



# FOCUS ON RESEARCH

## **Can a football-based weight management, physical activity and healthy living programme be adapted for delivery in secure institutional settings: the development of Fit for LIFE (CZH/4/886)**

**Researchers.** Prof Kate Hunt, Dr Cindy Gray, Dr Alice MacLean, Dr Matthew Maycock, Dr William Mullen, Prof Nanette Mutrie, Prof Sally Wyke, with Craig Mailer, Keith Mason

**Aim:** To develop a structured, manualised, group programme to support health behaviour change in male prisoners and assess feasibility of outcome measurements and likely benefits; to test feasibility of a programme for shift-working prison staff.

**Project Outline/Methodology:** Mixed methods, including evidence reviews; delivery observations; questionnaires; objective measurements; qualitative interviews and focus groups.

**Key Results** We established that:

- evidence of effective group interventions to help prisoners lose weight, decrease sedentary time and enhance PA and other behaviours is lacking;
- a structured, manualised, group programme delivered in professional football clubs required substantial modification for delivery to prisoners;
- a football-focus was not a draw for many prisoners, gave false expectations to others, and external involvement from local professional football club coaches was not easily sustainable;
- a range of health gains were valued by prisoners;
- staff valued the programme's ability to attract prisoners not previously using the prison gym;
- it is feasible and acceptable (to prisoners, staff and relevant authorities) to gather: a wide range of objective and subjective outcomes (including physical measurements and blood and urine samples); and process evaluation data to investigate how the intervention works;
- movement within, between and release from prisons resulted in high measurement attrition beyond 3 months;
- Fit for LIFE Train-the-Trainers materials resources successfully supported rollout to other prisons.
- whilst workplace group interventions for shift-workers exist, there is insufficient evidence on effectiveness and cost-effectiveness
- delivery of a group programme to staff proved unfeasible given organisational constraints

**Conclusions.** Development and delivery of a structured manualised, group health improvement programme for prisoners, Fit for LIFE, was possible in partnership with prison gym staff. Fit for LIFE attracted men not previously using prison gym facilities to this important space, bringing them into regular contact with prison gym staff. It supported positive relationships between prisoners, and prisoners and staff, and health behaviour change and continued use of gym facilities post-programme. Mechanisms can be developed for sustainable rollout to other prisons and ongoing audit of outcomes.

### **What does this study add to the field?**

Working in close partnership with key stakeholders, we developed a structured, manualised, group programme for delivery to male prisoners within prison gyms, and demonstrated its potential for attracting previous non-users of prison gyms to a space within prisons which is conducive to positive behaviour change, and to motivate prisoners to make positive lifestyle changes.

We found that, within this supportive context, the programme encouraged more positive relationships between men.

We demonstrated a lack of evidence on group-based workplace interventions for shift-workers to improve wellbeing, but also the challenges it introducing such a programme in a Scottish prison.

### **Implications for Practice or Policy**

We developed a model for widespread implementation of a structured manualised healthy lifestyle programme within closed-condition prisons, and for collaboration with prison staff and authorities, enhancing capacity for research and practice development.

### **Where to next?**

Fit for LIFE is being rolled out across Scottish prisons. Possibilities of extending the programme to female prisoners or prisoners elsewhere are being explored.

### **Further details from:**

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