



SDIP 2018/19 - Yoga at HMP Dovegate

Final Report

Summary

As part of SDIPs 2018-19, a programme of yoga was delivered to patients at HMP Dovegate by a qualified yoga teacher over the period of twelve months. Four cohorts were initially offered across the whole prison estate for a period of three months each and delivered regularly according to set days and times. The objectives of the project were to deliver a programme of yoga accessible to all patients and to establish if practicing yoga increased patient's health and wellbeing.

The programme was well received by patients who provided regular commentary through a weekly comment book and completion of a validated questionnaire at the start of the programme and after the three month programme had finished. The improvement in patient's health and wellbeing was significant.

The following report outlines the background to the project, steps taken to deliver the programme, the results, analysis and impact of the programme.

1. Introduction

Background to the Project

As part of Mental Health Awareness week (May 2018), a series of yoga taster sessions were delivered to a total of eighty one patients across HMP Dovegate. Patient feedback was positive, with all patients reporting that they *enjoyed the session*, that they *thought it helped them* and that *it could help in the future*.

A selection of patient comments:

"I have been in a dark place for the last two months and today's session has helped put some positivity back in me"

"Very relaxing would recommend this to every prisoner"

"Clears my mind and don't feel any stress"

"I believe it will take my mind away from being in prison when frustrated"

"I feel relaxed and stress free. We should do this more often"

As a consequence of positive patient feedback, funding was sought to roll out a full programme of yoga that would support equitable access to all patients across the whole prison, particularly patients completing integrated work with the Mental Health and Substance Misuse services and patients within the inpatient department.

It was anticipated that yoga would support the patients with alternative coping strategies, mindfulness, encourage a positive lifestyle and would give some purposeful activity for them and support the mental health and substance misuse agenda across the prison.

Funding was secured via the 2018-19 SDIP funding stream.



Benefits of Yoga in Prisons

The benefits of yoga for people in prison have been researched and acknowledged widely¹.

- Have reduced impulsiveness
- Feel less angry and aggressive
- Improved sleep
- Are less prone to taking drugs
- Are more ready to take up other educational activities
- Develop self-discipline and concentration, often for the first time
- Find something in themselves they like.
- They feel less isolated and more inclined to socialise, which prepares them well for resettlement

The Prison Phoenix Trust (PPT) collaborated with Oxford University on two pieces of research around yoga and meditation in a prison setting. The first showed that a ten-week programme of yoga and meditation in a prison setting reduced emotional distress and improved impulse control. The second showed that these effects were progressive, and the more the person practices, the stronger the effects were.²

The programme of yoga delivered at HMP Dovegate was delivered according to a person-centred approach, typically with five aspects:

1. Centering – to quiet the mind
2. Asana / posture work - flowing sequences and/or static poses
3. Relaxation
4. Pranayama / energy extension - utilising breathing techniques and
5. Dhyana / meditation

¹ 'Participation in a 10-week course of yoga improves behavioural control and decreases psychological distress in a prison population' (Bilderbeck, et al 2013) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022395613001970?via%3Dihub>
'Preliminary Evidence That Yoga Practice Progressively Improves Mood and Decreases Stress in a Sample of UK Prisoners' (Bilderbeck, 2015) <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/ecam/2015/819183/>

'Yoga Practice Reduces the Psychological Distress Levels of Prison Inmates' (Sfendla et al, 2012)

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2018.00407/full>

² <https://www.theppt.org.uk/>

2. Methodology

A qualified Yoga teacher was commissioned once references and SERCO security clearance was received. The yoga teacher was an advanced Yoga sports coach who had experience of working in prisons³ and had been involved in the early research with PPT and Oxford University cited above.

Eligibility Criteria – Whilst equal access to the programme was across the whole site, the following patients were given priority:

- Working with the Substance Misuse Team
- Working with the Mental Health Team
- On an ACCT
- On the Social Responsibility Unit (SRU)

Referral Pathway – Referrals were accepted from:

- Integrated Substance Misuse Team (ISMT)
- SRU
- Physiotherapists
- ROAD Mentors (Recovery Of Alcohol & Drugs) & Yoga Champion
- Self-referrals and
- Any staff member

A waiting list was created and managed by the Patient Engagement Lead (PEL). For anyone who did not attend two or more sessions, they would be removed from the group and replaced by someone from the waiting list according to priority.

