



# Inspiring Futures

## An Evaluation of the Meaning and Impact of Arts Programmes in Criminal Justice Settings

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Our deep gratitude goes to all of the Inspiring Futures arts partners: Clean Break, Geese Theatre Company, Good Vibrations, Helix Arts, the Irene Taylor Trust, Only Connect and Open Clasp for running the programmes during difficult times and supporting the research team. We are appreciative too of the advice we received from Koestler Arts on our audience impact work.

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Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank all the participants of the Inspiring Futures programmes in prison settings and in the community. We are deeply appreciative of their willingness to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings. This research could not have taken place without them.

## Executive Summary

### Background, Research Questions and Research Design

Inspiring Futures (IF) was an ambitious programme of work, led by the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance and funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, with the research element funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. It reflected a unique collaboration bringing together leading arts in criminal justice organisations and the University of Cambridge's Institute of Criminology (IoC). Inspiring Futures combined a ground-breaking artistic programme in prisons and the community with embedded participative research. It aimed to advance knowledge into *why* and *how* arts interventions affect the lives of people in the criminal justice system and *how* these effects may be optimised to promote a step-change in arts programmes embedded in criminal justice settings. It also identified the wider impact of these programmes: for programme facilitators and organisers, for the settings in which the programmes were run, for audiences and for the criminal justice and arts sectors overall. With oversight from the National Criminal Justice Alliance the participating arts organisations (selected through an open process) were: *Clean Break*, *Geese Theatre Company*, *Good Vibrations*, *Helix Arts*, the *Irene Taylor Trust*, *Koestler Arts*, *Only Connect*, and the *Open Clasp Theatre Company*. These partner arts organisations ran a range of music and drama projects as part of the Inspiring Futures programme.

Data collection started in March 2020 and was intended last 24 months. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdowns led to significant changes to the IF programme of activities, particularly those in prisons. Prisons entered lockdown regimes on 24 March 2020, and all non-essential work, including all IF work, was suspended indefinitely. After the national lockdown ended, a 5-stage regime framework was introduced which prisons moved between, but there was a further prison lockdown in December 2021 and this remained in place until January 2022, and longer in some establishments. There was therefore a long hiatus before arts activities were reinstated, and fieldwork to observe projects and interview participants was intermittent between 2020 and 2023, with some additional set-backs and delays. Our intention to ensure full-scale follow-ups with participants at three intervals suffered from the extended period of fieldwork, with a necessary concentration of effort in data collection at Times 1 and 2, (start of course, end of course) resulting in a limited sample at Time 3 (10-18 month follow-up).

The research builds on notable previous attempts to demonstrate the importance and value of arts programmes and initiatives in criminal justice settings. What is distinctive about the approach in this research is that it consisted of two sets of investigative activities, the first focused on the impact of the arts for participants involved in the programmes (the participant study); the second focussed on the wider impact of the arts programmes, for the arts facilitators and organisations, for the criminal justice and arts sectors, and for audiences (the wider study). The four core research questions were: i) What are the effects of arts programmes in the criminal justice sector? ii) How can these effects be measured in a way

that is participatory and inclusive and which is accessible, meaningful and empowering to participants, and builds research capacity amongst arts organisations? iii) How can these effects be collated to establish a collective evidence base for impact which can be further developed and sustained by arts organisations in the future? and iv) How can the evidence of arts impact be disseminated to policy makers and the wider public in order to facilitate a transformation of approaches and attitudes towards people in the criminal justice system?

For the arts participant study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected by means of questionnaires, diaries, interviews and participant observations in order to capture the outcomes of attending a course and the processes through which these outcomes were achieved. Where possible a comparison group was set up, comprising people in the same settings who did not attend the arts courses. Comparisons between their responses and participants' responses to the same questionnaires before and after the courses helped to establish course-specific impact. The researchers adopted a participatory approach so that the methods were sufficiently comprehensive, flexible and nuanced to capture the complex and diverse quality of arts impact and to reflect a stance of showing respect for the men and women who participated in the programmes. In the hierarchical worlds of criminal justice agencies this is not always common. At the beginning of the project there was a series of focus group discussions with former participants in arts programmes so as to inform the development of the questionnaires and interview questions. The participation of the arts partner organisations was also invaluable at this stage of development. We also drew on the Intermediate Outcomes Measurement Instrument (IOMI), developed by Rand Europe in partnership with ARCS UK and the University of South Wales (see Burrowes et al., 2013). In addition, the Research Advisory Group (which included members with lived experience of the criminal justice system) provided important input on the development of research instruments and reviewed the project's findings. Our aim has been to deepen understanding of the impact of arts; any limitations of course, are our own, and not those of all who have supported and guided us along the way.

Across the full programme of 20 IF activities, the research team conducted 50 participant observations lasting between 1 day and 5 days at a time and 59 interviews with participants, 43 immediately at the end of the programme (Time 2), and 16 between 12 – 18 months after the programme (Time 3). There were 182 participants in the different Inspiring Futures programmes who contributed to any of the questionnaires, diaries or interviews. All participants were over 18 years. 73% (133) identified as male, 8% (15) as female, 1% (2) as a trans-woman and 17% (32) did not give information. Just over 92% (168) of participants were British nationals. Of those who disclosed their ethnicity, 53% (73) identified as White, 17% (23) as Black, 9% (13) as Mixed Race, 5% (7) as Asian, 3% (4) as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller and 12% (16) as another ethnicity.

For the wider study, 25 interviews were held with the facilitators of the arts programmes and leaders of the arts organisations to understand their experiences and the impact of this work on their professional and personal lives. Interviews were also held with 20 staff and managers

of the criminal justice settings hosting the programmes to collect their perspectives on the effects of the programmes for them and others within the settings and for their organisations. Where courses resulted in a performance and it was feasible, audience feedback was also collected and included public responses to the final Inspiring Futures exhibition of the arts partners' work organised by the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance.

## **Main findings**

### Participants

We explored participant impact in terms of creative development ('creative capital'), their inner lives (wellbeing, self-concept and personal development), and their social worlds and opportunities. Our statistical analyses show small but statistically significant positive changes from the start to the end of the courses across the whole participant sample. Analyses of the responses of participants in male prisons identify similar changes (although not all were statistically significant). In contrast the scores of the comparison group in male prisons show no equivalent trend which suggests that the changes participants reported can be attributed to their attendance and completion of the arts courses.

