



**Annual Report For  
January to December 2021  
Presented at the  
Annual General Meeting  
on  
11<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

I am delighted to present the fifth Annual Report for the Bucks Association for the Care of Offenders (BACO). Hopefully this annual report will be presented to our members in person. The last two annual reports for 2019 and 2020 were presented via zoom due to government restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

On behalf of the Directors/Trustees, (Executive Committee) I would like to thank all our members for their support and generosity. Without them we would not be able to help the men serving sentences in the four prisons in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes nor the male and female ex-offenders rebuilding their lives in the county

**President**

Countess Howe, Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire

**Patron**

The Bishop of Buckingham, Rt. Rev'd Dr Alan Wilson

**Directors/Trustees** (Executive Committee)

My sincere thanks to the Committee who give their time and expertise diligently and generously.

Joe Barclay	Governance
Caroline Donald	Membership Secretary
Ruth Farwell	Education and Training Lead and Prisoner Support Volunteer (PSV) HMP Grendon
Fiona Paine	Prisoner Support Volunteer (PSV) HMP Springhill & Fund-Raiser
Roz Rossington	Grants Administrator and lead Probation and Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service and Milton Keynes Youth Offending Team (YOT)
Caroline Serjeant	Treasurer
Camilla Soames	Chair and Prisoner Support Volunteer (PSV) HMYOI, Aylesbury/Fund Raising Support

**Volunteer**

Andrew Muir                      Prisoner Support Volunteer (PSV) HMP Woodhill

## **2021**

January 2021 found the country experiencing a third national lock down. This was reflected in our prisons. At our committee meeting in January we assumed it would be unlikely that we would have access to hold face to face meetings with prisoners and that HMP Grendon wing socials, which our members are often invited to, would not take place for a second year; nor any other events in any other prisons would be available to our members.

HMP Springhill, HMP Grendon, HMP Woodhill and Her Majesty Young Offenders Institute, Aylesbury (HMYOIA) operated throughout the year according to the National Prison Framework for managing the pandemic, the priority being to keep prisoners and staff as safe as possible. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) protocol set out four different regimes for the prisons to adhere to, Stage 4 being a total lock down, with prisoners staying in their cells for 23 hours a day to Stage 1, allowing for prisoner's families to visit in person and education and activities to resume. Some access was given to third party organisations during Stage 2. During 2021 'our prisons' alternated between stages 4 & 2 depending on new outbreaks of the virus. BACO would be poised to attend in person meetings with prison staff, and then a further outbreak of the virus would take place and stage 2 protocols would become stage 3 and meetings reverted to attendance via telephone 'dial in'. The technological advances that we all on the 'outside' have learnt to use are not available to staff working on the 'inside'. Perhaps one positive from the two years of the pandemic will be the acceleration of digital technology throughout the prison estate.

Our thanks to all prison staff who made it possible for BACO to support prisoners who apply to BACO for a grant using the Criminal Justice Secure Email system (CJSM). It was fortuitous that we had started using this system in 2019 before the pandemic.

Our thoughts go out to all prisoners and staff who lost family and friends during the pandemic and we recognise the challenges that faced governors to manage their prisons with staff shortages and the ongoing issue of recruitment and retention of good people.

