

Physical Education in the Irish Prison System

Best Practice Handbook

Best Practice Handbook

Table of Content

Section 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Why have a Best Practice Handbook
- 1.2 What is the purpose of the Best Practice Handbook

Section 2 The Physical Education Team

- 2.1 Actions required

Section 3 The Physical Education Plan

- 3.1 Why have a plan?
- 3.2 What are the key elements of the PE plan?
- a. Progress Report
- b. Objectives of the PE programme
- c. Programme of activities
- d. Evaluation indicators

Section 4: Procedures and Programming for the Fitness Area

- 4.1 Screening
- 4.2 Introduction to Fitness area/Gym
- 4.3 Safety Checks
- 4.4 Record Keeping
- 4.5 Individual Programming

Section 5: Programme of Activities

- 5.1 Range of activities
- 5.2 Classroom work
- 5.3 Motivation and promotion
- 5.4 Special Needs

Section 6: Facilities

Section 7: Best Practice - Check List

Section 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why have a Best Practice Handbook?

Physical education is an integral part of the wider prison education service which aims to provide a high-quality broadly based and flexible programme to meet the needs of those in custody. Physical education in prison provides a unique opportunity and challenge for prison staff and teachers to work together to deliver an effective and high quality physical education programme to benefit offenders. In 2000 the Physical Education Development Group (PEDG) identified increased participation and improved quality programming as the main objectives to further enhance physical education in the overall prison system. A Best Practice Handbook at national level was one of the recommendations to act as a quality assurance standard for the implementation of Physical Education programmes.

1.2 What is the purpose of the Best Practice Handbook?

This Best Practice Handbook offers a blue print or guidelines on the implementation of procedures and practices recommended for organised Physical Education programmes in the prison system. Many of the guidelines have been identified by the Physical Education Development Group arising from observations from visits to all prisons over a number of years. The recommendations in the Handbook can and should be adapted to suit the various and differing needs of each institution. This Best Practice Handbook is an important part of the 'tool kit' along with adequately trained and motivated prison staff and teachers and appropriate facilities to deliver a professional and accountable educational and recreational service in the prison system.

Section 2 THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEAM

The PEDG in its first report recognised the importance of team-work in maximising the development of physical education and recreation in the prison system. It has been highlighted in many reports the importance of sustained development through establishing a Physical Education Team promoting co-ordination and co-operation from all those involved.

2.1 Actions required are:

- The Physical Education Team (PE Team) to be set up in each institution by Prison and Educational management as a necessary first step to deliver a quality PE programme.
- The PE Team should consist of all NCEF officers, PE teachers, Prison management (Governor or representative) and the Head Teacher.
- The PE Team should have allocated time each year (at least one meeting per term) for the team to discuss, plan and co-ordinate the PE programme. Many prisons have not provided this time resulting in poor quality programming.
- The PE Team should be responsible for the development of Physical Education and Sport in each institution and should address the following areas.
 - a) Draw-up and evaluate the PE plan on a yearly basis.
 - b) Ensure that the plan is implemented on a daily basis
 - c) Assess the staff, facility and equipment needs for the institution.
- Governor and Head Teacher (or a designated senior person), should monitor on a weekly basis the implementation of the PE programme, identified in the PE plan. A Best Practice check list is provided to section 7 to assist in this task.

Section 3	THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION PLAN
------------------	------------------------------------

A quality physical education programme can, in keeping with the overall aims of prison education, help offenders to cope with their sentences, achieve personal development, prepare for life after release and establish the appetite and capacity for life long learning.

The PE plan has been a significant development in the area of physical education for many years, setting an example of 'best practice' in planning, that others in the prison system have followed. However, the approach, content and quality of the PE plans have differed among prisons over the years.

3.1 Why have a PE plan?

- The PE plan provides a broad framework for the development of Physical Education in the prison system.
- The PE Plan gives a structure and direction for the programme each year.
- The Best Practice Handbook outlines the four key elements that should be covered in the plan (See 3.2 below).
- Each institution should develop their own PE plan reflecting their needs, creativity and circumstances.

3.2 What are the key elements of the PE plan?

- A. Progress Report
- B. Objectives of the PE programme
- C. Programme of Activities
- D. Evaluation Indicators

A. Progress Report

The planning process should begin each year with a review of the previous year's programme that identifies which objectives were achieved, what lessons were learned and how the PE programme can be improved. Facilities and equipment should also be included in this review.

