

Prisoner Wellbeing: A synthesis of the evidence base.

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Psychological wellbeing can be defined as the experience of positive psychological states, functioning well within one's environment, personal growth, and positive relationships.¹ While we acknowledge that psychological wellbeing and mental health are closely related, we focus on the former within the current article (and for ease, use the term wellbeing from hereon in).

In the general population, wellbeing has been linked to a range of positive outcomes, including increased productivity at work,² better relationships,³ and better health.⁴ It is unsurprising that people in prison in the UK appear to have poorer wellbeing than people in the community.⁵ People in prison have limited autonomy, are separated from their family, friends and support networks, and threat and suspicion are often part of day-to-day life. The introduction of restricted prison regimes to control infection during the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated many of these issues. This limited contact with families/significant others, access to appropriate support networks, and everyday activities that in more normal times would help people to manage stress or otherwise protect their wellbeing. This had an inevitable impact on feelings of isolation, frustration, and stress among many prisoners.⁶ This learning mirrored what we experienced and learned about wellbeing during the pandemic for us all.

Promoting and supporting the wellbeing of those within our care has clear links with HMPPS' purpose and priorities, and our duty of care to provide safe and supportive environments. Furthermore, the high prevalence of pre-existing vulnerabilities across the prison population means that it is likely that all

prisoners at some stage will experience difficulties maintaining positive wellbeing.

Aims

This article presents some of the key themes in the empirical evidence base relating to the wellbeing of people in custody, focusing primarily on who may be most at risk of wellbeing difficulties, and what the evidence tells us may help support positive wellbeing in prisons.

A literature search was conducted, primarily using EBSCO and Google Scholar, and over 70 global studies were reviewed. Not all papers are cited as we prioritised the more rigorous and most recent. We found some meta-analyses and systematic reviews, but most were smaller-scale studies (quantitative and qualitative). Some studies failed to differentiate between wellbeing, mental health, and resilience. While effort was made to maintain focus upon the concept of wellbeing throughout, this has not always been possible and there are occasions when related concepts are discussed. As wellbeing is influenced by multiple factors, isolating the impact or influence of any one component is difficult.

Who is at greatest risk of poor wellbeing?

Individual, custodial, situational, and environmental factors have all been identified as influencing wellbeing in custody. Whilst poor wellbeing can be experienced by anyone in prison, there is good evidence to suggest some groups of

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1. New Economics Foundation (2011). Five Ways to Wellbeing. New applications, new ways of thinking. www.neweconomics.org
 2. Losada, M., & Heaphy, E. (2004). The role of positivity and connectivity in the performance of business teams: A nonlinear dynamics model. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 47, 740-765.
 3. Diener, E., & Seligman, M. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science*, 13, 81-84.
 4. Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 803-855.
 5. Tweed, E. J., Gounari, X., & Graham, L. (2019). Mental wellbeing among people in prison in Scotland: an analysis of repeat cross-sectional surveys. *Journal of Public Health*, 43(2), 188-195.
 6. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. (2021). What happens to prisoners in a pandemic: A thematic review.

people may experience greater difficulties. These include people:⁷

- ❑ With pre-existing vulnerabilities, such as mental health difficulties, those with experience of being in care, a lack of family support and/or experience of trauma and adversity,
- ❑ In the early days of prison or at times of transition,
- ❑ On remand,
- ❑ Who are sentenced to long and indeterminate sentences,
- ❑ Who are recalled to prison,
- ❑ Held in segregation,
- ❑ Who take drugs in prison,
- ❑ Who experience insomnia,
- ❑ Who are parents, and
- ❑ Those experiencing discrimination (such as those from marginalised racial groups).

Certain factors associated with the prison environment can particularly impact on wellbeing also. While there is some evidence that cell-sharing with someone where there's a positive relationship can be good for wellbeing, most of the evidence would suggest that cell-sharing has a negative impact on wellbeing.⁸ Living in close proximity with people withdrawing from drugs and/or suffering from severe mental health problems, and lack of privacy, continual noise and antisocial behaviour, have all been linked with emotional and psychological instability.⁹

Prison crowding increases pressure on staff, resulting in greater lengths of time people spend in their cells. This can lead to lack of mental and social stimulation, and isolation and loss of opportunities for meaningful activities such as education and work.¹⁰ Poor prison conditions such as dirt, litter, clutter, fire risks, noise, lack of privacy and sanitation supplies have

also been shown to have a negative impact on the mental and/ or physical health of prisoners.¹¹

What helps to support people's wellbeing?

