

Day Centres



"I find this intervention absolutely invaluable and a great support to both staff and prisoners".

Quote from Staff member in one of the prisons in which we work.

RECOOP is a registered charity with over 10 years experience working specifically on the resettlement and care of older ex-offenders and prisoners.

Day Centres, established and normally run by RECOOP, can also be run by prisoners themselves with monthly guiding support from RECOOP. Not only does this option provide confidence, communication and planning skills, it offers a more cost-effective approach to delivery. Day Centres serve to encourage purposeful activity and social interaction ensuring that older prisoners develop strategies to live purposefully and actively both in prison and on release.

As the older prisoner population continues to rise in prisons across England and Wales, there is an increasing need for prisons to provide activities that meet the needs of older people.

With this in mind, several prisons have built Day Centre provision into their regimes in which RECOOP is currently delivering a regular service.

The benefits of a Day Centre cannot be underestimated. Occupying time of the older prisoner population is often a problem. Too old to be in

employment and too frail to take part in other organised activities within the prison, many are left or choose to stay in their cells for too much of their time.

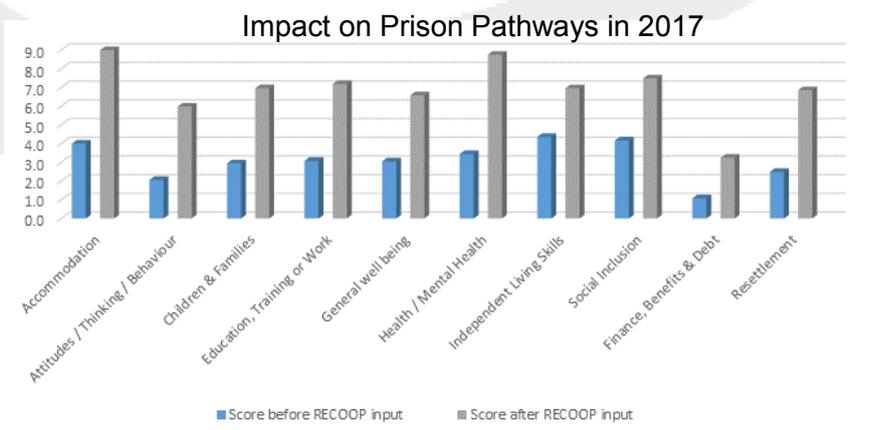
Focusing heavily on social interaction, activities within the Day Centres are designed to create an environment where prisoners feel relaxed enough to make positive changes to the way they interact with other people. This allows them to overcome the barriers created by closed environments and, in turn, promotes social-inclusion and wellbeing.

The 2015 HMIP Report on HMP Leyhill, stated:

"The Lobster Pot (dedicated Day Centre for the over 50s run by RECOOP) plays a central role and has gradually become an inspiring pace-setter in responding to their special needs, offering a wide range of education, recreational and life skill related activities".

The 2017 HMIP Report on HMP Leyhill stated:

"The Lobster Pot, a drop-in centre for the over 50s, was an excellent resource, providing a creative range of activities, support and assessment of need".



Examples of activities in some of our Day Centres

The importance of being socially involved should not be played down and we actively encourage participation in sessions.



We run cooking sessions, using some of the ingredients coming from the prison allotments and we look at the cost of food. Men forget these skills and for some they've never had to

worry about these aspects of life because they've had a wife or partner to do it for them. This often changes on release.

Returning from ROTL, one prisoner said: *"I was in a shop and someone spoke to me. I didn't know what to say and realised I didn't know how to make conversation"*.

Talking together, whether using creative writing, news items or film, allows for a reminiscing of past lives and it's often through their own stories that these men come to know their similarities or their common background or upbringing, and that we're not so different from each other.



Creative projects, such as this quilt made by the Rubies (over 50s Day Centre at HMP Eastwood Park) and the Fine Cell work undertaken by men at HMP Leyhill, reduces isolation (working in a group), increases self-esteem, a deeper sense of self-worth and the opportunity to take pride in work well done.



'When life gives you scraps, make quilts'



It also has a positive impact on levels of self-harm, as this quote highlights:

"I need something to occupy my hands and mind. I've always self-harmed, but this has reduced significantly since being in the group".

Service-users have their say about our Day Centres

My time in prison has been a lot of emotions mainly dampened but I love the Lobster Pot for the smiling and chatty faces. When I help out I'm always thanked for my contribution which is appreciated.

A place where you're welcomed and not judged .

The group has given me the chance to explore and challenge myself in ways I thought I was incapable of. It has given my prison sentence structure and makes me feel I have more choices in my life when I am released .

There is a great sense of trust, respect and understanding and, above all, caring, that we seem to pick up from you and a-learning-to-share. It is a great comfort and support and helps beating the terrible isolation and loneliness. Thank you for all your encouragement.

The Lobster Pot (Day Centre at HMP Leyhill) is a good place to come when you first land here. You can find out info about the prison, make friends/ mates, get info for forward planning/release and they do sessions on many varied topics, from benefits to banking, social care to community links. Overall a very worthwhile enterprise.

The Rubies (Day Centre, Eastwood Park) supplied me with friendship, strength, confirmation and the ability to share emotions. It is a promise against loneliness/ the loneliness of getting older. Through this I could slowly build up a new identity. It was my first time in prison. I will not be back.

For further information on how we can help you set up your own Day Centre, please contact: info@recoop.org.uk