TARGET: WELLBEING

PAN-REGIONAL PRISONS PROGRAMME: HEALTH, INCLUSION AND CITIZENSHIP

FINAL REPORT

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Ministry of JUSTICE
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 **REPORT OVERVIEW**

This report presents findings from the various strands of evaluation and monitoring conducted in relation to the Pan-Regional Prisons Programme – Health, Inclusion and Citizenship and draws together data from qualitative research undertaken with prisoners and staff at programme and project levels, along with quantitative data extracted from quarterly and evaluative monitoring reports.

The report is structured in four main sections:

- Programme-Level Evaluation
- Project 1 – Greener on the Outside: Prisons (GOOP)
- Project 2 – Offender-Focused Resources
- Project 3 – Inside Out: Family and Community Health Literacy

It ends with a concluding section, reflecting on how the programme has performed in relation to its aim and objectives.

1.2 **METHODOLOGY**

Whilst a range of methods were used – as detailed in the relevant sections of the report, the evaluation as a whole has been informed by a socio-ecological model of health, a theoretical framework that emphasises the interconnections between environment, behaviour and wellbeing, recognising the dynamic interplay between situational and personal factors.\(^1\) It is thus consistent with a psychosocial perspective, which positions the individual in networks of interpersonal relationships, organisations, and social, political and economic systems.\(^2\) It also accords with a critical realist approach, which appreciates the interplay of context and human agency, acknowledges that knowledge is contingent and contextual, and is concerned to address both ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions.\(^3,4\)

In order to explore these questions effectively, a qualitative approach has been adopted to complement the evaluative monitoring data gathered over the course of the programme. A qualitative approach is appropriate for studying people within the context of organisations and communities and for exploring the meanings that people bring to their experiences and interactions.\(^5\)

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1.3 THE PAN-REGIONAL PRISONS PROGRAMME: HEALTH, INCLUSION AND CITIZENSHIP

1.3.1 OVERVIEW

In designing the TWB portfolio, a decision was taken to include – alongside the local area programmes – two pan-regional programmes, focusing on prisoners/offenders and older people respectively. The rationale for this was that both groups of the population experience particular forms of disadvantage and health inequalities.

It is widely recognised that poor physical and mental health is strongly associated with offending behaviour:6

- one third of the prisoner population is overweight or obese;
- prisoners have poor eating habits and have a poor understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet;
- prisoners have a poor understanding of the additional benefits of physical activity;
- 90% of prisoners have either a mental health or drug dependency problem, or both.

As an excluded group, offenders generally fail to fulfil their potential and are denied opportunities that most of us take for granted. In addition, it is widely acknowledged that prisoners generally have poor skills. For example, 80% have the writing skills, 65% the numeracy skills and 50% the reading skills of, or below, the level of an eleven year old. A prison sentence also puts people at risk by making the factors associated with re-offending worse. For example, a third lose their house, two thirds lose their job and two fifths lose contact with their family. However, prisons can make a major contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of some of the most disadvantaged and excluded individuals in our society – specifically by providing opportunities for offenders to improve and develop skills that increase employability and reduce worklessness, and by fostering family and social links that promote inclusion, thereby improving health and wellbeing.

At the initiation of TWB, the national prison population totalled approximately 78,500, 15% of whom were located in the North West (Home Office, 2007). This equates to approximately 11,000 on any one day, with a high through-put. The Pan-Regional Prisons Programme – Health, Inclusion and Citizenship – was designed to work within and across the 17 North West prisons7 and to forge connections into the wider criminal justice system, appreciating the importance of working throughout the offender management pathway. In practice, project delivery has taken place within ten prisons, alongside the active engagement of the regional offender management team with a view to facilitating the dissemination and integration of learning more widely.

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7 Note: Lancaster Castle Prison closed during 2011.
The shape of the programme and its component projects were identified through a rigorous review of evidence, exploring ‘what works’ for offenders, their families and the wider community – drawing on guidance set out in policy and strategy documents and acknowledging the bigger continuum, particularly young people at risk of offending. During the period 2008-2012, the programme worked with ten prisons and one youth offending team and comprised three inter-related projects:

- Project One: Greener on the Outside (Prisons): GOOP
- Project Two: Offender-Focused Resources
- Project Three: Inside Out: Family and Community Health Literacy

1.3.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the programme was to:

- reduce inequalities and achieve sustainable improvements in health, wellbeing and learning for offenders and their families, with a particular focus on mental health, physical activity and healthier eating.

The objectives of the programme were to:

- increase physical activity through gardening and conservation work
- increase knowledge of food and food growing
- build competence and encourage learning, training and employment
- build capacity to increase health literacy
- address poor lifetime employability prospects of those with few qualifications/skills
- build social/interpersonal skills and competence to maintain family relationships
- promote models of good citizenship for their future role in society
- develop collective, collaborative and sustainable approaches to delivery.

2. PROGRAMME-LEVEL PROCESS EVALUATION

2.1 OVERVIEW

A programme-level evaluation of the Pan-Regional Prisons Programme was undertaken as part of the wider Target: Wellbeing process evaluation. Based on semi-structured interviews with the Programme Co-ordinator, Programme Manager and a Health Improvement Specialist actively engaged with the programme, findings were presented thematically under a number of headings – as summarised below. As the focus was on process rather than impact, the findings were not explicitly cross-referenced against the aim and objectives of the programme, although there are some obvious connections.

2.2 INITIATION, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Key findings included:

- the four year funding period enabled proper planning, development, implementation and embedding of work

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the programme’s ability to ‘get started’ and demonstrate success was in part due to the regional infrastructures and relationships that had been built over previous years
these building blocks provided a firm foundation for innovation and creativity (e.g. the use of the Green Gym model, the imaginative use of wasteland), facilitated by the active and enthusiastic engagement of prisons and prisoners
the motivation, commitment and leadership of staff at all levels in the prison system was crucial to the successful development and implementation of the programme, as was the engagement of external stakeholder bodies (e.g. Forestry Commission, primary care trusts)
the Programme Co-ordinator was likewise identified as crucial to the programme’s success, specifically in terms of her experience of working within the offender management system and the respect that key people in that system had for her
key challenges included time and staff turnover.

2.3 ENGAGEMENT AND UNDERSTANDING OF ‘WELLBEING’

Key findings included:
- there was an explicit recognition of wellbeing as an holistic concept and a clear concern to work across the three outcome areas of physical activity, healthier eating and mental health
- whilst it was felt that there had been no guidance about adopting any one ‘model’ of wellbeing, the focus was seen to lean towards a ‘eudaemonic’ concept concerned with the realisation of human potential and individual and societal fulfilment
- there was an appreciation of the need to invest in staff wellbeing alongside the prisoner focus
- there was a commitment to working across and joining up public health and offender management agendas
- there was a clear understanding of the need to appreciate how the unique ethos of prison settings impact on experiences of wellbeing

2.4 RELATIONAL ISSUES

Key findings included:
- a key ambition of the programme was to foster a collaborative approach across the criminal justice system and it was felt that the programme had successfully developed this way of working – facilitated through newsletters, learning events, the Regional Healthy Prisons Network and the GOOP Network
- the programme has been influential in enhancing relationships and building partnerships with external stakeholder organisations (e.g through the GOOP Project Board)
- it was felt that after some initial caution, relationships with Groundwork had developed very positively and was characterised by friendliness, respect and mutual support
- likewise, relationships with the North West Public Health Observatory have been positive.
2.5 EVALUATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Key findings included:

- whilst the administrative burden of providing quarterly returns was noted, the necessity was acknowledged and the provision of easy-to-use systems highlighted
- the challenge of identifying which specific individuals within each establishment were best placed to complete returns was discussed
- it had proved important to be allowed to develop a ‘tailored’ approach to evaluation that took account of the particular culture of prisons and the issues involved in collecting data
- this approach had prioritised participatory and qualitative methods to capture the richness of prisoners’ experience.

2.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Key findings included:

- whilst four years was seen as a long period of funding in today’s economic climate, there had been a strong focus on sustainability through ‘gearing projects up’ for the future (e.g. though requiring establishments to invest in staff time and participate in training)
- alongside this, the focus on working across the criminal justice system to embed learning and practice was seen as fundamental to securing future sustainability
- the programme team have been proactive in exploring options for further funding, as have a number of individual prisons.

