



# GREENER ON THE OUTSIDE: FOR PRISONS

A Guide to Setting Up and Delivering a  
Prison-Based GOOP Project



# GREENER ON THE OUTSIDE: FOR PRISONS (GOOP)

Drawing on eight years' experience of designing, delivering and evaluating GOOP projects in different prison establishments across the North West, this Guide provides helpful tips and suggestions for the successful delivery of GOOP.

The Guide illustrates how horticulture can work across the whole prison – in doing so, utilising skills and resources beyond those available in the Gardens to positively impact on both individual behaviour and system-level change.

## WHAT IS GOOP?

'GOOP' stands for '**Greener on the Outside for Prisons**'.

GOOP is an innovative and unique programme of therapeutic horticulture that started in prisons in the North West of England in 2008 with thanks to the Big Lottery's Target: Wellbeing programme. It is delivered as a social, therapeutic and educational intervention for prisoners to improve health and wellbeing and to support the reduction of reoffending rates.



## WHY GOOP?

GOOP projects put into practice the growing evidence that suggests the outdoors is a dynamic environment that stimulates creativity and enables learning to happen faster whilst providing an opportunity to impact positively on attitudes and self-esteem.

# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOOP?

The primary aim of GOOP is to engage prisoners in gardening activities that provide a programme of learning, skills development and work experience thereby:

- Enhancing knowledge and skills development, strengthening capability and employability, thus improving an offender's life chances and reducing victims of crime
- Delivering on the ground horticulture and conservation projects, thereby enhancing local environments for the benefit of prisons and local communities
- Improving health and wellbeing, thereby contributing to a healthier and more active population



## GOOP PROJECTS HAVE BETTER OUTCOMES WHEN WORK IN THE GARDENS CONNECTS ACROSS THE WHOLE PRISON.

For example, involving health care in the referral process to the GOOP project by identifying prisoners who would benefit the most. Prisoners who may be experiencing problems with depression, anxiety or more challenging behaviours such as substance misuse and self-harm.

Involving the education provider to support the delivery of qualifications such as Level

One and Two Horticulture or key skills such as literacy and numeracy is a resource to the Gardens while enabling prisoners to be better and more appropriately qualified. Also, working with the catering department to find ways of utilising produce grown by prisoners is a way of encouraging prisoners to try new vegetables and salads whilst complementing their diet with fresh 'home grown' foods.

Engaging with residential staff so that they are aware of what prisoner participation in the GOOP project can achieve. This awareness can enable residential staff to help direct prisoners into appropriate work and education programmes. It can also help by increasing awareness of how the value of GOOP can extend to more stability on the wing particularly with younger or more challenging prisoners.

## What Does GOOP Do?

A GOOP project creates an environment and provides opportunities whereby prisoners can gain:

- Qualifications
- Work experience
- Health improvement
- Social networks
- Horticultural skills
- Key skills in literacy and numeracy

*"I've learnt quite a lot during my time here, things that I wouldn't have picked up on the outside. I'm now confident in growing tomatoes, chillies, peppers, aubergines. I can take these skills away with me and when I get out I can continue with it, whether for my own use at home or to sell."*

**(Male, H.M.P Thorn Cross)**

*"I love working (on GOOP) because I have learned to associate with people more."*

**(Female, H.M.P/ Y.O.I Styal)**



## NATURE AND HEALTH

The consistent message from research is that contact with the natural environment improves psychological health and mental wellbeing and most notably, that it reduces stress and improves mood. It also provides a restorative environment for people to relax and recharge their batteries and facilitates social contact by bringing people together<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

Particularly, findings indicate that nature plays a vital role in human health and wellbeing<sup>4,5</sup> and fills an inherent need<sup>6</sup>. A large body of evidence suggests that contact with the natural environment can provide a range of wellbeing benefits to people, ranging from health and education to social and nature connections<sup>7,8,9,10</sup>.

*"I think your mental wellbeing changes in a sense that you're not sat behind a door all the time. When you're outside you haven't got time to think about the bad things that are going on. You're in the fresh air and it feels better. I've tutored lads that have mental health issues, and you can see the difference in them once they get stuck into something. They're not walking around with their head down. They're eager to get there and get stuck in. So I see a big benefit in it myself."*

**(Male, H.M.P Thorn Cross)**

## WHAT ARE THE KEY INGREDIENTS THAT MAKE GOOP WORK?

Support and endorsement from the Governing Governor and Senior Management Team, and a solid partnership between the garden staff, education provider, and health provider.