Participants indicated that they had learned new technical or creative skills, and that being able to be creative gave them confidence to try new activities. They described positive shifts in their wellbeing, their self-concept and their personal development. Some said the programmes gave 'meaning' to their lives and a sense of future agency (by attending another project or programme, or by thinking about future aspirations).

In terms of self-concept, two particular themes stand out: a growth in self-understanding and greater confidence to challenge oneself and put oneself in new and potentially demanding situations. In terms of personal development both the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that participants felt that they had been given an opportunity to develop new skills and capacities that might make a difference in their future. Some said that their desire to work on their personal development had been reignited or inspired.

Participants also reported positively on the social impact of taking part in the programmes and the relationships that were built or strengthened with others, both within and outside the criminal justice settings. Thus there is evidence of 'bonding social capital'; through participation new connections and friendships were formed. Relatedly, some participants felt that attending the arts programmes had brought them closer to their families - to their children, their partners, and parents - because of having something positive and uplifting to share with them, and because of an increased social confidence which had come about through participation.

There was also positive evidence of 'bridging social capital'. Participants spoke of developing new or latent skills through the team work on the courses, which they felt they could apply to other areas of life, and which would help them progress to new things. From Time 2 data in particular, participants indicated that positive experiences of programmes had been sustained in memory, attitude and application. The experience of participation had helped people overcome personal barriers, the sense of achievement had promoted positive thinking, or a sense of calm, or had prompted further self-help strategies. In sum, the experience of participation, for some, had served as a catalyst for personal development. This said, Time 3 data indicated that participants had reflected on the need for continuity of involvement and the need for further opportunities to engage in creative programmes.

#### Criminal justice staff and settings

Of course, none of the projects could have run without support from senior managers in the criminal justice settings. From interviews with staff in prisons (senior managers, education staff and prison officers), it was clear that some were highly motivated to facilitate the running of arts programmes, whereas some had simply been allocated the task. Several prison staff members indicated that highly structured regimes do not necessarily contribute positively to rehabilitation and saw benefit in creating opportunities for different kinds of activities. Some of the staff who were allocated to oversee the day-to-day running of the programmes participated directly in the activities, whether playing a musical instrument or taking part in a drama game or role play. They tended to find the experience enjoyable and interesting, and also confidence building.

Interview data (from both prison staff and prisoners) indicated that the direct participation of staff members in the arts programmes could yield longer-term benefits for relationships between staff and prisoners. The presence of prison staff and managers at performances also demonstrated an important message to participants about the prison's support for the arts activities and the staff's interest in prisoners' achievements. One strong theme here was that staff and prisoners could see each other as 'real people'.

As well as the individual and relational legacies of the arts programmes on life within the prison setting, people spoke of a broader cultural impact. Instrumentally the programmes contributed to the prisons' agenda for purposeful activity and rehabilitative programmes, but the courses could also create a 'buzz' within the prison that was energising.

Our findings on the impact of arts programmes in individual criminal justice settings, in prisons and in the community, serve as an indicator of the wider collective impact of arts programmes across the criminal justice sector. Specifically, it is possible collectively to see how the arts programmes are making an active contribution to several of HMPPS priorities including Respect, Purposeful Activity and Rehabilitation and Release Planning. We note however that in prisons where 'buy in' to the arts programmes was limited such a contribution remained a possibility rather than an actuality.

### Arts facilitators and organisations

Our study also captured the impact of running arts programmes for facilitators and for leaders of arts organisations. Interviews with facilitators found that however they started their work in the criminal justice system, all were motivated by a desire to make a difference. The precarity of work in the sector affected many facilitators' involvement in the field but despite organisational frustrations and the emotional labour involved, they found the work highly fulfilling and contributed to their own personal development. For the IF partner organisations, CJS work is either all of or a significant portion of their work. Working in prisons in particular is complicated and unpredictable, and for organisations who get their income from this work, last-minute cancellations and changes can be very disruptive. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted this fragility, but also amplified the resilience of the sector: many organisations were able to move their activities online and come up with innovative and creative ways to continue to provide some activities or resources.

Thinking more broadly to the role of the arts programmes within the arts sector, it is evident that the work of these organisations represents a small but significant part of the sector's activities. By reaching communities currently under-served by the arts they make an important contribution to Arts Council England's strategy for 2020-2030 'Let's Create'.

### Audiences

A strand of IF work involved showcasing in prisons and in the community. Performing or sharing work with an audience is important to all the arts partners; it transpired that this was important to many participants too, despite some initial anxiety. For participants, there was hope that sharing their stories or ideas could have positive impact. The arts organisations performed or showed their work in different ways: with a prisoner and prison staff audience, website productions, gigs within prison or in the community (involving ex-prisoners), showcases to a public audience, and digital showcasing.

As part of the IF research four audience surveys were conducted. The first three took place after a performance of work from one particular partner. The fourth survey, and the key one to mention here, was of audiences who attended the Inspiring Futures Exhibition held for one week at *Rich Mix*, a community arts venue in London, and then moved online. Responses, which came mostly from people visiting the in-person event, indicated that these events broadened some people's understandings of criminal justice and perceptions of people with criminal convictions. Other respondents indicated already nuanced views of people with convictions. Free text answers showed recognition of the role of the arts in facilitating rehabilitation. This feedback from visitors to the exhibition, over half of whom had happened upon it and had no connection with the criminal justice system, demonstrated the potential for publicity and information about the arts programmes to positively influence public opinion. We recognise that findings are drawn from a small sample of visitors to one exhibition and there needs to be more research to establish how common such responses might be across different sectors of the population.

## Conclusion

Inspiring Futures was a wide-reaching collaborative research exploration of multiple dimensions to the impact of arts programmes in criminal justice settings. The study's findings reinforce insights from earlier research on the contribution of arts programmes to participants' creative skills development, wellbeing, self-concept, and personal development. There is also evidence of the development of both social capital and bridging capital, and thus possibly to better prospects for desistance. The findings also indicate positive contribution to staff wellbeing and prisoner-staff relationships. One strength of the study is that evaluation has been cross-sector and has been conducted with large numbers of participants at Time 1 and T 2 and over a longer time period than has often been the case. Another is that we have collected both qualitative and quantitative data, avoiding previous 'toolbox/tick box' approaches or approaches which have focused only on reoffending rates, without recognising the complex journeys towards desistance.

