

Admission to Prison: It's ok to not be ok

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Background

There was recognition on the GGC wide suicide prevention group about the **challenges to people who were entering prison for the first time**. The group discussed different approaches to prevent suicide. Doris Williamson raised the challenges of suicide prevention in prison. **Doris highlighted that the average reading age for prisoners was around 6-8 and thus there are low levels of literacy to interpret what can often be complex hypothetical topics.**

Doris was keen to do something different and bid for budget that had become available. The budget was available in November and had to be used by March.

What did we do?

A tender document was developed for procurement portal and following the tender process and organisation was selected who had delivered previous work in this setting.

Executive management permission was required from Scottish Prison Service to allow SPS staff and patients to engage in this work within prisons in Greater Glasgow & Clyde.

Focus groups were carried out, a story board was developed and schedules for filming agreed with various people.

People, including residents of the prison estate, researched the topic, learned videography and production skills.

4 videos were produced – 1 for admission to estate (short 2-minute video) and a longer video about mental health services available in the prison community. These were produced from both a male and female perspective.

Who with?

A **variety of stakeholders worked in collaboration to co-produce** this project, including media and education unit within the prison, prison community (across whole prison estate), SPS officers, head of SPS comms, Executive management group, Governors of HMP's, and prison radio and Health Improvement Staff.



How did they feel?

Partners involved in the process have stated they felt engaged in the process, heard and valued as contributors.

A highlight is **hearing how really engaged members of the prison community felt** – they felt their opinions were really listened to and that it was an important topic to address in this setting.

What did they learn and gain?

Participants **gained a lot through this process**, while for many it was capitalizing on some existing interest. Many became really invested in the topic and process.

Several people living in prison gained media skills, but they also **gained lots of softer skills**, this included sparking an interest in sharing their experience for the benefit of others in a constructive way.

All participants gained experiential learning to research, manage feelings on an emotive topic and associated skills for each step of the process of producing the resources (i.e. facilitation of focus groups, filming, presenting, interview techniques).

What they do differently?

The experience of developing this piece of work **made the group more confident in their skills, participation, and ability to discuss a difficult and emotive topic.**

It really helped participants further develop their social capital, **contribute to a culture change within their community** and **remove some of the stigma** around suicidal thought.

The population impact has not yet been measured.

“People living in prison listen to other people living in prison – there is credibility when one of your peers tells you something.”

Doris Williamson, Health Improvement Lead, NHSGGC



What difference does this make?

This piece of work helps **address some of the myths around suicide prevention strategy in prisons** and highlights that help and support are available. The outputs encourage people to make that human connection and that we all have a role to play in suicide prevention.

It really does show that it is ok not to be ok, and that **your community understands and can support you.**

You can view anonymised versions of the videos here:

- ♥ [Suicide Prevention \(Men\)](#)
- ♥ [Suicide Prevention \(Women\)](#)

Read the full Independent Review of Talk To Me & Commitment to Change here:

<https://www.sps.gov.uk/about-us/transparency/commitment-to-change/suicide-prevention>

