



Good Bitches
BAKING

Prison Bake 2018

Proof of Concept report

"I learned that I can be a kind person. I didn't actually know that."



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Executive Summary

The Good Bitches Trust's mission is to make Aotearoa the Kindest Place on Earth

The Good Bitches Trust (the Trust) has been operating since 2014 and currently has over 2000 volunteers in 21 locations throughout New Zealand. The Trust was founded on the belief that small acts of kindness can be meaningful to people experiencing a trauma, crisis or difficult time in their lives. Volunteers deliver home-made treats to organisations like night shelters, hospices, support groups and refuges.

Receiving a gesture of kindness is meaningful to those having a tough time, however *giving* the baking has proved to be equally so for our volunteers.

The Trust has recently been considering ways to expand its reach, looking for ways for more people to be kind.

We wanted to test whether men in prison could benefit from the opportunity to be kind

Altruism, random acts of kindness, and volunteering have been shown to be significant contributors to wellbeing and social-connectedness. There is a wealth of evidence to support our theory that the men could benefit from the opportunity to be kind. Volunteers at the Trust report that participating has assisted with recovery from depression and with grief, and helped them to think beyond themselves and develop good insights into other people's lives and struggles.

Our theory was that micro-volunteering for Good Bitches Baking could give men in prison these benefits. A summary of our evidence base is attached in Appendix One.

Our proof of concept trial was a six week course at Rimutaka Men's Prison

We developed a six week trial curriculum, with customised recipes, which:

- used inexpensive ingredients, so that the men might be able to afford to keep making them after the trial
- used a range of techniques, so the men gained a range of skills to apply in other cooking
- could be baked for a range of events / purposes such as breakfast, a birthday, etc, so that the men had a wide repertoire
- could be completed in a two hour window, so the time commitment at the prison was not too long, and to reduce the potential for awkward silences during long baking times when there is not much to do but wait.

Ingredients were provided by the Department of Corrections and cost \$200 for the trial which they reported to be very good value for money.

Participation was voluntary for the men and the Good Bitches (volunteers). The self-care units (villas) at Rimutaka Prison were chosen as there were small kitchens that would suit a one-on-one style of teaching, in a more relaxed environment, and because the men were 'low risk'.



We shoulder-tapped some of our more experienced volunteers, who received training from the Department of Corrections on keeping safe, a site visit to the prison, and training from the Trust on the purpose and curriculum.

Volunteers spent consecutive Saturday mornings teaching the men how to bake and talking about the work we do. Each unit baked two batches each weekend, one to keep and one to donate to Women's Refuge. The men were asked to write a note to accompany the donation in the same way all our volunteers do.

We provided the refuges with a feedback form for the women to complete if they wished to do so. We read the feedback out to the men the following week.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with a wider range benefits reported than we anticipated

As hoped, the men did benefit from the opportunity to be kind and they demonstrated a desire to do more kind things like baking extra cakes, refusing to keep the baking themselves, and buying sprinkles to add some colour to the baking *"to make the kids smile"*.

We also hoped that the women in refuge would benefit from receiving baking from the men, and although some were hesitant at first, all refuges reported that it helped the women with their process of healing.

Unexpectedly, the trial also changed attitudes of the men towards volunteers, and the volunteers' towards the men.

There are a few easy ways to improve Prison Bake if it was continued and expanded

The process used worked well overall, however there a few minor changes that could be made to improve the programme; such as changing the order to the recipes, increasing the length of the course, and reducing the number of Good Bitches rostered per villa.



Evaluation Methodology

We evaluated the proof-of-concept trial by:

- Face to face interviews with most of men involved (6)
- Online survey of most of the Good Bitches involved (10)
- Phone interviews with two Department of Corrections rehabilitation staff (2)
- Phone interviews with Women's Refuge 'safe-house' managers (3)
- Written feedback forms from women in refuges (12)
- Written feedback from the GBB Trust's administrator (1)
- Observation of participants (men and Good Bitches) throughout the trial

We also sent an online survey to the guards in the Self-Care Unit, unfortunately none of them responded.