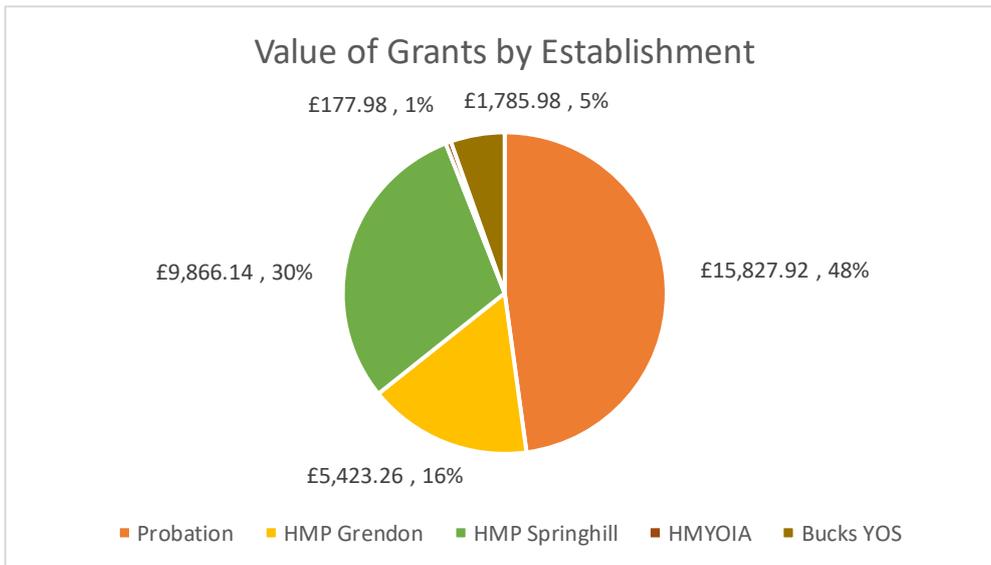
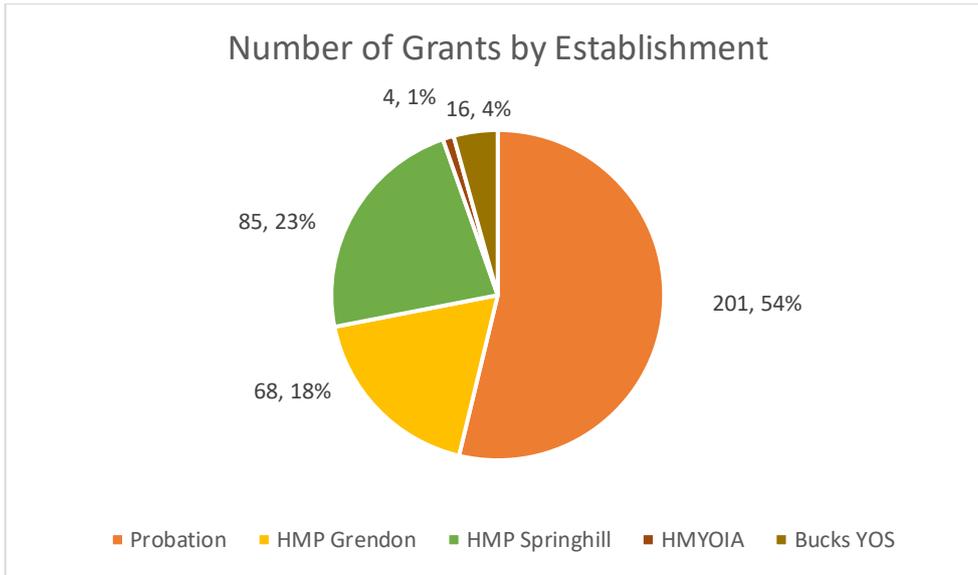
## **Finances**

Unsurprisingly, our fund-raising in 2021 produced lower levels of income than we achieved in 2019 and 2020. However, because of the surpluses generated in those two years we were able to continue our grants at our normal level of around £30,000 per annum and still end the year with funds carried forward of £29,884. This will give us some breathing space and allow us to continue our grants into 2022 provided we are able to reinvigorate our fund raising. I am extremely grateful to, and proud of, all those who helped us raise such a significant surplus in 2019 and 2020 so that when the proverbial rainy day came we were able to continue our work.

## **Our work**

### **Grants – Roz Rossington**

In 2021 BACO made 374 grants totalling £33,081 - an average of approximately £ 88.45 per grant. Although the average grant has remained at a similar level we have been able to support many more individuals this year as probation and prisons were once more able to open up for at least part of the year.



