

Parc Prison Peer-led Self-Management Project

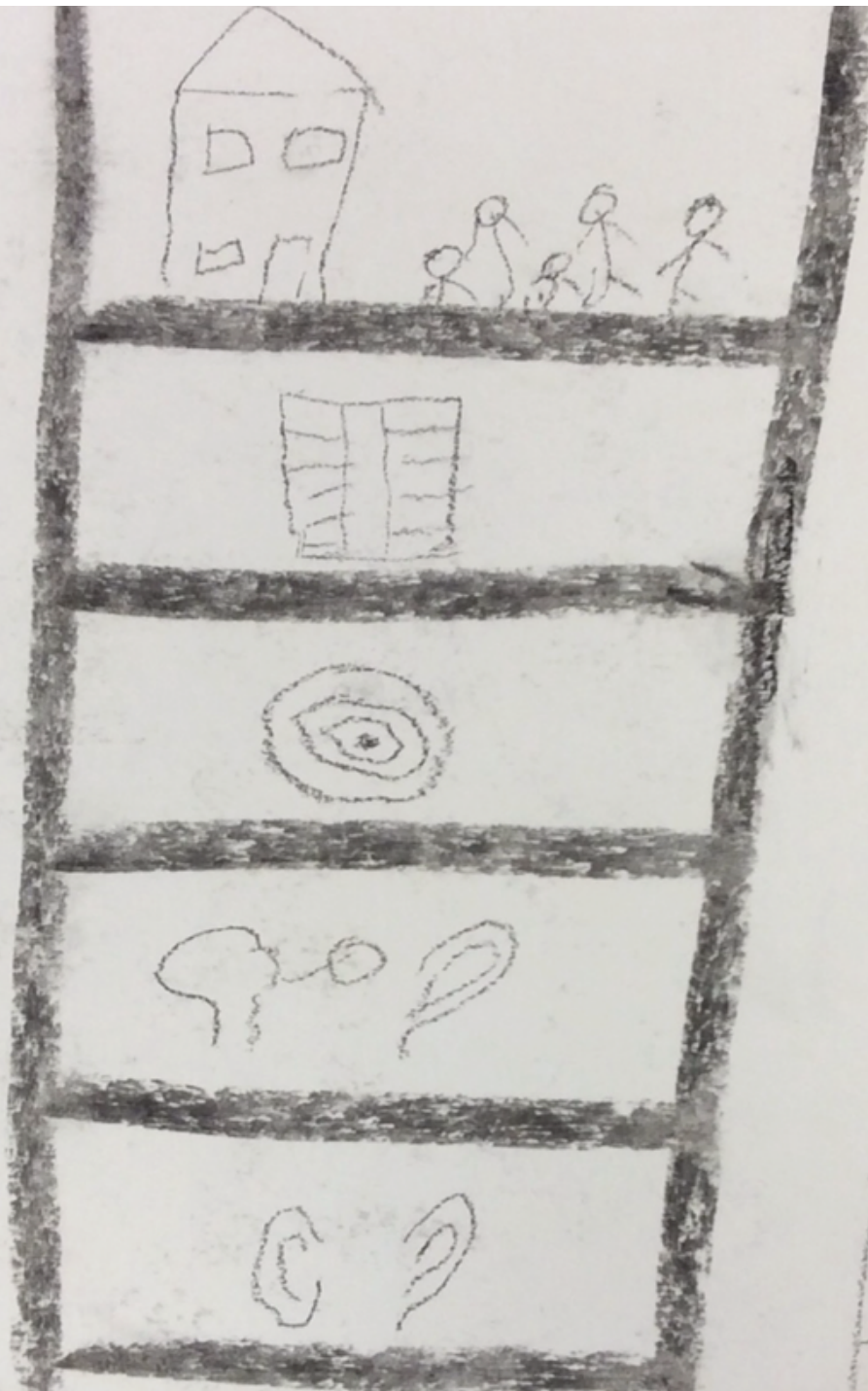
Snapshot - Impact Report 2013 - 2016



Mental Health
Foundation



ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI
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The Mental Health Foundation in partnership with G4S delivered self-management with peer support courses to vulnerable prisoners at HMP & YOI Parc between October 2013 and December 2016. It was a challenging project to develop and deliver, eliciting a great deal of new learning for the Foundation and HMP Parc, as well as some positive improvements for some prisoners. Improvements on outcomes are highlighted below.

12

self-management courses were delivered in HMP & YOI Parc from September 2015 to December 2016

16

prisoners were trained as facilitators to help promote self-management in prison.