3. EVALUATION OF GREENER ON THE OUTSIDE [PRISONS] (GOOP)

3.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The GOOP project provided opportunities for offenders to participate in environmental projects through locally determined, needs-led activities that aimed to impact positively on the three priority outcomes of the Big Lottery Target: Wellbeing programme. Drawing upon the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV’s) Green Gym delivery model (improving health through engagement with nature) the project provided ways to increase physical activity, improve mental wellbeing and increase understanding of environmental issues and food growing, as well as enhancing skills and employability. Reflecting the needs of different types of institution and categories of prisoner, there were two main types of activity:

- community-based environmental ‘outworking’
- ‘in-prison’ horticultural work.

This project demonstrated the highest level of participation as it spanned six prisons and one youth offending team (HMP Buckley Hall, with their local Youth Offending Team, HMP Kirkham, HMP Kennet, HMP Haverigg, HMP Wymott and HMP & YOI Styal). During the four year period over which it operated, prisons offered almost 5,000 sessions, with a total of nearly 160,000 attendances. There were 3,567 unique
participants, of whom 3,520 were ‘direct beneficiaries’ (attending more than once) – exceeding the original target of 1,535 by around 130%.

Whilst the primary outcome was mental wellbeing, the project explicitly adopted an holistic approach to health and wellbeing – and participants benefitted from the following Target: Wellbeing programme outcomes:

- Improved self-management;
- Increased sense of belonging within the community (prison and beyond);
- Increased self-esteem;
- Increased use of open space;
- More active in their daily lifestyles;
- Increased number of people involved in food growing;
- Increased availability of healthy food;
- Increased knowledge of healthier eating.

3.2 PROJECT ORIGINS

The GOOP project was inspired by and built on the pilot environmental outworking programme that took place at HMP Haverigg in 2008 [see report summary]. Whilst the primary motivation of this pilot programme was skills enhancement linked to improved employability, there was also a widespread appreciation that the involvement of prisoners in environmental out-working can impact positively across environmental, social and economic policy arenas, thereby contributing to reduced rates of re-offending, better environmental management and improved health and wellbeing. In relation to this latter point, the scheme drew on a growing body of evidence concerning the positive contribution of green space and nature to health and wellbeing. The scheme was developed with the aim of delivering accredited practice-based training leading to the acquisition of environmental skills by prisoners and supervisory staff (thereby building capacity to ensure future sustainability). Six modules (access and boundary management; footpath construction; tree and shrub planting; post and rail fencing; introduction to dry stone walling; introduction to environmental conservation) were delivered to both prisoners and supervisory staff, each leading to the award of a certificate. The training was then put into practice on work days in woodlands and nature reserves around West Cumbria. The evaluation found that:

- participation in the Environmental Out-working provided structure and purpose to the working day and helped to build prisoners’ confidence, self-belief, self-management, trust and problem-solving capacity
- the scheme opened up opportunities in terms of training and skills development, thus improving prisoners’ employment prospects and potentially reducing their chances of re-offending – thereby benefiting participants, their children, their families, the communities in which they resettle and wider society
- prisoners felt ‘happier’ and ‘less stressed’ when they had been working outdoors, and relationships between prisoners and staff improved
- being able to make connections between the training and practical work on the one hand, and life and work beyond prison on the other was an important factor for future prisoner engagement and success – prisoners valued the opportunity to work away from the prison, in a natural setting that allowed them to put into practice and value, their learning
• public appreciation of their work boosted prisoners’ self-esteem, and improved public understanding and acceptance of HMP Haverigg’s work. The prisoners also received praise for the quality of their contribution, confirming its environmental value.

The evaluation also identified a number of challenges in planning future programmes, which were taken into account when planning and delivering the current GOOP projects:

• ensuring security and managing the risks associated with out-working
• maintaining cohort numbers and joining up programme delivery across establishments in the context of high prisoner mobility
• building staff capacity and capability to develop and deliver programmes.

3.3 Evaluation: Aims and Methods

The aims of the evaluation were:

• to explore the positive effects and wider contributions that GOOP has made, particularly in relation to physical, mental and social health and wellbeing; reducing anti-social behaviour (social inclusion); and increasing citizenship skills
• to develop an in-depth understanding of the experience of those involved, in relation to the impact on knowledge and behaviour, in terms of morale, peer learning, knowledge transfer, team work and personal development
• to examine and explore the unique context of the prison setting in relation to application of the project.

As detailed above (see 1.2), the evaluation largely adopted a qualitative approach. For the GOOP study, having secured ethical approval, five focus groups were undertaken with prisoners and five individual semi-structured interviews were undertaken with prison staff. These were all recorded and fully transcribed and data were subjected to a thematic analysis. This initial analysis was then refined by the research project manager and other team members. The identity of the prisoners interviewed is anonymised (the only attribution is to the specific prison in which they were detained), whereas key staff members are identified by prison/project and specific role. The structure of the interview schedule (see Appendix 1) was informed by the research team’s emergent findings from the previous research data (mainly data from interviews and focus groups and influenced by feedback from prison staff – primarily gardens managers). Data is presented using sub-headings derived from the structure used in interview schedules with the various participants, which proved appropriate for presenting the major emergent themes:

• Initiation, Development and Implementation
• Benefits of Participation and Wellbeing
• Relational Issues
• Sustainability and Areas for Development.

This section of the report concludes with a discussion of the exploring the main issues that projects have encountered (see 3.5).

It is also important to note that it proved challenging to utilise the BTCV Green Gym questionnaires within the prison context, and further consideration will be given to its potential future use.
3.4 Findings

3.4.1 Initiation, Development and Implementation

Many of the key staff who became involved in the programme already had an interest in – if not experience of – gardening. However, one staff member at HMP & YOI Styal explained an initial reluctance to engage with the GOOP project, but was encouraged to attend planning meetings and eventually became the Gardens Manager for the prison:

“If the GOOP hadn’t have started at the same time as I did, then maybe a lot of this may not have happened, I don’t know. Probably luck rather than judgement really, but it has been a massive influence on the gardens because without it we wouldn’t have had the funding, it’s as simple as that.” (Gardens Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

Projects that were run inside prison grounds (e.g. HMP & YOI Styal) faced different issues from those that involved prisoners working in outside locations in the local community. The Forestry Commission Manager, whose main role was to liaise between the prison projects and local landowners, identified issues that the projects faced when attempting to work in partnership with landowners outside of the prison grounds:

“I think with landowners, for it to start off, they’ve got to be... reassured that your groups are going to come out and they're always going to be supervised, what the selection processes are and the risk assessments that take place. I think, you know, what I’ve always said to landowners is, prisons aren’t going to be [letting] people out unless they’re confident about doing that and their security systems [are] going to be greater probably than anything that we’d think of doing ourselves.” (Manager, Forestry Commission)

This was an issue that has been dealt with by building a working relationship with landowners over time:

“I think [they] have got their heads around the fact that they’re just another group of volunteers really and they should treat them in the same way as they would any group of volunteers. And I think the ones who work with them regularly get to that understanding, but it does take some time and it takes that time to build up the confidence and trust between the prison and the landowner...But I think it’s very much building from the bottom up on that and sometimes they can get a bit scared off if they feel that there’s a big commitment being made.” (Manager, Forestry Commission)

The Forestry Commission Manager felt that part of the landowners’ concern may have come from negative perceptions from the local community, but this was not something she had observed in her previous experience of prison projects. A contributing factor to implementing projects successfully was informing the local community of the project beforehand and addressing any concerns that the general public might have. This had been the practice during the pilot work that took place at HMP Haverigg (see 3.2 above) and had proved to be a good way of informing the general public.

The prisoners took part in the projects for a variety of reasons – some drew on positive past experiences of gardening, whilst others recognised an opportunity to work in a more appealing environment than the kitchen:

“The first time for me was the weather, It was obviously a good time to work in the summer. I’ve done a similar thing like this in the past, on my past sentences.” (Prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)
3.4.2 Benefits of Participation and Wellbeing

Participation in the project was beneficial for the prisoners in multiple ways:

“I think we’ve found from people getting the opportunity to work out[side is that] obviously, they really want to do it normally. And so actually getting out of the prison is a really big thing anyway and having that opportunity....The feedback from the Haverigg work is, you know, a real big boost in confidence and self esteem, as well as the benefits of actually gaining practical skills and doing things, it’s very much, you know, the whole kind of soft skills stuff I suppose and team-working and working together and stuff like that.” (Manager, Forestry Commission)

Such observations are backed up by prisoner experience. Many of the prisoners had little gardening experience, perhaps growing tomatoes but certainly nothing on this scale. In terms of developing a skills and knowledge base, a prisoner at HMP Buckley Hall who was experienced in gardening said that other prisoners were asking him for advice and that they were learning gardening tips from each other. A member of staff working at the Beacon Fell Country Park commented on skill swapping observed between prisoners on the project. A prisoner at HMP & YOI Styal felt that the main skill that they had learned on the project was patience:

“You’ve got to have patience with yourself and everybody else...patience in every sense of the meaning. Patience watching things grow...and when people get on your nerves, patience with that. Being up here as well, actually to have patience when you go back to the prison.” (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

The patience involved in working with and tolerating others had also been observed by a staff member:

“...the communication skills and the interaction with other people that they never had before, it’s teamwork that if you actually do work together, it doesn’t matter, you come to a stronger outcome.” (Horticulture Instructor, HMP & YOI Styal).