B. Objectives of the PE programme:

The PE plan should translate the overall aims of prison education into objectives for physical education. What are the desired outcomes to

be achieved within PE in this institution this year? The objects should be specific, relevant, realistic, and measurable. Objectives must also relate to the individual needs - What will the offender gain from participating in the PE programme? What are the expected changes - cognitive, affective and behavioural? In other words what will the offender know (understand), believe (attitudes, beliefs, values and opinions) and do (skills and actions) as a result of their experience in the PE programme. Illustrated examples in Box 1.

Box 1: Examples of Specific Objectives

Aim 1:

- ❖ To raise awareness of the potential of PE to contribute to the well being of offenders in coping with their sentence.

Specific Objectives:

- ⇒ to develop a leaflet setting out the benefits of PE - why bother? What's PE about? For you? How to take part?
- ⇒ To ensure all new offenders receive the leaflet during their first week in prison.
- ⇒ To organise a health/fitness week with a variety of 'intro' activities.

Aim 2:

- ❖ To provide greater opportunities for individuals to access and participate in the PE programme for personal development.

Specific Objectives

- ⇒ To plan for a special event every month (health/fitness day, challenge, sport competition).
- ⇒ To develop a calendar each month with a list of activities to be offered and distributed to all offenders.
- ⇒ To develop for beginners a prepared written/illustrated circuit programme (aerobic/LME) as a first step in individual programming.
- ⇒ To work with a set number of prisoners each week in helping to develop a balanced individual programme suitable to his/her needs.

Aim 3:

- ❖ To encourage students to develop realistic health fitness goals for life after release.

Specific Objectives

- ⇒ To establish links with the pre-release programme and discuss information on accessing sports and recreational activities in the community after release.
- ⇒ To work with the pre-release offender to develop a realistic personal exercise programme to continue after release.

C. Programme of activities

For the most part there is good balance and diversity in the range of activities and courses provided in the PE programmes in almost all prisons. However, some prisons need to include a stronger games teaching element in the programme. The few remaining prisons where free weights are still being used should be scaled down when new exercise machines are installed and no new free weights should be introduced. This is in keeping with the PEDG policy of eliminating free weights from all prisons, which would help promote a more balanced approach to healthy exercise. The use of health awareness weeks, tournaments and special events are effective measures to promote and provide greater access to the programme. However, more creative thinking and application is needed for sustained recruitment to the programme. Efforts should also be made to accommodate specific target groups where appropriate. In other words is the programme serving those who need it most.

Some questions to consider - What activities, courses and events will be undertaken during the year to achieve the stated objectives? What are the resource requirements (staff and facilities)? What is the timeframe (how often and for how long)? What are the most appropriate and effective activities given available resources?

D. Programme Evaluation:

Evaluation is about assessing what has been achieved (outcomes) and how it has been achieved (process). Has the specific objectives, set out in part B of the PE plan, been achieved? To answer this question a set of indicators or measures relating to the objectives should be drawn up at the planning stage. These will be specific to each plan and could include such indicators as - the number of regular participants, feedback from the prisoners, prisoner understanding of the value of physical education, prisoner self confidence, prisoner self-directed and balanced exercise programme, the prisoner success in the FETAC courses. An example of specific objectives and evaluation indicators are given in Box 2.

During the year or at the end of the year the programme should be evaluated using these indicators to assess if the desired changes or outcomes have been achieved. Evaluation can also be about the process, how the objectives were achieved, whether the most

appropriate methods were used and whether they were used in the most effective way.

Box 2: Example of Specific Objectives and Evaluation Indicators

Aim 2: To provide greater opportunities for individuals to access and participate in the PE programme

Objectives	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To plan for a special event (health/ fitness day, challenge, sports competition) every month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Time spent planning b) Number of people involved in planning. c) Number of special events organised. d) Profile of offenders who participated ~ regular vs others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a calendar each month with a list of the activities to be offered and distribute to all offenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Number of calendars distributed & the channels of distribution. b) Feedback from participants – where did they see calendar? c) The listed activities and the actual activities run. d) Did it attract any new people into programme?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop for beginners a prepared written circuit programme (aerobic/LME) as a first step in individual programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Number of beginners who were given circuit programme b) Feedback, by asking questions, from beginners as to their usefulness c) Feedback, by observation, were they able to follow circuit card.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with a set number of prisoners each week in helping to develop an individual programme suitable to his/her needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Number of offenders helped to develop personalised individual programmes b) Number of offenders with a self-directed <u>balanced</u> programme (observation)

Section 4: PROCEDURES AND PROGRAMMING FOR THE FITNESS AREA

The Fitness Area is a designated area or room where a variety of cardiovascular machines (treadmills, bikes, rowers etc) and weight resistance machines are placed to allow for a balanced exercise programme. To create a more uniformed approach and safer environment for exercise participation, both in the fitness area and other activity areas, national guidelines are set out below to ensure that adequate procedures are in place for screening, induction to the fitness area, safety checks and record keeping. Best practice guidelines are also provided for individual programming.