As a result of its evaluation of multiple arts courses, the IF study has been able to generate unique insights into the similarities and differences regarding the effects of different arts forms. There are many similarities in terms of the positive experiences as described above. At the same time, we noted the following possible differences: drama activities involved embodiment of the self, with participants drawing on earlier life experiences, and subsequently engaging in intensive self-reflection and reflection on their own and others' behaviour. The drama programmes also offered a high degree of flexibility in terms of improvised self-expression. The music programmes provided greater scope for technical skills to be developed - with tangible outcomes. *Overall*, the distinguishing feature of the IF arts programmes is the focus on 'the social' - social interactions and relationships were intrinsic to the creative activities, learning, desistance-related and other outcomes for participants. This is in contrast to arts activities which are more individually focussed, such as the needlework training provided by Fine Cell Work ([finecellwork.co.uk](http://finecellwork.co.uk)) and individual desistance-oriented frameworks such as IOMI. It was through the interpersonal activities that intra-personal change took place as participants were inspired or prompted by these activities to develop and reflect. Our research creates a sound platform to explore such ideas further.

# 1 Introduction and Background

Research studies have long recognised that participation in arts programmes (such as music, drama, dance, creative writing, and visual arts) can be life-changing for men and women involved or at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. From small-scale evaluations to government reviews (for example, the Culture White Paper (Ministry of Justice, March 2016), and Dame Sally Coates' review of education in prisons (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, May 2016)), there is much evidence to show that arts programmes can be personally transformative for participants: reinvigorating a sense of self, promoting health and wellbeing, restoring relationships, opening up new lifestyles and social networks, and facilitating social reintegration and desistance from crime (see, Aesop, 2020; Bilby, Caulfield and Ridley, 2013; Colvin, 2015; Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2008, Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016; Diamond and Lanskey, 2023; Doxat-Pratt, 2021). Further, through public display of creativity, a communication channel can be established with the wider community, and with that comes a chance to break down social barriers of stigma and negative attitudes towards people with criminal convictions. Newly-acquired or improved artistic skills may generate better health, work and leisure opportunities, and benefit the wider artistic community, the creative economy, and the cultural life of society.

This research is a further contribution to the goal of bringing measurable change in both the credibility and the reach of arts projects in the criminal justice sector. Devised as a collaborative initiative between the University of Cambridge Institute of Criminology and the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance (NCJAA), the Inspiring Futures project has combined a programme of artistic work in prisons and community justice settings with embedded, participative research. The research has aimed to establish the first steps towards a new cross-disciplinary theory of arts impact through the development of a robust evidence base that will support the consolidation and expansion of arts programmes in criminal justice settings.

## 1.1 Project Aims and Research Questions

Alongside a growing number of studies and evaluations into the myriad benefits of the arts in criminal justice settings, a number of scholars have identified the need for sustained investment and the creation of a firm and robust research base (see, for example, Cheliotis, 2012; Parks and Bilby, 2010). A primary motivation of the Inspiring Futures research project, therefore, has been to move beyond the 'toolkit' approach of many recent initiatives, which have led to 'excessive simplifications' of artistic impact (Belfiore and Bennett, 2010), and to address the ongoing calls for a stronger theoretical underpinning to arts impact in criminal justice (Miles et al., 2005).

Methodologically, it has been multi-layered study, involving both qualitative and quantitative work. There has been a commitment throughout to consultation and involving the organisations and participants in the development and conduct of the research. Theoretically,

it has been informed by studies on the arts and desistance (e.g. Caulfield et al, 2016; Cheliotis and Jordanoska, 2016; McNeill et al., 2011), and has drawn on the theoretical foundations of the Intermediate Outcomes Measurement Instrument (IOMI), a tool developed specifically to measure change over time for participants in criminal justice arts programmes (see Burrowes et al., 2013). It has included some of the IOMI's identified 'intermediate outcomes'<sup>1</sup> (positive interim signs of change, including wellbeing, agency, problem-solving, motivation to change, hope, interpersonal trust) along with measures of social capital: relationships with family members and friends, social networks and employment prospects. The Inspiring Futures study has also been shaped by research looking at arts impact from other lenses (e.g. Crockett-Thomas et al., 2021; Doxat-Pratt, 2019), and has therefore explored possibilities of other outcomes for participants in the short and longer-term which may not be captured by a purely desistance focus. In this way, IF has aimed to extend and consolidate current theorisations of arts impact for participants in criminal justice settings.

The Inspiring Futures research study has also looked beyond participant impact; it has investigated the impact of arts programmes on staff and others in the criminal justice settings where the programmes were run, on the arts organisations and practitioners, and on the wider criminal justice and arts sectors. Lastly, the study has explored the potential impact of showcasing artwork made with and by people in the criminal justice system, through the performance and exhibition of creative project outputs, looking at audience responses to such work and possible changes in attitudes towards the arts and people in the criminal justice system. Our longer-term aim is for the project findings to stimulate dialogue with policy makers on the future role of the arts in criminal justice settings.

The research has been guided by the following four questions:

- 1) What are the effects of arts programmes in the criminal justice sector?
- 2) How can these effects be measured in a way that is participatory and inclusive and which is accessible, meaningful and empowering to participants and builds research capacity amongst arts organisations?
- 3) How can these effects be collated to establish a collective evidence base for impact which can be further developed and sustained by arts organisations in the future?
- 4) How can the evidence of arts impact be disseminated to policy makers and the wider public in order to facilitate a transformation of approaches and attitudes towards people in the criminal justice system?

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<sup>1</sup> 'Intermediate outcomes' are defined as 'outcomes that are directly or indirectly associated with reductions in reoffending over the longer term' (IOMI guidance notes, MoJ, 2014:6)

## 1.2 The Political Context

There has been an unprecedented number of Secretaries of State for Justice since this research was conceived and operationalised – seven since 2018. Following a series of huge changes to the justice system since 2012, the constant ministerial upheaval has meant a lack of consistency in penal policy (including, for example, the separation and subsequent reunification of the Prisons and Probation Services, and the extension of privatisation across the justice system). In 2018, Jacobson and Hough characterised the previous 25 years as a period of intense penal populism, shown in, amongst other factors, increasing numbers of custodial sentences, increasing sentence lengths, and a declining use of community sentences.