**You may also want to engage with national community partners such as:**

- The Trust for Conservation Volunteers
- Groundwork Trusts
- The Forestry Commission
- The Wildlife Trust
- Natural England

**And with local agencies and organisations such as:**

- Local Authority, Environment Department
- Garden Centres
- Social Cooperatives
- Farmers Markets
- Local cafes



**It's also key to have:**

- Motivation, Interest and Patience of all involved
- Growing space such as a raised bed, polytunnel or greenhouse
- Small hand tools, seeds and plant pots as a minimum



# WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GOOP?

There are a high degree of educational, occupational, health, social and rehabilitative benefits of engaging with GOOP. For example:

## For the Organisation

- Building capacity – through training of staff and prisoners/offenders
- Financial – a joined up way of working is a more efficient way to manage limited resources
- A more stable prisoner population – focused, working outdoors in the fresh air
- Wider social benefit – development of mutual understanding between staff and prisoners

## For the individual

- Improved physical, mental and social health and wellbeing
- Reduced social isolation, social development and teamwork
- Increased decision-making and self-control
- Psychological benefits – having time to think outside, in the fresh air
- Increased confidence, self-esteem and hope
- Work-related skills and learning – improved prospects for employment



*"I'd like to set up my own business and go round doing people's gardening. I'd like to get qualifications and experience under my belt, before going into landscaping."*

**(Female, H.M.P Styal)**

*"I get on with all these people and I'm encouraged to do what interests me. I think if you show them that you want to get on and you're not going to mess about, they're quite happy to teach you."*

**(Male, H.M.P Thorn Cross).**

*"It has been the making of me. I absolutely love it. Because when you put a seed in the soil, and then you watch it, it's like you're growing with that seed."*

**(Female, H.M.P Styal)**

# EVALUATION AND SELF-AUDIT

## WHY EVALUATE?

In order to demonstrate the value of any programme, it is important to carry out some level of evaluation and self-audit. This enables you to understand how projects work and see what, if any, benefits are received from participation in the project you are evaluating. It allows you to demonstrate the effectiveness of projects, as well as any issues and problems that may have occurred. Evaluation helps you to identify what is needed to make successful programmes even more effective in the future.

For Greener on the Outside (GOOP), we used a number of methods to conduct our evaluation. These included: compiling registers of beneficiaries, getting beneficiaries to complete different kinds of questionnaires, conducting focus groups, interviews and gathering other forms of data and evidence such as comments from staff and photos of GOOP projects.

**A good rule of thumb is: if you feel that you have collected something that is useful to show the achievements of your particular project then it probably is!**

**It is good practice to ensure that when collecting any evaluation data concerning beneficiaries that it is stored in a secure location. Below we explain some of the methods you can use to evaluate your project.**

## REGISTERS

There are many challenges in conducting an evaluation in a prison setting. At the most basic level, you will need to do an audit of who is enrolled on the programme (Fig.1). Due to a variety of factors such as prisoners transferring to another site, back to the community, or moving to another area of work inside the prison, it can be difficult to keep track of beneficiaries involved in the project.



With this in mind, it is a good idea to have a registration form for your prison.

**CONFIDENTIAL: Greener On The Outside: Prisons (GOOP) Register**

HMP: \_\_\_\_\_

Beneficiary Code: \_\_\_\_\_

No.	Name	Date Started	Previously on GOOP (Location)	GG	GG Cont.	WEMWBS	Date Left	Moving to (if known)
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								

**Fig.1 An example of a register for auditing beneficiaries**

A register can hold vital information such as the beneficiaries name; the date they joined and left the project; a checklist for when the beneficiary has completed any questionnaires (see Green Gym Questionnaire) or other evaluation forms, and columns for noting if (and where) they have been previously engaged with GOOP (i.e. at other establishments) and where they are headed next (be this to another prison or 'through the gate'). A register can be tailored to add space for whatever information you think is important to gather to assist with the implementation of your project.

In order to help with the filing of any paperwork you gather you will probably find it useful to assign each beneficiary a unique project code number. Prisoners do not need to be given a number in any particular order, but it will help you keep on track of who is taking part to ensure that once an individual is assigned a number it is used consistently throughout the project and appears on all the paperwork they complete (e.g. any questionnaires).

# QUESTIONNAIRES

It is a good idea to have some form of basic questionnaire that gathers data that is most relevant to the project.