The results of the interviews and surveys have been grouped by the experience of the three main groups involved; the men, volunteers and women's refuges. Feedback from Department of Corrections staff and Trust staff has been included where relevant throughout this report.

Note: Following the trial, we added an extra three-week Christmas themed course. We had expected that it would be mostly the same participants however the participants were mostly new. This extension occurred after the evaluation activity, and we did not survey the new participants. However we learned some important things from this addition which have been included in this report.



The men's experience

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me the opportunity to give to others."

We interviewed six men, after the final baking lesson, to understand if they had learned anything, to test our hypothesis, as well as to get feedback to help inform a future programme.

All of the men said they would participate again and would recommend participating to other men like them. Some said they were disappointed that more men in the self-care units hadn't participated, because they'd enjoyed the chance to work alongside other men, in a team.

The men learned practical skills, even if they had previous kitchen experience

"I learned that I can actually do something like this"

All of the men, even those who appeared to already have good kitchen skills, said they learned new skills or improved their existing skills. These included: baking from scratch, how to substitute ingredients and how to measure ingredients properly.

Department of Corrections staff and the volunteers all noticed that the men were taking time to plan – when volunteers arrived each week the ovens were already on and up to the right temperature, kitchens were spotlessly clean and some of the men had read the recipe.

When we returned for the three-week extension, the men who had been on the main trial course had been using the recipes on their own or with other men in their villa.

The men learned about themselves

"I found a peace while baking that was really different."

All of the men were able to note a range of things they felt they had learned about themselves, such as communication skills and team work.

Others said that they learned that *"it's ok to ask for help if you don't understand"* or that *"I can be kind and generous"*.

The men learned about other people

"People can be friendlier than you think."

All of the men were able to identify at least one thing they thought they'd learned about other people, and in many cases it was about the volunteers – they were surprised (and pleased) that the volunteers were not paid or part of a religious mission, and were choosing to spend time with them. Two noted that it made them think more positively about Pakeha.

One also noted that he learned that people can do the same thing differently and get the same result: *"you don't need to do things the same as others"*.



Learning a new skill was not seen to be the most valuable aspect

“It felt good to be know it was going to other who were struggling.”

By asking the men what was the ‘best thing’ about the course we were able to identify what they thought was most valuable. Although learning was seen as valuable, it was not the most valuable thing. Their answers mostly fell into three categories, and all identified more than one ‘best thing’.

Helping others was by far the most common ‘best thing’. All the men made a comment about enjoying the aspect of giving, and one said *“The best thing was thinking about the recipients. I used to only ever think of myself.”* Several were particularly grateful to have been able to give to Women’s Refuge, and had been initially nervous that the women would reject their gesture, and then delighted when that didn’t happen.

Spending time with the volunteers was noted by most as a positive aspect. They enjoyed having positive conversations (noting this was unusual for them), and they appreciated the volunteers sharing practical knowledge as well as their experiences. One of the men commented on *“the lovely hearts and lovely energy”* that the volunteers brought with them, and Department of Corrections staff also noted that hearing so much laughter while the volunteers were there was unusual and had been missed by the men when the course ended.

Most of the men talked about **looking forward to the future** when they could use their new skills, for example to make pancakes for their kids or make their Mum a birthday cake. Several also asked if they could join Good Bitches Baking when released so they could keep giving and contributing to the community. They were surprised when the volunteers told them they would be welcome to join.

The men would like the course to be expanded

The men had several consistent ideas for improvement, predominantly:

- Making the course longer, some thought ideally it would be permanent
- Giving to a wider range of participants, like hospice and night shelters (note: we did this in the extension programme and the men appreciated learning about the recipients)
- Getting more men involved so they could get to know each other better and so more men could receive the benefits that they had enjoyed.



