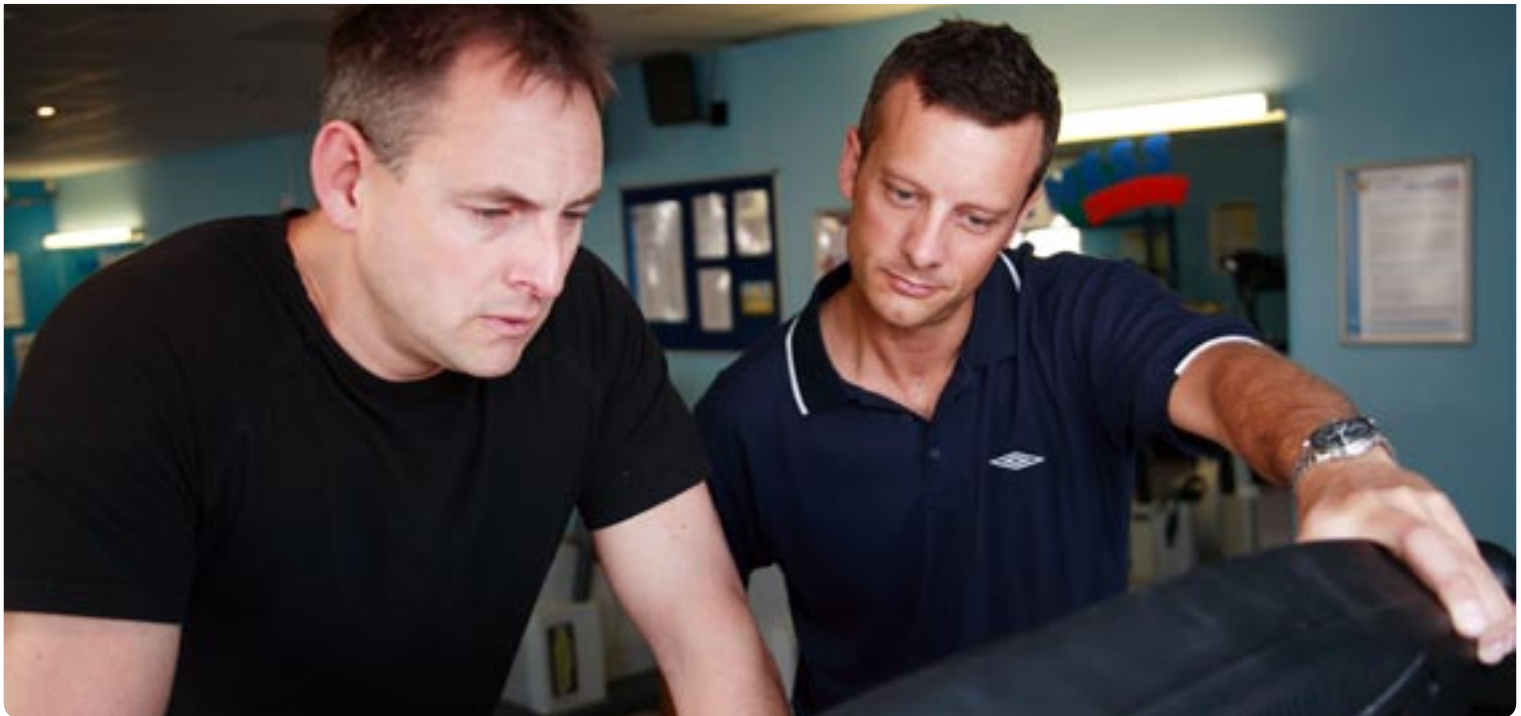




National Audit Office

Promoting healthier lifestyles for prisoners

A good practice guide





In March 2006, the Comptroller & Auditor General (head of the National Audit Office) published his report *HM Prison Service: Serving time – prisoner diet and exercise* which examined improvements made by the Prison Service to prisoners' diet and exercise. The report found that prisoners have the opportunity to eat healthily and to exercise, but that more could be done to encourage them to do so.