If you feel confident and have sufficient time and means to do so, you can of course design your own questionnaires for beneficiaries, especially if there are questions you would like answered that you do not see in any pre-defined questionnaire. In the case of GOOP, we chose the Green Gym Questionnaire (Fig. 2), an accredited and established questionnaire that covered a range of issues we were interested in, designed for use by Trust for Conservation Volunteers (TCV). A licence was purchased from TCV to use this questionnaire.



**About your health and well-being\***  
*This page asks for your views about your health. How well you feel and how well you are able to do your usual activities.*

**1] In general, would you say your health is:**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5

**2] The following questions are about activities you might do during a typical day. Does your health now limit you in these activities? If so, how much?**

2A] Moderate activities, such as cleaning, gym activities such as bowling or badminton

Yes, limited a lot	Yes, limited a little	No, not limited at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3

2B] Climbing flights of stairs

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3

**3] During the past 4 weeks, how much of the time have you had any of the following problems with your work or other regular daily activities as a result of your physical health?**

3A] Accomplished less than you would like

All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	A little of the time	None of the time
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5

3B] Were limited in the kind of work or other activities you could do

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5

\* SF-12v2 TM Health Survey [copyright symbol] 1994, 2002 by QualityMetric Incorporated and Medical Outcomes Trust. All Rights Reserved. SF-12 a registered trade mark of the Medical Outcomes Trust (01-12 v2 Standard, US Version)

Fig.2 A page from the Green Gym Questionnaire

We would recommend administering an introductory questionnaire and continuation questionnaire. An introductory questionnaire collects baseline data about the beneficiary. A continuation questionnaire can be completed by beneficiaries after they have been taking part in your project for a period of time to see if any perceived changes in their health and wellbeing have taken effect.

The content of your questionnaire should include questions regarding the health and wellbeing of the beneficiaries. For example: their general health and limitations this poses on general activities; physical health issues; emotional problems; pain experienced; calmness, stress and energy; social activities; physical activities undertaken. The scores generated provide measures of health and wellbeing from which you can compare the data of the continuation form with the baseline data gathered at the start of participation. The continuation questionnaire can also ask for a degree of reflection on any changes the project may have had in the participants' health and wellbeing.





# MEASURING MENTAL WELLBEING

As GOOP also has a focus on mental health and wellbeing, it is useful to evaluate the beneficiaries' perceptions of their own wellbeing.

One method of evaluating this is to use a document such as The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 3). The beneficiary completes the WEMWBS form in order to identify in more detail if there are any wellbeing changes when participating in the project. At a minimum, WEMWBS forms need to be completed at the initial engagement with GOOP and then at the end of participation with the project. It is then possible to look at the specific areas of mental health and wellbeing that have changed on each of the 14 questions being responded to.