The refuge's experience

"I would love to be able to tell them (the men) the impact of their manaaki."

We invited four refuges in the greater Wellington area to participate. Three of the four agreed to, with no reservations. The fourth said they supported what we were doing but felt it would be too "raw" for the women they support. We chose refuge as the recipient as we hoped there might be an additional benefit to be gained if the women would accept and enjoy this type of gesture from the men

During the trial, we provided feedback forms for the women in refuge to complete if they wished to; there was no obligation to do so but many of them did. The notes generally expressed thanks for the gift, and occasionally some good natured suggestions for improvement: *"more chocolate next time!"*

We also interviewed the refuge manager in each of the participating refuges after the trial.

All of the refuges said they would participate again and all said they would recommend the programme to other refuges or *"anyone that might need to know that the men are trying."*

Staff in refuges were positive about the programme

"If it's good for those men, it will be good for whanau and New Zealand."

Refuge staff recognised the potential to help women heal, by showing them that the men were prepared to make a gesture of amends.

Refuge staff had no reservations about the programme and no recommendations for improvement.

Receiving the baking prompted some helpful conversations between the women and refuge staff

"They were very surprised but after processing it they were grateful to know that the men were giving back and it helped them to get to a better place in their recovery".

The response from the women, when told where the baking was from, was predominantly one of surprise. Although there was some initial hesitation with accepting the baking, all the women and children did eventually accept it after some individual thought, or discussion.

All refuges said that they felt it had helped the women to move forward.

Refuges noticed a change in the women's attitude to the men

"There is a better side to you. I hope this is the start of a better road for you."

The refuge staff reported seeing the women move from a negative view of these men, to a positive one as they gained understand that the men were trying to make amends.



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It gave the women hope

“It was the hope that you gave them that their own tane could be better. You showed them that there is still goodness. It’s gold.”

Refuges also reported that the notes, in particular the poems, from the men made a significant impact and “*added another layer*” in that the women saw it as additional evidence that the men were trying to be helpful and supportive, and they felt positive about this.



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The volunteer's experience

"I've never invested so much of myself into something and it's been amazing."

We had carefully considered volunteer needs and safety in the design of the programme, and had taken a number of steps to ensure we had the right type of volunteer working (ie calm, patient, and confident without being overly extroverted). We had not identified any potential benefits for the volunteers however and were taken by surprise at how much they got out of it.

We surveyed 10 of the volunteers. Most had worked four of the six sessions.

All of the volunteers said they would participate in the programme again, and all were likely or highly likely to recommend it to other volunteers. Several noted a caution that *"it is not for everyone"* and noted that it was *"emotionally draining"*.

Our safety and security steps worked well

"I always felt safe with the guys. They treated us with the utmost respect."

Nine of the volunteers felt 'completely safe' and the remaining one felt 'mostly safe' while inside the prison. Many commented that they appreciated the helpful, caring and supportive approach from everyone involved – the Trust, Department of Corrections' staff and the guards.

The volunteers mentioned that the site visit and safety training had been worthwhile and contributed to their comfort in going in to the prison environment. Several commented that they felt the approach from Department of Corrections staff and the prison guards was good, in that *"they took a back seat once they knew we were comfortable."*

Most commented that they were surprised at how comfortable they felt, especially with the men.

The programme improved the volunteers' perceptions of the men

"I thought they'd be standoff-ish and arrogant, but despite being shy at first, they were warm and open."

Seven of the women said they had a significant or very significant change in perception of the men. Many had expected the men to be intimidating and it to be hard to form connections with them, they were pleasantly surprised that this was not the case.

Many were surprised at how enthusiastic the men were about the programme.

Several commented that the experience helped them understand the men better, and not see them as simply a prisoner. One said *"it's great for those with privileged lives to get an insight into others' lives. It was really humbling."*

Volunteers felt hopeful about the potential impact of Prison Bake

"The notes the guys wrote were heartbreak-central. It shows they really understood the kaupapa."