A group of prisoners worked together to produce a



resource guide for offenders coming into prison for the first time.

120

prisoners from the Vulnerable Prisoners Wing received self-management training in small peer group settings.

10 prisoners who were employed as 'Healthcare Champions' were also trained, in order to support them in their role.



50 prisoners completed the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale at the start of the course and after one month after completing the course.

The mean wellbeing score showed a significant increase in wellbeing from start of the training and 4 weeks later (post-training) (increasing from 37 to 51 points). But it is noted that the sample size was small.

62.5%

of prisoners (10/16) surveyed after six months achieved their primary goal.

Goals were related to behavioural activities (e.g. staying in touch with family), getting out of prison/being transferred, aspirational (e.g. losing weight, learning to read), helping others and improving mental health and wellbeing.

"One of my goals was to do my artwork. I was hoping to be the new Art Technician on the wing but have not got there yet – that is my goal. I now draw pictures for other inmates so that they can send it to their loved ones in their letters, for their kids or for birthdays. It makes me feel better that people recognise me for my artwork."

Participant 32

What is self-management?



There are a variety of approaches to self-management which has predominantly been used to help people with severe and chronic health conditions to understand their condition better, make informed decisions about care, and engage in behaviours that maintain and improve their health.¹

The Mental Health Foundation's approach to self-management includes peer support and can be summarised as:

Control – people should be in as much control of their lives as possible and able to make their own decisions and choices as far as possible.

Life orientated, not condition orientated – the focus is on people's lives, minimising the negative impact that a condition/diagnosis may have on their lives.

Asset/Strength based – peoples' experience can be turned into expertise. The facilitators share direct experience with the participants.

Working Together to find solutions (peer support) – recognising that we are all part of a community and relationships are a key element of everyone's existence (peer support).

Developing new skills: building individuals capacity to manage and improve their lives through goal setting, action planning, problem solving.²

Question?

What is self-management?
It's learning how to cope
Making informed decisions everyday
And never giving up hope.

Realising you can help yourself
With commitment and with stealth
Everyone should understand
You can manage your mental health

It isn't a magic solution
There is no special plan
It's taking things one step at a time
And becoming the 'Better Man'

It's taking back control again
No time to whinge and moan
You can make this work for you
No-one else – just you alone

It's adapting to a lifestyle
But always thinking things through
And with a better understanding
The rewards will come back to you

The journey starts with little steps
And your life is one big stroll
Stand tall and repeat these words
"I'm taking back control."

Written by prisoner HMP/YOI Parc

Prisoners and Mental Health



It is well documented that the prevalence of mental ill-health (and substance misuse) is higher among prisoners than the general population. In 1997, the Office of National Statistics surveyed the prevalence of mental health problems among more than 3000 prisoners in England and Wales.³ The survey found that levels of mental health problems, ranging from common mental health problems to psychosis, personality disorder and drug and alcohol problems, were greatly in excess in prisoners, compared to the general population. Another study found estimates of mental health problems in prisoners to be as high as 90%.⁴

There is widespread concern that the prison environment, with its rules and regimes, may have a detrimental impact on the mental health of prisoners, and those with mental health problems in particular. Factors such as overcrowding, separation from family and friends, boredom and loss of autonomy have all been recognised as being potentially damaging to mental health.^{5,6}

A recent prison inspectorate report (2014/15) produced a stark portrait of life in prisons across England and Wales.⁷

The report found more prisoners had been killed, died by suicide, self-harmed and were victims of assault in 2014/15 than five years ago. The number of self-harm incidents involving male prisoners had risen steadily over the

