, which is not helped when rubbish bags containing leftover food remain outside the wings in unsecured cabinets.

The men on the wings are allowed to cook their own food, if they wish. They have been provided with toasters, air fryers and microwaves to facilitate this. Some of this equipment is bought with a community fund, which men can contribute towards. However, quite worryingly, on most of the wings, this equipment is on the landings and is not hygienic or safe. The Governor would like to change a room on each of the wings into a kitchen for the men to use, but, with the prison population crisis, it is difficult to provide space for this.

The kitchen on the Aspire unit is well used and the Board has observed an improvement in cleanliness since the employment of a kitchen orderly. It is good to see men cooking for each other and sharing a meal.

The waste management team of men work hard to clear the rubbish and waste from around the prison, but they have been hampered by the fact that the compactor has been out of use for much of 2025 and had still not been repaired by the end of July. A large skip has been supplied, but this is quickly filled with waste and needs changing twice a week. This is an expensive alternative.

## **5.2 Segregation**

At the start of the reporting year, the care and separation unit (CSU), where men are separated from the rest of the prison population, was often full, which was a concern for the Governor and the Board. In the Board's view, the Governor is working hard to ensure that the CSU is only used in cases where there is no alternative. At the end of May 2025, there were only two men in the unit, but the number increased, again, to six in June and four at the end of July.

The men in the CSU are seen regularly by members of the healthcare department, as well as the mental health and chaplaincy teams. IMB members also visit the CSU when they are in attendance.

The constant-watch cell has been used on several occasions throughout the year, but it has mostly been the same few men needing extra observations.

When the Board is able to observe, we are usually impressed with the care and consideration given to men who are held in the CSU and the efforts made by staff to accommodate their needs. Board members regularly observe adjudications and generally regard them as fair and humane. However, on one occasion, it was noted that the man appearing was on an ACCT (assessment, care in custody and teamwork) plan, but the adjudicating Governor was not aware of this and the prisoner's documents had not been brought to the CSU.

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

The Board has observed some excellent examples of members of staff who engage well with the men. However, occasionally, some incidents have escalated because of poor communication by staff. This is particularly noticeable when staff are dealing with men who have complex issues. It would appear, at times, that there is provocation to push the men into reacting in a very negative way so that an adjudication can be given. A more consistent, understanding approach might have avoided this escalation.

From the Board's observations, the staff on the CSU work particularly hard to manage some of the most challenging behaviour at Buckley Hall.

The key worker scheme appears to work well and the Board has seen some excellent reporting of these sessions. The men are seen monthly by their key worker and more frequently when issues arise, although this can be disrupted due to staff shortages.

Men who are classed as having complex issues are seen more frequently by their case worker for regular reviews. The number of men in this category varied throughout the reporting year, from eight in September 2024 to three in January 2025. There were four at the beginning of July 2025.

### **5.4 Diversity and equality**

A PRIDE event (which celebrates the LGBTQ+ community) was held in the Hive (an area in the mental health unit that offers therapeutic activities and initiatives for prisoners, particularly those with complex needs) at the end of August 2025 and was well attended by men and staff.

The prison held several events in November to celebrate Black History Month. These included dance performances, African and Caribbean mental health services, including a forum with prisoners to discuss how to improve their mental health and wellbeing, a 'Wear Red Day' to 'show racism the red card', and an event with guest speakers, food and music.

A cultural awareness event was held in the gym in November 2024 to celebrate diversity at Buckley Hall. Various stalls were set up selling food and gifts from different cultures, such as, for example, Polish, Indian and Chinese. Some external charities attended, including the Kashmir Youth Project from Rochdale, bringing with them snacks and gifts to be distributed. Men on enhanced status were able to attend and mingle with staff to appreciate the relaxed atmosphere. They all appeared to enjoy the event and sampled the food on offer. Money was raised for charity at the event.