You, as prison PE officers, are in a unique position to encourage and support prisoners to get fit and prepare for healthier lives when they go back to the community. You get to know prisoners in the course of your work, and they get to know you and respect you. We know from our survey (to which 44 prisons replied) that many of you are doing lots of good things to promote healthier lifestyles. We didn't have space to include them all, but we hope this guide gives you a few extra ideas to explore, based on the experience of your colleagues.



Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all 44 prisons who responded to our survey earlier in the year and to the PE officers who willingly shared their good practices with us.

Thank you too, to Ian Hinds and Christine Millard whose help enabled this guide to be produced, and to Blakenhurst, Morton Hall, Stamford Hill and Wayland prisons for their assistance with photographs.

Please let us know whether or not you have found this guide helpful. You can let us have your thoughts via our website – www.nao.org.uk/prisonlifestyles

If you have any queries about this leaflet, or wish to discuss our work further please contact Jo James – Audit Manager, Jo.James@nao.gsi.gov.uk

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It's about diet as well as exercise



Prisoners' choice of food is limited to that which is provided in the prison. Opportunities for exercise are on site, with qualified people available to offer help and advice.

So there's potential to improve prisoners' health and lifestyles – especially those of people who don't know or don't remember much about balanced diets and those who can't afford to use their local gym or leisure centre. Many may be able to eat better food and have easier access to exercise than they've had at home.

Many prisoners, when outside, live chaotic lives, and don't have the benefit of a stable home. Lots are from poorer or socially excluded sections of the community. They tend to be people who are more at risk of ill health than the rest of us. Many have never registered with a doctor or dentist¹ so don't find it easy to get advice. Drug habits and mental illness are also all too common.

Healthier lifestyles can help improve people's sense of wellbeing and self-worth. Prisoners are no different – though many are at a lower starting point. But people have to want to improve – and like everyone else, need lots of encouragement to start and to persevere.

Healthier lifestyles can help improve people's sense of wellbeing and self-worth



Did you know?

- > Healthier lifestyles can help:
 - boost the immune system to reduce frequency and seriousness of illness;
 - combat illness and health problems;
 - reduce blood pressure;
 - improve morale and self-esteem;
 - provide a personal focus.
- > About 83 million meals are provided in prisons every year. In 2004-05, £43 million was spent on food and the average daily food allowance was £1.87.



Prison induction packs provide an ideal opportunity for setting out benefits of healthier lifestyles by:

- Providing advice on what constitutes a healthy diet at the same time as explaining how prisoners fill out the weekly food order forms, and how to set about choosing food to suit their needs.
- Informing prisoners about the merits of exercise as part of healthier lifestyle, as well as telling them what facilities are available and how to set about taking part.
- Promoting education and training in catering and in fitness instruction, both as meaningful activity during their sentences as well as providing them with stepping stones to jobs when they leave prison.



Did you know?

- > What can be served – and what is in it – is governed by the Prison Service's Catering Standards. Catering services are “audited” every two years. In addition Area Catering Advisers have to visit each prison four times a year to assess how well prisons are doing, and offer best practice advice on a range of topics, including healthy eating.



Some ideas to try

You may like to consider the following:

- Talk to catering colleagues about benefits of including attractive-looking and easily readable basic diet information in prison induction booklets. Colourful pictures may grab prisoners' attention better than words!
- Include eye-catching information about physical education and leisure facilities in prison induction literature. Make clear when and where to find out more, and from whom.
- Don't be modest about advertising the skills, knowledge and approachability of PE officers – and peer mentors, too.
- Through promoting “success stories” and achievements, encourage prisoners who have abused drugs to take part in CARAT² programmes (the Prison Service's drug treatment framework).
- As part of delivering the required “Tackling Drugs through Physical Education” provision liaise closely with CARAT and healthcare/drug strategy departments. Encourage prisoners with more severe drug problems to take part – remind them they're lucky to have support at least equal to anything they might get outside prison.

What others do and how they do it...