Research evidence suggests a range of ways in which the wellbeing of prisoners can be supported. Although at times the prison-specific research is limited, evidence suggests what contributes to prisoners' wellbeing parallels closely with what we know about wellbeing in general. The New Economics Foundation reviewed the evidence and identified the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing',¹² which have been adopted by the mental health charity MIND. From the evidence reviewed for the current article, these also appear relevant for the promotion of positive wellbeing among prisoners. An additional sixth 'Way to Wellbeing' has been identified as part of the current review, which accounts for some of the unique prison-specific factors identified in the literature.

While there is inevitably some cross-over between these 'Six Ways to Wellbeing', what follows is an outline of the evidence for each in supporting the wellbeing of people in prison.

1. Connect with others

Social relationships act as a buffer against mental ill health. Feeling valued, having support from peers and contact with loved ones can all make a difference to prisoner wellbeing.

Staff. Positive social interactions between prisoners and staff can be beneficial. Activities such as working collaboratively on a project can help build trusting working relationships.¹³ Perceptions of fair treatment from staff (known as procedural justice) can also have a significant impact on prisoner's wellbeing.

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7. For example, Ford, K. Bellis, M. A., Hughes, K., Barton, E. R., & Newbury, A. (2020). Adverse childhood experiences: a retrospective study to understand their associations with lifetime mental health diagnosis, self-harm or suicide attempt, and current low mental wellbeing in a male Welsh prison population. *Health and Justice*, 8(13); Tweed, E. J., Gounari, X., & Graham, L. (2019). Mental wellbeing among people in prison in Scotland: an analysis of repeat cross-sectional surveys. *Journal of Public Health*, 43(2), 188-195; Addicott, P. (2012). 'Frustrations within': Imprisonment for public protection (IPP). *Prison Service Journal*, 201, 24-30; Harris, M., Edgar, K., Webster, R. (2020). 'I'm always working on eggshells, and there's no chance of me ever being free': The mental health implications of Imprisonment for Public Protection in the community and post-recall. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 30, 331-340; Bloem, O., Bulten, E., & Verkes, R.-J. (2019). Changes in subjective well-being of prisoners on remand. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 15(2), 181-191; Harner H.M. & Riley S. (2012). The impact of incarceration on women's mental health: responses from women in a maximum security prison. *Qualitative Health Research* 23, 26-42.
 8. Cox., V., Paulus, P., & McCain, G. (1984). Prison crowding research. The relevance of prison housing standards and a general approach regarding housing phenomena. *American Psychologist*, 39, 1148-1160.
 9. Goomany, A., & Dickinson, T. (2015). The influence of prison climate on the mental health of adult prisoners: a literature review. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 22, 413-422.
 10. Walker, M., Illingworth, C., Canning, A., Garner, E., Woolley, J., Taylor, P., & Amos, T. (2013). Changes in mental state associated with prison environments: a systematic review. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 129, 427-436.
 11. Moran, D., Jones, P. I., Jordaan, J. A., & Porter, A. E. (2020). Does Nature Contact in Prison Improve Well Being? Mapping Land Cover to Identify the Effect of Greenspace on Self-Harm and Violence in Prisons in England and Wales. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 111(6), 1779-1795.
 12. See footnote 1: www.neweconomics.org
 13. For example, Farrier, A., Baybutt, M., & Dooris, M. (2019). Mental health and wellbeing benefits from a prisons horticultural programme. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 15(1), 91-104.