An increase in knowledge of gardening was also observed:

“...you know, you think deeply about things, it is a learning curve. I think some people may say gardening’s easy but there’s a lot to learn.” (Prisoner, HMP Kennet)

“When I came up here two (prisoners) were already here and they had some knowledge but not a great deal...the third one who came along did have some gardening knowledge, and I think they’ve shared the knowledge from her and...they’ve learnt a lot themselves...they’ve self taught a great deal and I’ve let them experiment as much as they want.” (Gardens Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

The methods used within GOOP allowed the prisoners to make mistakes along the way and created further learning experiences from the discussion of these mistakes. It also appeared beneficial in generating a mindful experience for the prisoners:

“You can just get lost in your work. There’s times when we don’t speak to each other at all and that’s just because we’re into whatever we’re doing and you just get lost in your own thoughts.” (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

A positive effect on prisoners’ self-esteem was also observed, largely encouraged by staff:

“It’s the comments that you’re getting along...about how it’s improving and how it’s looking better each day...It’s just like being normal again in a way.” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)

As well as benefitting the prisoners, the projects also appeared to have a positive effect on confidence levels for some staff.
“I think at least one of the gardeners [was] a little bit disillusioned of what his job...I think he just thought he was here just to mow the lawns and pick up the rubbish, even though he was a gardener. Well since we’ve started...I think his confidence has raised, he’s starting to use the skills and the ability that he’s got to grow things and see it all blossom the way it has done. He’s got more involved, he’s coming to me now and saying, ‘do you think we should do this, do you think we can do that?’” (Gardens Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

Both prisoners and staff commented on the strong positive impact of the project on work ethos, with many prisoners having had little or no actual work experience previously:

“‘It prepares you for working... that’s all good because we’re not used to [working].’” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)

“I haven’t done any kind of job before.” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)

“‘Yes, a positive thing, basically because they’ve had something they’ve kind of believed in, if you wish, it’s given them an opportunity to see things through. I mean they’ve wanted to work seven days a week and some of them wanted to work into the evening, which for a prisoner in activity in prisons, I think that’s a massive thing. Normally they want to get out of doing stuff, they actually want to get into doing stuff, which is kind of like the other way round.’” (Senior Manager, HMP Kennet)

A sense of pride and achievement at growing plants and vegetables was described by participants from HMP Buckley Hall:

“When they start shooting up and growing, you start feeling like that you’re getting something produced, it’s that little bit of, I don’t know, honour is it, something like that.” (Prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)

“None of this was here when I came, all this behind us where these raised beds are, that was all just rough waste ground. And we’ve put all these raised beds in, skimmed it all off, built that fruit cage, built the compost bin. The difference up here since I’ve started is absolutely amazing...” (Prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)

This was also the case at HMP & YOI Styal, where prisoners frequently asked the Gardens Manager to document the progress they made using photography. The gardening work was viewed as more worthwhile than other jobs:

“It’s a sense of achievement isn’t it? No matter what you’re doing but I mean if you’re sat behind a desk all day long, I wouldn’t be achieving anything.” (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

The gardens were also seen to be having a knock-on effect to other prisoners and prison activities:

“It’s bringing a smile to their face...if you come up at lunchtime, when the weather’s like this, all them benches are usually full. They use it to have their lunch, education, bring their classes up to do art and do drawings and one thing and another, so they’ve done a classroom there...when we’re doing jobs around the prison, they can see the benefits for it and probably appreciate what we’re doing to keep the place a nice environment to be in. So I think they appreciate what we’re doing now because of what they see and what we’ve created around the estate so far.” (Garden Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

The project with HMP Kirkham at Beacon Fell Country Park was described by the Forestry Commission Manager as helpful in getting prisoners near the end of their sentence (particularly life and long sentences) to reintegrate into the community and get into a transitional mindset in preparation for coping with life on the outside:

“It is a good thing because, I mean some people have been in a really long time, 25 years and...coming out is a really big thing and mostly it’s hard because you don’t really know how to act around the public...and this breaks you in gently and that’s really positive.” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)
“You’ve got to be aware that the general public are there.” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)

Prisoners were so enthusiastic about the projects that the only aspect that was criticised was the weather – especially their experience of winter.

Although the above issues could be broadly defined as affecting the participants’ holistic wellbeing, it was when describing how they felt when doing the work that the impact of the project on mental wellbeing became even clearer. A prisoner at HMP Buckley Hall described gardening as therapeutic, which was echoed by a key staff member at HMP & YOI Styal:

“It’s a gentle introduction into health and wellbeing because it’s on the physical, it’s on the mental and the social side of it. It ticks every box, does horticulture, it’s a fantastic therapy to do.” (Horticultural Instructor, HMP & YOI Styal)

A prisoner at HMP Kirkham spoke of how the project allowed him to reflect on his sentence and put things into perspective. When discussing the value of working in the outdoors, the prisoners defined the environmental aspects and how they affected them:

“It’s refreshing, it takes your mind away from everything...it’s different from working in the city because... the environment, it’s much better than what we’re used to.” (Prisoner at HMP Kirkham)

“It freshens me up, that’s why I most enjoy doing it as well because it freshens you, that’s what I feel. Certainly when I’m weeding I’m calm and relaxed.” (Prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)

“It’s a lot better, you haven’t got that prison environment to think about constantly... it’s still there in the back of your mind, but you’re relaxed, you’re out of that area and you’re working to your own timescale, rather than the prison timescale.” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)

“It’s good because...we’ve all been here a long time, so it’s like, it doesn’t matter where you go you’re still in prison in your head. Coming outside, it is a totally different environment ... it’s a wide open space, the smells, sounds, you know, it helps you relax and just forget.” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)

The Horticultural Instructor at HMP & YOI Styal offered an explanation for the satisfaction involved in growing plants and vegetables that connected with issues of mental wellbeing for the prisoners in a profound way:

“If you look that you put the seed in the ground or seed in the seed tray or whatever, it germinates... you’re caring for something. Something that isn’t judgemental, something that will not answer back, something that will flourish with a bit of TLC. And most people can give a bit of TLC, some people find it difficult to sustain that TLC, but a plant isn’t conditional. So when they see it growing and harvest it at the end of it and taste it, they’ve done the full process. And it’s a journey through life and it’s like theirs, you know, you might have a twist in the stem and you can talk about people probably having a mental health issue and that will be a kink in the stem. We’ve got one girl here...and she grew a sunflower. It was the largest sunflower in the whole of the polytunnel, really strong thick stem...you couldn’t help but notice it. I had another girl who had mental health issues and that had split the flower and it was just remarkable. And when you start talking to the women about how often the flower reacts to how you care for it and grow it, you start realising that, what if I look after my family that way, maybe I can make a difference, maybe I can make a change.” (Horticultural Instructor, HMP & YOI Styal)

As well as the benefits of the programme for mental wellbeing, elements were identified that specifically addressed other Target: Wellbeing outcome areas. For example, increased levels of physical activity have improved the overall fitness of the prisoners:
The people engaged on the gardens, obviously their activity levels have increased because they’re doing a lot of manual work. I mean with all the projects we do have a lot of digging to be done, like turning soil over, you know, you get one or two complaints, ‘I don’t want to do this’, fine, if you don’t want to do it we’ll find you another job because it’s not everybody’s cup of tea to be digging holes...if they can’t do that job, then we’ll look at other jobs that they can do, you know, so that will benefit them. I’ve got a woman who’s got a serious heart complaint working in the greenhouse, so we’ve facilitated her by saying, ‘yes you can come and work on the garden’, because she’s shown a keen interest.” (Garden Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

The Horticultural Instructor at the same prison thought that a lot of the exercise that went along with gardening was initially overlooked by the participants (exercise by stealth) while the impact of being active all day was recognised by a senior manager at HMP Kennet:

“I think the majority of learners haven’t a clue how healthy they’re becoming when they’re doing the garden...but I think if you ask them after a few weeks, they would be more chilled, more relaxed, more easy going, able to walk faster.” (Horticultural Instructor, HMP & YOI Styal)

“...they’re out all day pretty much and they go to bed, you know, they get home after work and they’re tired. So they sleep better, therefore they wake up and they’re ready to go again...it is definitely a massive bonus to their wellbeing.” (Senior Manager, HMP Kennet)

However, some of the prisoners on the programme did refer to this aspect of gardening positively:

“From being in bang up for so long and then you come out to Kirkham, just walking doing the laps round the jail, it’s more active.” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)

One prisoner had been monitoring his progress on the project in terms of weight loss:

“You’re always busy, keep[ing] fit...I’ve lost two and a half stone. I’ve lost a load of weight just working on here...I think it’s a combination of all the shovelling that [the Gardens Manager] makes me do...I mean we must have had, while I’ve been up here, I bet we’ve had the best part of two hundred ton of top soil, that’s all gone into these beds. It’s a workout in itself, because you’re working all the parts of your body, because you’re twisting and you’re lifting.” (Prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)

The Forestry Commission Manager speculated that the prisoners doing physical work may be easier to manage for the staff when they’re back in the prisons as well. Fresh air and being active were cited as reasons for prisoners sleeping better after participating.