4.1 Screening

A **standard screening form** has been developed in co-operation with the Prison Medical Director.

- This form should be completed before a participant is allowed use any facility.
- A check of the form is necessary to decide if the participant can continue or whether medical clearance is necessary. The participant may need to be seen by the doctor who will sign the form and recommend participation or not.
- This form should be filed indefinitely in a secure place along with other PE documentation and should be readily accessible.

While almost all prisons have a **screening process** in place some are better integrated than others. One prison proves a model of best practice in relation to effective screening, in that within 48 hours of a prisoner's arrival in the prison. The prisoner is interviewed by the PE teacher and NCEF officer and information on the PE programme is provided. All participants in the PE programme are also screened by the prison medical staff.

At a minimum, it is essential for health and safety reasons that all participants in the PE programme are screened by means of the approved screening form, which should be kept on file.

4.2 Introduction to the Fitness Area

Induction to the fitness area (Box 3) should involve each prisoner, who comes to the gym/ fitness area for the first time, being familiarised with the equipment. A record of this task should be signed and filed.

Box 3: Example of Introduction to Fitness Area for new participant

- ❖ Before you start, make sure you have filled in a screening form and have been assessed by the PE staff.
- ❖ The PE staff will show you how to use the equipment. Do not start exercising until you know how to use every machine you intend to use.
- ❖ If you are on medication or if you feel unwell do not exercise. Seek advice from the staff.
- ❖ You should get a training plan from the staff. Follow the plan and ask for advice if necessary.
- ❖ If you notice any damage or problem with the equipment do not use the machine and inform the staff.
- ❖ Be fair when using the equipment. Move on smartly to the next machine.

As soon as the participant has been cleared medically s/he should be taken around the fitness facility.

S/He should be:

- Given the basic rules of the gym/ fitness area, i.e. clothing / behaviour (Box 4).
- Each piece of equipment should be demonstrated.
- The participant should be assessed as to their needs and expectations in the PE area.
- The participant should then be enrolled in one of the classes or activities suitable to his ability or given an individual programme.

Box 4: Health and Safety

Example of Form for participants in Fitness Area and Health and Safety Rules

- ❖ Proper clothing and training shoes must be worn at all times.
- ❖ Use a towel during exercise and clean down machines with paper provided.
- ❖ Stand well clear of machines when others are exercising.
- ❖ Use the machines as demonstrated. All movements should be slow and under control.
- ❖ Head -phones are not allowed.
- ❖ Follow all Health and Safety signs in the Fitness Area.

I have read and I understand the introduction to the Fitness Area and the Health and Safety Rules.

Signed _____

Date _____

Staff Member _____

4.3 Safety Checks

To promote a safe and enjoyable exercise environment for all, the trained staff and the participants in the programmes should follow some basic guidelines. The trained staff (NCEF Officers and PE Teachers) should regularly check equipment, and report any problems to the Chief Trade's Officer . Offenders should understand their duties as participants.

4.4 Record Keeping

Attendance: A record should be kept of all those who use the Fitness Area and other PE facilities each day. Attendance records should be filed. This is happening in almost all of the prisons.

Filing documents: What needs to be filed? Attendance, individual programmes, safety checks, accident reports, induction to fitness area. Where are the documents kept and who does this work?

4.5 Individual Programming

The role of the NCEF officer and Physical Education teacher is to actively instruct healthy exercise among the prison population. Individual programmes is one of the most effective ways of achieving this aim. There is little evidence that individualised programming takes place except in a few of the prisons. In many prisons much more work is needed from the trained staff. The skills learned on the NCEF course in relation to individualised programmes should be developed and applied.

Good practice in implementing individual programmes would be as follows:

1) Any new participant entering the PE programme should be interviewed to find out :

- Previous history of PE activity
- Present level of physical activity
- What does he want to achieve?
- What do you, as instructor/teacher, believe is a realistic aim?