A 'Santa dash' was held on 13 December, which involved a Park Run with both staff and men participating while wearing a Santa hat, to raise money for charity. This was followed by a Christmas market in the yard of D wing. The staff arrived first, followed by groups of men from each wing, on rotation. One of the Governors arrived in a Santa suit and staff participated with men in a goal-scoring football exercise. The wings were offered a stall to sell items they had made or purchased. B wing sold chocolate brownies, made at Buckley Hall, and other snacks. The gardening workshop sold plants and Christmas wreaths, and the woodworking workshop had made wooden Christmas trees and other items to sell. The Aspire unit sold items usually available in their shop and had sold out within an hour. Men were then able to use their tokens to order for future delivery of the goods they wanted.

The South Asian Heritage Month, 'Roots to Routes', was celebrated in July (and August). Also, special yoga sessions were arranged for July, while a quiz organised by the safer custody team offered prizes such as a goody bag or £5 phone credit.

There have been 21 DIRFs (discrimination incident reporting forms) submitted since January 2025. Seven of these related to complaints regarding race. The DIRF scrutiny panel (an independent panel that includes two or three prisoners) review a selection of these every three months, and all have been considered to have been correctly dealt with.

## **5.5 Faith and pastoral support**

The multifaith team caters to all religious groups, offering services and celebrations for everyone. The Eid celebration, at the end of March, was observed to be well attended and the food available was much appreciated by the men. All the prisoners were welcoming and polite to the IMB, offering food in abundance. During Ramadan, food was delivered to the wings in thermos containers to keep it hot until after sundown. From the Board's observations, a great deal of work was done to provide one of the men a contact for his Jain faith.

Courses are available for men to take part in at the multifaith centre, including Living with Loss, the Alpha course and a Bible Study class. It is unfortunate that the Sycamore Tree course is no longer available for the men to work on recognising the impact of their offences, as it has been withdrawn nationally. This has had a particular impact, as it coincides with the changes in the courses available in the establishment.

## **5.6 Incentive schemes**

At the end of the reporting period, 258 out of 460 men were on the enhanced (top) level of the incentives schemes, which is 56% of the prison population. A total of 163 (35%) were on the standard (middle) level, and only 37 (8%) on the basic (bottom) level. The Board has regularly heard from men who have been downgraded to basic when they have been given an adjudication slip. Even though the adjudication is not proven, they may be left on basic, which they feel is unjust.

The enhanced behaviour monitoring (EBM) system is used on the Aspire unit to encourage men to engage with the ethos of the unit, which encourages a community spirit and support for each other. The purpose of the unit is to help prepare men, who have been in custody for a long time, for release. Additional support with parole hearings, contact with outside agencies and introductions to support with housing and drug-treatment agencies, etc, is paramount to a successful release. The men are able to cook meals in the wing kitchen and to purchase certain items from the wing shop.

Men are allocated a psychologist with three weeks of arriving on the unit and are also given a dedicated key worker. Their EBM case file review is disclosed within six weeks and their first EBM is held after eight weeks on the unit. Then, at stage one and stage two, they are reviewed every 12 weeks, with objectives set towards their progression. At stage three, reviews may be heard every six months.

The men are actively encouraged to take part in activities on the wing, which they organise themselves. Examples are a barbecue in the gardens, a fashion show, a MacMillan charity coffee morning and a football match between staff and men. Groups are held throughout the week to engage the men. Examples are a sign language course, cookery classes, origami and a reading group. The unit has introduced the idea of a council, composed of elected men, who are involved in the management of the wing. Unfortunately, there has been some difficulty engaging the men in this idea.

## **5.7 Complaints**

The progress of all complaints is reported at the morning briefing three times a week. Records of complaints are made available to the Board to assist with applications

(prisoners' written or verbal representations to the IMB). It has been noted that the complaints clerk will go out of her way to offer help to men when she can, even going onto the wings to speak to them.

It has been noted by the Board that a certain number of men are submitting multiple complaints and applications about the same issue. We have then received further applications from these men, claiming that we don't help them. On two occasions, we have had to write to the men to say that we will not answer any more applications on the same subject. This has been after a conversation with them.