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The volunteers noticed a range of behaviours that they felt evidenced that the men did learn more than just a new skills. Examples provided were:

- On a couple of occasion the ingredients supplied were missing a couple of items, and the men happily used their own ingredients. Department of Corrections staff also commented that they were surprised about this
- Towards the end of the programme, a couple of men baked an additional cake and cheesecake for the volunteers to take away. The men receive only a little money to spend on groceries to feed themselves, so this would likely have meant they went without some food that week
- The men being very reluctant to keep any of their baking “the women and children deserve it more” even though we’d deliberately baked enough for them to keep
- The care the men took to write thoughtful and neat notes, sometimes including poems and drawings
- The men brought Sprinkles to make the baking prettier.

Several of the volunteers and Department of Corrections staff commented on how much enjoyment the men seemed to receive from giving to others.

Volunteers identified a number of improvements

Volunteers felt it was important to have consistency of people at each session; they would prefer to attend every session but they felt that weekly would be too often for them to also manage their time and energy. They also felt there were sometimes too many volunteers.

Volunteers thought the men might benefit from a longer programme, and from having the opportunity to make requests for some of the lessons so as to learn something they were interested in.

Volunteers noted that the ingredients provided were not always right and this required a bit of juggling and improvising. Although not ideal, this did actually allow for additional lessons on substituting and gave the men the chance to donate some of their own ingredients which they seemed to feel good about.

Volunteers were concerned about the attrition rate of men as some did not attend every session and numbers seemed variable. Department of Corrections staff report that sometimes the men were rostered to work on Saturdays or were tired from a particular hard week at work. There may be some additional work needed to “sell” the programme.



Recommendations

Although the design of the trial worked very well, there are a few improvements that can be made.

1.0 Review the rostering of volunteers

We had anticipated more men would participate than did and some days there were simply too many volunteers. In most villas there were three men participating. Two volunteers per villa, with one or two supervisors floating between villas (to allow toilet breaks etc) would be sufficient.

Consistency of volunteers is important, as trust between the men and volunteers built over time. However volunteers found the process emotionally draining and a big time commitment.

2.0 Extend the length of the course to at least eight weeks

Department of Corrections staff noted that a six week course had made it easier to get consistency in the men participating each week. However, both the men and the volunteers were disappointed when the six week trial ended, and agreed that the course should be longer.

One option is to extend the course to eight lessons run over 12 weeks (two weeks on, one week off) using the same group of volunteers each time. Another is to extend the course to eight weeks, run consecutively, with a larger pool of volunteers, using a roster than only introduces one new volunteer per week.

3.0 Have a more specific and time-bound process for setting up the course, with all parties agreeing

The Trust's administrator reported that the process of getting everything ready for the trial to commence was cumbersome and the start date was pushed out a few times.

There were delays in getting responses to requests of both Department of Corrections staff and volunteers which made the process more difficult. Although aspects of the process, such as the site visit and safety training, make the process longer the benefits of these steps outweigh the challenge.

4.0 Make some small changes to curriculum

Structure the curriculum so that the length of time taken to complete the baking is increased over time. As trust built between the men and volunteers over time, it makes sense to have the longer recipes later in the course when people were most comfortable with each other, and the shortest lessons first.

At least one session could be a 'men's choice' of what to learn.

5.0 Consider formalising a mechanism for recognising participation by the men

Although participation and our feedback was recorded in prisoner's files, which we understand are available to the Parole Board, formal recognition may increase perceived value and participation.



6.0 Develop a better ingredient ordering system

Ensuring there are the right ingredients and enough to cover all villas is important. Buying fresh produce close to when it's required will help with quality.



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Appendix One: Evidence Base

The following published psychological research shows the evidence to support the benefits of volunteering and kindness.