There was also evidence of healthier eating. In keeping with the system-level focus of the overall programme, a number of establishments used produce grown as part of the GOOP project in the prison kitchen. Buckley Hall prisoners commented that they loved being able to eat what they had produced in the gardens and reflected that this meant that the whole prison population was benefitting from dietary improvement. Prisoners at HMP & YOI Styal found that growing the produce had expanded their diet leading to a more varied and healthier range of foods:

“Courgettes yes, garlic and herbs, that was gorgeous. Broad bean dip... which was lovely, you wouldn’t have ever thought of having that.” (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

“Leaf beat...like a cabbage and that’s something I’ve never eaten before, never...It was really, really nice.” (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

“It’s certainly raised awareness, certainly some women have never seen some of these vegetables before... I know a lot of mine are using it for meals and the young offenders did take food back to the house to experiment with different menus and salads and one thing and another. So that’s good to see that the food isn’t being wasted.” (Gardens Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)
The benefits of eating the vegetables also extended to the staff:

“Every member of staff that came up came back a second time and a third time...it was all organic, there’s no pesticides, insecticides or anything used...and every single one said how fresh and how nice [the vegetables] tasted.” (Gardens Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

More widely, it was felt that the prisoners may be able to extend some of the learning from the projects to their families and the local community, though the area of cooking skills and food preparation could be developed further:

“I think they’ll probably take some of it, they obviously won’t take all of it. I think the downside to it is they haven’t got any real information of what you can, what meal you can do with x, y, z and the kind of different salads that you can make and maybe that’s an area that needs to be developed.... look with all the veg that you’re creating on the garden, what you’re growing, these are the types of meals that you could produce’. (Gardens Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

“It tastes so much better straight from the ground, it really does. And I will certainly grow, if I can, vegetables, definitely. If it’s possible I will do it because it just tastes so much better.” (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

3.4.3 RELATIONAL ISSUES

Several key relational factors affected the GOOP programme. A major appealing aspect for prisoners on the GOOP projects was working with fellow prisoners. In exchanging knowledge on gardening, prisoners were cooperating with one another, which made for a more harmonious living and working environment. As one prisoner from HMP Kirkham put it, when working on the project “you’ve got to be aware of the people around you”. Reference was also made to like-minded fellow prisoners participating in the projects:

“I like growing stuff, I like being outside, I don’t like being stuck in like these workshops, they’re full of people I wouldn’t socialise with.” (prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)

A further difference prisoners observed from working in the workshops was that the nature of the outdoor work encouraged co-operation:

“[It’s] a team effort isn’t it? If you work individually and you work against each other, you get nothing done, because that’s harder work than working together.” (Prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)

“We have ground rules when you work as a team. And if you’re not prepared to work as a team, there’s no point coming to join us.” (Prisoner, HMP& YOI Styal)

Alongside all this collaboration, there was still room, however, for friendly rivalry with other groups working on other polytunnels:

“There is competition between different tunnels...it’s healthy isn’t it because the more competition there is the better you grow, the more you’ll produce.” (Prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)

A further relational aspect to the project was that between the prisoners and staff involved in the work, which appears to have flourished. In this example, gardening work is again viewed more favourably than workshop work, even though it is by no means an easy option.

“You know where you are with [the supervisor], he’s a bit of a slave driver but it doesn’t matter. If you get on with your work he’ll leave you alone. If you don’t get on with your work he’ll be on your case and that’s his job...And compared to like workshop jobs and then being up here, I suppose there is something in that about that level of trust, that if you’re getting on with it then you’re out here and you’re getting on with it, whereas in the workshops it’s a bit different.” (Prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)
“[The Garden’s Manager] is brilliant...If any of us are not feeling well or something like that, he’ll tell us, go back, it’s not a problem, anything we want he gives us. He can tell when one of us is a bit like that and he kind of leaves us.” (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

“Well like a trust position for me, it’s really good because obviously with having a criminal record...here it’s like, well you’re respected, you get respect back and it’s just like you feel like you’re out of the situation and you feel like you’re in society already, coming into work is fantastic really. I mean people will sometimes have their off day and mine was when it was cold, but I’d rather be out here than in my cell.” (Prisoner, HMP Kennet)

At HMP & YOI Styal, both the Gardens Manager and Horticultural Instructor observed a shifting dynamic between staff and prisoners working on the project:

“If it hadn’t have been for the GOOP Project, [the relationship] possibly would not have been quite as good and as relaxed, to an extent. Alright we have to maintain order and control, at the end of the day, but because me and none of the other staff are in uniform, the barrier’s broken down. So they’ll say things to me and the guys that they won’t probably say to the uniformed staff...but when the days come when I have to clamp down, they know I’m clamping down because there’s a genuine reason for it.” Gardens Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

“Lots of new skills, another thing is, they’re taking ownership. You give them a task to do, go and weed a bed or plant a bed or whatever, well can we do that? Well it’s not come from us, they’re actually going out and they’re getting involved. And someone else will see something and they’ll say, and so so on such a house has said, can’t we have this in front of ours because ours is looking scruffy compared with theirs. And it’s that infectious, it’s going round the site, the whole of the prison. It’s, they’ve got colour, why can’t we have colour? And people sort of notice, people are noticing what we’re doing.” (Horticultural Instructor, HMP & YOI Styal)

“Learn as you go along. And if there’s one fellow who’s greater and the other fellow isn’t so good, he’ll drag them along, he won’t drag him down, he’ll drag him up, do you know what I mean? He won’t drag him down to his level, he’ll drag him up, and you’ll find that that’s what will happen. And if one plot is doing well and the other one’s not doing so well, crikey his cabbages compared to mine…but I don’t want that, I want them to interact with one another...because if they ever get out and they have an allotment, I’m not going to be there but other gardeners growing in them allotments will be there. And one thing they will find amongst gardeners, they’ll help one another out. You go down to an allotment and you’ve never dug a hole in your life, they’ll all be round there and show you how to do it and that’s what I try to get from them.” (Gardener, HMP Kennet)

The Horticultural Instructor at HMP & YOI Styal was highlighted as an aspect of the project that wasn’t originally planned but became a real bonus, especially in his contribution to the ‘transformative’ element of the project for one prisoner with self-esteem issues:

“...that just came out of the blue, so that was a really big bonus to us, we can tap into his knowledge and he’s passed all that knowledge onto the women. But the ones who have worked on the GOOP specifically, certainly one of them, her self esteem was a little bit low when she first started, then it picked up and then she went through a dip last year but I think she continued to come up. And I think by working with her and talking to her, it’s raised it back up again.” (Garden Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

Key staff at HMP & YOI Styal were also able to broaden the demographic of the project participants and involve the young offenders in some of tasks, particularly the heavier lifting work. The Garden Manager also reported that wider prison staff were bringing outside visitors to the gardens whenever the weather was suitable, and those staff had exhibited a degree of pride in the gardens.
Prisoners from HMP & YOI Styal said that although they had asked staff directly involved in the project (Gardener) for advice, the project very much entailed “learning ourselves” through the use of gardening books, although they were also learning from others in the kitchen:

“If someone’s there to say, listen, this is the best way to cook that, you know, and then you watch them do it or you taste it, then you’re more likely to try it yourself. So yes it does, it broadens your horizon.” (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

There were some negative experiences reported concerning some staff who were not directly involved in the projects, with prisoners reporting undermining comments being made, food being taken without asking and, in one prison, food meant for the self-catering units being thrown away.