In recent years there has been a number of hard-hitting reviews of criminal justice practice, including the Lammy Review's (2017) damning evidence of racial disparity and discrimination in the criminal justice system, Serious Further Offence Reviews,<sup>2</sup> and reports about police conduct raising serious concerns about the legitimacy of policing.<sup>3</sup> Such concerns have continued to dent public faith in the criminal justice system. Partly in response to such reports, but also in keeping with the continued populist approach, we have seen further policy changes such as the granting of new powers to the Justice Secretary to prevent automatic early releases at the end of tariffs for certain offenders, and extending the option of the Whole Life Order to all those aged 18 and over, rather than aged 21 as previously (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Such measures mean people are spending more time in prison. The Police, Crime, Courts and Sentencing Act (2022) has created new offences, and generally adds to the stance of 'toughening up' criminal justice policy and practice.

Looking further back, austerity measures in the early 2010s under the Coalition Government cut budgets and restricted resources, leading to fewer staff, more limited provision of programmes in prisons, and fewer training and education opportunities available to people in prison or on community sentences. According to the Prison Officers' Association, the introduction of such schemes as the voluntary early departure scheme meant the Prison Service lost 7,000 frontline staff over a relatively short period of time.<sup>4</sup> These losses have not been fully recouped. New prison staff arrive with little relevant experience; all prison staff are

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<sup>2</sup> The Serious Further Offence Reviews concerning Jordan McSweeney and Damien Bendall who both committed offences under Probation supervision acknowledged failings on the part of the Probation Service who in McSweeney's case underestimated his risk of harm in the post-prison release supervision arranged for him - with a relatively inexperienced probation officer (HM Inspectorate of Probation Serious Offences Review January 2023) and in Bendall's case misclassified risk levels when he was under Probation supervision (HM Inspectorate of Probation Serious Offences Review December 2023).

<sup>3</sup> The crisis of legitimacy follows such incidents as serving police officers sharing images via the social media of Biba Henry and Nicole Smallman when they were assigned to protect the crime scene (they were stabbed and killed in northwest London in June 2020), four murders of men by Stephen Port between June 2014 and September 2015 in which the December 2021 Inquest concluded that 'failings on the part of the Metropolitan Police' probably contributed to three of the four deaths, and the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 by an off-duty Metropolitan police officer.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.poauk.org.uk/news-events/news-room/posts/2023/may/the-government-created-this-crisis-and-only-the-government-can-put-it-right/>

subject to high stress and sickness levels (Palmer, 2020) and it is unsurprising therefore that staff turnover is very high.

A combination of changes in policy and public attitudes has thus led to prisons in England & Wales continuing to be overcrowded, and to both the Prison and Probation Services (now combined as HMPPS) being understaffed and overwhelmed. This political context has shaped the possibilities and reach of arts programmes in prisons and other justice settings. Any appetite there may be for providing alternative programming such as arts projects is limited by budget and resourcing constraints, security, risk management and the need to manage public perception. This context has also shaped the Inspiring Futures study specifically, creating challenges for delivering arts programmes as planned, recruiting participants, and ensuring access for the research team and course materials.

### **1.3 The impact of Covid-19**

The existing challenges of providing arts programmes and conducting research in criminal justice settings were of course compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. The national lockdown prevented any community arts work from taking place; prisons also entered full-scale lockdown, with prisoners being locked in their cells for up to 23 and a half hours a day, a ban on non-essential personnel entering the prisons, and all non-essential activities being cancelled or delivered remotely as in-cell packs. The Inspiring Futures courses were therefore cancelled or postponed. This affected the timeline of the project, and also in some cases altered what the Inspiring Futures arts partners were able to provide. Despite the challenges and constraints of working during and after the pandemic, all arts partners were eventually able to deliver a form of the programme of work they had envisaged as part of the Inspiring Futures project.

### **1.4 The Inspiring Futures Research Activities**

With oversight from the National Criminal Justice Alliance the participating arts organisations (selected through an open process) were: *Clean Break*, *Geese Theatre Company*, *Good Vibrations*, *Helix Arts*, the *Irene Taylor Trust*, *Koestler Arts*, *Only Connect*, and the *Open Clasp Theatre Company*. These partner arts organisations ran a range of music and drama projects as part of the Inspiring Futures programme in different prisons across the country and in one community setting.

For the study of participant impact, quantitative and qualitative data were collected to capture the outcomes of attending a course and the processes through which these outcomes were achieved. The research methods comprised survey questionnaires, diaries, interviews and participant observations. Where possible a comparison group was set up, consisting of people in the same settings who did not attend the arts courses. Comparisons between their responses and participants' responses to the same questionnaires before and after the courses helped to establish course-specific impact.

Across the full programme of 20 IF activities, the research team conducted 50 participant observations lasting between 1 day and 5 days at a time and 59 interviews with participants, 43 immediately at the end of the programme (Time 2), and 16 between 12 – 18 months after the programme (Time 3). There were 182 participants in the different Inspiring Futures programmes who contributed to any of the questionnaires, diaries or interviews. All participants were over 18 years. 73% (133) identified as male, 8% (15) as female, 1% (2) as a trans-woman and 17% (32) did not give information. Just over 92% (168) of participants were British nationals. Of those who disclosed their ethnicity, 53% (73) identified as White, 17% (23) as Black, 9% (13) as Mixed Race, 5% (7) as Asian, 3% (4) as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller and 12% (16) as another ethnicity.

For the wider study, 25 interviews were held with the facilitators of the arts programmes and leaders of the arts organisations to understand their experiences and the impact of this work on their professional and personal lives. Interviews were also held with 20 staff and managers of the criminal justice settings hosting the programmes to collect their perspectives on the effects of the programmes for them and others within the settings and for their organisations. Where courses resulted in a performance and it was feasible, audience feedback was also collated, included public responses to the final Inspiring Futures exhibition of the arts partners' work organised by the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance.