*Probation refers to National Probation Service and Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company and Bucks YOS is Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service*

## **National Probation Service (NPS) Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) – Roz Rossington**

48% of grants (54% by number) made in 2021 were to those released at the end of their custodial sentence into Buckinghamshire, including Milton Keynes and who are working with either the National Probation Service or Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company. The probation service underwent a complete re-organisation in June 2021. The new unified operating system brings into one place Sentence Management as well as the delivery of Unpaid Work, Accredited Programmes and Structured Interventions, taking the best of current CRC and NPS practice. The grant requests are assessed and processed by Roz Rossington.

2021 saw a continuation of disruption due to the global pandemic. Individuals released from prison are required to set up their benefit claims, to start searching for jobs and often to engage with training programmes to improve their chances of employment. All of this is difficult or impossible if you have no access to the internet. Even if you have the resources to fund a smart phone, this is not adequate for most online access. We have supplied 34 Chromebooks/Kindle tablets together with data dongles and data credit which have allowed individuals to access online skills training, Open University, literacy/numeracy education and counselling sessions.

The Milton Keynes probation office has once again been particularly successful in securing accommodation for those it is working with. The largest number of grants made is for household essentials. The small grant given allows individuals to buy a few basics as properties are often leased with no furniture or fittings. It is so important for an individual to have somewhere to call home to give stability to their lives and give a platform to move on. Other categories where we have provided support include basic clothing, identity documentation (vital to access housing/benefits) and basic mobile phone to allow communication with support services and probation.

## **Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service – Roz Rossington**

It has been good to continue to support this multi-disciplinary team supporting young people as they once again had to access education remotely during another lockdown, funding 5 laptops/chromebooks. We have also provided equipment to support sporting activities to aid mental health and encourage good lifestyle choices and helped with technical equipment and travel expenses for work experience.

For a redacted list of all grants made in 2021, please ask Roz [grants@baco.org.uk](mailto:grants@baco.org.uk).

*‘Just a letter to say thank you for the laptop and soon to be dumbells. I’m especially thankful as these both contribute to me being a better person and doing something with myself. Many thanks’.*

*February 2021*

*Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service*

## **In Prisons**

Buckinghamshire has four prisons. Our presence in the prisons is dependent on the trusted working relationship between BACO Prisoner Support Volunteers (PSV) and the prison staff. This is precious and we are privileged as a charity to be given access to our four prisons. In two of the establishments our PSV's attend the monthly QIG (Quality Improvement Group) meetings, which took place remotely due to the pandemic. It's a time where you discover what the principal initiatives to reduce re-offending are and who is leading them. Other charities working in criminal justice attend and it gives an ideal time to discuss possible future collaborations.

In 2019 we reported that we had changed our method of working in the prisons allowing us to receive and process applications using the secure email system (CJSM) and with the support of staff. This proved prescient for 2020 & 2021 when the prisons were closed to our volunteers and for some lengthy periods of time prisoners were living in isolation. Our sincere thanks to members of staff of the respective Business Hubs who have helped us deliver our service throughout this challenging year. Men serving their sentences have let us know that our continued support during this very difficult time has meant a great deal to them.

To evaluate our work we rely heavily on testimonials from all our service users as well as prison and probation staff. Many testimonials can be found on the home page of our website [www.baco.org.uk](http://www.baco.org.uk). In conversation with the people who receive our grants they are often surprised to learn that much of our funding comes from our members who believe that their financial support can help the men turn their lives around and break the cycle of re-offending. To know that a stranger cares can be a powerful force for good.

## **HMP Grendon**

### **Prisoner Support Volunteer - Ruth Farwell**

Throughout 2021 the processing of applications for individual grants to residents at HMP Grendon has continued to operate remotely. Its success can be attributed to the excellent support of staff at Grendon. Particular thanks should be given to Chris Dowthwaite, Head of Residence and Safety and June Cooper and colleagues in the Business Hub.

