



**target:**  
wellbeing



# **IMPACT REPORT: GREENER ON THE OUTSIDE FOR PRISONS, UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL LANCASHIRE**

**MAY 2015**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

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# Poor health and lack of skills are common amongst offenders. GOOP tackles this by providing a tailored and sustainable ‘green health’ programme for addressing mental health, physical activity and healthier eating.

This initiative is part of Target: Wellbeing.

Target: Wellbeing aims to help people live healthier and happier lives.

Funding has come from the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund.

**Greener on the Outside for Prisons (GOOP)** provides a variety of opportunities for offenders to participate in gardening, growing and cooking activities that improve and develop skills to increase employability and reduce worklessness, and foster family and social links that promote inclusion.

GOOP is delivered by a number of prisons in the north west in partnership with the **University of Central Lancashire’s Healthy & Sustainable Settings Unit**.

The initiative has been part of **‘Target Wellbeing’** – a regional portfolio of health and wellbeing projects funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Target: Wellbeing projects have been monitored and evaluated by a central management team at **Groundwork UK** independent of the delivery organisation.

## Our main findings show that:

- ✓ GOOP projects have demonstrated a positive impact on the wellbeing of prisoners, especially in relation to mental health.
- ✓ Prisons have reported that GOOP has had an impact both on behaviour of prisoners and the prison environment.
- ✓ The successful networking of GOOP projects has shared knowledge and best practice between prisons.
- ✓ The adoption of GOOP by all state-run prisons in the region is a huge vote of confidence in the benefits of the project.

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## About the Healthy & Sustainable Settings Unit

Established in 2001, the Healthy & Sustainable Settings Unit aims to support the holistic and integrated development of healthy settings – acknowledging that “health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love” (WHO, 1986) and that many health challenges are inter-related and can be best tackled through comprehensive, integrated programmes in the contexts and places where people live their lives.

Bridging research, policy and practice, the unit has a global reputation and is concerned to facilitate ecological approaches to health and wellbeing within and across a diversity of organisational and geographical settings – and to increase understanding of ‘what works and why’ in different contexts.

## Project description

Greener on the Outside for Prisons (GOOP) works with around a dozen prisons and approved premises around the north west to develop horticultural and environmental training and work for prisoners, both within the prison environment and further afield within the community.

Each prison takes a different approach to GOOP, depending on the prisoner population, the capacity of the site etc. Broadly, activities include:

- Establishment of outdoor areas - both for growing food/horticulture and for prisoner relaxation.
- Training of prisoners in horticulture and landscaping.
- Maintenance of gardens and outdoor spaces.
- Growing of fruit, vegetables, garden plants and in some cases animal rearing. Often produce is sold to staff, visitors or external businesses such as local cafes.
- Landscaping and horticultural work within the local community.

GOOP improves prisoner wellbeing in numerous ways. It improves skills and employability, encourages physical activity and healthy eating and develops social and interpersonal skills. The benefits of horticulture and outdoor activities to mental wellbeing are well documented.

In addition to prison-based work, GOOP brings the prisons together to facilitate learning and further development. This includes the establishment of a ‘community hub’ for sales of products and produce. This could be in the form of a food bank or food box type initiative with products sourced from various prison sites. A catalogue of produce is being developed covering each establishment with the aim of reducing duplication and creating a reliable supply chain.

GOOP is also producing a ‘best practice’ toolkit to facilitate wider roll-out of the project both regionally and nationally, identifying key success factors within different prisons, highlighting how challenges have been overcome and pointing to ‘beacon sites’ of excellence.

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# Prison activities and achievements

There are around a dozen prisons and approved premises taking part in GOOP. Activities differ from prison to prison – these are some key examples to illustrate the range of work and the achievements made at a prison level.

## HMP Garth

The GOOP project at HMP Garth has been set up on the newly opened personality disorder unit. Achievements include:

- Ongoing work to transform the exercise yard into a 'health and wellbeing' garden. It will consist of four areas: a quiet, sensory zone; area for vegetable growing; area for outdoor gym equipment and the remaining area for plants, shrubs and flowers.
- Involving the whole prison in this work, with prisoners putting forward ideas and making decisions on plans and designs. One prisoner has been selected to lead on the project – attending meetings with staff, getting involved with budgeting and encouraging other prisoners to get involved.