The prisoners have also developed their relationships with family members outside of the prison through the projects. One prisoner spoke of reconnecting with his grandmother:

“I write to my Nana and tell her what I’m doing because we lost my granddad a few years ago and he was the one who did all the growing, so I always write to my Nana telling her I’m growing tomatoes and things like that. And hopefully when my tomatoes come, I’m hoping [my supervisor’s] going to do a photograph of my tomato plants that I can send her. She’s 87, I haven’t seen her for 8 years, she’s too old to come up here. But she wrote back to me saying it’s lovely that you’re growing things. And the growing the tomatoes, it reminds me of when I used to do it with my granddad.” (Prisoner, HMP Buckley Hall)

“My dad’s got his own little allotment, so when I spoke to him, like I’ve been telling him about what we’ve been doing. And he’ll say, well how have you done that? So I’ll tell him, like we talk about growing tomatoes.” (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

Relationships were also developed with members of the community, perhaps the most difficult group for the prisoners to engage:

“You’re talking to other people as well. You might not be talking to them on a daily basis but you might get the opportunity to, so seeing different faces and you can also talk about other stuff other than prison. You can talk about anything that you want. When you’re in a prison environment you just talk, it’s like when are you out next or when’s this happening? Whereas when you’re out, out here... you’re interacting quite differently.” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)

“We get challenged all the time don’t we by Jo Public for doing good, but if we don’t do good then we’re just going to churn out bad.” (Gardener, HMP Kennet)

The Forestry Commission Manager viewed interactions between prisoners and community members on the project as being of mutual benefit:

“It’s the whole kind of reparation side of it I suppose and the community benefit... because those are all public sites, they’re all sites that the public are going to get something out of that work being done. So it’s not just the organisation and the environment, it’s actually the people that are using it, the communities that use those areas. So there’s lots of knock on effects on other people...I think most general public wouldn’t necessarily have an issue, would be happy to see people doing the work, because we find on any of our sites, people like seeing people doing stuff and improving it and making it better. I mean I don’t think it would matter to most people about who those people were.” (Manager, Forestry Commission)

The main opportunities to interact with the community has been at Beacon Fell Country Park, however the Forestry Commission Manager reflected that at the time of interviewing, this had not occurred as frequently as they anticipated at the beginning of the project:
“There’s maybe been less of those opportunities for direct interaction between prisoners and the general public, which is a shame but that hasn’t happened as much.” (Manager, Forestry Commission)

This created tension in terms of continuity and managing landowners’ expectations as practice illustrated that isn’t always possible with the prison population for a variety of reasons – primarily managing risk. The Forestry Commission (FC) Manager also reflected on previous FC experiences with people on probation doing community service that gave landowners a negative perception of what the prisoners will be like, even though in reality they operate quite differently:

“Having prisoners there has been a totally different experience because they’re much better motivated. They want to get outside, they want to get something out of it, and so I think they have much higher motivation levels just because they’re getting out of the prison really.” (Manager, Forestry Commission)

On a programme level there have been difficulties in linking between prison projects, described by the supervisor at HMP Kirkham as “virtually impossible to achieve”. However, the Gardens Manager at HMP & YOI Styal felt that they had made some connections with other GOOP projects, at least in the initial stages:

“With the guys from Buckley Hall we’ve had a little bit of connection and... in the early days [their Line Manager] she came round and we had a couple of telephone conversations, it seems to have died off now, whether they’re just going their own way, which is understandable, we’ve gone our own way at the end of the day, you know, we only meet really at the [network] meetings.” (Gardens Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

This reflects the level of engagement across the prisons more generally across the GOOP projects – senior managers are very active in some of the projects while in other establishments the supervisor or gardeners take the lead. In some cases this has depended on goodwill and/or high levels of motivation to progress projects to the high standard achieved across the region.

GOOP Network meetings were set up to facilitate sharing practice among operational staff. They were described as useful to an extent, to develop ideas and share progress although the connections with other prisons did not appear to extend beyond this. The Horticultural Instructor at HMP & YOI Styal said that the support from the Programme Manager had been “brilliant”.

There were a small number of occasions whereby prisoners transferred from HMP Buckley Hall to HMP Kirkham worked on the GOOP project. This highlights the opportunity to join up across the prison system however it was more chance than systematic and joined up working.

In addition, most of the prisons involved demonstrated that they can connect the horticultural work with other parts of the prison (e.g. the gym or kitchens). However, HMP & YOI Styal’s GOOP project was particularly successful in demonstrating a whole systems approach through joined-up working across the prison (involving education, catering, the gardens and residential units) and by developing health cards that impacted on the areas of resource (Project 2) and family (Project 3) development.

3.4.4 SUSTAINABILITY AND AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Alongside the aspects of wellbeing improvement discussed in section 3.4.2, the projects also had a more instrumental value with their links to employment opportunities and possibilities once prisoners had completed their sentence:
"There’s...always the hope that individuals will come out of that process then would potentially do one on one work placements... The win for the prison is getting some work experience and if you link in training, some kind of added-value work experience...[We’re] linking into opportunities in the area they’re going back to live in because, you know, whatever we do with them in prison, if there isn’t any continuity that might not have actually, be any benefit for them in the long term....And I think that’s a really big opportunity once we have done some work with these people, that they should then be having those opportunities outside the prison, because otherwise we’re maybe losing the benefit that we’ve generated really." (Manager, Forestry Commission)

Thankfully, prisoners felt that they could transfer skills learnt on the projects to employment and gardening was described as “a trade in itself.” (Prisoner, HMP Kirkham):

“It’s just like preparing yourself for work though isn’t it, what you would do on the outside.”
(Prisoner, HMP Kirkham)

Prisoners at both HMP Buckley Hall and HMP & YOI Styal said they would consider going into gardening as a living after their release. Specific skills that the participants had learned were acknowledged, along with an increase in the motivation to use them:

“Over the last 17 months there’s been people that’s done the course, they’ve done landscaping, they’ve put a conservatory up, they’ve never used a drill before, they don’t know one type of screw from a different type of screw, what a nut and bolt’s for, how to hold a screwdriver, how to hold a shovel, a spade, they don’t know the difference. It’s not something they’ve ever done but by God...they go home, they’re knackered, but they come back the following day fired up.” (Horticultural Instructor, HMP & YOI Styal)

The Horticultural Instructor at HMP & YOI Styal also explained that prisoners were learning and using basic mathematics on the project in a non-didactic way (something which may have been rejected in more formal lessons), coupled with learning skills with a “watching and doing” approach from the instructor.

Key staff spoke of how the skills gained during the projects could be meaningfully applied to life on the outside once sentences were completed:

“I was speaking with a woman before, I asked her the similar sort of question, what will you take and will you take anything from this into another job on release? And I was really surprised because the answer was very similar, she said, well once you’ve learned that you can do something you’ve never touched before, you can do it kind of thing, once you’ve learnt that you can and you like doing it and you’ve achieved something, you know you can apply that to anything, and I thought that was brilliant.” (Horticultural Instructor, HMP & YOI Styal).

This prisoner saw that beyond the literal application of the skills learned and experience gained from the project, the results could be transferred to any form of employment and that the confidence gained was as important as any other skill learned:

“I think...that you can achieve anything, no matter what employment you go into, you know, you can achieve what you want out of it. Because I came here, I’d never touched a plant in my life, I didn’t know nothing, but I’ve learnt hell of a lot. And I think no matter where you go, if you don’t do gardening or if you do anything else, you can do it. And it sort of gives you a confidence to know that yes, I can achieve anything really. So I think that’s a good thing about it, you know, taking it outside as well and that you can pass your knowledge on as well.”
(Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

Skills gained were also considered to be of use on the ‘outside’ to ensure the most basic of needs were met:
"When I get out as well, I know because like jobs, you know, they're quite scarce at the moment and it's expensive to live out there, if I'm doing this I know that at least I could feed myself cheaply with like the vegetables and everything that I've learnt how to grow." (Prisoner, HMP & YOI Styal)

One aspect of skills development that the project at HMP Buckley Hall intended to set up was to skill up prisoners who had participated in the project to act as mentors for new participants, which unfortunately didn’t happen. The Forestry Commission Manager saw this as a systemic failure of the prisons:

"I'm still not sure if that the moving through the system stuff is embedded within the prisons, as they wanted to do as a whole systems approach of that whole kind of moving through, so if somebody did start doing supervision work in a Cat C, if they went to a Cat D then would that get picked up and would they be utilised in that way? So yes, I think there's a lot of potential for that and obviously when they get to a Cat D they could definitely be supervising, they could be driving the minibus....I think the whole thing with the system, is still prisons are very much individual entities and managed very much on quite an individual basis. And I think although they are part of a system, I think it's not always easy to make different prisons communicate in a very open way when prisoners move between them, which is interesting seeing that prisoners move quite a lot...from my limited experience, I'm not sure if that really has improved in how they're picking up people through the system and sentence plans etc...It would be nice to think that happens, I'm just not sure it does really." (Manager, Forestry Commissions)

The Gardens Manager at HMP & YOI Styal considered the likelihood of prisoners continuing to do gardening work for enjoyment when they are released:

"I'd like to think so. I think they will if they got the opportunity, you know, if they have a small garden or they've got a chance to have an allotment somewhere, I'm pretty sure they would." (Gardens Manager, HMP & YOI Styal)

The Horticulture Instructor at HMP & YOI Styal felt that the prison would benefit from integrating the gardening work with the gym and cited the Green Gym at Kennet prison of an example of how this could work.