No-one feels good about coming to prison. Giving them a colourful induction book is more likely to grab their attention – and that’s exactly what we want to do here at **Standford Hill**. We want them to see that they can eat healthily – and that it’s a good thing to do – and that exercise and group activities are all part and parcel of better lifestyles.





It was good to see that 90 per cent of the prisoners who started on exercise referral and CARAT intervention programmes progressed on to more mainstream PE activities with many achieving nationally recognised qualifications. **Blakenhurst**



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Prisoners are given a talk on diet and nutrition by PE staff during their induction process. This, together with information we give them on accessing remedial gym classes, has led to an upturn in the number of individuals who require exercise programmes and advice, including appropriate diets for weight loss. PE staff liaise with the Catering Manager to try to assist the prisoner with making the right dietary choices.

Wayland

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Did you know?

- > In March 2006, the NAO reported that prisoners received little information about healthy eating apart from when they first entered prison. NAO's March 2007 survey showed that 42 per cent³ of prisons put guidance on healthy eating in prison induction packs, and two thirds of them include it in gym induction leaflets.
- > NAO's March 2007 survey⁴ showed that:
 - 96 per cent displayed what opportunities and facilities are available;
 - 76 per cent advertise how to arrange a gym induction;
 - 73 per cent have healthy eating posters;
 - 62 per cent have posters explaining what makes a balanced diet;
 - 56 per cent prisons display posters showing who to contact for healthy eating advice.
- > Only 15 per cent provide information in languages other than English, regardless of the mix of nationalities in the prison.

How can I persuade them to eat better?



Prisons have to provide a “suitable diet” for all prisoners – but they also have to provide food that prisoners will eat! Not doing so can cause trouble and can risk destabilising the prison.



Menus – which offer up to six choices for some meals – are designed to enable prisoners to select a range of different foods, and to meet a wide range of different diets. But people will only choose wisely if they understand the benefits, and it is clear which foods are the healthier options.

It is easy and comforting to choose foods that are familiar and remind you of home. Helping prisoners to understand more about food and try new dishes may encourage them to eat more healthily.

Getting the messages across can be hard. Some people think healthy eating means more salads or vegetables and don't understand the importance of protein, or why one should eat a balanced diet.

Did you know?

- > In March 2006, the NAO recommended that the Prison Service should raise awareness of the importance of healthy eating, through posters and actively promoting it on a regular basis.
- > Nearly all prisons now offer pre-select menus, compared with 50 per cent at the time of the NAO's report in March 2006.
- > Prisoners grumble about quality of food, but prison governors consider that complaints about food have diminished in recent years.
- > Providing food that is acceptable to prisoners makes it harder to provide healthy options.

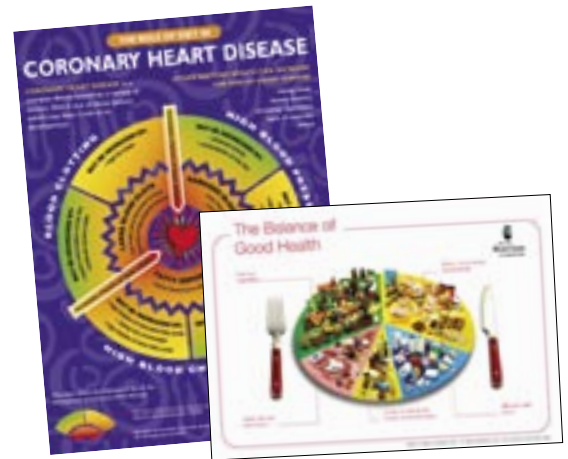


Helping prisoners to understand more about food and try new dishes may help them eat more healthily

Some ideas to try

You may like to consider the following:

- Use opportunities to talk through with prisoners their previous diet and lifestyle.
- Display healthy eating posters in exercise zones.
- Frequently rotate the publicity material – including colourful, eye-catching posters such as those available from British Nutrition Foundation ([www.nutrition.org/upload/wholeplatesm\(1\).jpg](http://www.nutrition.org/upload/wholeplatesm(1).jpg)) and www.nutrition.org.uk/upload/CHDHEART.pdf.
- Include some posters focusing on “success” stories, and how much better those prisoners have felt since they changed their diets.
- Make a point of meeting all new prisoners to find out about their lifestyles and offer simple steps (initially) to help them improve.
- Ask prisoners how easy they find it to identify and choose healthier food options and feedback any findings to catering staff. Do they know that low-fat options are not necessarily also low in salt? Do they understand what to look for and how to balance their diet?