This is when people feel decisions made about them are unbiased, are driven by trustworthy motives, done respectfully, and involve being genuinely listened to. Studies from several countries, including England and Wales, have demonstrated that poorer perceptions of procedural justice are associated with poorer wellbeing among prisoners. Trusting, supportive relationships with staff can influence how well a prisoner may cope with their situation, and the strains of imprisonment.¹⁴

Peers.¹⁵ In prison, sharing stories and experiences can help to develop feelings of belonging and relatedness to others. Spending time with supportive peers helps some prisoners feel better protected, supported, and in control of their environment, contributing to reduced feelings of distress. A collaborative culture, working together on a project or developing a skill as part of a group, can provide ways for prisoners to feel connected with their peers. Peer-delivered interventions can also help to increase levels of confidence and self-worth amongst the peer workers who deliver the activities.¹⁶ There is less evidence yet available on the potential positive effects of receiving peer support.

Contact with family and significant others.¹⁷ There is a body of evidence that contact with family and significant others brings benefits for people in prison. In a recent systematic review, prison visits from family were found to reduce depressive symptoms in women and young people in custody but there has been less research exploring this among adult males. Research has also found that visits from parents are key for the wellbeing of young people in custody, regardless of the quality of the parent-child relationship prior to imprisonment. Wellbeing can also be impacted by the relationship between prison staff and those visiting the

prisoner. For some people, visiting brings joy at being reunited with family and friends, but for others visiting causes stress and anxiety. This is often because of the travelling required for visitors, prison rules, practical difficulties, or the visit being an unhappy one. However, there is some evidence that the visiting experience can feel less stressful, simply by treating visitors with respect and fairness, and by explaining why certain security procedures are necessary. Visiting rooms that are designed with normality in mind are also better environments, especially for children who are visiting prisons.

2. Be physically active

Taking part in regular physical activity can help to promote wellbeing, and lower levels of depression and anxiety.¹⁸ Such activities can also encourage social interactions.

A common coping strategy identified by prisoners is exercising and going to the gym to help improve mood, health, and alleviate anxiety. A 2018 review of sport in justice settings highlighted the importance of prisoner physical activity on wellbeing.¹⁹ Whilst several studies have explored these links, the rigour of the studies vary. Despite this, there is evidence that increased levels of exercise

among men and women in prison is associated with positive psychological benefits, such as decreased levels of hopelessness.

3. Take notice of the present moment

Taking notice of the present moment can strengthen and broaden awareness of how the simple things can bring joy.

A common coping strategy identified by prisoners is exercising and going to the gym to help improve mood, health, and alleviate anxiety.

14. For example, Beijersbergen, K. A., Dirkzwager, A. J. E., Eichelsheim, V. I., Van Der Lann, P. H., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2014). Procedural justice and prisoners' mental health problems: a longitudinal study. *Criminal Behavior and Mental Health*, 24, 100-112.
15. For example, Woodall, J., South, J., Dixey, R., De Viggiani, N., & Penson, W. (2015). Expert views of peer-based interventions for prisoner health. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 11(2), 87-97; Hanley, N., Marchetti, E. (2020). Dreaming Inside: An evaluation of a creative writing program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 53(2), 285-302; Oliffe, J. L., Hanberg, D., Hannan-Leith, M.N., Bergen, C., & Martin, R.E. (2018). "Do You Want to Go Forward or Do You Want to Go Under?" Men's Mental Health in and Out of Prison. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 12(5), 1235-1246.
16. Woodall, J., South, J., Dixey, R., De Viggiani, N., & Penson, W. (2015). Expert views of peer-based interventions for prisoner health. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 11(2), 87-97.
17. For example, Ministry of Justice. (2017). The importance of strengthening prisoners' family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime; De Claire, K., & Dixon, L. (2017). The effects of prison visits from family members on prisoners' wellbeing, prison rule breaking, and recidivism: A review of research since 1991. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 18, 185-199; Bruntton-Smith, I., & McCarthy, D.J. (2017). The effects of prisoner attachment to family on re-entry outcomes: A longitudinal assessment. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 57, 463-482.
18. For example, Battaglia, C., Di Cagno, A., Fiorilli, G., Giombini, A., Borriore, P., Baralla, F., Marchetti, M., & Pigozzi, F. (2015). Participation in a 9-month selected physical exercise programme enhances psychological well-being in a prison population, *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 25, 343-354.
19. Meek, R. (2018). A Sporting Chance. An Independent Review of Sport in Youth and Adult Prisons. Ministry of Justice.