Key staff were asked to consider the future of the programme. For the outworking at the Beacon Fell Country Park site for example, the Forestry Commission Manager felt that more landowners needed to be involved to increase outside project work:

"I think getting other landowners involved apart from ones already, it's good for them to talk to people that have been involved. So to give them maybe a bit more confidence, but also maybe just the whole kind of, these are the pros and cons and this is what you might come across. But then I think it is, you've got to get those people into the prisons as well, those landowners, to actually understand what a prison's like. Because I think, I know for myself before going into prison, maybe your perception of what a prison's like and the regimes and everything and the processes people have to go through, it's totally different, you know, you have no concept of what actually goes on in prison until you've been into one. I get really annoyed when I hear people saying kind of generalisations about prisons...I think having case studies, talking to people that have experienced it, is really important to build that confidence in kind of landowners to start doing that type of work. But that means we need to have good information really that we can use." (Manager, Forestry Commission)

It was acknowledged that, as with the TWB programme on the whole, the future of the projects were difficult and dependant on collaboration between the organisations and stakeholders involved:

"I think the challenges going forward are through every organisation going through lots of cuts to try and keep linkages going and also, making sure that some of these opportunities don't get lost really. Because people tend to become a bit more insular and inward looking when they're going through a lot of cuts. So we need to try and keep those relationships going, going forward." (Manager, Forestry Commission)
3.5 **DISCUSSION**

3.5.1 **INITIATION, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

For GOOP projects operating within prison grounds, staff were brought ‘on board’ via planning meetings. Prisoners were invited to participate, some with previous positive experience of gardening and others being attracted to the project as an interesting and preferable alternative to other jobs.

For those operating outside prison grounds, there were further issues to be considered. Landowners had to be consulted and engaged, alongside wider partners, in order to find suitable venues for work and the local community needed to be kept in the loop in order to allay any concerns about prisoners working in the local area.

3.5.2 **BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION AND WELLBEING**

The benefits of participation were multiple. In general terms, gardening skills were learned (both from key staff and by prisoners exchanging knowledge) and the projects encouraged teamwork and helped to develop and strengthen a work ethos. GOOP was understood to have contributed in an holistic way to wellbeing, with the most obvious impacts being in terms of mental wellbeing – through increased levels of self-esteem and confidence in both prisoners and staff. Prisoners clearly felt a great deal of pride about their achievements. For those working on gardens within the prisons, this was reinforced by the appreciation that they had created an improved environment for other prisoners not taking part in the project and for staff. For those working on community-based projects, there was also a greater awareness of and reintegration with the general public. More specifically, the projects were described as therapeutic and relaxing and it was clear that prisoners benefitted from being able to nurture plants and develop a more optimistic outlook.

The physical activity of working on the gardens led to overall (self-reported) improved fitness and in some cases (measured) weight loss. Key staff considered this ‘exercise by stealth’ to be a particularly effecting way to improve the health of prisoners who may otherwise be resistant to exercise. Sleep patterns of the prisoners also improved after being exposed to the exertion and fresh air in the gardening projects. Staff reported prisoners being less energetic, less demanding and easier to manage when returning to the wings after a session or a day doing gardening work.

Consuming the vegetables grown on the projects improved the diet of not only the participants on the projects, but also other prisoners and staff through produce being used in the prison kitchens. The project also served as a catalyst to the development of cooking skills in the prison kitchens and self catering houses, and there was optimism about the potential to use these newfound cooking skills to encourage healthier eating with families after release.

3.5.3 **RELATIONAL ISSUES**

Several key relationships were altered by GOOP. Prisoners worked with fellow prisoners more, encouraging co-operation and friendly rivalry (when prisoners were working in two different garden areas). Relations between prisoners and staff also improved and a shifting dynamic was commented on, with a mutual respect developing and a feeling of collaboration across the gardens teams. Alongside the overwhelmingly positive feedback, there were some negative aspects reported by prisoners (food wastage) and key staff (lack of support from some colleagues).
Prisoners spoke of relationships improving with their families through discussing gardening (on visits/phone), and those working on community projects were also proud to be communicating with the wider public and contributing to society. Landowners on these projects also gained a positive experience of working with prisoners along with perceptions being altered.

Some relationships developed between the different prisons running GOOP projects. However, these tended to be limited to communication and liaison at the facilitated GOOP Network meetings – suggesting some room for further development.

**3.5.4 SUSTAINABILITY AND AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Beyond the explicit ‘wellbeing’ benefits, there were also elements of instrumental value more directly linked to core criminal justice and offender management agendas. There were many transferable skills gained on the projects and key staff hoped that they would be able to get participants connected with environmental-based work placements (with the ultimate aim of employment in the environmental sector) after they had served their sentences. Participants were learning basic numeracy and literacy and life skills alongside developing a broader gardening and cooking knowledge – achieved through a non-didactic teaching method from the key staff and a broader ‘learning by doing’ approach. Overall, the confidence of both prisoners’ and staff was understood to have improved – and this was seen as a building block for further skills acquisition. Even the basic need of being able to grow food in the absence of money to buy groceries was considered to be positive.

The key areas for development in the Pan-Regional Prisons Programme were skilling up prisoners to be mentors for future projects, integrating gardening as another physical activity programme in prisons (for example, marketing the ‘green gym’ philosophy), increasing networks with local landowners to develop more projects external to the prisons and achieving a greater level of collaboration between prisons to take account of prisoner movement and ensure a joined-up approach to sentence planning and work experience across the system.

**4. EVALUATION OF PROJECT 2: OFFENDER-FOCUSED RESOURCE MATERIALS**

**4.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The Offender-Focused Resource Materials project aimed to reduce inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of offenders (and their families) by increasing health literacy. Using skilled arts and health development workers, the project involved prisoners in creating, developing, piloting and distributing health and wellbeing resources appropriate to and targeted at offenders and their families by:

- importing and adapting existing (and where necessary developing new) resources/toolkits focused on healthier eating, physical activity and mental wellbeing
- actively involved offenders and staff in the creative development and adaptation of resources.

There were two ‘sub-projects’ – one at HMP Preston and one a partnership between HMYOI Thorn Cross and HMP Risley. The former commenced with an initial consultation with prisoners, after which a team of prison officers worked with a film company to produce a resource for families preparing to visit prison for the first time. The latter involved the two establishments working together to develop a resource to support
new prisoners called ‘First Time: a guide for prisoners by prisoners’. Guided by Warrington Primary Care Trust, UCLan’s Healthy Settings Unit and consultants from the Men’s Health Forum, prisoners produced a high calibre resource aimed at helping new prisoners at the point of reception.

The sub-projects had 198 attendances over 19 sessions – and there were 55 unique participants involved in producing the resources discussed in this section. Of these, 29 were ‘direct beneficiaries’ (attending more than once), exceeding the original target of 26 by around 12%. However, it is important to recognise that the resources produced have the potential to impact with a far reach: for example, the DVD produced by HMP Preston is being sent out to an average of 40 prisoners’ families each week and the First Time Guide produced by HMYOI Thorn Cross and HMP Risley has the potential to be used in any prison establishment in England and Wales.

In relation to Target: Wellbeing outcomes, prisoners who participated in these sub-projects are understood to have benefitted from:

- improved self-management
- increased sense of belonging within the community (prison and beyond)
- increased self esteem.

4.2 EVALUATION: AIMS AND METHODS

Whilst the evaluation strategies for the two different Offender-Focused Resource sub-projects were determined by the establishment(s) and stakeholder organisations involved and tailored to the particular nature of the resource produced, both aimed to capture feedback about positives and negatives.

In the case of HMP Preston, the evaluation (comprising screenings of the draft DVD, group discussions and a staff questionnaire) was undertaken at an intermediate stage in the resource development process, in order to enable findings to shape the final product.