2) The participant should then be given a programme chart which should consist of:

- Warm -up with stretching
- Aerobic activity - Bike / rower / treadmill etc.
- A circuit / weight resistance programme (depending on ability, needs and equipment available)
- A cool -down

3) The participant's progress should be monitored. It is best to have the participant chart his own progress by having him fill in his own individual activity/programme chart.

4) The participant's progress should be evaluated by the instructor and reassessed after about 6 to 8 weeks.

Section 5 PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

5.1 Range of Activities

As broad a range of activities as possible should be covered in the programme. At present the following activities are run extensively in prisons: Circuits, Aerobics, Step Aerobics, Basketball, Volleyball, Badminton, Soccer, Indoor tennis, Table tennis, Olympic handball and Bowls. The range of activities offered depends on the type of facilities available. Whenever possible all areas (indoors and outdoors) that can facilitate an activity should be used. The outside space such as the yard or exercise area can be used to facilitate these activities or indoor space such as fitness room or reasonably large rooms might be considered.

5.2 Classroom Work

A number of institutions in the Prison Service offer FETAC courses (Further Education and Training Awards Council). Areas of specific interest are the Health Related Fitness at Foundation level and the more advanced Level 1 and 2. In special circumstances where there are sufficient numbers, the Level 2 FETAC qualification will be used as the entry standard to any proposed NCEF course. Other basic courses in Health and Fitness (ie. Fás) and Health Education are run in cooperation with the Education Units in each institution.

5.3 Motivation and promotion

The range and type of activities available should be made known to the prison population. Example of how this is done at present include:

- Open days to show the facilities.
- The development and distribution of hand-outs on the type of activities on offer especially to new arrivals.
- Special events such as rowing challenges, super- star competitions and sponsored runs.
- Sports days or weeks where matches and competitions are organised.
- Awards and graded tests to motivate different ability levels.

5.4 Dealing with special needs

Different groups need different types of programmes and activities. The less experienced or participants with special needs require more individual attention and individual programming. Colour coded charts (easy to difficult exercises) at each of the equipment pieces is useful. Special short-duration classes for older prisoners or those with special health needs, with the emphasis on low to moderate aerobic activity or bowling sessions are examples of good practice at present which happens in some of the prisons. Highly motivated and fit prisoners also need to be catered for and some examples of good practice are: graded aerobic and strength tests, colour coded individual charts which are challenging and super star, rowing or running competitions

<i>Section 6:</i>	<i>FACILITIES</i>
--------------------------	--------------------------

Physical Education and Sport facilities vary greatly from prison to prison. It would be useful for every prison to keep an inventory of all PE equipment and a list of the facilities used for the PE programme.

The PEDG has recommended that a centrally located sports and fitness area should be considered for all prisons but especially for all newly planned prisons. This would offer not only the best possible programme for all participants but would also maximise the use of equipment and staff. To date in many prisons there are a number of small, unsuitable training areas, each stocked with the same type of expensive machines, and each area staffed by qualified personnel.

In order to expand and widen the range of activities in the PE programme it is vital that investment in centrally located sports and fitness areas in all new and existing facilities are promoted. Taking into account security arrangements, all outdoor areas should be used to the maximum and yards and any green areas could be used for small team games.

Section 7:	BEST PRACTICE - CHECK LIST
-------------------	-----------------------------------

<i>Best practice - Check list</i>	YES
<u>START OF EACH TERM</u>	
Is there a PE plan ?	
Do all staff working in the PE programme know the plan?	
Has the plan been discussed with all PE staff?	
Are copies of the PE plan available ?	
Has the plan been evaluated at the end of the term and year?	
<u>WEEKLY</u>	
Are screening forms used ?	
Are screening forms filed away ?	
Are staff introducing new prisoners to PE programme ?	
Are staff introducing new prisoners to equipment in fitness area?	
Are the orientation/safety forms used and filed?	
Are safety checks carried out daily by trained staff?	
Are equipment faults documented and reported ?	
Are class records of attendance kept and filed ?	
Are individual programmes developed?	
Are copies of these individual programmes available / filed ?	
Are the programme activities set out in the PE plan being implemented?	
Taking account of facilities, is there a good range of activities on offer?	
Are staff seen (observe) to be advising and helping participants?	
Is dress code as per regulations?	
Is the PE programme promoted ?	
Are promotional materials available - hand-outs, leaflets etc ?	