Yoga/ mindfulness/ meditation.²⁰ Mindfulness aims to develop a non-judgemental attitude towards one's thoughts, feelings, and sensations as they occur. Two systematic reviews and one meta-analysis found that mindfulness and yoga in prison settings helped reduce some of the symptoms of depression and psychological distress and improved relaxation capacity, self-esteem, and optimism. More recent prison-based studies have suggested that mindfulness may help with sleep quality and insomnia, and other physical symptoms associated with anxiety. Mindfulness training has been found to be significantly more effective for those serving longer sentences. The meta-analysis highlighted how the (modest) positive effect on psychological wellbeing was consistent across prison samples in a broad range of countries. The range of institutional settings included prisons for young adults, women, men, and substance misuse facilities. This means we can be reasonably confident about the robustness of this evidence.

Green space.²¹ There is some evidence that stress, social connection, and health outcomes are related to access to green space and nature and may be linked to:

- ❑ Less agitation and increased empathy
- ❑ Increased social opportunities
- ❑ Community connections and cohesiveness
- ❑ Increased opportunity for exercise
- ❑ Lower blood pressure and anxiety
- ❑ Reduction in self-harm

As structured interventions involving greenspace often also provide an increased opportunity for social contact, exercise and learning new skills, it is difficult to identify whether the benefits (and the degree of these)

Mindfulness
training has been
found to be
significantly more
effective for those
serving longer
sentences.

is attributable to the specific 'green' element of the activities.

4. Keep learning

Continued learning through life encourages self-esteem and encourages a more active social life.

Research into psychological and therapeutic interventions for prisoners have generally focused on outcomes such as recidivism, rather than wellbeing. Therapies for prisoners with mental health problems are also relatively common in the literature. The limited number of general wellbeing studies we identified were small-scale, of variable quality and with varying follow-up periods, and included different psychological and therapeutic approaches. Despite this, some suggest promising benefits. For example, there is some evidence that group-based cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)²² and positive psychological interventions (PPI)²³ may reduce distress and improve resilience and wellbeing.²⁴ Despite these promising findings, there is currently insufficient evidence to draw firm conclusions about the effectiveness of any particular approaches on improving wellbeing (and for whom, when and over what time period) in prison settings specifically.

The evidence linking arts, drama, and creativity with prisoner wellbeing is still developing and we were only able to find a few studies in our search. One of the most consistent self-reported findings from studies across numerous disciplines is an increase in self-worth and confidence as a consequence to taking part in these activities.²⁵ Another potential benefit is that they provide people with alternative ways of expressing their feelings.²⁶ One study in China found that a drawing

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20. For example, Shonin, E., Van Gordon, W., Slade, K., & Griffiths, M. D. (2013). Mindfulness and other Buddhist-derived interventions in correctional settings: a systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 18, 365-372; Derlic, D. (2020). A Systematic Review of Literature: Alternative Offender Rehabilitation—Prison Yoga, Mindfulness, and Meditation. *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, 26(4), 361-375; Auty, K.M., Cope, A., Liebling, A. (2017). A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Yoga and Mindfulness Meditation in Prison: Effects on Psychological Well-Being and Behavioural Functioning. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 61(6), 689-710.
21. For example, Farrier, A., Baybutt, M. and Dooris, M. (2019) Mental Health and Wellbeing Benefits from a Prisons Horticultural Programme. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 15(1), 91-104.
22. Cognitive behavioural therapy is a talking therapy that can help you manage your problems by changing the way you think and behave.
23. Positive psychological interventions include tools and strategies focusing on increasing happiness, wellbeing, and positive cognitions and emotions through positive thoughts and emotions.
24. For example, Mak, V.W.M., Chan, C.K.Y. (2018). Effects of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and positive psychological intervention (PPI) on female offenders with psychological distress in Hong Kong. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 28, 158-173.
25. Rosenbaum, J.L. (2019). Art and Mindfulness Behind Bars. *The Prison Journal*, Vol. 99(4) 35-135.
26. Testoni, I., Bonelli, B., Biancalani, G., Zuliani, L., Nava, F.A. (2020). Psychodrama in attenuated custody prison-based treatment of substance dependence: The promotion of changes in wellbeing, spontaneity, perceived self-efficacy, and alexithymia. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 68. 101650.

therapy helped prisoners to manage their anxiety as they got closer to release.²⁷ Another focused on a creative writing programme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners in Australia;²⁸ participants reported improvements in their self-confidence, and they placed particular value on the storytelling and connections to others.