Attendance - At the planning stage, it was anticipated that 15-20/patients would attend each class (with small numbers expected within inpatients). However, yoga sessions could not be accommodated in the multi faith hall initially but had to be delivered in a room within the old library accommodating a smaller number of participants. On average, class sizes varied between 4 and 12.

Delivery - The programme started on 1st April 2019 and ended March 2020. Initially 12 months of yoga was divided into 4 cohorts, each cohort receiving 3 months of yoga (equivalent to 6 sessions). However, due to the number of patients being transferred, patients were added on a rolling basis following the first cohort. Each session was approximately one hour in duration, though the inpatient sessions were typically shorter, lasting 30-45 minutes (see Fig 1).

The PEL managed the organisation of yoga at site level and worked with the Project Manager and Yoga teacher to design a programme that:

- Provided equitable access for all patients
- Satisfied timings around lock down and movement and
- Ensured regular commitment by Yoga teacher

³ <https://www.yogasportsspecialist.com/about/>

M O N T H			
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Monday YOGA		Monday YOGA	

MONDAY	YOGA Groups
Arrive	Set up
8:30-9:30	Main Session (Basic, Standard & Enhanced)
Movement	
10:00-11:00	Main Session (Basic, Standard & Enhanced)
Movement	
11:15-12:00	In patients
12:00-1:00	Staff Session* & Patient feedback tasks
Movement	
1:30-2:30	Therapeutic Community (TC) Session – Prison Custody Officer (PCO) Support from TC
Movement	
3:00-4:00	TC Session – PCO support from TC
Leave	Secure mats & blocks/collate feedback forms

*Funded by SERCO

Fig 1: Delivery timetable for Yoga

Overcoming Challenges in Delivery - Unfortunately it was not possible to provide equitable access to Vulnerable Prisoners (VP) as it was not possible to deliver yoga exclusively on the VP wing without having an impact on work and employment. A number of approaches were employed to increase uptake and prison buy in. Steps to increase participation by:

- Multi Faith hall secured for am sessions (2x mains) as opposed to smaller library room
- Promote and trial in N Wing (Induction)
- Amalgamate the 2 pm sessions in TC to 1 session

Seek increased buy in by:

- Promoting yoga with Purposeful Activity Manager, HMP Dovegate
- Promote importance of PO listing participants on gate list/unlocking and enabling movement
- Escalate priority of group so it shows on gate list
- Promoting sessions more widely
- ROAD Mentors ringing participants to remind/prompt attendance
- Yoga Champion in place to promote the benefits of yoga and encourage attendance at classes

Reporting - Monthly telecon updates and a mid-term review were conducted to keep the project on track. A summary report covering first 3 months of roll out was provided for commissioners August 2019 (See appendix).

Evaluation Approach - Following desk top research of a range of evaluation techniques and in discussion with the Regional GP Lead, it was decided to use the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental



wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS⁴) as a means to establish the effect on mental well-being as a result of a programme of yoga.

WEMWEBS - WEMWEBS is a self-completed 14-item scale. The total score is obtained by summing the score for each of the 14 items. The scoring range for each item is from 1 – 5 and the total score is from 14-70. (See appendix). UK Population Norms (2011) have identified the top 15% of high mental health having a WEMWEBS score in the range of 60-70 and the bottom 15% in the range of 14-42. An analysis of the change score before and after an intervention provides a measure of Individual-level differences which indicates ways in which mental health changes as a result of an intervention. A change score of between 3 and 8 is regarded as meaningful.

A 12 month commercial licence was purchased for exclusive use of WEMWEBS for the purposes of evaluating the programme.

The WEMWEBS 14- item scale was given to patients with an explanation of what it was and why they were being asked to complete it. The first questionnaire was completed at the beginning of session 1 and after Session 6. Patient feedback was also sought in the form of a comments book which was made available at the end of each yoga session. Patients were encouraged to record their thoughts and feelings following each session.

3. Results and Analysis

The total number of patients who participated in the programme was 270

The number of patients who completed the whole programme was 67

The number of patients who started the programme but did not complete programme was 203

This gives an attrition rate of 75%

The reasons for this attrition rate can be broken down in the following way:

- 118 patients missed 2 or more sessions consecutively and were removed from list
- 67 patients were transferred or released to/from prison
- 16 patients were taken off the list due to being placed in the segregation unit
- 2 patients were taken off the list due to disruptive behaviour

Quantitative Results

Of those participants who completed the whole programme 100% of participants fully completed WEMWEBS questionnaire prior to three months of yoga and three months after the start of the programme.