The number of complaints to the Independent Prisoner Complaints Investigation (IPCI) team seems to have increased during the reporting year, with men often asking for assistance with the process. In June 2025, a prisoner was appointed as the IPCI ambassador to assist the men with their complaints, and he appears to be doing an excellent job.

At Buckley Hall, it is much more common to receive a verbal application than a written one. All applications are answered in writing and are regularly followed up in person to ensure that the outcome is properly reported back to the men.

## **5.8 Property**

With the number of transfers in and out of Buckley Hall increasing significantly in the reporting year, the problems with men's property have increased. The reception area is often piled high with bags of property waiting to be scanned and checked by the sniffer dogs. This has led to men waiting too long to receive their possessions on the wing.

Forced movement to the CSU involves cell clearance by staff. This is not always handled promptly and the cell clearance form is not sent to the CSU as quickly as it should be. Bags of property are regularly seen in the stairwells or corridors in the staff area of the wings, as they wait to be taken down to reception.

It has been observed by Board members that all of a prisoner's property does not follow him when he is transferred from another establishment. For example, in May, a man arrived at Buckley Hall from HMP Liverpool without his valuables being sent. We followed up on this and, with the help of IMB at Liverpool, they were eventually found in the cashier's office there. It took a further four weeks for them to be sent on and they arrived just as he was being transferred to another establishment; fortunately, he was able to take them with him.

The Prison Service adopted a new rule prohibiting property sent in by family and friends early in the reporting year, because of security issues. Although this was relayed to the men in good time, with a community notice on the kiosk (a self-service computer terminal that allows prisoners to manage their daily affairs), many of them are still asking family to send in items. These are then handed out at visits, as they are not allowed to be given to the men, or held in stored property. Men are allowed to have money sent in so that they can order items themselves from the catalogues available. However, this causes frequent issues when the items arrive and are not suitable. Because of the delay, returns are often outside the timescale set by the catalogue and cause an issue when returning goods.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

Nurse-led triage clinics are held on the wings daily, staffing permitting. Men submit an application and their medical needs are then assessed; if necessary, a GP appointment is made. Men can also be signed off sick and given a sick note at these clinics if they are not fit for work.

For routine GP appointments, the wait should be no more than four weeks. Three clinics are run by GPs each week. Long-term health issues, wellbeing and sexual health clinics are held regularly, while physiotherapy, podiatry and optician appointments are also available. Dental clinics run twice a week and a hygienist is available once a week. The Board is not concerned about waiting times for a dental appointment. Medication is dispensed in the healthcare department by pharmacy twice each day and by healthcare staff over the weekend. Healthcare staff respond to emergency calls to the wings and check all men arriving in reception before they are taken to the induction wing. They also check that all men about to be released have a copy of their health records to take with them.

GPs visit the CSU three times a week to assess the suitability of the men to be held there. If the men on the unit need a GP appointment, they are taken to the healthcare department for a consultation. Nursing staff visit the CSU each day and medication is delivered directly to the men.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Men are allocated gym sessions according to their incentives scheme status. Prisoners on the enhanced level are given the most sessions, of four per week, while men on the basic level are allowed only one hour of gym time each week; this can be removed as part of losses imposed at an adjudication.

The gym provides many additional activities, such as the Park Run every Saturday morning, yoga sessions for men with neurodiversity, over 50s sessions and weekly competitions. The staff also run a 'Slimpossible' group, which has theoretical and physical components to assist with weight loss. They run a fire safety course in conjunction with the Fire Brigade two or three times a year and a first aid course is held regularly. Unfortunately, they are no longer able to run the gym instructors' course due to financial constraints.

The Park Run is still extremely popular and men who complete 100 sessions are given a Park Run T-shirt. All the men are very competitive about their performance. The course is eight laps of the grounds and you certainly do not want to get in their way! Orderlies observe and log laps and times, and the fastest run is recorded.