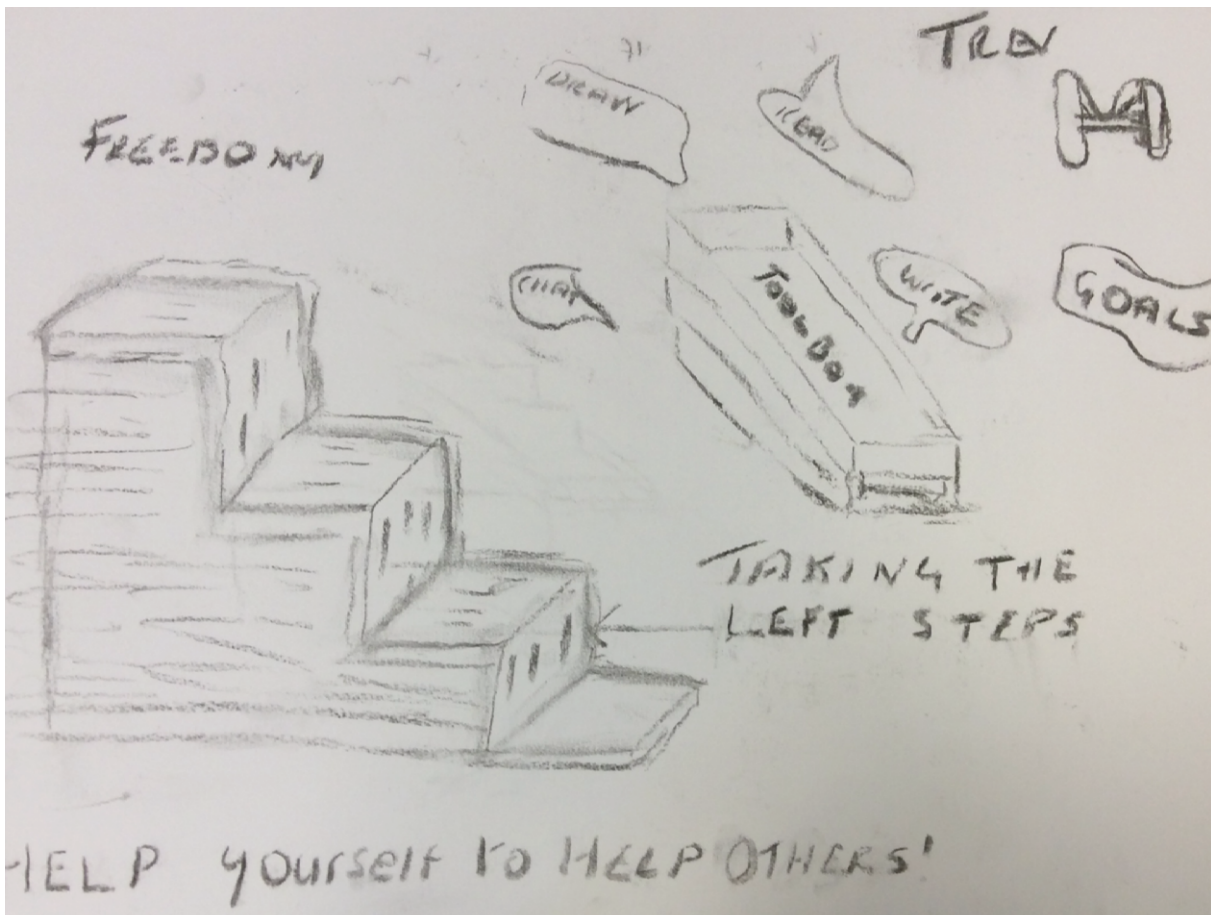
last five years to 18,995 incidents in the year ending December 2014. This was almost a third higher than the year to December 2010. The report also found that 25% of vulnerable prisoners and 26% of mainstream prisoners in HMP & YO1 Parc felt they had suffered mental ill health upon arrival at the prison whilst 40% of vulnerable prisoners and 39% of mainstream prisoners felt they suffered mental ill health whilst in custody. Only 14% of prisoners felt that they were being properly supported by someone within the prison.

"I have been really low in here so they have given me tablets – but I didn't have anything before coming in here."

14%

of prisoners felt they were being properly supported by someone within the prison.

Background to the Parc Self-Management Programme



"What self-management means to me" (Prisoner HMP Parc)

The self-management training programme was developed as a partnership between the Mental Health Foundation and G4S and funded by Big Lottery Cymru. The aim of the project was to improve prisoners' mental health through self-management and peer support.

The project was managed by the Mental Health Foundation and facilitators of the self-management training were seconded from third sector organisations which specialised in supporting people

with mental-ill health. A research officer was employed by the Mental Health Foundation for two days a week to evaluate the training in HMP & YOI Parc. The project was supported by the Safer Custody Manager from G4S who acted as liaison and supported the administration of the training within the prison.

Leaflets and application forms about the courses were left on the wings for the prisoners to express an interest in attending the training. Prisoners all



had to undergo security clearance and 'interruptions' (staff permission to be excused) from work or education duties were also required.

The self-management training ran on one day a week, for approximately two to three hours for four weeks in total. Up to ten participants could attend. The training included topics on; positive thinking, goal setting, managing wellbeing and behaviour, working with professionals and problem solving. Participants were encouraged to also develop a personal 'tool box', which contained ideas for coping during challenging times.