By way of contrast, the evaluation of the project undertaken by prisoners at HMYOI Thorn Cross and HMP Risley (comprising a meeting with the two establishments, the local primary care trust and the prisoners involved in the development of the booklet) provided feedback that could inform future projects.

4.3 FINDINGS

4.3.1 HMP PRESTON: VIRTUAL TOUR DVD FOR FAMILIES AND VISITORS

The project was felt to have played a vital part in educating prisoners’ families and other visitors about prison and in particular, how being in prison can actually make a positive contribution to their health and wellbeing. As one staff member commented:

“Families are very keen to better understand how prisons operate and what services they deliver to help offenders settle back into the community after their release.” (Senior Manager, HMP Preston)

The evaluation comprised one member of the project team presenting the DVD at a variety of prison-based meetings (e.g. with the Independent Monitoring Board, prisoner representatives, the Senior Management Team, and externally with other prisons at the Celebration Conference for the Pan-Regional Prisons Programme). Informal comments were collated and, additionally, a staff questionnaire was circulated. Comments were then taken on board and used to revise the content of the DVD. As such, the editing and
The review process took much longer than had been anticipated at project start up. Other challenges included when to film inside the prison and the associated issues related to security and prisoner lock up/unlock meaning that most filming took place over weekends with the officers coming into work outside of their normal working week to supervise and manage the process.

The following evaluation feedback was collated from the 13 questionnaires returned by senior management team members (whose job titles included: Governor; Deputy Governor; Estates Co-ordinator; Health and Safety Adviser; Head of Healthcare) – the majority of whom felt that the DVD offered an extremely helpful resource for families and other visitors:

**Which aspects of the DVD did you feel would be most helpful for families/visitors?**

Aspects identified as particularly helpful included:

- general overview of prison life
- visualising the prison and its different parts and services (e.g. reception, healthcare, gym)
- prisoners’ own perspectives and views
- awareness of support and healthcare available to prisoners
- information on vulnerability issues
- First Night Centre
- confirmation of extensive family links and importance of these in encouraging offenders to use services
- information about Drug Dependency Unit.

**How do you feel the DVD helps to improve visitors’ knowledge and understanding of life in prison?**

Key features identified as particularly important included:

- the extent and range of services available
- the different levels of support available
- reassuring tone
- seeing inside the prison and clearly showing the ‘route’ every prisoner takes – (e.g. reception, First Night Centre, health care)
- seeing a cell
- prisoner interviews
- highlighting the importance of outside contact and providing information on visits and support groups.

**How do you feel visitors will be better be able to deal with and feel less anxious about their family member being in prison as a result of watching the DVD?**

Key features identified as particularly helpful included:

- gives the human face of what we do
- highlights the peer support, Listeners and First Night Centre set up and support
- makes it clear that family members are an important link to a successful sentence
- demonstrates a professional approach to duty of care
• helps families to know what their family member will be going through
• gives insight into the full range of services and makes it clear that the family member is not just locked up 24 hours a day.
• shows the clean modern look of the prison itself
• focuses on health and wellbeing.

**How could the DVD highlight aspects of life in prison that help to show how positive improvements in physical and mental health and wellbeing can be made?**

Ideas proposed included:
• provide more information on gym usage
• show a prisoner at the start and end of sentence – a ‘before and after’
• highlight education and re-settlement
• showcase good positive information on mental and physical health
• include a shot of visits reception
• provide additional pictures of dentist, drug group, IT Class, works etc.
• focus on gym, mental health, group work, chaplaincy, chronic disease, clinics
• demonstrate how effective training can improve the life after release
• include some good news stories.

**Please recommend any changes/improvements you feel would enhance the quality of the DVD**
• Add contact numbers to DVD so that family can contact if concerned
• Pixelate out keys
• Add more about visitors /family maintaining contact etc.
• Provide ideas for how family members can offer support – letters, telephone etc.
• Include more about exercise/social activities
• Include something about education services and prison as a learning environment
• Provide a little more focus on pathways (e.g. Education, Learning and Skills; Accommodation) highlighting potential for people to change
• Make the ‘feel’ less clinical and quiet.

**4.3.2 HMP Risley & HMYOI Thorn Cross: First Time Guide for Prisoners**

The First Time Guide sought to provide a positive guide to surviving prison – offering information that is open, honest, and tackles fears and prejudices and how to deal with them. The contributing prisoners took real pride in their achievement and reported an elevated feeling of self-worth, an experience many had never had before their involvement in this project. The opportunity to take part was highly valuable in improving the wellbeing of those directly involved and of future recipients of the booklet.

At each establishment, prisoners would have access to an armoury of valuable information and advice to help them settle in and deal with the stress of change in a more prepared state. This highly valued booklet which has been greatly praised by newly received prisoners.

As detailed above, the evaluation comprised a meeting involving the two establishments, the local primary care trust and the prisoners involved in the development of the booklet
– with a view to identifying what worked well, what didn’t work well and what could be done differently in the future. Consideration was also given to the delivery and dissemination of the resource, in order to ensure effective distribution. It was agreed that the booklet would be sent out with cell packs so that they are available when the new prisoner arrives. A further trial of the resource undertaken at HMP Preston also disseminated it in the same way.

What worked well?

All prisoners at HMP Risley thought the resource was necessary and the young people responding from HMYOI Thorn Cross considered the resource to be:

“Very important and valuable.” (Prisoner)

Both HMYOI Thorn Cross and HMP Risley were pleased with how the project had engaged the wider prisoner population and felt that it had succeeded in communicating information and capturing their perspectives:

“We reached more prisoners than we thought we would due to the unexpected length of the project.” (Prisoner)

“It’s good that the original ideas have come through.” (Prisoner)

“The resource links more information together in a helpful manner than most general health leaflets and information.” (Prisoner)

“It feels like it has been done by prisoners.” (Prisoner)

Prisoner feedback on the booklet’s information and design was that it was of high quality compared to other resources and could be used in all prison establishments, even if prisoners were being transferred within the estate rather than those who are first time in prison. There was also a sense that peer feedback and communication would be important:

“If [a prisoner] had read it they would tell other to read it.” (Prisoner)

Reflecting on his involvement, one young person from HMYOI Thorn Cross commented that:

“The process became more specific and focused as the sessions and time went on.” (Young Person, HMYOI Thorn Cross)

Similarly, a worker from the Men’s Health Forum was satisfied with the project and output:

“Very pleased on the area of work, and happy with the context and the result.” (Men’s Health Forum Worker)

What didn’t work well?

The evaluation discussion suggested that the project was more challenging to deliver than was initially anticipated, due to a number of issues:

- engaging both prisons as equal partners
- identifying project leads within each of the prisons (rather than having a PCT lead)
- prisoner movement meant that different prisoners had to keep being enrolled onto the project rather than having a consistent group
- managing the financing arrangements across different establishment, the PCT and charitable organisations.

What would we do differently?
In order to facilitate, deliver and replicate this type of project a number of key learning points were established:

- ensure that aims and objectives are agreed by all partners prior to commencing a future project – and that they are clearer, tighter and focused from the start
- spread the project over a longer period so that sessions can be more easily integrated into the current education system
- consider running a future project as a course within education, enabling all prisoners to enrol
- set out session plans at the start of the project with specific aims and outcomes – particularly if working across prisons with age differences, as this meant that sessions had to be delivered differently in each establishment, affecting the outcome of the sessions
- ensure facilitators are flexible, as group dynamics were frequently challenging and required different facilitation skills reflecting the difference in age and maturity
- consider placing funding within a different organisation – it was difficult to transfer expenses to project partners as the budget was held by one of the prisons
- ensure that future projects are set up in ways that give maximum ownership to prisoners.

5. **INSIDE OUT: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH LITERACY**

5.1 **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The Inside Out: Family and Community Health Literacy project aimed to provide health and wellbeing focused resources and activities for offenders’ families and dependents – thereby achieving a coherent ‘whole system’ approach to health improvement within the offender community. It also aimed to further develop the evidence base for health-led parenting and support for vulnerable and excluded families.

Recognising that social and family relationships are at the heart of offender management, the project worked to build these links through partnerships with prison visitors centres, local faith groups, the local community and voluntary sector – comprising two main strands that worked across the Target: Wellbeing priority areas:

- the development and provision of structured and engaging activities that enabled offenders families and dependents to better understand the benefits of healthier lifestyles and alter their behaviour accordingly
- the participatory development of health and wellbeing resources that reflect national guidance and target vulnerable families of offenders.