- Encourage good choices through offering to help monitor food intake/exercise done (e.g. through weekly or monthly food/exercise “diaries”).
- Remind prisoners that choosing healthy meals will be less advantageous if they then eat confectionery or unhealthy foods from the prison tuck shop.
- Encourage learning through working in kitchens, and working towards catering qualifications.
- Work with catering staff to offer special promotions days/competitions to try to encourage better awareness of healthier foods and diets.

Did you know?



- > Meals offered to prisoners in 2004-5 closely matched catering requirements⁵ (except on salt and some other trace elements).
- > In 2004-05, prisoners struggled to eat healthily because they received little information on healthy eating, unless they had been placed on a special diet for a medical reason, such as diabetes. Some food options were listed as healthy on the menus but were not actually healthy or even the healthiest options on the menu.
- > Researchers working with NAO found that younger prisoners were the most resistant to eating healthily, and that they often chose high fat dishes.
- > Wandsworth Prison told us that over the last few years there has been an increasing trend towards healthier options, with relatively high percentages of prisoners selecting the healthier option main meal followed by yoghurt or fruit afterwards.

What others do and how they do it...

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We find it works well to give prisoners some diary sheets on which can write down what they've had to eat and what exercise they have done, and then we can talk it through with them to see what they could have done differently. Of course, it only works if they write down everything (including what they've bought from the tuck shop!) and bring the sheets the next time we see them. **Wandsworth**

Use the grid to record your dietary intake over the next 7 days

Day	Breakfast	Snack	Lunch	Snack	Tea	Snack	Drinks
Mon							
Tue							
Wed							
Thur							
Fri							
Sat							
Sun							

Use the grid to record your exercise over the next 7 days

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thur			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

Hundreds of prisoners have benefited from **Blantyre House's** FiTech equipment. All newcomers are offered the option of an hour-long session – the sort of thing for which you could pay £££s outside. We measure their blood pressure, lung capacity, flexibility and fitness level and input all of this, together with diet, into the PC. We share the report it produces with Health and Catering colleagues, highlighting any issues, and the prisoner is then offered a special diet, 1-1 weight loss training – or whatever else he needs, tailored especially for him.



He gets a very helpful booklet with lots of advice and information, and six months later we reassess him to measure what progress he's made against his targets. The programme has been so good that we've offered it to staff as well – and they're getting fitter, too!





Prisoners and staff can come to **Wayland's** annual two-day health fairs. There are quizzes with health-orientated prizes, e.g. fruit baskets, or food hampers. There is always a variety of stands and everyone can try different foods and take away samples if they like. Then there are 'taster' sessions, such as spin cycling, organised by the PE Department.



Other stands include assessment on acute or chronic injuries by trained physiotherapists and a free treatment and / or sports massage, free eye testing and vision assessment, as well as a foot massage and guidance on keeping your feet healthy. We've also run sessions on mental and spiritual aspect of fitness and health, e.g. with presentations from a variety of religious organisations, and meditation experts. Last year's health fair attracted 300 prisoners... and we see many of the same people now making real efforts to try to improve their quality of life.

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Inspiring exercise – it's not all about weight training!



Some prisoners exercise very readily, but for PE officers, the biggest hurdle is to encourage the more reluctant to start. Once people have taken the first step, many go on and progress to greater things when they are ready.

Others, however, are easily “put off” by being surrounded by regular users or are embarrassed by being seen to be considerably less able.

Others can be deterred by the environment – good facilities, changing rooms and showers can all help attract newcomers.