There is limited empirical evidence available on music-related activities in prisons, but what there is, suggests music may be a route through which to engage people in out-of-cell activities, which may in turn have a positive effect on wellbeing.²⁹ How music may contribute to improved wellbeing remains unclear and further research is needed. For example, it could act as a distraction, helping prisoners to focus on something soothing, positive, and helping them to detach. It could also facilitate prisoners being able to connect with others, express their feelings or provide them with opportunities to feel a sense of accomplishment/mastery over a new skill.

There is some evidence that reading and access to prison libraries may support positive wellbeing among people in prison also. One Australian study found that reading and using the library helped some to experience time as “a positive aspect of prison life, rather than a source of frustration and boredom”.³⁰

Books can also offer prisoners access to information on topics such as legal aid, health, skill acquisition, and generally as a way to increase awareness and knowledge, all of which can help them enhance their own wellbeing.³¹

The link between sleep and wellbeing is well established. The National Institute for Health and Care

Excellence recommend treating short-term insomnia with non-pharmacological interventions followed, if necessary, by a short course of medication.³² However, recommended non-pharmacological approaches (e.g., CBT) are not commonly provided in prisons to address insomnia,³³ and providing opportunities to support prisoners to learn strategies to manage such symptoms warrants further research attention.

5. Give

Participating in social and community life, an interest in helping others, and acts of kindness come under the principle of ‘give’.

Playing a role in our community, or having someone ask us for help, can provide us with a sense that we matter. ‘Do good be good’ activities enable people to help others. In a prison setting this can include formal roles (such as being a listener, a peer mentor, wing representative or prison council member) or less formal roles (such as helping others get through their sentence, helping to create a better physical environment, undertaking charity work and so on). Research suggests that volunteer work improves health and wellbeing when it makes us feel like we matter, and that it works best for those who may not ordinarily get opportunities to experience this.³⁴

6. Build

Building and promoting opportunities for prisoners to develop optimism, hope, meaning, and a sense of

Books can also offer prisoners access to information on topics such as legal aid, health, skill acquisition, and generally as a way to increase awareness and knowledge, all of which can help them enhance their own wellbeing.

27. Yu, Z.Y., Ming, C.Y., Yue, M. Li, J.H., Ling, L. (2016). House- tree- person drawing therapy as an intervention for prisoners’ pre-release anxiety. *Social Behaviour and Personality*, 44(6), 987–1004.
28. Hanley, N., Marchetti, E. (2020). Dreaming Inside: An evaluation of a creative writing program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 53(2), 285–302.
29. Bensimon, M., Einat, T., Gilboa, A. (2015). The Impact of Relaxing Music on Prisoners’ Levels of Anxiety and Anger. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 59(4), 406–423.
30. Garner, J. (2020). Experiencing time in prison: the influence of books, libraries and reading. *Journal of Documentation*, 76(5), 1033–1050.
31. Emasealu, H.U., Popoola, S.O. (2016). Information needs and the enhancement of the psychological wellbeing of Nigerian prison inmates. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 1365. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1365>
32. NICE. (2021). Managing short-term insomnia (less than 3 months duration) <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/insomnia/management/managing-short-term-insomnia-less-3-months/>
33. Dewa, L.H., Hassan, L., Shaw, J.J., Senior, J. (2018). Design of a treatment pathway for insomnia in prison settings in England: a modified Delphi study. *British Medical Journal Open*, 8(8), e022406.
34. Perrin, C., Blagden, N., Winder, B., Dillon, G. (2018). “It’s Sort of Reaffirmed to Me That I’m Not a Monster, I’m Not a Terrible Person”: Sex Offenders’ Movements Toward Desistance via Peer-Support Roles in Prison. *Sexual Abuse*, 3(7).

autonomy. Working to develop and maintain the physical environment to help foster safety, decency, and rehabilitation.