## HMP Kirkham

HMP Kirkham accepts prisoners who can reasonably be trusted to serve their sentence in open conditions. GOOP achievements have included:

- 15-20 allotments are being established on a 6,000m site for prisoners to use.
- Prisoners carried out landscaping work for the 'Alice in Wonderland' gardens at Blackpool Illuminations, grass cutting for Westby, St Michael's and St Anne's Churches, and mowing and strimming at Fylde Arboretum.

## HMP Preston

The GOOP project is based around a site that includes two polytunnels alongside a classroom and a tool shed. Achievements include:

- Provision of range of horticultural training and activities.
- Income generated for the project through sales to staff.
- Ongoing project to design and landscape a sensory garden in the hospital grounds with a large area for wellbeing.

## HMP Risley

HMP Risley is one of the largest category C training prisons in the UK, currently housing an average of 1,085 male prisoners. Achievements include:

- 20 prisoners are enrolled on GOOP, carrying out various gardening and environmental activities, including general ground maintenance and recycling.
- Prisoners have erected two new polytunnels – one for growing plants and flowers to cut for bouquets and one for growing vegetables.
- Prisoners developing a quiet area, filled with sensory planting and seating, to be used by prisoners that need time out from the hustle and bustle of the wing.
- Horticultural instructor will be offering a vocational qualification which will be reinforced with voluntary work placements within the community.

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# Prison activities and achievements

## St Joseph's Approved Premises

St Joseph's Approved Premises in Eccles, Manchester, is a 29-bed hostel with residents on release from custody. Achievements include:

- Establishment of site including raised beds, three greenhouses, a mini orchard and several areas for bedding plants.
- Securing of additional funding to commission a horticulturist and to further develop the site.
- Residents use the produce they have grown to cook meals and this has led to an improved sense of community. The project has also broken down some of the barriers that prevent residents and staff from working together.

## HMP YOI Styal

Styal was one of the first GOOP projects, beginning in April 2009. Achievements include:

- Initially just 12 women were employed to mow the lawns and pick up rubbish. Now over 70 women at any one time are employed there, making it the second largest employer in the prison behind education.
- Links have been made with the local community, selling produce to Styal Country Community Café and Styal Quarry Bank Mill, as well as providing vegetables to a local butcher who has a small café.
- A prisoner training restaurant – The Clink – opened in May 2015. As well as producing vegetables for the restaurant, prisoners will be able to gain qualifications every step of the way: from horticulture to catering and hospitality.
- Prisoners helped to design and build a Silver-Gilt award winning garden for the Tatton Park Royal Horticultural Society show.
- Eddie Tarry, Land Based Activities Manager and Governor Carl Bailey were both presented with a Butler Trust Award in 2010, in recognition of their outstanding work on the project.
- Prior to establishment of GOOP the prison was struggling to employ all the women but now even prisoners with complex needs can be accommodated.

## HMP YOI Thorn Cross

Achievements include:

- Chickens kept and vegetables grown with sales made to staff (over £6K in just a year) and a strategy in place to increase production in future.
- GOOP has been linked closely with education work. This has helped bring subjects like maths to life - prisoners have been better able to understand where education can be useful in a real-life scenario.
- The impact on drug and alcohol users has also been significant – it's a calming area to work, it gives prisoners a bit of responsibility and something else to focus on.

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**“Prisons should not allow offenders to simply mark their time in a purposeless fashion. Rather, prisons should be seen as places where prisoners are engaged in challenging and meaningful work.”**

**Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders, Ministry of Justice, 2010**

**GOOP** began its work in 2009, and since then its development has dovetailed with a new focus on how prison work can be expanded and used to help prevent reoffending.

The 2012 prison population of England and Wales was 85,450, nearly double what it was 20 years previously (Ministry of Justice, 2012). Research consistently shows that prisoners have poor health, particularly poor mental health. Poor physical, mental and social health – alongside poor levels of literacy, numeracy and educational achievement – is strongly associated with offending behaviour (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001, 2002)

Prison has a poor record for reducing reoffending, with nearly half of adults being reconvicted within one year of being released. However, 97% of offenders express a desire to stop offending, with 68% identifying ‘having a job’ as the most important influencing factor (Ministry of Justice, 2010).