Surveying prisoners annually is a useful way of finding out in which activities prisoners have enjoyed or think they have benefited from – as well as their views on what they’d like to do more of, or how they’d like to see the range of facilities extended.



Doing group activities is much more fun than doing exercise on your own



Did you know?

- > Six physical education advisers monitor the provision of physical exercise and provide specialist technical advice to prison managers.
- > The minimum statutory weekly requirements for prisoners getting access to PE in prisons are:
 - Over 21s – 1 hour
 - Young offenders (18-21) – 2 hours
- > The Justice Board recommends 3 hours a week for 15-17 year old offenders as part of their "Core Learning Day". Any extra time should be accredited learning. Further opportunities in the evenings and weekends are also recommended.



Some ideas to try

You may like to consider the following:

- When next revising information for prisoners, decide whether the word “gym” might put off some people who think it means weight training rather than a whole range of activities.
- Follow-up promptly any requests for exercise inductions.
- Survey prisoners – including those who do not usually take part – to find out what exercise activities they would like or which might encourage them to take part.
- Use “quiet sessions” or allocate sessions specifically for the older age groups or for those new to exercise, so that they are not put off by the super-fit who can do so much more than them.
- Introduce mentors (prisoners who have become qualified gym assists) to help and encourage those who are new to exercise.
- Be pro-active in identifying prisoners who are not doing any exercise and discuss options with them.
- Organise special promotions for particular activities, e.g. football tournaments, yoga sessions.
- Encourage participation through organising recreational activities such as carpet bowls. Getting people involved and enjoying themselves may lead to them wanting to try different, more exercise-based, pursuits.

- Promote “Walking your Way to Health”, possibly through letting prisoners borrow pedometers to encourage them to walk more frequently or for longer distances.
- Publish (anonymous) successes on posters around the prison as well as in the gym.

Did you know?

- > The range of facilities available at the 44 prisons responding to the NAO survey⁶ include:
 - 91 per cent have dedicated gymnasium with CV/fitness suite and 98 per cent have dedicated weight training facilities;
 - 91 per cent have a sports hall
 - 46 per cent have outside grass pitches but only 25 per cent have all-weather pitches
 - 29 per cent have bowls facilities
 - 87 per cent have an exercise yard for walking
- > The cost of providing physical education per prisoner varied from £392 at a male, local prison to £1085 at a Young Offenders Institution (2004-05).
- > Although 43 per cent of prisoners undertook some form of organised physical education activities in prison, this ranged from 11 per cent in a large category B male prison to 87 per cent in juvenile male institution. The average was 2.4 hours per week.



What others do and how they do it...

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As a 'lifer' prison, the average age of our prisoners is relatively high. At **Shepton Mallet** we've tried carpet bowls, table tennis, board games and Pilates classes in the gym as ways of getting the men more active. The most successful class has been the over-45s, where people can use the equipment that best suit their personal fitness needs, and some light circuit training. It's been attracting 15 prisoners a session.



As part of the evidence for their qualifications, 20 prisoners at **The Verne** are working with others over a range of activities. Some 28 prisoners are those who would not normally come to a gym. Some have been referred by the medical staff.

Fit 4 Life at **Morton Hall**

has proved a great hit.

We'd originally seen it as being a way of getting older prisoners more active – but it's popular with all ages and fitness levels, especially in the evenings and at weekends.

Following a survey of **Blakenhurst** prisoners in 2005, we developed the PE programme to include more varied and diverse activities. "Introduction to Sport" was introduced specifically to attract prisoners who don't usually get involved. They focused on social development for the less confident individuals, and they've been well-attended. A large number progressed to additional recreational or educational classes. Overall, participation in PE has increased from 42 per cent in 2005 to 55 per cent in 2007.