The prisoners took greater 'ownership' of the training programme as it became more established by promoting the benefits of the training to other prisoners.

Facilitators underwent training on the Mental Health Foundation model of self-management with peer support and the unique approach to learning and facilitating the self-management training. The key elements of the course were:

- Applying a holistic approach
- Valuing participation and recognition
- Ownership- importance of prisoners themselves making their own decisions about next steps
- Respecting different views about mental health and wellbeing
- Recognising each other as an expert of experience that knows what works best for themselves

Facilitators were encouraged to reflect on their practice and the elements of the programme that worked or needed developing.

"I enjoyed sharing good practice with inmates, seeing them self-manage. When they first come in they are apprehensive and not very helpful but then seeing them change over the four weeks as they learn to manage themselves."

Course Facilitator

Participants' views on self-management with peer support



What prisoners said

Participants said that because of the course they began to understand **how to manage their own behaviour** and know what situations would trigger a negative response:

"Before the group I would just hit people if things annoyed me but I am learning about how to ease off"

Through developing strategies to help manage their behaviour better it had helped participants to feel better about themselves.

"The course helps me to deal with things, I can sleep better."

"The toolkit is helpful, I carry the toolkit with me mentally."

"I now feel more confident, it is the best thing I have ever done."

Participants also began to develop empathy for others and understand **how their behaviour affected their relationships** with others.

"I think it has made me realise that other people have issues too. It is easy in here not to think like that; like my partner has difficulties at home, so when she doesn't call, there is a reason for it. It helps me not to get so down when she doesn't call and stops me from thinking that she has gone off with someone else because I am in here."

Being able to share problems regarding prison life with the group and **developing**

strategies for dealing with issues was seen as a positive for participants.

"I had a problem and I shared it with these guys last week and we all talked about the different ways of dealing with it. That was really useful."

Participants were able to discuss specific issues with the other group members and receive ideas and support regarding how to manage these problems.

"Being on the course and meeting people helped me to build my confidence so that I could reply to those who were picking on me. "People helped me with what to do and what to say." And by advising me it gave me strength to respond and challenge. This has helped me and people stopped picking on me."

Participants felt that it was beneficial to attend with fellow prisoners. Interviews with participants show that establishing trust within the group **helped them to share their feelings and experiences with group members**.

"I opened up to people and I felt like a dick head but no-one in the group shared what I had said on the wing so I know that I can talk to these guys."

The facilitators were viewed as supportive to the participants **and treated them with respect and equality**. This was highly valued by the prisoners as they had often experienced stigma and discrimination from prison staff.



"Yes can talk to staff (facilitators) as they not part of the prison, they're really helpful and they listen."

"We can trust the facilitators as they are not prison staff."

Peer support within a prison setting is complicated because prisoners are always on the move. Self-management training appears to help participants understand the benefits of seeking social support, even if they were unable to continue the relationships that they had developed within the group.

"I am a highly distressed person so I bottle it up a lot, so it was good to talk in a group. I keep talking to people now."

As training became more familiar with prisoners within the vulnerable prisoner unit they began to bond with others who had attended the training, even if they had not attended their own course.

"Now I am friends with Phil and Steve who were on other courses. We can communicate with each other because they have been on the same course. We have formed a mini-membership club because we have some things in common with other people who have been on the course."

What the facilitators said

The facilitators highlighted four areas of benefit for the prisoners taking part in the self-management training programme, these were; shared experience; peer support; behaviour change and sense of achievement/control.

"It helps the participants to hear that other people within the group have experienced some of the same anxieties and issues as themselves. They will often express that they felt they were the only one having difficulty with relationships, or adapting to prison life until they spoke out within the group."

"A participant was going to get sacked from working in the prison gardens as he was having issues with other people who he worked with. He told us that he had made up his mind to attack one of the other blokes but he said that as a direct result of thinking things through and the consequences of his actions that he didn't. He went to the officer and told him that he needed to get out of there and he didn't lash out."

"One participant when he came onto the course was reluctant to get involved, he was upset with his offender manager and he was saying that she wasn't going to be able to tell him how to live or where he could live. He completed the course and at the end he made a leaflet highlighting his future plans and goals. He was excited that he was going to develop a pottery workshop. That was very encouraging. He used to go to bed in the afternoon and he would be unkempt and since the training he is pristine. We could see massive differences in him and I think we have reduced the risk of him reoffending."

"It was good that we managed to provide some people with facilitator training. Those who attended felt that they had achieved something additional and enjoyed supporting other people through the training."