Data collection started in March 2020 and was intended to run for 24 months. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdowns led to significant changes to the IF programmes of activities, particularly those in prisons. Prisons entered lockdown regimes on 24 March 2020, and all non-essential work, including all IF work, was suspended indefinitely. After the national lockdown ended, a 5-stage regime framework was introduced which prisons moved between, but there was a further prison lockdown in December 2021 and this remained in place until January 2022, and longer in some establishments. There was therefore a long hiatus before arts activities were reinstated, and fieldwork to observe projects and interview participants was intermittent between 2020 and 2023, with some additional set-backs and delays. Our intention to ensure full-scale follow-ups with participants at three intervals suffered from the extended period of fieldwork, with a necessary concentration of effort in data collection at Times 1 and 2, (start of course, end of course) resulting in a limited sample at Time 3 (10-18 month follow-up).

## 2 Earlier Policy and Research Initiatives

### 2.1 The development of the arts in criminal justice settings: a case study of Scotland

The development of arts programmes in criminal justice settings deserves special mention. There have been many notable initiatives across the globe for example, in Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Kenya and the US which have incorporated a wide array of art forms: theatre, painting, sculpture, music, poetry and dance. There is not the space to describe all of this work in this review, so we focus on a case study: the significant developments in the role of the arts in criminal justice settings in Scotland.

There has been longstanding interest and some notable initiatives in the arts in Scotland. For example, the creative arts played a significant role in positive developments in the Barlinnie Special Prison Unit for violent and resistant offenders way back in the 1970s – as described in autobiographical works (Boyle, 1977; Collins, 2000). But a major review of the arts in prisons which was completed in 2011 prompted a step change in thinking about the value of the arts more widely. *Inspiring Change* involved a programme of arts interventions that operated in five Scottish prisons which was co-ordinated by Motherwell College and Learning Centre staff in the prisons. There were partnerships with the National Galleries of Scotland, Citizens' Theatre, Traverse Theatre, Scottish Opera, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble and the National Youth Choir of Scotland (Anderson et al., 2011). The aims of the review were to 'stimulate offenders' engagement with learning, improve literacy skills, and demonstrate the potential of the arts to support the process of rehabilitation' (Anderson et al., 2011:3). An organisational review of the Scottish Prison Service in 2014 '*Unlocking Potential Transforming Lives*' subsequently led to a particular focus on the arts. The Scottish Prison Service Arts Review was published in 2015; it aimed to provide an overview of provision of the arts in the sector drawing on knowledge of third sector involvement, interviews with providers, information from Heads of Offender Outcomes and Learning Centre Managers in prisons, as well as on conversations with ten arts service users in HMP Perth. The organisational review conveyed a number of revised values relating to beliefs that people can change, that there might be 'courage to care regardless of the circumstances', and that there should be humility and recognition that it is possible to learn from others, for example (Scottish Prison Service, 2015: 4). The arts review explored the arts in relation to nine offender outcomes which had been identified and a 'Curriculum of Excellence' all relating to 'human outcomes (desistance, human health and wellbeing, recognising the role of informal activity in improving outcomes' and 'motivational activity' for instance), with concomitant 'organisational outcomes (recognising the role of the third sector, asset-based service design, evidence based services, ...[and] embedding arts-based learning)' (Scottish Prison Service, 2015: 5). A third focus reflected community-facing outcomes which might build bridges between prisons and the community, and thus contribute to changing public attitudes to offenders. Alongside the related holistic review of purposeful activity (encapsulating activities relating to wellbeing, citizenship, life skills and resilience, offending behaviour and learning and employability

(Scottish Prison Service 2014) the arts review endorsed and promoted recognition that the arts could play a major part in facilitating learning, and indeed, might reach people considered 'hard to reach' and for whom formal educational approaches had not worked.

Armed with a survey of provision and details of experiences of the arts in prisons on the ground, the arts review led to a commitment by the Scottish Prison service to build arts provision in a new generation of learning contracts. It aimed to improve partnership working, ensure capital investment (resources for the arts in prisons), make strategic connections with the Scottish Prisons Arts Network and create a directory of arts providers. It created a learning and skills team whose objective was to build capacity to manage prison-based arts services, develop a communications strategy for the arts in prisons and ensure that the delivery of arts activities within prisons including agreed aims and objectives for participants, as well as evaluations (Scottish Prison Service, 2015: 23-24).

Other initiatives which fed into the arts review and the step-change agreed by the Scottish Prison Service include the important work of Kirstin Anderson who taught music at Polmont Young Offenders Institution in Scotland, and which has generated resources for those teaching music in prisons (Anderson, 2014; 2015). Another particular initiative which has achieved national recognition concerns *Vox Liminis*, a charitable organisation which runs creative projects in both prisons and in the community (involving offenders, victims, researchers, criminal justice and support workers, and families who have experience of crime and justice processes). The organisation was created in 2013 and reflects a belief that making music can bring together diverse groups of people with different experiences of crime and justice and contribute to a greater sense of justice (<https://www.voxliminis.co.uk>).

In sum, arts developments in Scotland reflect both evidence of the impact of the arts, and commitment to establishing a framework for the effective delivery of arts programmes which encapsulate broader prison service aims and values relating to personal change, and which also promote the idea that creative activity can bridge the divide between 'offenders' and 'victims'.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.2 Previous Research

What follows is a brief outline of previous research focusing in particular on major overviews of research on the arts and criminal justice (predominantly concerning the arts and criminal justice in the UK), and then an outline of more recent research developments and evaluations of arts-based projects.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See also, Scottish Prison Service Arts Review, April 2015. *Accompanying Document. Literature Review* - which provides a summary of the research documents which informed the arts review.

<sup>6</sup> The NCJAA Evidence Library offers an excellent resource in relation to previous studies of arts-based projects in the criminal justice system: <http://www.artsevidence.org.uk>

## Reviews of Criminal Justice Arts Programmes

Building on the widespread reporting of beneficial experiences and outcomes from individual arts initiatives in criminal justice settings, a number of research reviews have explored evidence of *cross-sector* and *long-term* impact. In 2005 following a commission by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit within the Department of Education, and the Arts Council England, and developing work already begun at the Anne Peaker Centre in Kent, Jenny Hughes and colleagues produced an extensive review of arts programmes: *Doing the Arts Justice: A Review of Research Literature, Practice and Theory*. The overall aim of the review was to strengthen the evidence base for the arts as an effective medium in offender rehabilitation. The key objectives were to:

- 'survey and evaluate the range, practice, method and effectiveness of previous arts interventions in criminal justice settings
- explore and specify the causal mechanisms/models of change underlying existing practice and any links to rehabilitation or prevention
- analyse existing evidence for any differential effects of participation in specific art forms' (Hughes et al., 2005: 8).