Autonomy was a theme across a number of the studies we reviewed related to prisoner wellbeing. Staff providing opportunities and allowing prisoners a degree of choice and control (where feasible) appears to enhance wellbeing. In addition to this, we know that mastery (having a sense of control, being proactive, capable, or able to achieve/ develop skills) has also been linked to psychological wellbeing.³⁵ There is some evidence that when prisoners have a sense of meaning, this has a positive effect on wellbeing, optimism, and resilience.^{36 37}

Being able to engage in activities and manage the passing of time is also related to wellbeing in prison settings. Activities that appear to assist with this included reading and using the prison library,³⁸ structuring routines around available activities (e.g., meals, listening to music, cell workouts), using television guides to plan schedules, and watching television.³⁹ Having a routine can go beyond the activities themselves and appears to help people make time pass more easily.⁴⁰

Comfort and safety are also related to positive wellbeing within the prison environment. One study identified how young adult men (18-21 year olds) would seek and create spaces for comfort within the prison to get a break from the culture of power and status. By keeping their cell clean and tidy, they tried to create a 'homely' positive environment.⁴¹

While research exploring animal interventions is limited in quality and quantity, some suggests that animal interventions have the potential to improve psychological wellbeing for people in prison. Animal therapies have been shown to have a calming influence, helping people in prison to better manage

stress, preventing feelings of loneliness, and having a positive impact on mood and behaviour.⁴²

We know from the evidence on rehabilitative prison cultures that aspects of the physical environment can have an impact on attitudes and behaviour in prisons.⁴³ Having effective and efficient systems in place to develop and maintain the physical environment is therefore important to support wellbeing.

Noise is an important sensory aspect of prison life, which prisoners have little control over. Whilst we were unable to find any studies specifically about noise and psychological health in prisons, there is research in the wider community which has explored the negative impact environmental noise can have on wellbeing.⁴⁴ For those who may have heightened sensitivity to sensory stimulation such as noise, finding ways of reducing loud sounds in the prison environment, particularly at night when people are sleeping, is likely to be beneficial for wellbeing.

Implications

The evidence reviewed as part of the current article highlights the parallels between what is important for prisoners' wellbeing and what we know about wellbeing in general. This suggests that the use, and promotion, of the well-established Five Ways to Wellbeing within prisons is of value, plus our sixth way for prison settings. It provides a means of summarising what the evidence suggests helps to support people's wellbeing in prison and the addition of the 'build' category accounts for the prison-specific factors which have emerged from this review. A summary of approaches and activities that the evidence suggests may be most promising for promoting and protecting wellbeing are shown in the infographic below.

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35. Gadalla, T.M. (2009). Determinants, correlates and mediators of psychological distress: A longitudinal study. *Social Science and Medicine*, 68(12), 2199-2205.
 36. Bartholomaeus, J., Strelan, P. (2021). The empowering function of the belief in a just world for the self in mental health: A comparison of prisoners and non-prisoners. *Personality and Individual Differences* 179, 110900.
 37. Olliffe, J.L., Hanberg, D., Hannan-Leith, M.N., Bergen, C., Martin, R.E. (2018). "Do You Want to Go Forward or Do You Want to Go Under?" Men's Mental Health in and Out of Prison. *American Journal of Men's Health Vol. 12*(5), 1235-1246.
 38. See footnote 30: Garner, J. (2020).
 39. Mehay, A., Meek, R., Ogden, J. (2019). "I try and make my cell a positive place": Tactics for mitigating risks to health and wellbeing in a young offender institution. *Health and Place*, 57, 54-60.
 40. For example, Johnsen & Berg Johansen. (2019). Serving time: Organisation and the affective dimension of time. *Organization*, 26(1), 3-19.
 41. See footnote 39: Mehay, A. et al (2019).
 42. For example, Mercer, J., Gibson, K., & Clayton, D. (2015). The therapeutic potential of a prison-based animal programme in the UK. *Journal of Forensic Practice*, 17(1), 43-54.
 43. Mann, R., Fitzalan Howard, F., Tew, J. (2018). What is a rehabilitative prison culture? *Prison Service Journal*, 235, 3-9.
 44. Clark, C., Crumpler, C., Notely, H. (2020). Evidence for Environmental Noise Effects on Health for the United Kingdom Policy Context: A Systematic Review of the Effects of Environmental Noise on Mental Health, Wellbeing, Quality of Life, Cancer, Dementia, Birth, Reproductive Outcomes, and Cognition. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 393.