### **6.3 Mental health**

The mental health team has established a safe space in the Hive for men who are experiencing challenges in managing prison life. They are able to get support from others and from the staff. Tier 2 activities regularly run in the Hive, including bingo sessions, craft and art sessions and other courses to engage the men. The mentors and orderlies in the Hive provide a valuable service for all the men and are to be commended, in the Board's view. Several courses are run by them, including Learning Accountability, Responsibility and Managing conflict resolution and emotions (LARM), plus the new 'Unlock My Life' programme. This is designed to help men deal with issues arising from their mental health. The mentors, or mental health ambassadors, have completed the training and then run the sessions. These men show great pride

and satisfaction in the role they play helping others. The atmosphere in the Hive always seems to be warm and welcoming to everyone.

#### **6.4 Social care**

A coffee morning with cakes is arranged in the visits hall each month for men who do not get any visitors. Not everyone takes the offer up, but those who do feel it really helps them to sit and chat with staff and other men. It is reported that some of the men who have attended these sessions are now arranging to have visitors come in to see them.

Many of the Tier 2 activities give the men the opportunity to enjoy a relaxed, sociable atmosphere. Guitar jamming, bingo and debate groups are examples of the activities available, as well as craft sessions and creative writing. In the Hive, men decorated pillowcases and T-shirts, which can then be handed out to family members at visits.

#### **6.5 Time out of cell, regime.**

In the Governor's January monthly update, he stated that staffing resources have been challenging since the start of 2025. Staffing numbers are designed to accommodate 20% of the staff being on leave, sick or training, whilst still allowing the prison to run an effective regime. Over the first three months of 2025, the prison has been operating closer to 30%, which has a significant impact on the ability to deliver a consistent and full regime. This, too often, results in wings being locked down on rotation. Men are still sent to education or work, but those who are unemployed or staying on the wing for other reasons are locked up after movement to work. At the end of July 2025, 18 members of staff were absent due to sickness, as well as four staff being on restricted duties.

This ongoing problem with staff shortages is having a detrimental effect on the smooth running of the establishment. The men become disgruntled when the regime is restricted, particularly in the hot weather, when the cells become uncomfortable. Gym sessions are being cancelled and attendance for religious services is not always facilitated by wing staff, which is also causing some unrest. On the last weekend in July, it was reported at the morning briefing that staffing levels were critical, particularly as escorts were required for hospital visits and bed-watches. The staff who were available really stepped up to the mark, in the Board's view, to make sure that Buckley Hall was safe, and this was recognised at the morning briefing.

From 7 May, the regime changed to allow the men a full hour of association time in the morning. Unlock was at 8am but, instead of the men returning to their cells for lock up and roll count at 8.50am, they are expected to return to the wing at 9am to be checked straight out to go to work or education.

#### **6.6 Drug and alcohol rehabilitation**

The drug and alcohol rehabilitation service (DARS) hold an induction meeting with all new arrivals at Buckley Hall. They aim to do this in the first 24 hours of arrival, but it may take longer over a weekend. Help is offered to men who want to engage but, if they choose not to, they are told that they can always make contact later. Men are allocated a case worker within 15 days and should have been seen three times during that period. At the start of June, the team was working with 180 men, and approximately 70% of new arrivals are signing up for help with the team. As well as one-to-one sessions, the team runs regular group courses to assist the men. A six-week base course helps prepare men for the longer accredited course, Foundations for Rehabilitation, which lasts 16 weeks. As well as the regular staff on the team, they employ a prisoner as a peer mentor to assist men with coursework, whose help the



team have said, is valued. A total of 95% of those working with the team are supported on release or a move to category D (open) prison and provided with links to outside agencies.

During the second quarter of the reporting year, a drama group, Theatre in Prison and Probation (TIPP), came into Buckley Hall to work with the men supported by DARS. They helped them to write, produce and perform their own play. This was so successful, they are running weekly meetings with the men and are planning a further production later in the year. One IMB member who observed the play found it very entertaining. All the men were fully engaged and obviously proud of what they had achieved.

## **6.7 Soft skills**

The men at Buckley Hall are very keen to donate to local charities. A Board member spoke to one of the men, who was completing a one-million-metre row on a rowing machine (approximately 620 miles). He was sponsored by other prisoners and raised funds for the local hospice: £1,020 in total was donated to the local hospice from this event and others organised by the gym staff. A thank-you letter from the hospice was shared with all the men.