The review was based on a survey of published and unpublished work on the arts and covering the period from the early 1980s to the early 2000s). Some 63 reports were identified in the UK, with a few more in the other countries, making a total of 76 examples of arts projects which had been evaluated (including a few North American, Brazilian, Canadian New Zealand and South Australian studies in addition to those based in the UK). The researchers focused on the practice model of arts delivery in use, the theory base (where there was one), the research/evaluation method, and evidence of outcomes/effectiveness. Using criteria relating to the strength of the research design and evidence of research quality, the researchers then attempted to evaluate the evidence in terms of its relative quality and robustness. Very few of the studies included any quantified results (n2); most of the studies were qualitative (n38); qualitative studies comprised 31 of the studies, and 5 turned out to be literature reviews.

Despite the concomitant limitations of the analysis of arts activities (which may not have been representative of the whole), and of evidence based almost solely on interviews and observation, the evidence gathered reflected a positive connection between participation in the arts and overall improvements in the wellbeing and behaviour of participants. These ranged from increased educational attainment to increased self-confidence, and from social cohesion to a reduction in recidivism, though it would have to be said that many of the studies suggest correlations here, rather than causation (Hughes et al., 2005:35). The researchers looked at wide ranging evidence, for example, in addition to evaluations of arts-based projects which pointed to positive effects on 'inclusion', education, learning, co-operation and individual self-esteem and confidence, some studies also focused on the impact of arts projects on rule-breaking.

Given acknowledged limitations of arts project evaluations at the time in terms of definitions of 'arts' projects, a lack of a sufficient number of studies to produce meta-analyses and lack of explanation in evaluations to explain the factors which might make a difference (in other words, no explicit theory based to facilitate testing of models of change), the review's main contribution was to both provide detailed description of what different arts projects were delivering, and pick out theoretical strands which might help to explain why participation in arts workshops might produce change in behaviour and achievements.

Since Hughes et al., (2005) published their comprehensive overview of the arts in the field of criminal justice there have been further attempts to consolidate the evidence base for the arts in the English and Welsh criminal justice system. One such overview was commissioned by the NCJAA (known at the time as the 'Arts Alliance' and focused on secondary desistance (Bilby, Caulfield and Ridley, 2013). Indeed, it is relevant here to point out that scholars have drawn a distinction between primary desistance (which is defined as a pause or gap in a pattern of offending), secondary desistance (which is defined as a shift from non-offending behaviour to a non-offending identity), and tertiary desistance, which is when long term change is recognised by others and the ex-offender develops a sense of belonging (see, for instance, Maruna and Farrall 2004; McNeill, 2016; Nugent and Schinkel, 2016).

The NCJAA commissioned research conducted by Charlotte Bilby, Laura Caulfield and Louise Ridley developed as a result of the ESRC seminar series run by Bath Spa University: 'Enrichment activities – Arts, creativity and spirituality in criminal justice systems' (ES/J021784/2). The research examined five projects in four criminal justice locations: 'visual arts in a high security adult male prison; music and deejaying skills with young offenders in the community; a music-making project in a resettlement (open) prison, and creative writing and bookbinding project in a closed female prison' (Bilby et al, 2013:6). The research consisted of observation of four or more sessions in each of the projects, interviews with staff and participants, and analyses of work produced within each of the arts projects. Key findings included the fact that participation in arts projects gave opportunity for prison residents and young offenders in the community to redefine themselves, there was evidence of increased co-operation with others, and increased compliance with criminal justice system rules and expectations. But there were just 30 participants involved in the projects and no follow-up in the months and years which followed.

The Arts Council England (2018) overview *Arts and culture in health and wellbeing and in the criminal justice system: A summary of evidence* not only rehearses the value of the arts in the criminal justice system, but highlights some of the challenges in measuring impact. Drawing on the Burrowes et al. (2013) review of evidence of the impact of the arts on reoffending (for the National Offender Management Service as it was then known)<sup>7</sup> only 16 out of 2,028 papers met the established criteria for review. As the Arts Council report indicates, this was not a statement about the quality of the projects, but rather indication of how few projects

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<sup>7</sup> Now known as His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

had demonstrated immediate and measurable impact on reoffending. At the same time, the report acknowledges the important work of McNeill et al. (2011), which suggests that it is unrealistic to expect involvement in an arts project to immediately produce impact on criminal attitudes and lifestyles. The development of the Intermediate Outcomes Measurement Instrument toolkit (Maguire et al, 2019) followed, but there are limits to toolkits because of the pre-categorisation of likely impacts for instance.

A recent unpublished but significant piece of work is the MPhil dissertation by Claire Yixin Ren: *To What Extent Do the Arts Inspire Desistance? A Systematic Review of Evaluations of Arts Programmes in the UK Criminal Justice Systems from 2004 to 2019* completed in 2020 at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. Ren's (2020) review of arts-based projects related to desistance initially identified over 4,000 references for review. But exclusion of studies which did not meet the review criteria (for example they did not include methodological details) ultimately resulted in the inclusion of just 54 studies. Drawing on Cochrane principles for systematic reviews (Higgins et al., 2019), the studies which qualified for review were accessed via a wide range of databases and journal indexes, and reflected different methodologies: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods, with a wide array of methods used within each of these categories.

Half the arts projects reviewed (within the sample of 54 studies) were short term – between one week to six months. Longer term arts projects (between one and five years) were infrequent. Most projects were just one week. The projects were delivered in differed in settings: prison, community, prison and community, prison therapeutic communities, and as part of resettlement programmes. Moreover, they reflected different art forms: music, theatre, dance/theatre, arts mentoring, multi crafts, fashion and textiles, needlework and radio. Exactly half of the projects were conducted with fewer than 25 participants.