What does the evidence suggest can help prisoner wellbeing?

Connect



- Encourage and **enable trusting, supportive relationships** with staff.
- Ensure that processes and decision making are conducted in a **fair and just** way (applying principles of **procedural justice**).
- Provide prisoners serving longer sentences with the **opportunity to talk** about their life and sentence, at a stage that works for them.
- Encourage staff to engage well with **prisoners' families** / support network - in a respectful and procedurally just way.
- Enable **informal support networks** between prisoners.
- Provide lots of **contact with family and friends** and support network, ensuring that the use of technology does not replace face-to-face contact and is accessible, good quality, provides privacy and is affordable.
- Engage prisoners in **out of cell music** activities.
- Develop and **maximise green space** within prisons and prisoners' access to it.

Active



- Provide lots of opportunity for different forms of **exercise** and access to the gym.
- Encourage / provide a **healthy diet**.
- Develop and maximise **green space** within prisons and prisoners' access to it.
- Ensure that changes to regimes are **communicated to prisoners** as soon as possible in a procedurally just way, to provide them with an opportunity to plan how they will manage additional time in their cells.
- Provide books and televisions within cells to assist prisoners **manage the passing of time**.
- Enable and encourage **access to the prison library**.

Take notice



- Encourage people in prison to try **mindfulness, meditation and yoga**.
- Engage prisoners in **out of cell music** activities.
- Consider interventions using **animals** for those who may need that form of support.
- Provide **access to green space**.

Keep learning



- Provide access to **cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT)**.
- Provide access to **mindfulness-based therapies**.
- Provide access to positive **psychological intervention**.
- Encourage and enable **mindfulness, meditation and yoga**.
- Encourage and enable access to the **prison library**.
- Provide access to **creative activities**.
- **Support** prisoners experiencing insomnia.

Give



- Encourage participation in **social and community life**. Foster an interest in helping others, and encourage and reinforce **acts of kindness**.
- Enable and provide the right support to **peer** delivered interventions.
- Encourage and support activities prisoners can **do good, be good**.

Build



- Build opportunities to help develop **optimism, hope and meaning**, through **meaningful roles**, activities and evidence-based interventions.
- Build in ways to help **manage the passing of time**.
- Provide opportunities where prisoners can have **some control** and **make decisions** for themselves, to help foster and create a sense of autonomy.
- Foster a **safe clean and decent prison environment**, where prisoners are encouraged to play a role in creating and maintains that environment and professional building maintenance processes are timely, efficient and effective

Conclusion

Promoting and supporting the wellbeing of people in prison has clear links with HMPPS' purpose and priorities, and the duty of care to provide safe and supportive environments. The high prevalence of pre-existing vulnerabilities across the prison population and the likelihood that all prisoners at some stage will experience challenges to their wellbeing, means that this is an area that needs focus and attention.

There is much that we do not know about prisoner wellbeing and further robust research is needed in this area. In particular, we need to better understand the effects of different aspects of prison life, and the longer-term impact of interventions and activities designed to support prisoner wellbeing. We also need

to understand when interventions need to take place and who may be best suited to which type of intervention. More research is required to explicitly explore the relationship between protected characteristics and prisoner wellbeing.

As a result of this review, the HMPPS Evidence-Based Practice team have joined with the Health and Social Care Partnerships to work with National Prison Radio as part of a Spring 2023 prisoner wellbeing campaign. The Six Ways to Prisoner Wellbeing principles have been used to structure 16 short radio messages created with and for prisoners using soundscape and music to share what the evidence suggests can help support their wellbeing. There is a plan to evaluate prisoners' responses to the campaign in Summer 2023.