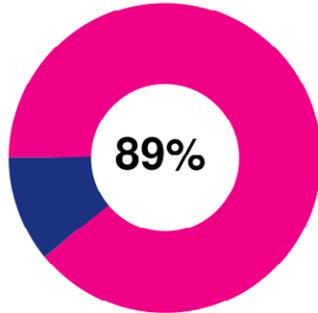
**GOOP** aims to both improve prisoner health and wellbeing and reduce reoffending through the provision of tailored environmental and horticultural work both within and outside of the prison environment.

There’s also a wealth of research evidencing the the health benefits (especially mental health) of engaging in horticulture and food growing. Sustain/Garden Organic’s recent literature review, *‘The benefits of gardening and food growing for health and wellbeing’* identifies a number of benefits directly relevant to the prison environment. These include: reducing reliance on medication, reducing self-harming behaviour; improving alertness, cognitive abilities and social skills; providing productive manual activity and beneficial social interaction for people tackling drug and alcohol dependency; and helping people manage the distress associated with mentally challenging circumstances.

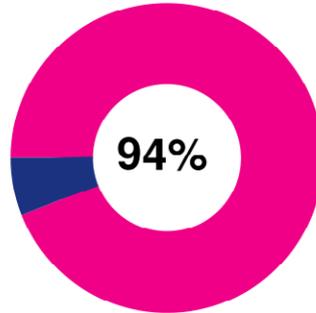
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# Project Outcomes

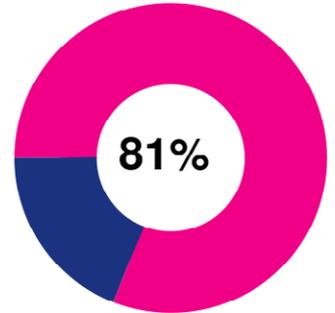
## Mental wellbeing



People feeling more confident to manage their everyday lives

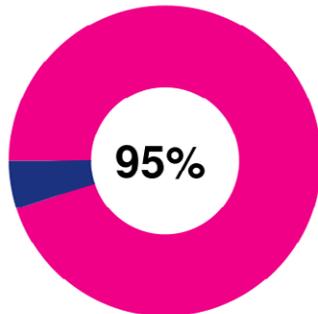


People experiencing increased opportunities for social interaction

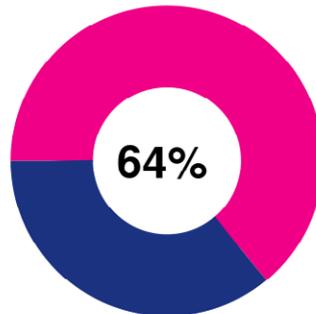


People reporting new skills or knowledge gained

## Physical activity

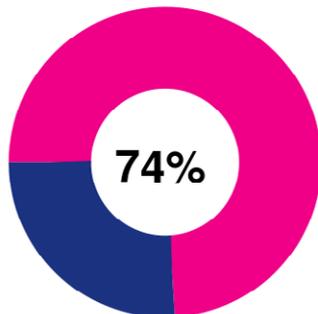


People reporting an increased awareness and understanding of the benefits of physical activity

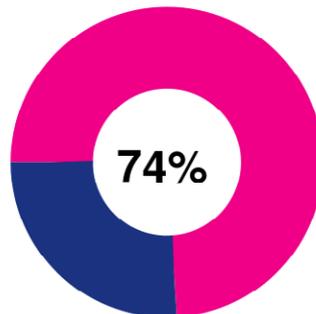


People reporting reduced barriers to exercise or having taken up a new activity

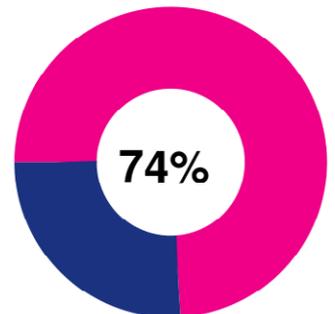
## Healthy eating



People reporting increased access to healthy food choices



People having developed new skills regarding growing or cooking nutritional food



People displaying an increase in knowledge around nutrition and healthy eating

06/13 – 02/15

Total beneficiary numbers: 872

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# Qualitative results: Mental Health

*“I get on with all these people and sort of just do what interests me and I’m encouraged to do that, so it’s good...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, HMP Thorn Cross).