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Getting people walking may not sound much – but it has been great, especially for some of the more senior men who tend to miss out otherwise. We started **Hewell Grange’s** Healthy Man Walk in the summer of 2005. We did it twice, but it’s now an integral part of our programme. Some 25 prisoners regularly do the 3-mile walk within the prison boundaries (including some slopes, inclines and steps!). Unlike some of the other outside sports that need better weather, walking can go ahead rain or shine. Giving them pedometers has helped them measure how much better they are getting. Some of them are doing more exercise than they’ve ever done. At first few elderly men showed much interest in walking – now over a quarter of them take part – and we’re extending the Healthy Man Walk option to the over 40s.

We've been pleased to see more of the reticent boys getting involved in PE – we started them off in “quiet” sessions. Quite a lot of our boys do at least something now, so much better than a few years ago. Using heart rate monitors also helps them to see how well they are training and how they can help themselves to do things better. **Huntercombe YOI**

Our Sports and Social Club has done wonders for our older and less-able prisoners. They come along to our Friday club sessions, where they can play games such as chess or cribbage. It gets them out of their cells, meeting other prisoners etc. – it is good for them even if they only come along for tea and a biscuit. They enjoy it and they tell us they feel better for it. A few have also shown an interest in other things, such as the walking club we've just set up. **Wakefield**

How can I persuade them to prepare for life outside prison?



Roughly half of all prisoners were excluded from school, half have no educational qualifications, and more than a third lack basic literacy skills. But it is never too late to learn. Acquiring new skills – and basic level vocational qualifications – boosts the ego and may be a stepping stone to being responsible citizens when they leave prison.



Vocational qualifications are quite different from academic ones, involving much more “hands on” training. Once they’ve started developing skills, prisoners may well develop an interest in getting better and better.

Catering courses on offer in some prisons include: basic food hygiene, catering and hospitality, food preparation, budget cooking, diet and nutrition, healthy eating, international cooking and “nutritious but delicious”.

PE courses may include: Gym and Fitness instructors, Health Trainer, Diet & Nutrition, Healthy Living, NVQs in Sport and Recreation, First Aid at Work and other awards.



Did you know?

- > Providing education and training, to give offenders the skills they will need to stand a realistic chance of employment on release, is a key strand of Government policy to reducing offending.
- > Prison kitchens provide employment to nearly 2,300 prisoners at a cost in wages of £1.7 million annually, but it would cost prisons much more if they had to use prison officers, even after taking account of the costs of managing and educating prisoners.
- > Of the 45 prisons which responded to our survey:
 - 23 offered catering courses;
 - most were Level 1 training;
 - 8 offered Level 2 training; and
 - 3 offered Level 4.

Some ideas to try

You may like to consider the following:

- Publicise prisoners' qualifications results or their successes in getting jobs after they have left the prison.
- Encourage prisoners to take up postings to kitchens if they show an interest in food, food preparation or hygiene. (Often they have to gain basic food hygiene qualifications if they are to continue working in the kitchens.)
- Encourage prisoners to become orderlies and peer tutors in the gym to help build their interest in the opportunities available.
- Help prisoners boost their self-esteem and their experience of working with others through suggesting to them that they consider becoming mentors to others.



Did you know?

- > Four fifths of prisons surveyed run at least one course in fitness instruction and half run three or more courses
- > The UK has relatively high numbers of adults with low levels of literacy and numeracy compared with other countries.



What others do and how they do it...

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We aim to give people a taste of the real world through our community programme. Prisoners work with local physical disabilities groups, residential care home. They also go out to Charlton Athletic and Leyton Orient football clubs, and London Towers Basketball team. Local community groups also use our swimming pool, which has been a great success.