Despite some conflicting findings from this body of research, in relation to the primary question about the possible contribution of the arts to desistance, the key findings include reference to some commonalities in terms of 'areas of change' – noting that participation in arts projects can facilitate a degree of autonomy and humanity (thinking for oneself and feeling 'normal' with normal exchanges between members of groups and the facilitators). Other key findings relate to wellbeing, the expression and management of emotions, increases in self-confidence, improvements in learning and enrichment, the development of practical and social skills, improved interpersonal relationships, utilisation of space in the arts projects to reflect, develop self-efficacy, and develop aspirations for life beyond their immediate situations. At the same time, there was evidence of 'negative emotions and inability to adjust back to institutional life' after the programme finished (Ren, 2020:75). Ren (2020) also observes that arts workshops may reinforce criminal associations and that some people simply found it too hard to participate because of a lack of confidence; some revealed hostility and sabotaged arts projects. The main limitation of this review is that it does not quantify any changes in arts workshop participants, but it has provided very useful background to our own study.

In sum, there has been a strong and continuous thread of research on arts-based interventions in criminal justice settings. Cumulative research has examined positive effects of artistic creativity. Identifying just a few individual projects, Cox and Gelsthorpe (2008; 2012) have shown that music programmes in prisons can foster self-esteem, and Ezell and Levy (2003) have demonstrated that participants in the arts in prisons facilitate a strong sense of achievement. Researchers have highlighted higher levels of self-efficacy as a result of participation in arts programmes (Lazzari, Amundson, and Jackson, 2005) and an increased internal locus of control (Gussak, 2009). Digard and Liebling (2012) have indicated that there can be empowerment through involvement in the arts. Participation in the arts can foster greater self-confidence and a positive attitude towards learning (Tett et al., 2012), and assist individuals in improving their social skills (McNeill et al., 2011).

Music, the visual arts, theatre, drama, needlework and fashion design have all featured here. There is evidence that participation in the arts can serve a transformative function for individuals in the criminal justice system, facilitating both psychological and attitudinal change, increasing individuals' motivations and capacities for learning and enhancing social skills (Caulfield and Simpson, 2019; Cheliotis and Jordanoska, 2016).

#### Recent arts evaluations

Overviews of research aside, we wanted to ensure that we consider evaluations across different arts-based initiatives. The following selection is designed to reflect different art forms, as a precursor to our exploration of cross-arts impact. The projects descriptions have been drawn directly from the NCJAA Evidence Library.

#### 2014: [Women at the HeArt Evaluation Report](#)

Funded by the Arts Council England, and in partnership with the Monument Trust and Thames Valley Probation, Women at the HeArt was a Thames Valley mixed media project which used the visual arts for vulnerable women in four different settings. The aim was to empower women as well as to embed creative practice into support services. The evaluation revolved around changes in confidence, engagement, emotional change, and attitudinal change for example. The primary limitation of this study was that the sample size was not specified (Leverett-Morris, 2014).

#### 2018: [An independent evaluation of Making for Change: skills in a fashion training and manufacturing workshop](#)

This project was a partnership between HM Prison Service (HMP Downview) and the London College of Fashion which offered an accredited course in fashion, and which aimed to increase women's skills, confidence, learning outcomes, and wellbeing. The evaluation revolved around observation, focus groups and interviews with participants and staff, producing positive findings. Here the main limitation was that there were just 14 in the sample of participants and there was no follow-up (Caulfield, Curtis and Simpson, 2018).

2018: HMP/YOI Winchester Applied Theatre pilot

Delivered by Bearface CIC between July 2017 and July 2018, and funded by Hampshire Cultural Trust, this theatre pilot with young offenders aimed to deliver a new Applied Theatre intervention to impact on young people's attitudes, thinking and behaviour in a closed setting. There were positive findings for participants who completed the programme. The main limitation concerned the small sample size (10) and there was no follow up (Barton and Russell, 2018).

2019: An evaluation of The Irene Taylor Trust's Sounding Out programme 2016-8

This two year project created traineeship positions for ex-prisoners. Through 'creative music projects, live performance opportunities, one to one pastoral support, training, workshop delivery, mentoring [and] work placements' the project aimed to 'instil discipline; increase self-confidence, self-esteem and self-motivation; improve social skills; and develop mentoring skills' (Massie, Jolly and Caulfield, 2019:1). The main limitation of this study is that whilst the evaluation is very positive, the sample size was just 10 between 2016-2018 (Massie, Jolly and Caulfield, 2019).

2020: BROAD (Building Resilience and Overcoming Adversity through Dance and Drama) Evaluation Report

This project aimed to support vulnerable groups of people in prisons, secure children's units and secure hospitals (co-created by Odds Arts company and Company Chameleon). The evaluation focused on behavioural change and communication skills, confidence and personal skills, but the researchers also looked at the use of space in physical confinement, embodied learning and psychosocial and bodily integration, for instance. The evaluation reported positive findings but the main limitations were a small sample size and the absence of follow up to assess longer term impact (Froggett and Breton, 2020).

2020: Creating Change, Impact Study: 65 Individuals participating in five Women's Centres across Hampshire (funded by HIOW CRC and Hampshire Cultural Trust)

Key features of this applied theatre project (conducted between April 2019 – April 2020) relate to personal growth and development. The evaluation reflects testimonies from participants and other measures of change relating to the development of pro-social attitudes and behaviour. The evaluation indicates positive findings. The main limitation of the study, however, is that there was no follow-up (Russell, 2020).

Even in this small sample of projects – relating to theatre, music, dance and drama, the visual arts (multi-media) and fashion – there are commonalities in objectives and in positive outcomes especially relating to personal development, attitudinal change, confidence and increased engagement. But all have limitations relating to sample size and the absence of any kind of follow-up.

Whilst the present study has limitations of its own, key objectives have included the generation of a reasonably large sample size and follow-up mechanisms in at least two stages

after the initial participation in a project, with a small sample of follow-up at a third stage, some 12-18 months after participants' involvement in the arts programme.

#### Challenges and limitations of previous studies

A lack of funding for arts activities to be delivered either consistently or long-term in prisons (or in the community) has generated some common challenges for evaluators of arts programmes which frequently:

operate in a context defined by institutional requirements and convenience, in which schedules are often fluid, and relationships unpredictable...[t]hey are one-off or short-run projects working with small, often shifting groups of participants that are recruited in an ad hoc or unspecified manner. This prohibits the manipulation of samples into treatment and control (or comparison) groups, the validation of outcomes by testing for statistical significance, and the ability to generalise from or extend findings (Miles & Clarke, 2006, pp. 5-6).

