

Prison Health Promotion: A Settings Approach



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Presentation Outline

- Health Promoting Prisons: The Vision
- Context: why it is important
- Key challenges & opportunities
- Putting theory into practice
- Takeaway messages



The Vision: a health promoting prison

- International meeting of senior prison health representatives in October 1995: prisoner health is neglected and of public health importance
- The settings approach was recognised as a way of addressing the health of this population on the back of effective work in other settings (e.g. schools, cities and hospitals)
- Linked to WHO's European *Health for All* strategy (1995)
- First International conference on Healthy Prisons, 1996 (10 years after the start of healthy cities): reaffirmed commitment from WHO, broadened the discussion and launched *healthy prisons*

The WHO Health in Prisons Project

Launched in 1995

Purpose:

‘to support Member States in improving public health by addressing health and health care in prisons, and to facilitate the links between prison health and public health systems both at national and international levels’

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/prisons-and-health/who-health-in-prisons-programme-hipp>

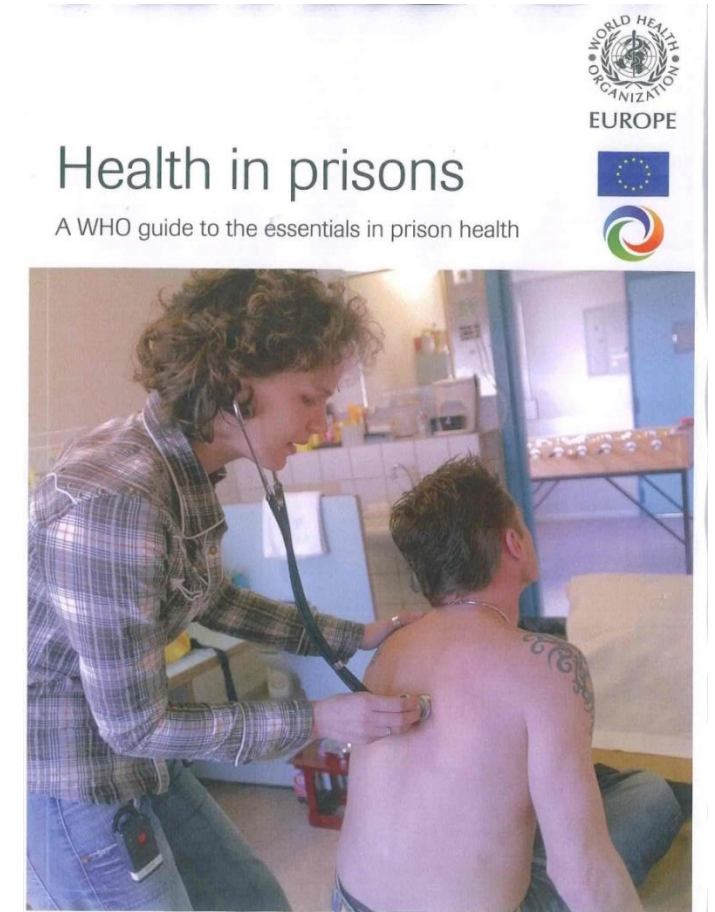
Health Promoting Prisons: a shared approach (2002)

- English and Welsh strategy advocating 'whole prison approach'
- Conversion of the strategy into a Prison Service Order (PSO 3200) in 2003, offered practical guidance
- However, both are reductionist and focused on individual lifestyle interventions despite policy recommendation for a more upstream approach



Strategic Objectives

- Integrating prison health into the public health system
- Encouraging prisons to work within codes of human rights and medical ethics
- Contributing to rehabilitation and resettlement and giving social support
- Reducing exposure to communicable diseases
- Achieving prison health service that are equivalent to broader society



<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/prisons-and-health/partners/who-collaborating-centre-for-promoting-health-and-prisons>

Context: the health of people in prison

General trends:

- prisoners have poorer health relative to the general population;
- they share generally “less healthy” / more “risky” lifestyles;
- they come from poorer communities / areas of relative deprivation;
- they have less involvement with health services;
- They generally return to the wider community taking with them their health and social issues.

Prison populations reveal strong evidence of health inequalities and social exclusion.

This is a valuable opportunity to identify and tackle the broad health needs of a vulnerable and socially excluded population.