The regime during the pandemic has significantly disrupted the usual routine for the residents and BACO has received a corresponding increase in applications from residents for grants to purchase items which will assist in managing the increased time, they spend alone in their own cells. Items for which grants have been awarded include resistance bands and heart rate monitor for safe exercise in cells, DVD players, learning materials such as books and DVDs. Grants for essential clothing have continued to be in the majority.

Feedback on the purchases enabled by the grants is always positive for example:

*'These resistance bands may not seem a lot to most but to me it's a new start, it's a message and gift of support. It's my future health. I am so grateful to you all...'*

*'... thank you so much for the books and for the hard work everyone put in for me to get them. ... They are a great help to my future plan'*

In addition to the individual grants we have awarded funds in 2021 for activities which benefit groups of residents or communities. On his own initiative and having been backed to start guitar lessons, one resident applied on behalf of his community for funding for guitars so that residents could practice in their own cells. BACO has sponsored them with the purchase of five guitars. BACO has also arranged the funding and sourcing of various jigsaws and mats to be lent out to residents via the library in Grendon.

### **Education and training – Ruth Farwell**

Sadly, BACO's enhanced approach to education and training initiatives in prisons was in abeyance throughout much of 2021 although will be resumed as soon as practicable.

BACO donated £5,000 to the Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) to fund specifically applications for distance learning courses from young men at HMYOI Aylesbury during 2020. Since the number of applications was reduced during the pandemic, BACO agreed with PET that the period of the grant could be extended to April 2021. BACO's grant was used to finance nine young men's studies on:

- Book-keeping
- Business AS Level (two)
- Business A Level
- Business Start-Up
- Electrical Technologies Theory
- Foundation Journalism
- Open University: People, Work & Society Access module
- Plumbing Installation Theory.

A further grant of £3,000 was made to PET later in 2021.

## **HMP Springhill**

### **Prisoner Support Volunteer - Fiona Paine**

In 2021 we received a total of 121 requests for help from the men in Springhill of which 85 resulted in a grant being made. Due to lockdown, we have had to rely on email (CJSM) to receive applications. This has worked very well, enabling me to complete the necessary financial checks and get payments out speedily.

The scope of our grants has followed the same theme as in previous years - with the emphasis on training courses and qualifications which lead to employment opportunities both while in Springhill and upon release. Of the 14 Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS) training requests, we were pleased to be able to issue cheques to 4 applicants who succeeded in raising the balance of the significant funds needed. We continued to receive requests for help funding Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards. The applicant is required to complete on-line training and BACO then funds the certificate costing £36, essential for work on a building site. We received requests for help with Protective Clothing Equipment (PPE) and work tools enabling applicants to enter the workplace properly equipped. We also supported men hoping to work on the railways by giving grants towards the cost of their Personal Track Safety (PTS) courses, again, relying on individuals to seek further funding to reach the balance required.

Driving lessons and tests were a frequent request. We were unable to help applicants wanting lessons due to the unavailability of a driving instructor until October when a new instructor was appointed.

We had 14 requests for help with essential items of clothing all of which made a huge difference to each applicant. The value of a new pair of trainers replacing an old, worn-out pair or a smart shirt ready for an interview cannot be underestimated.

We were very grateful for a donation of £95 from the men of Springhill who undertook a sponsored car wash in May.

*'I would like to use this opportunity to thank BACO and its donors for their support. Their help will enable me to be work-ready with suitable PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) once the time has come for me to seek and find preferred employment as a carpenter once again. Thank you for your support as it is going to be huge help on my journey in my future employment'*

*April 2021*

*Testimonial from prisoner in HMP Springhill*

## **HMYOI, Aylesbury**

### **Prisoner Support Volunteer – Camilla Soames**

Establishing BACO within HMYOIA without having access to the prison was problematic during 2021. We received a few applications for clothing from the young men and our thanks to the Librarian and Business Services for their help in processing these. The Learning and Skills Manager invited BACO to 'advertise' its services on the in-cell television service. We saw continued support from the Head of Reducing Reoffending and her invitation to BACO to attend the monthly Quality Improvement Group (QIG) meetings.