## People feeling more confident to manage their everyday lives

Prisoners have spoken about how GOOP has brought wider benefits in their everyday lives:

*“I have suffered with mental health problems for over 25 years but working in the Green gym GOOP project has helped me to feel more confident”.* (Male, HMP Risley)

*“Being involved in the group has helped me with my social anxieties and helped me gain self-belief again”.* (Female, Styal)

*“I’ve grown up in a lot of ways since being with the group as a whole”* (Female, HMP Styal).

## People experiencing increased opportunities for social interaction

GOOP activities are highly social and growing plants is collaborative by nature. This is not only in reference to other prisoners, but also the relationships with prison staff, who are described as treating the prisoners on the projects with “respect”.

The group is described as having “a good atmosphere”:

*“[It’s] a really good group and the staff are helpful”.* (Female, HMP Styal)

*“Staff here (in gardens) are very helpful and pleasant people”.* (Female, HMP Styal)

*“I love working at the Green Gym because I have learned to associate with people more”.* (Female, HMP Styal)

*“When we’re down the gardens, you know, you say to each other, what are you going to do when you get out? And a couple of lads have said, “well, you know, do you realise, you can actually sell that stuff?””.* (Male, HMP Thorn Cross)

## Participants reporting new skills or knowledge gained

Horticulture is an educative experience, which can be valuable outside of prison. It may also lead to accreditation that is recognised in the wider world of work:

*“I...have learned quite a lot here and look forward to gaining some kind of qualification in horticulture”.* (Female, HMP Styal)

*“I love it here and I have learnt a lot more for when I go home working on my nanna’s veg plot and flower gardens”.* (Female, HMP Styal)

*“I am... learning about gardening which could help in the future”.* (Male, HMP Risley)

This is a summary of an evaluation undertaken by the social researcher, Dr Alan Farrier of UCLAN. The full report is available up on request.

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# Qualitative results: Physical Activity / Healthy Eating

*“...the first few weeks I was conscious of having to exert myself. And, you know, even sort of bending down and ripping a tomato plant out of the ground, I'd be catching my breath... [I wanted to] just to sort of get a bit fitter and, you know, do it that way by working outside.”*

(Male HMP Thorn Cross).

## People reporting increased awareness and understanding of the benefits of physical activity

Participants have recorded the positive impact of physical activity both on their physical health and mental wellbeing, recognising the holistic nature of horticultural activity:

*“There are... benefits to our health from being in the fresh air performing tasks that work our body”. (Female, HMP Styal)*

*“Such work also boosts our emotional and mental wellbeing”. (Female, HMP Styal)*

## People reporting reduced barriers to exercise or having taken up a new activity

64.3% of GOOP participants to date have not taken part in this kind of activity before, which demonstrates that GOOP has been effective in getting prisoners into gardening and not just recruiting those who already had an interest:

*“I have suffered with mental health problems for over 25 years but working in the Green Gym GOOP project has helped me to feel more confident, social and healthier, as I do not like doing conventional exercise in a gym. But working in the green gym is exercise, but I do not get bored as I am doing an activity that keeps me busy”. (Male, HMP Risley)*

*“I have to say, that's the benefit of working on the farms and gardens and yes, I've lost a lot of weight and I feel fitter... And, you know, although nobody wants to come inside, you have to look at the positive aspects and that's a big one, you know, is the health aspect, because I can honestly say, I wouldn't have become as fit as I am if I'd continued doing my job sitting in an office” (Male, HMP Thorn Cross).*

## People having developed new skills regarding growing or cooking nutritional food

A high percentage of the prisoners have developed new skills regarding growing nutritional food:

*“I've learnt such a lot about growing stuff..., I'm confident in growing tomatoes, chillies, peppers, aubergines, all stuff that I can take away with me and do when I get out, whether for my own use at home or whether to sell the stuff”. (Male, HMP Thorn Cross)*

## Credits

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## Target: Wellbeing

Target: Wellbeing aims to help people live healthier and happier lives.

Since 2007, it has been funded by £12.8m from the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund

For more details on the portfolio and its projects, please visit:

**[www.targetwellbeing.org.uk](http://www.targetwellbeing.org.uk)**