We've now set up a social enterprise company, Health and Fitness Solutions, where prisoners and the company are paid to deliver various qualifications, team building and healthy living courses to external companies, schools, health clubs etc. We're providing a good service to our clients, but most of all, it has been good for the prisoners, some of whom later secured jobs in health clubs and other firms. **Standford Hill**

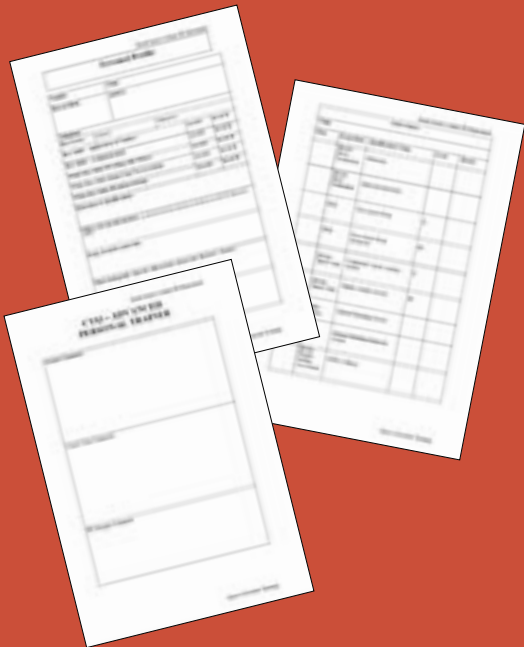


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What others do and how they do it...



We introduced a PE Passport to help track and provide evidence of prisoners' work as they move through the PE cluster or to other establishments. Bearing our new name, the Island Sports College and the cluster's logo, the passport is used as a CV for outside agencies and job interviews. We also use it for our PE department's Peer Tutor scheme, charting people's development as they move between departments. That way we don't lose their skills. **Standford Hill**



Our Healthy Living courses showed that prisoners were keen to learn about and to try out new food ideas. Now we're planning more. **Morton Hall**

We've run two very successful courses – Smoking Cessation and a 12-module Healthy Living Course covering many of the same topics. There's a definite shift in the right direction.

Blantyre House

At **Wayland**, we offer an Open College Network "stand alone" nationally accredited qualification: "Nutrition, Performance and Healthy Eating. We run this as a unit within our Health and Fitness Programme. Students are required to keep a journal, in which they keep a log of their physical activity, how they feel, and what they are eating. This helps prisoners reflect on their eating habits and analyse the cause and effect. We plan to use a similar journal for prisoners enrolled on the CARATs programme.





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I graduated in Sports Science from Lancaster University, thanks to having been inspired to have a go at various qualifications at **Haverigg.**

Several prisoners (including those leaving **Coldingley, Eastwood Park** and **Manchester**) had gained employment as fitness or leisure officers at either private or public sector facilities on their release from prison.

Getting a job as an orderly in **Eastwood Park** was the best thing I could have done. I found myself getting interested in all sorts of gym and fitness, including swimming. Having qualified as a pool lifeguard before I left prison, I was able to get a job in a leisure centre, and since then I've set up my own business.



Endnotes

- 1 The Social Exclusion Unit estimates that half of all prisoners have not registered with a doctor before they come into custody.
- 2 Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare.
- 3 Based on 44 prisons responding to NAO survey, March 2007.
- 4 Based on 44 prisons responding to NAO survey
- 5 Recommendations of the Department of Health, and the Food Standards Agency.
- 6 Based on 44 prisons responding to NAO survey.

Useful references

PSO 4250 *Physical Education*

PSO 5000 *Catering Manual*

HM Prison Service – Serving Time: Prisoner Diet and Exercise, Report by the Comptroller & Auditor General, HC 939 Session 2005-06, www.nao.org.uk/publications/

The Balance of Good Health, Food Standards Agency, 2007 www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication

Choosing Health: Making Health Choices Easier, Department of Health, 2004, Cm 6374 <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics>

About the National Audit Office

The National Audit Office scrutinises public spending on behalf of Parliament, The Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir John Bourn, is an Officer of the House of Commons. He is the head of the National Audit Office, which employs some 850 staff. He, and the National Audit Office, are totally independent of Government. He certifies the accounts of all Government departments and a wide range of other public sector bodies; and he has statutory authority to report to Parliament on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and other bodies have used their resources. Our work saves the taxpayer millions of pounds every year. At least £8 for every £1 spent running the Office.

This report can be found on the National Audit Office website at www.nao.org.uk

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