Of those 67 participants, 15 participants had a change score = or < 3.

Of those 67 participants, 52 participants had a change score = or > 3.

Giving an average change score of 8.1

Of those 52 participants that had a meaningful change score of =or>3

Giving an average change score of 10.2

Given that a change score of between 3 and 8 is meaningful it can be concluded that a 3 month programme of yoga has resulted in a meaningful change in mental health. (See Fig 2).

⁴ <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

Participant No.	WEMWEBS Score Before Yoga	WEMWEBS Score After Yoga	Score Difference	Meaningful* (i.e. the difference between 3-8 points)
1	40	50	10	Y
2	25	34	9	Y
3	39	41	2	NO
4	34	37	3	Y
5	63	67	4	Y
6	54	68	14	Y
7	38	47	9	Y
8	63	64	1	NO
9	42	51	9	Y
10	52	68	16	Y
11	28	40	12	Y
12	34	46	12	Y
13	58	59	1	NO
14	68	70	2	NO
15	45	51	6	Y
16	50	57	7	Y
17	54	56	2	NO
18	45	50	5	Y
19	40	47	7	Y
20	28	38	10	Y
21	55	61	6	Y
22	33	36	3	Y
23	47	60	13	Y
24	56	70	14	Y
25	56	64	8	Y
26	34	50	16	Y
27	47	57	10	Y
28	43	55	12	Y
29	50	50	0	NO
30	33	49	6	Y
31	53	59	6	Y
32	59	64	5	Y
33	32	53	21	Y
34	56	57	1	NO
35	44	44	0	NO
36	54	57	3	Y
37	66	68	2	NO
38	56	62	6	Y
39	44	59	15	Y
40	48	57	9	Y
41	42	47	5	Y
42	47	53	6	Y
43	29	43	14	Y
44	50	56	6	Y
45	53	57	4	Y

46	53	59	6	Y
47	52	50	-2	NO
48	45	52	7	Y
49	48	61	13	Y
50	42	55	13	Y
51	50	52	2	NO
52	41	56	15	Y
53	39	50	11	Y
54	42	43	1	NO
55	49	51	2	NO
56	45	58	13	Y
57	40	61	21	Y
58	42	48	6	Y
59	48	60	12	Y
60	42	52	10	Y
61	37	63	26	Y
62	54	54	0	NO
63	67	67	0	NO
64	44	48	4	Y
65	53	70	17	Y
66	41	44	3	Y
67	37	58	21	Y
Total All Participants	All 67 Participants 3098	All 67 Participants 3641	All 67 Participants 543/67= 8.1	Y
Total All 52 participants	All 52 Participants 2286	All 52 Participants 2815	All 52 Participants 529/52= 10.2	Y

Fig 2: WEMWEBS scores before and after 3 month programme of Yoga

Further, it has been shown that significantly more patients resided in a low category of mental health at the beginning of the programme than afterwards and, significantly more patients resided in a high category of mental health at the end of the programme. Therefore, it can be concluded that following a 3 month programme of yoga mental health has shown to improve. (See Fig 3).

Number of Patients in Low category of Mental Health at the beginning of Programme (i.e. score of 14-42)	Number of Patients in Low category of Mental Health at the end of Programme (i.e. score of 14-42)	Number of Patients in High category of Mental Health at the beginning of Programme (i.e. score of 60-70)	Number of Patients in High category of Mental Health at the end of Programme (i.e. score of 60-70)
26	4	4	18

Fig 3: Number of patients in low and high category of Mental Health before and after Yoga

Taking a sample of 13 completed WEMWEBS, it has been found that more patients reported improved mental Health all of the time after 3 months of yoga than at the beginning (See Fig 4).

