



## PE SPECIAL FOCUS: YOGA PRISONERS 'FEEL BETTER', SURVEY FINDS

In July 2004's issue of *Safer Custody News*, we ran a short article promoting the benefits of yoga classes at HMP Cardiff for vulnerable prisoners. National charity, the Prison Phoenix Trust (PPT), which promotes yoga and meditation classes in prisons, contacted us to say that the class teacher, Mike Young, was one of 77 yoga / meditation teachers actively working in prisons in the UK and Eire and supported by the PPT. The PPT calculated that there were 106 prisoner yoga and meditation classes running as of September 2004.

PPT Deputy Director, Jane Harrington, also supplied details of a recent survey carried out by the PPT, which found that 88% of prisoners who took part in classes and filled in evaluations said that the activity had made them feel better about themselves, or given them a better feeling about their future.



The PPT carried out the research between January and June 2004, by sending out teacher register forms and student evaluation forms to its 77 teachers. A total of 203 prisoner students completed evaluation forms. Only three prisoners (2%) said that the classes hadn't made them feel better, and 23 (or 11%) said that they weren't sure. The remaining 180 prisoners (88%) reported feeling better.

The charity has also collected feedback from prisoners, demonstrating the positive effect classes can have. This quote - from a prisoner at HMP Frankland who is teaching meditation techniques to one of his peers - suggests that it can be beneficial for prisoners who self-harm: "...I'm teaching an inmate who is one who cuts himself when things go wrong with him. It's slow, no use giving him that breathing exercise because he's not so bright. So today I sat face to face and told him to follow my breathing. We made it to 10 minutes before he lost it. But the slowest way is the fastest."

*The Prison Phoenix Trust is a registered charity, which encourages prisoners in their spiritual lives through practising meditation and yoga. For more information, see: [www.prisonphoenixtrust.org.uk](http://www.prisonphoenixtrust.org.uk) or call: (01865) 512521.*