Fig.3 The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale

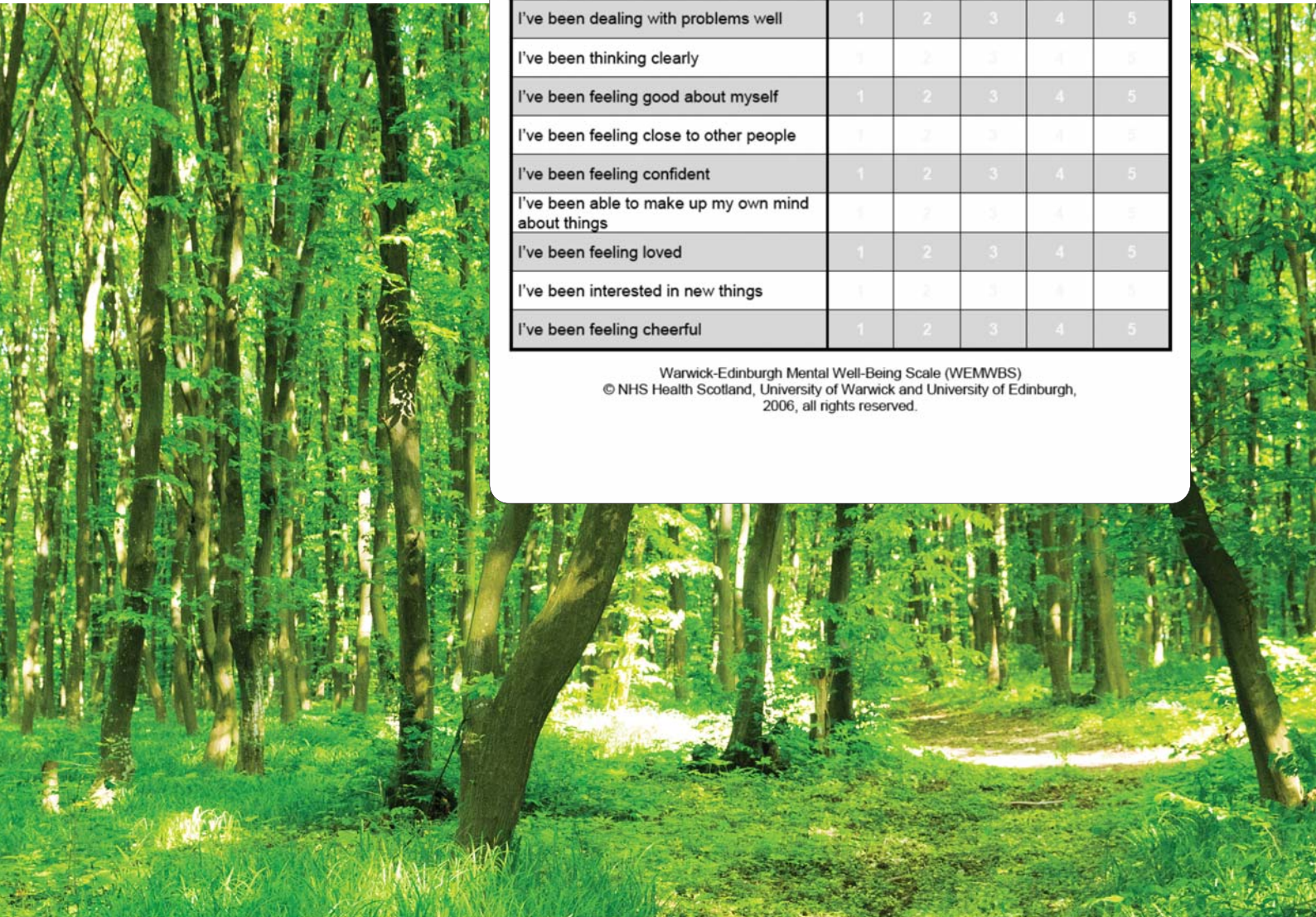
BENEFICIARY CODE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.  
Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)  
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# FOCUS GROUPS

Another useful evaluation method which can be used is to conduct focus groups with staff and beneficiaries.

These interviews are steered by an interview schedule that asks questions about experiences of the programme and audio recorded for greater accuracy. Examples of questions asked include: How the project has affected confidence levels; have levels of physical activity changed; if the project has raised awareness of healthier eating; has the project increased the knowledge of the beneficiaries in food growing and horticulture; has the project improved the relationship between staff and prisoners, and so on.

It is a good idea to make the interview schedule semi-structured, which means that although there

are important topics that are always covered, there is some freedom allowed for participants to discuss issues which you may not have previously considered or even been aware of.

This is more time consuming than the previous methods as once the focus group is finished, the audio (or at the very least, the relevant parts of it) need to be transcribed and written up in a report in a coherent way. The themes in the interview schedule may shape the format of a report, or you may wish to develop the themes for your report from the topics discussed (or even a mixture of both). This latter method may be useful, as you may

have discovered new and important themes in your focus group you had not previously considered.

## REMEMBER!

The different methods we have mentioned are suggestions. There are factors in any prison setting that may make certain methods challenging to use. However, without the evidence that the projects are making a difference to the beneficiaries' lives it is more difficult to make a case for future funding and projects in this area as well as to show others what you have achieved.



# CHECKLIST

- ✓ At least one member of staff with interest in gardening and motivation to change people's lives
- ✓ A place to work: raised bed, polytunnel, greenhouse
- ✓ A range of appropriate tools and materials – such as soil, seeds, plants and plant pots
- ✓ Evaluation methods
- ✓ A member of staff to supervise – this can be someone from the gardens, education, residential or health care
- ✓ Embrace participants' creativity and good ideas – enjoy experimenting!

# REFERENCES

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- <sup>11</sup> O'Brien, L., Buris, A., Townsend, M and Ebdon, M (2011) Volunteering in nature as a way of enabling people to reintegrate into society *Perspectives in Public Health* 131, pp. 71
- <sup>12</sup> The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was funded by the Scottish Executive National Programme for improving mental health and well-being, commissioned by NHS Health Scotland, developed by the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh, and is copyrighted to NHS Health Scotland and the Universities of Warwick and Edinburgh. Permission and registration are required for use. Should you decide to use WEMWBS (or SWEMWBS), you will need to register your use by completing an online registration here: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/researchers/register/>

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