In September a selection of DVD's donated by BACO members were delivered to the prison.

BACO was pleased to have partnered with the Prison Education Trust (PET) once again.

## **HMP Woodhill**

### **Prisoner Support Volunteer – Camilla Soames / Andrew Muir**

Our thanks to our patient PSV Andrew Muir, who is key trained and ready to deliver BACO grants in HMP Woodhill. Head of Reducing Re-offending has invited Andrew to attend the monthly QIG meeting but none were face to face.

## **Partnerships**

Throughout the year various members of the committees attended online training and webinars from various organisations; CLINKS, the NCJAA, Community Impact Bucks. The Trustees continue to work at maintaining BACO's profile as an effective charity operating in Buckinghamshire & MK within the voluntary organisation criminal justice sector. The Trustees of the Hardman Trust invited BACO to a networking dinner in London.

## **Fundraising**

We owe Fiona Paine our thanks for leading our efforts to secure funds from trusts and foundations over recent years. Fiona stepped down from her fund-raising role in October due to ill health but continues with her role as HMP Springhill PSV.

BACO did not host any fund-raising events during the year. We had hoped to have been able to celebrate our postponed fiftieth anniversary year but we took the view that it was too risky to try and organise a gathering of friends and supporters with the understandable concerns people had to socialise and the uncertainties of more lock-downs. Like so many others we did what our resources allowed to have an online social media presence and to set up a Just Giving 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary page on Just Giving.

Thank you to Andrew Muir and his wife Jane who helped organise an open gardens day in Wingrave and chose BACO along with Maggie's Centres to share the net proceeds.

We are grateful to the Charitable Trusts and Foundations who have supported us. We are an unusual charity and as grant givers are more likely to receive a positive response from Trusts who understand what we do from attending a prison social or speaking to our BACO Ambassador, Bradley Cooper or know a BACO member.

We are grateful to the following Trusts/Foundations who supported us in 2021

Aldo Trust	£500
Carrington Charitable Trust	£500
EM MacAndrew Trust	£2,000
HDH Wills	£500
Rothschild Foundation	£5,000
Charles Hayward Foundation	£1,250

Our members are our life-blood and we are so grateful for their support. We need to keep BACO breathing and alive by recruiting new members. We had some success in 2021 but need to keep working hard to recruit more. Thank you to all Members who have made generous donations above their annual subscriptions of £20.00 per annum.

We have a social media presence and can be found on Facebook, Instagram & use Just Giving as our Fund-raising platform plus Amazon Smile and the Buckinghamshire Lottery.

### **Special Mentions**

Thank you to Henry Allmand CE of Heart of Bucks (HOB) and to his staff who continue to support BACO by allowing us to use the HOB offices as our poste restante and forward post to us FOC.

Thank you to Fiona Paine who nominated BACO as her 'birthday' wish on Facebook and the generosity of her friends raised £400.

Thank you to AJR Richardson for independently examining our accounts on a pro bono basis.

Thank you to Martyn Allen and Kathryn Hobbs for Website and Admin & Social Media support.

Thank you Rose Scrope for looking after our Instagram account.

Thank you Bradley Cooper for being our first lived experience Ambassador.

### **Meanwhile**

Thank you for taking the time to read this report and if you know of anyone who would like to support BACO by becoming a member and or making a donation please direct them to our website [www.baco.org.uk](http://www.baco.org.uk) or email [info@baco.org.uk](mailto:info@baco.org.uk). Or follow us on twitter BacoinBucks or Instagram Baco\_in\_Bucks.

Camilla Soames - Chairperson