(Department of Health 2005; WHO 2014)

Navigating Challenges

- Overcrowded and complex prison systems
- Population increases
- Resource constraints
- Understanding 'health': whole prison responsibility not only that of the health department and health professionals
- Shifting from a reductionist focus
- Leadership: the role of WHO over time
- Evaluation: easier to evaluate interventions (e.g. those related to smoking, healthier eating, vaccination programmes)
- Wider ideological views (political and public) on prisons can have a negative impact
- Working across the whole health and justice system; partnerships outside of 'health' for health

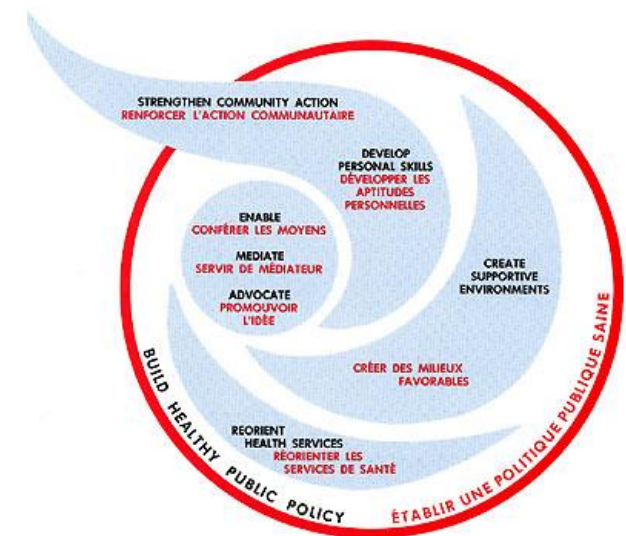
The opportunity should be a priority

Maintaining a focus on broader health and wellbeing while being a challenge, provides a real opportunity to impact positively on:

- Prison security
- Prisoner and staff safety
- Contribute to creating a rehabilitative culture in prisons
- Citizenship and prisoner resettlement
- Economic contribution to the wider community
- Health and social needs of prisoners families
- Reducing reoffending

Creating a healthier prison environment

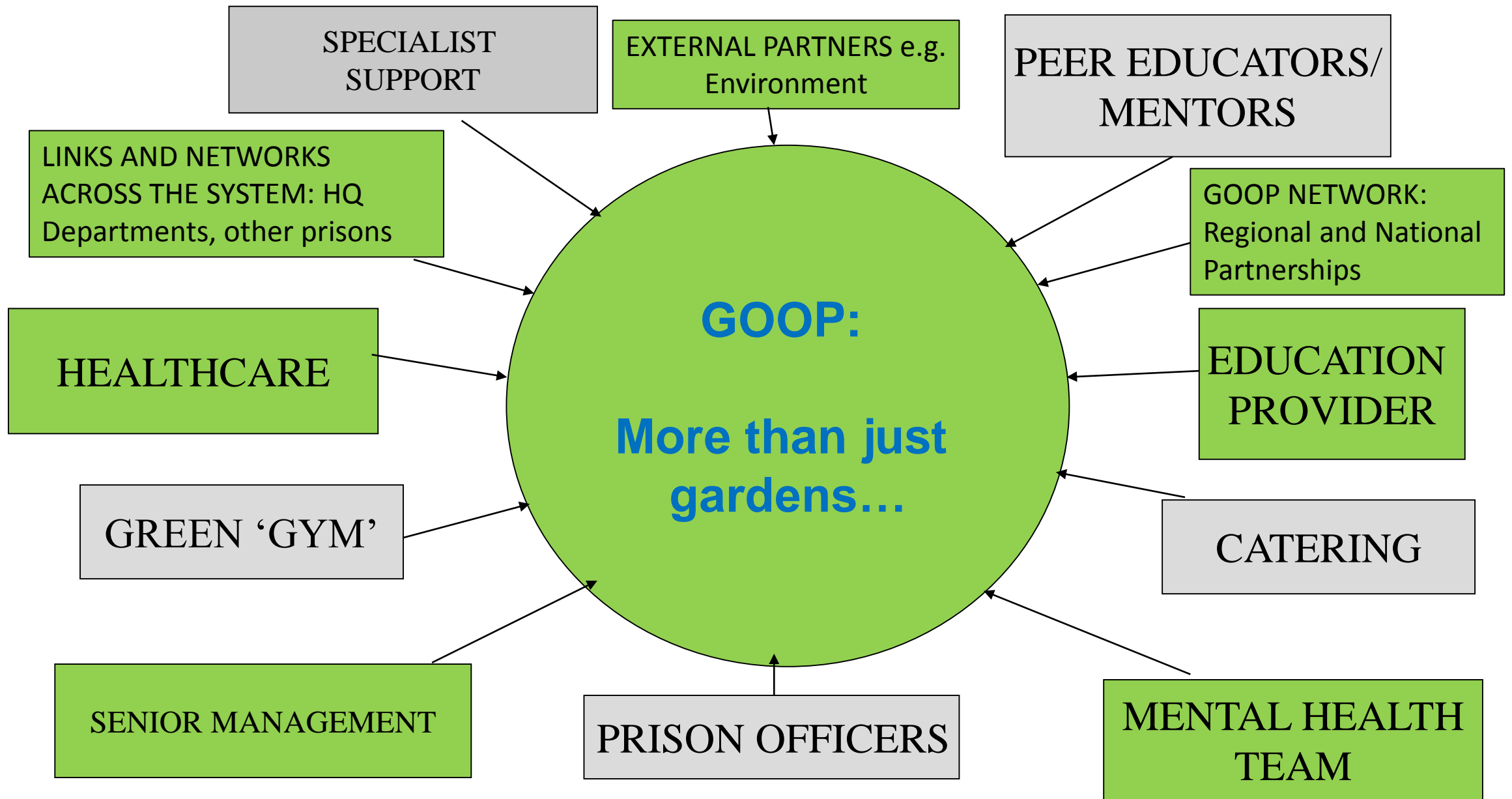
- Understanding health in its broadest sense and what determines health inside and outside the prison setting
- Embedding 'health' into the system through policies and strategies;
- Ownership: 'health' is everyone's responsibility
- Leadership required at all levels
- Connecting beyond prison: partnerships