What the prison said

The prison liaison officer helped to support the administration of the project, such as obtaining security clearance for the participants and obtaining suitable training facilities to run the self-management programme. She provided valuable insight for the evaluation from the perspective of the prison.

Once a reliable staffing arrangement had been established the liaison officer felt that the project had flourished within the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit. She felt that self-management had been very beneficial for these prisoners, as due to the nature of their crimes, they often lose everything important to them, particularly their relationships with family members. This loss can have a devastating impact upon their mental health and wellbeing.

The liaison officer felt a team approach, with facilitators working closely with the G4S liaison and HMP & YOI Parc management team to plan, administer and develop the project, was integral to the success of the project. She held the facilitators in high esteem, saying that had a non-judgemental approach to the participants and were “not easily groomed” by the prisoners. The prison needed to trust the facilitators would be professional in their approach to the participants and would support

prisoners within the appropriate boundaries.

The liaison officer would like to see the project continue within the prison for vulnerable prisoners and for ‘first timers’ within both vulnerable and mainstream prison units. She told us:

“Often coming into prison for the first time causes mental breakdown and this is the time prisoners are most vulnerable and need support. The project could also help support us to stop the cycle of leaving prison, committing more crimes and ending up back in prison.”

The facilitator of the Healthcare Champions within the prison felt that the training was very worthwhile for the Healthcare Champions as individuals but also to help them support other prisoners who they come into contact within their role.

“It has helped give them an understanding of what people might be going through when first come into prison, or if they have had a bad phone call or something and they can support them better now they have that understanding. I think it will give them more empathy.”

A Way Forward

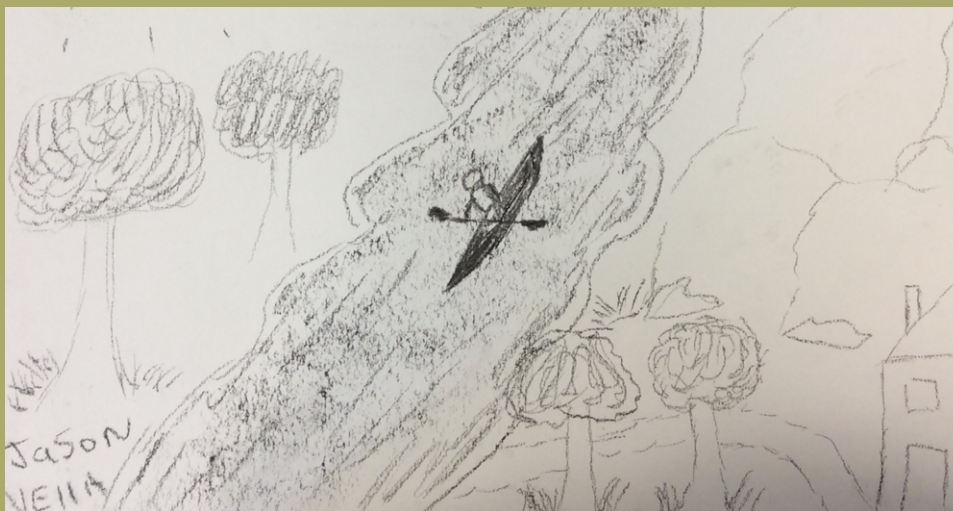


Self-management training is a powerful approach supporting participants to reframe their thoughts, attitudes and behaviour. This project highlights how self-management with peer support can show improved outcomes for individuals at a difficult and challenging time in their lives. Prisoners give feedback that they feel more confident, have a greater sense of control in their lives and generally have an improved sense of wellbeing.

More research is needed to build a substantial body of knowledge to understand how self-management and peer support supports prisoners'

mental health and wellbeing. Working with vulnerable prisoners shows that the model has the potential to be adapted to meet the needs of a range of prison populations from first time offenders to prisoners soon to be released.

The Mental Health Foundation is currently looking for further opportunities to work within prison settings to promote self-management and peer support.



"Get back into kayaking – I trained to a pretty high level so I would like to continue that and teach kayaking. I would live somewhere by the river so I could do this."

Participant 8



Authors:

Rachel Gingell and Jackie Fisher

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London Office:
Mental Health Foundation
Colechurch House
1 London Bridge Walk
London SE1 2SX

Glasgow Office:
Mental Health Foundation
Merchants House
30 George Square
Glasgow G2 1EG

Cardiff Office:
Mental Health Foundation
Castle Court
6 Cathedral Road
Cardiff, CF11 9LJ