STATEMENTS	Number of patients reporting									
	None of the time		Rarely		Some of the time		Often		All of the time	
1. I've been feeling optimistic about the future			4		3	7	4	3	2	3
2. I've been feeling useful			5	1	3	5	3	4	2	3
3. I've been feeling relaxed	1		3	1	4	4	5	6		2
4. I've been feeling interested in other people	2		6	1	1	8	4	1		3
5. I've had energy to spare			5	1	5	8	2	2	1	2
6. I've been dealing with problems well			4	2	4	5	5	2		4
7. I've been thinking clearly			2	1	7	2	4	7		4
8. I've been feeling good about myself		1	4		4	4	3	3	2	5
9. I've been feeling close to other people	2		2	2	4	6	4	2	1	3
10. I've been feeling confident			2	1	6	2	4	6	1	4
11. I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1		3		3	3	3	5	3	5
12. I've been feeling loved		1	4	3	2	4	6	1	1	4
13. I've been interested in new things	2			2	7	3	2	4	2	4
14. I've been feeling cheerful			4	1	3	5	4	4	2	3
Total Pre Yoga	8		45		56		53		17	
Total Post Yoga		2		16		66		50		49

Fig 4: Item responses Pre and Post Yoga

Qualitative Results

Patients have reported the following benefits to practicing yoga:

- Improved sleep - ability to get to sleep quicker, stay asleep for increased periods and quality
- Improved mood
- Less aggression
- Improved stress management - ability to cope with stressful situations and environments
- Less anxiety and agitation
- Increased relaxation and ability to relax

Selection of patient comments, as recorded in comment book by patients:

Reduction in Anger

"Feel good no anger, I'd like to thank you. Respect"

"Released my anger today"

"Should be run more often and available for the future, good fun, promotes non-violence and very informative, also encourages peace of mind and body"

Pain Relief

"Great session, [Yoga is] targeting my back pain. Feel good and refreshed. Thanks again."

"This yoga really helps my aching muscles and brightens up my day, giving me some release from my sentence. Thank you"



“Really enjoyed the session, found it relaxing, stress releasing and also helpful for a bad back which I’ve had for a while now.”

“Really good thing that the prison offers very good to sort out pain”.

“Brilliant session yet again. Really helps with my mindfulness and helps with my old knee and elbow injuries”.

Relaxation

“Perfect antidote to inactivity of prison”

“Relaxation easily the best thing offered by prison. Helps me relax, sleep and generally be happy”.

“Yoga helps me to control my mind and distress from all the prison negatives, without the class life would be much harder”

“I found this session very therapeutic and it helped me relax a lot and relieve a lot of tension”

“Very relaxed, full of energy for the day ahead. Thanks”

“Great time today, really enjoyed the workout variation, feel really relaxed and calm ready for the day”

“Found this session really helpful, came feeling stressed and left feeling relaxed and at ease. This is very helpful with helping me deal with issues I have”

Desire to continue

“I really enjoy the class it relaxes me and clears my mind. I wish it was more frequent and hope it carries on after this pilot”

“Feel very chilled out after, hope we can continue”.

“I think this class is great and I am taking a lot from it. Would like to have more classes more frequently. I always feel relaxed and refreshed after”

Feedback from Yoga Teacher

The yoga teacher observed changes to health and wellbeing in a number of aspects both physically and psychologically but, also behaviourally.

Improvements in physical posture and calmness were observed within classes and over time; the ability of patients to connect to other less physical components of the class were noticeable centring at the beginning, during relaxation and breathing practices where patients were silent and still. Interactions with each other and with the yoga teacher improved as patients began to be more helpful in classes, supporting with organising the room, collecting mats and sharing round the comment book (see Appendix).

The yoga teacher reported that many patients have incorporated a yoga practice in to their daily lives, some have requested to purchase their own yoga mats (available on the canteen list) and some were getting together to practice as a group on a number of wings.

“Through a continued yoga practice, it encourages patients to live in the present, stilling the mind and enabling them to learn different ways of dealing with a prison environment and others around them. It allows them to cope better with the stresses and strains of prison life, which in its self, generally leans towards a constant heightened state and a stressful environment”.

Yoga Teacher, HMP Dovegate

4. Conclusions

It has been shown that following a sustained programme of yoga, mental health and wellbeing has been shown to improve. Different types of analysis have reinforced this conclusion with patients self-reporting improvements in their health and continuing with independent practice.

It can be concluded:

- The project has met its objectives
- We can be assured by the value of yoga sessions which is consistent with previous research findings as reported in the Introduction
- We can be confident in the quality and commitment of the yoga teacher
- Whilst the attrition rate high, those patients fully engaged reported increased well-being and high satisfaction with a desire to continue yoga practice.
- We can be assured of the value of using WEMWEBS to measure the impact of an intervention and can use this method for other projects (e.g. Social Prescribing)

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