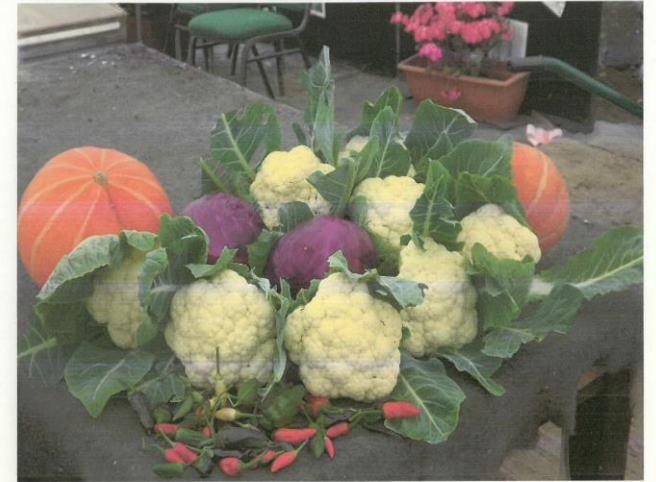
Prison as a setting for health promotion: a whole system approach (example)



- Greener on the Outside for Prisons' [GOOP] is an innovative prison-based horticultural programme. Proving an effective mechanism to engage prisoners with their health and wellbeing as well as connecting them with the natural environment.
- A whole systems approach acknowledging that prisoner's health cannot be addressed in isolation of the health of the general population – there is a constant interchange between prison and community



A WHOLE PRISON APPROACH



Takeaway Messages

- Being a health promoting prison is a means to an end - **not** an end in itself and needs to:
 - Build the physical, mental and social health of prisoners (and where appropriate staff) as part of a whole prison approach to promoting health
 - Help prevent the deterioration of prisoners' health during or because of custody, especially by building on the concept of decency in our prisons
 - Help prisoners adopt healthy behaviours that can be taken back into the community
- Prisons are a place to access often difficult to engage people e.g. for health promotion and prevention – sell that idea
- The wider context: prisoners are members of the general population
- **We now have to look wider than the prison context and work with the interfaces of health and justice across the whole system**