In both correlational and longitudinal studies, volunteers report more positive affect, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being, and less depression compared to non-volunteers, even when considering a variety of covariates (Konrath, S. H., & Brown, S. (2013). *The effects of giving on givers.*)

Volunteers who donate their time for other-oriented reasons (e.g. compassion) experience a significant reduction in their mortality risk, but volunteering for more self-oriented reasons (e.g. to learn something new, or to feel good about themselves) is not associated with any change in mortality risk. (Konrath, S. H., & Brown, S. (2013). *The effects of giving on givers.*)

Compassion is not only a process that builds positive relationships with others; it is also a vital path to releasing the human mind from the effects of harmful negative emotions. (Wang, S. (2005). *A conceptual framework for integrating research related to the physiology of compassion and the wisdom of Buddhist teachings.* In P. Gilbert (Ed.), *Compassion: Conceptualisations, research and use in psychotherapy* (pp. 121–147). London: Routledge.)

A correlational study conducted by Schwartz et al. (2003) found that being the provider of altruistic behaviours was associated with greater gains in mental health (i.e. lowered depression and anxiety) than being the recipient of altruistic behaviours. (Mongrain, M., Chin, J. M., & Shapira, L. B. (2011). *Practicing compassion increases happiness and self-esteem.* *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12(6), 963-981.)

There is evidence that helping behavior has a general tendency to influence mood positively. (Millar, M. G., Millar, K. U., & Tesser, A. (1988). *The effects of helping and focus of attention on mood states.* *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 14, 536–543.)

As social animals, humans possess a range of psychological mechanisms that motivate them to help others, and they derive satisfaction from doing so (Curry, O. S., Rowland, L. A., Van Lissa, C. J., Zlotowitz, S., McAlaney, J., & Whitehouse, H. (2018). *Happy to Help? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of performing acts of kindness on the well-being of the actor.* *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 76, 320-329.)

Previous research has found an association between motive and outcome; one longitudinal study found that volunteers motivated by a desire to help others lived longer than non-volunteers, but that volunteers motivated by a desire to help themselves did not. (Curry, O. S., Rowland, L. A., Van Lissa, C. J., Zlotowitz, S., McAlaney, J., & Whitehouse, H. (2018). *Happy to Help? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of performing acts of kindness on the well-being of the actor.* *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 76, 320-329.)

Naturally occurring altruism and volunteering have been related to increased life satisfaction, decreased depression, lower blood pressure and even increased longevity. (Pressman, S. D., Kraft, T. L., & Cross, M. P. (2015). *It's good to do good and receive good: The impact of a 'pay it forward' style kindness intervention on giver and receiver well-being.* *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 10(4), 293-302.)



Pay It Forward givers reported increased overall positive affect, optimism, gratitude, life satisfaction and joviality, with the largest changes found in positive affect and joviality. *(Pressman, S. D., Kraft, T. L., & Cross, M. P. (2015). It's good to do good and receive good: The impact of a 'pay it forward' style kindness intervention on giver and receiver well-being. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 10(4), 293-302.)*

The Pay It Forward study contradicts previous research that indicated an autonomous motivation is necessary for psychological benefits for both givers and receivers, as the Pay It Forward activity was a forced kindness intervention. Other studies using forced kindness activities have been shown to increase happiness and subjective wellbeing of students. *(Pressman, S. D., Kraft, T. L., & Cross, M. P. (2015). It's good to do good and receive good: The impact of a 'pay it forward' style kindness intervention on giver and receiver well-being. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 10(4), 293-302.)*

Both altruistic attitudes and helping behaviours proved to be significant predictors of positive affect in multivariate models. *(Kahana, E., Bhatta, T., Lovegreen, L. D., Kahana, B., & Midlarsky, E. (2013). Altruism, helping, and volunteering: pathways to well-being in late life. Journal of aging and health, 25(1), 159-187.)*



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