The 'We Roar' exhibition of art, created by men in prison, both in the UK and the USA, was on display in the education department for two weeks. Two of the items were paintings by men at Buckley Hall.

Tier 2 activities are available for men to engage in throughout the day and early evening. The head of reducing reoffending has informed the Board that Buckley Hall has one of the most comprehensive, all-encompassing Tier 2 activity programmes in the region. Guitar jamming, craft sessions, creative writing and art classes and yoga groups are some of the activities available, along with bingo and games groups, which are very popular. These sessions are either run in the Hive or the library. This gives the older men the opportunity to become involved, if they are retired, although several of them choose to continue working well passed retirement age. The men are paid for some of these activities but not all. However, Board members found, when talking to the men and the staff, that these are not well advertised and many knew nothing about what is available. This was reported back and it was explained that many of these sessions are targeted at particular groups of men. However, it has been agreed that efforts would be made to advertise the events more widely. It is also noted that when the regime is disrupted by staff shortages, the sessions may be cancelled.

The reading strategy has been presented to encourage the men to read more. Books are donated by staff and one of the men has painted a mural on the stairs in the administration building, 'Bookley Hall'. This depicts a very colourful bookshelf and a motivational quote by Dr Seuss.

## **7. Progression and resettlement**

### **7.1 Education, library**

The education department provide classes to support the men to gain basic Maths and English skills. Men are expected to gain Level 1 in both subjects before they can be employed; however, they are allowed to work in one of the workshops whilst studying to obtain the qualifications. Some of the men were unwilling to miss work to attend education and they are being accommodated with outreach workers who go to the workshop to help them with Maths and English. This requires them to sign a compact (a sort of contract) to confirm that they will engage with the outreach worker.

The education department also provides courses on life skills, computer skills, art and recycling. The art class is always busy and the men produce some amazing work. They are able to create pieces to share with family and the room is always decorated with examples of their work. It is a credit to the staff that they are able to so engage the men and still complete the curriculum. The recycling workshop takes items that have been donated and decorates them to produce saleable items. In May, IMB members observed a beautifully recovered love seat, a decorated guitar wall-hanging and a small cabinet on display. Men are engaged in building and decorating footstools. These are then sold to staff or passed to the charity that supports the class to sell.

### **7.2 Vocational training, work**

In April, the prison population was 461. The prison has 419 activity places. These are broken down as follows: 50 am/pm full-time education equivalent spaces; 76 am/pm part-time places, spread across eight classrooms and five vocational workshops; and 293 industry places, spread across four wings and seven other work areas. The department offers a variety of accredited workplace training qualifications, including Forklift Truck and Personal Development Curriculum, which are funded by Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). Workshops available to the men include Recycling Lives, Reborn and LMB Textiles, which are external contracts and pay the men's wages for the prison. This allows more of the limited budget available to be used to better remunerate the men in the other workshops.

The textiles workshop produces bed sheets and prisoner trousers for the prison service.

The construction workshop gives men the opportunity to obtain qualifications that they can use on construction sites on release, while the shopfitting workshop allows them to gain experience in joinery and woodwork.

At the end of July, it was reported at the morning briefing that 56 men were recorded as being unemployed.

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

At the beginning of the reporting year, men with sentences eligible for the SDS40 scheme, which allows them to be released when they have served 40% of their sentence, were being assessed. Five men were released on 10 September and a further eight on the 22 October. As the year has progressed, other schemes have been introduced, which allow men to move to category D prisons early and be released on home detention curfew (HDC). This has involved a huge amount of work for the offender management unit (OMU) and caused some anxiety amongst the men who were waiting for decisions.

The Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) was withdrawn at the end of 2024 and has been replaced with Building Choices. This was rolled out at Buckley Hall in January 2025 and the first group of eight men completed it by the end of March 2025. Building Choices allows HMP Buckley Hall to more flexibly cater for demand and ensure accredited programmes are accessible to a larger proportion of the population. The programme can be delivered to prisoners who would benefit from either a moderate- or high-intensity pathway and can also be delivered to those with learning difficulties and challenges. Optimum delivery for Building Choices ranges from 18 to 64, depending on what delivery model a prison opts to use. Capacity of places available vary each year, to respond to the priority need within the population. HMPPS programmes prioritise those closest to a release opportunity and of the higher risk or post tariff for those on indeterminate sentences. Individuals can be considered for a programme place to support sentence progression, provided that selection does not impact those with a release opportunity, and it is not mandatory that offending behaviour programmes must be completed before a prisoner moves to open conditions.

There were 42 men at Buckley Hall serving IPP sentences in June 2025, 31 of whom resided on the progression unit (Aspire). As men serving IPP sentences have been released from the unit, a more difficult to help cohort has moved to Buckley Hall. Their request to join the unit is assessed at a monthly meeting, with their own application and support from the establishment where they currently reside. If it is agreed that they will be suitable, they move to Buckley Hall and are accommodated on the unit as soon as a place becomes available. There is a clear selection process for men to apply to the unit, and the process for removal from the unit is clearly explained to the residents.

During the reporting year, 14 men serving an indeterminate sentence (which does not have a fixed release date, although the court sets a minimum period that must be served before the prisoner can be considered for release) for Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) have been released into the community and a further two transferred to a category D (open) establishment. Six men serving life sentences have also been released and a further 11 transferred to a category D prison. Not all, but most, of these men were resident on the Aspire unit.

#### **7.4 Family contact**

The visits hall has done some amazing work in the last 12 months. Themed visits are arranged frequently for families. Supported visits are available for children who have learning difficulties and family contact visits are available once a month to enable fathers to actively play with their children. In July 2025 a TOTS visit was arranged where children up to the age of five could wear fancy-dress costumes to the visit. Members have observed a variety of these sessions and found men and their families are enjoying them. When visitors are asked by Board members about their experience of coming to Buckley Hall, it is almost always positive. Rarely there are problems arranging the visit using the phone line.

The food available for visitors has always been a concern, consisting mostly of crisps, fizzy drinks and sweet snacks. At the end of June, the kitchen started to supply sandwiches and some hot food, and it is expected that this will improve the quality of refreshments available for families.

#### **7.5 Resettlement planning**

Although Buckley Hall is not a resettlement prison, it has recently been regularly releasing men into the community. The employment hub works with men who are approaching release and will usually see them 12 weeks before that date for a resettlement board meeting, where their needs are assessed. They help in obtaining a

bank card, driving licence, National Insurance Number and ID documents. They will also assist in contacting the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to apply for welfare benefits. They offer men who are about to be released into the community an introduction to the Creating Future Opportunities (CFO) activities hubs, which can assist with managing themselves on release.

The hub also organises a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS). A construction course which will give the men the documentation they need to allow them to work on a construction site on release. This course generally allows 10 to 15 men to complete the work and aims to run three or four of them each year.

## 8. The work of the IMB

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	10
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	6
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	6
Total number of visits to the establishment	313

### Applications to the IMB

Code	Subject	Previous reporting year	Current reporting year
A	Accommodation, including laundry, clothing, ablutions	23	28
B	Discipline, including adjudications, incentives scheme, sanctions	25	29
C	Equality	6	3
D	Purposeful activity, including education, work, training, time out of cell	26	17
E1	Letters, visits, telephones, public protection, restrictions	35	25
E2	Finance, including pay, private monies, spends	10	11
F	Food and kitchens	25	6
G	Health, including physical, mental, social care	47	52
H1	Property within the establishment	43	23
H2	Property during transfer or in another facility	32	31
H3	Canteen, facility list, catalogues	2	5
I	Sentence management, including HDC (home detention curfew), ROTL (release on temporary licence), parole, release dates, recategorisation	41	36
J	Staff/prisoner concerns, including bullying	8	9
K	Transfers	8	11
L	Miscellaneous	29	33
	<b>Total number of applications</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>319</b>



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