There were two main ‘sub-projects’ within this project – the Gamelan Project at HMYOI Thorn Cross and the Parenting Course at HMYOI Hindley. The former was borne out of the purchase of an Indonesian Gamelan by The Manchester College. This traditional musical instrument was acquired for use with prisoners across the North West and inspired by the potential of this resource, HMYOI Thorn Cross put a bid to the Target: Wellbeing Pan-Regional Prisons Programme to develop a learning resource for the region, as well as developing plans to integrate the Gamelan into the Family Days held in the prison. The latter involved HMYOI Hindley developing and running a radical and innovative programme aimed at equipping young fathers (15-18 years old) in custody with vital parenting skills.
However, it is important to note that other prison-based sub-projects developed as part of the GOOP and Offender-Focused Resource Materials projects met some of the aims of this project. For example, the DVD developed at HMP Preston worked closely with the prison visitor centre and offenders’ families; and the development of health cards at HMP & YOI Styal are for the benefit of the wider offender’s family. Working across the different projects and thematic areas demonstrated a more joined-up approach within the programme and across prisons.

The sub-projects had 1615 attendances over 155 sessions – and there were 1394 unique participants involved in producing the resources discussed in this section. Of these, 279 were ‘direct beneficiaries’ (attending more than once), exceeding the original target of 1115. In relation to Target: Wellbeing outcomes, prisoners who participated in the sub-projects are understood to have benefitted from:

- improved self-management
- increased sense of belonging within the community (prison and beyond)
- increased self-esteem.

### 5.2 Evaluation: Aims and Methods

Whilst the evaluation strategies for the two different Family and Community Health Literacy sub-projects were determined by the establishment(s) and stakeholder organisations involved and tailored to the particular nature of the work, both aimed to capture feedback that could inform future developments.

The evaluation of HMYOI Thorn Cross’s Gamelan Project involved informal interviews and observation during Family Days.

The evaluation of HMYOI Hindley’s Parenting Course involved a range of methods:

- group discussions and written quizzes to ascertain levels of knowledge throughout the course
- an interactive discussion at end of course
- presentations by participants
- informal discussions with those involved and who attended the presentations

There is also a commitment to using validated measures of wellbeing (e.g. WEMWEBS) in future work.

### 5.3 Findings

#### 5.3.1 HMYOI Thorn Cross Gamelan Project

Working in partnership with the Hallé Orchestra’s Education Department, the Family Gamelan Project at HMYOI Thorn Cross quickly realised many of the initial targets set out in the bid: a training manual was produced for the North West prisons; over 40 staff had a training and awareness session; and 15 staff participated in an intensive master class.

By the end of its first six months, the project had performed a concert to over 100 guests, including prisoners’ families, had been used in two Family day events and had provided taster activities for over 50 prisoners. As the project developed, ownership became important, and the Chapel staff took over the Family Gamelan for their family
day events – working with small family units to provide an alternative engagement activity for all the family to participate in (twelve events over 18 months).

The full Gamelan has developed into an arts-based resource, with the collaboration of the Art Department and Hallé4brass (the brass music group at Thorn Cross). The aim of the group was to develop skills across the arts, using the Gamelan as the central tool. The group achieved this through creating their own shadow puppet theatre, reflecting traditional use in Indonesia. The group has worked with poets and writers to create scripts with prisoners and has latterly developed their own scripts to present concert events for Family days, Celebration events (six major presentations in the past two years). Most recently, the group performed to over 150 delegates at the European Prisons Education Conference in November 2011, at the Midland Hotel in Manchester.

A letter received from the former Senior Vice-Principal for Offender Learning at The Manchester College summed up reactions to this performance:

John

A big thank you for supporting the EPEA Conference in such a big way. The Friday afternoon session delivered by the Hallé and the Thorn Cross young men was truly the high spot of the Conference. Delegates were still talking about it on Sunday as they were leaving. The evaluation forms also reflect the superb impact the performance had. The lads were absolutely great. They were polite, enthusiastic and responded to an audience of over 150 people from all over the world with tremendous spirit and charm!! They were a real credit to you all at Thorn Cross. May I also add that the staff accompanying them were so professional and informative. What a good team! We were all so thrilled with the whole afternoon; the 3 minute standing ovation was well deserved.

Thank you most sincerely for arranging such a high profile visit to a high profile Conference.

Very best wishes

Merron Mitchell OBE. FRSA

From conception to completion, this project has involved prisoners, prisoner families, local communities, volunteers, and prison staff. The project has shown sustainability, and is well embedded within many of the educational, cultural and family dimensions of the prison.

5.3.2  **Parenting Course at HMYOI Hindley**

Evidence shows that having children at a young age can damage health and wellbeing and severely limits education and career prospects. For young people the demands of caring for children when dealing with the difficulty of their own transition to adulthood is more acute when in a custodial setting and isolated from support.

All participants actively engaged and participated well in the HMYOI Hindley’s parenting course – an intensive two week course which demanded commitment and resolve. All those who began the course completed it – and participants’ learning outcomes were achieved and their self-esteem and confidence improved, as did their ability to compromise, negotiate and conciliate between themselves and with others. They were particularly supportive of each other during the more demanding parts of the course, in which parental conflict and the effects on children were discussed and participants were encouraged to reflect on their own relationships and on their parenting.

Most importantly, the participants enjoyed the course – particularly its interactive nature and the fun element that was incorporated into it. The use of aids such as virtual babies,
the empathy belly, the cooking challenges and first aid was considered vital to the course’s success.

A celebration summative learning event held at the end of the two week course involved participants formulating and delivering a presentation to a wide-ranging audience – comprising Prison Governors, key workers, Youth Offending Team representatives, health workers, after care workers, girlfriends and family members – in which the young people talked about what they had learned, how the course had affected them and their hopes for the future.

Input from the following partners was seen to have added to the success of the course:
- Prison Staff
- Healthcare Staff
- Midwife
- Teenage Parent Support Worker
- Sure Start Men’s Worker
- Teenage Pregnancy Unit
- Youth Offending Team health workers.

6. **Conclusion**

It is clearly challenging to evaluate such a wide-ranging and varied programme as Health, Inclusion and Citizenship – which has operated across ten prisons, involved numerous stakeholder organisations and sought to work across the entire criminal justice system. However, whilst it is recognised that many impacts will only be seen ‘further down the line’, it is clear from the different elements of evaluation that have been undertaken that the Pan-Regional Prisons Programme has been successful in relation to its overall aim and objectives (see 1.3.2).

Throughout all of its component projects and sub-projects, it has maintained a clear focus on reducing inequalities and achieving sustainable improvements in health, wellbeing and learning for offenders and their families. The ‘common thread’ across all three projects has evidently been mental wellbeing – with clear positive impacts on self-management, sense of belonging and self-esteem. However, the GOOP project also evidenced positive action and impacts in relation to the other two Target: Wellbeing outcome areas, demonstrating increased physical activity through gardening and conservation work and increased knowledge of food and food growing.

Crucially, the programme has successfully bridged and ‘joined-up’ public health and criminal justice agendas – through enhancing learning and health literacy; building skills and enhancing employability prospects; developing social and interpersonal skills and the competence to maintain family relationships; and promoting models of good citizenship.

The fact that all ten establishments involved in the programme intend to continue and develop their project work in some form suggests success in developing sustainable approaches to delivery – as does Big Lottery’s decision to award continued funding to the programme as a whole. This funding provides an opportunity to build upon the past four years’ experience and focus on further embedding learning within and across the offender management system.
## APPENDIX 1: GOOP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Focus</th>
<th>Supplementary Questions/ Prompts: Physical Activity</th>
<th>Supplementary Questions/ Prompts: Healthier Eating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why did you want to go on this programme?</td>
<td>Have you been more active as a result of the project? What kinds of things have you been doing? Will you continue to do this when you are released? Discuss the yes/ no</td>
<td>Since being involved in this project are you eating a more varied and healthier range of foods? Such as…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What benefits do you think the programme has had so far/ will have in the future for you? (skills; knowledge; living/ working together; confidence levels; self-esteem; work ethos; achievement; feeling good/better; coping ability;)</td>
<td>What is there to support you and your family about the benefits of being more physically active?</td>
<td>Has there been opportunity to extend this to your families or the local community? Such as…/how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might being on this programme help you with future employment? (issues of transferability; meaningful application; motivation; skills; achievements; accreditation; time management)</td>
<td></td>
<td>How has your levels of food preparation and cooking skills improved since being involved the project? Please give examples..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What have been the best bits of the programme/ so far?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How has being on the project helped the relationships between yourselves and staff? Can you give any examples…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you make any changes to this programme? What would they be and why? (How might these changes influence the potential to roll out the project/ programme;)</td>
<td>Do you have any other comments to add?</td>
<td>How useful have you found being involved generating the resources i.e. recipe cards</td>
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