Prisoner Wellbeing – Outcomes from a Prisons Horticultural Programme

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Outline

- Contextual health issues in prison
- Rationale for horticultural programme
- Evaluation
- Mental health outcomes
- Next steps
Prison health issues

- Poor physical and mental health is strongly associated with offending behaviour (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002)

- 72% of male and 70% of female prisoners suffer from two or more mental health disorders (prisonreformtrust.org.uk)

- Prisoners have a poor understanding of the benefits of physical activity and a healthy diet (Public Health England, 2014)
Prison wellbeing

- Health in prisons: reductionist rather than holistic (Warwick Booth et al., 2012)
- Physical as opposed to mental dimensions of health and wellbeing (Woodhall et al., 2014)
1920s-present day as a “means of creating more humane conditions and as a form of inmate rehabilitation through meaningful work” (Rutt, 2016)

“It can enable marginalised people to reintegrate into society by facilitating skills development” (O’Brien et al., 2011)

“Investing in health-promoting activities such as horticulture may increase a prisoner’s chances of returning to society with improved health and self-efficacy, which may increase their chances for a reduction in reoffending” (Flagler, 1995)
Greener on the Outside for Prisons (GOOP)

Prisons horticulture project funded by Big Lottery (est. 2008).

- Establishing and maintaining outdoor green spaces
- Growing food and flowers/plants
- Improving local environments (ROTL)
- Linking with accredited courses (e.g. NVQ)
- Assessing health of participants
- GOOP Network: quarterly meeting with key staff
- GOOP branding and identity
GOOP impact evaluation

Evaluation methods:
- ‘Green Gym’ Evaluation forms
- Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)
- Qualitative data/case studies from narrative interviews with prisoners

Aim:
- Evaluative against wellbeing outcome indicators set by Big Lottery (mental wellbeing, physical activity and healthier eating)
- To monitor changes in wellbeing related to GOOP participation
Data collected

- Evaluation data from 11 prisons in the North West of England
- 897 beneficiaries
- Quantitative evaluation data on 370 beneficiaries (41%)
- Qualitative in-depth interviews with 13 prisoners from 4 prisons
## Mental health: outcome indicators

<table>
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<tr>
<th>% of evaluated beneficiaries showing improvement</th>
<th>People feeling more confident to manage their everyday lives</th>
<th>People experiencing increased opportunities for social interaction</th>
<th>New skills or knowledge gained</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>I have suffered with mental health problems for over 25 years but working in the...GOOP project has helped me to feel more confident. (Male, Category C)</td>
<td>I love working [on GOOP] because I have learned to associate with people more. (Female)</td>
<td>I’ve learnt quite a lot during the time here, stuff that I wouldn’t have picked up on the outside...I’ve learnt such a lot about growing stuff. (Male, Category D)</td>
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Additional wellbeing outcome indicators

- Emotional development
- Impact of exposure to green space
- Improved relationships with staff
- Reconfiguration of traditional prisoner status (autonomy and empowerment)
- Reconnection with local community
- Progression towards employment
- Non-vocational wellbeing improvements
Next steps

- Continuation of GOOP across all NW prisons
- Evaluation as evidence to future funders
- GOOP rollout to neighbouring regions to the NW in the first instance, before a wider roll out
- ‘Greener Outside’ – Approved Premises (already piloted)
Thank You!

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