Key limitations of research and evaluation have revolved around methodological issues; for example, the lack of control groups and lack of follow-up over time (Parkes and Bilby, 2010) and a lack of specificity in terms of sample sizes (Digard and Liebling, 2012). One major concern has related to a quest for quantifiable evidence. As O'Keefe and Albertson (2016: 509) indicated:

...it is unlikely that arts-based interventions will lend themselves to randomised control trials, the so-called 'gold standard' for evaluation. Issues around attribution are likely to be problematic as substantive change in offending behaviour is rarely achieved from a single intervention but is often the combination of interventions, sequenced to support the case management process, which enables change to be embedded in a person's future lifestyle.

The notion of randomised control trials being a 'gold standard' for research evaluations, of course, has come under close critical scrutiny (Hough, 2010) and it is no longer widely accepted that there is a hierarchy of research tools; rather, it is a matter of choosing the tool appropriate to the task.

Whilst the Ministry of Justice set up the Justice Data Lab service in November 2014 to provide intervention evaluators with a matched comparison group to facilitate analysis of the impact of the intervention on reoffending, the challenge of finding appropriate comparison groups for small-scale studies and projects has not made this easy. Moreover, there have been general concerns about the value of quantitative data which capture single moments of experience; and the questions themselves may alter states of mind. In addition, relatively few evaluations of arts-based projects have been conducted independently of the funding bodies, small samples have hindered generalisability (insofar as this may be relevant); many studies lack control or comparison groups, and some have also concluded the evaluation process at the end of a given project, leaving no possibility to conduct follow-up interviews with participants. We can add to this catalogue of methodological problems in doing evaluations of arts-based initiatives in the criminal justice system, such as challenges in gaining access to

participants or obtaining prison participants' personal information, especially when they are moved from one prison to another or are released from prison or when staff are overstretched with other duties and unable to devote time and energy to finding details regarding individuals.

## 3 Research Methodology

### 3.1 Project Partners

The Inspiring Futures project worked with eight different partner organisations, each of which is involved entirely or partially in providing creative projects in prisons and other justice settings. Seven of these organisations were involved in project delivery; that is, they provided the projects which formed the basis of this evaluation. The eighth, Koestler Arts, contributed to the showcasing element of the Inspiring Futures project. This section gives an overview of each project partner, their general work and their specific contribution(s) to Inspiring Futures.

#### Clean Break

Clean Break is a theatre company working exclusively with women with experience of the criminal justice system and women at risk of entering it due to problematic alcohol and substance use and mental ill health. Founded in 1979 by two women in prison, it now runs theatre workshops and projects in prisons, the community and from its women only studios in London to build confidence, resilience and wellbeing and transform the lives of women, supporting them into positive futures. Alongside its direct work with women, the company commissions and produces original theatre productions to introduce ideas around the complex theme of women and criminalisation to new audiences, inspiring compassion and action.

For Inspiring Futures, Clean Break ran two projects, both at HMP Downview.

#### ***The Setting***

HMP Downview is a closed women's prison in Surrey holding approximately 210 individuals (per HMIP report, October 2021). The Clean Break work was overseen by the Education department, although the Enhanced Thinking Skills programme manager also had involvement due to her personal interest in the project.

#### ***CB1: Clean Break & Open Book***

The first project was run in collaboration with Open Book, an organisation based at Goldsmiths University of London, which aims to break down barriers for people entering higher education. Open Book led this project, which combined research skills sessions run by Open Book with practical drama workshops run by a Clean Break facilitator. Participants picked a topic of interest to them and conducted their own research into it, and then through the Clean Break drama sessions they turned their findings into a short piece of theatre.

The project started in December 2021. Sessions took place once weekly – drama in the mornings, and research skills in the afternoons. Due to the national lockdowns, the project was interrupted in the middle; it restarted in the Spring of 2022 but at this point only 3 participants were able to return to the project. It finished in May 2022 with two performances

of the theatre pieces each woman had produced. Their pieces covered their topics of interest: menopause in prison, forced marriage, and identity and creativity in prison.

### ***CB2: 'A Proposal for Resisting Darkness'***

The second project was run solely by Clean Break, and ran from May to July 2022. A group of women worked with a Clean Break facilitator and playwright Yasmin Joseph to create an original piece of theatre addressing themes affecting women, eventually titled 'A Proposal for Resisting Darkness'. Once the script had been finalised and approved by the group, they rehearsed it with a professional director and stage manager, and performed it in the prison to an audience of other prison staff, invited peers and outside guests. The play has since been turned into a radio show, with voice actors playing each part, which is intended to be played publicly and inside prisons via National Prison Radio.

### **Geese Theatre Company**

Geese Theatre Company uses theatre and drama in criminal justice and social welfare settings. They devise and deliver bespoke groupwork projects, performances and training events, harnessing the power of theatre to encourage positive change. With over 35 years of experience, they have worked in partnership with prison and probation services across the country and internationally; they provide theatre projects for young people and adults who have offended or who are at risk of offending, and for professionals who work with these client groups. Their work is based on a belief that theatre performance and drama are powerful and effective tools for inviting individuals to examine their own behaviour and acting as a catalyst for promoting personal development and change.

For Inspiring Futures, Geese Theatre delivered four 'Journeyman' projects in two prisons.

### ***The Settings***

Three of the projects took place at HMP Featherstone, a Category C men's prison in Staffordshire holding approximately 660 adults. The project came under the remit of the Reducing Reoffending department and the main point of contact in the prison was the Head of Reducing Reoffending.

Due to staffing issues at HMP Featherstone, the second Geese project (GT2) took place at HMP Hewell, a Category B men's prison in Worcestershire holding approximately 850 adults. The project initially came under the oversight of the 'Rehabilitation Culture and Equalities' lead, but this member of staff left his post midway through the project and oversight was more challenging.

### ***GT1-4: Journeyman Projects***

'Journeyman' was developed especially for Inspiring Futures and was adapted in response to the additional limitations in the aftermath of the Covid-19 lockdowns. In practice, each of the four projects took the same broad form. Two facilitators (sometimes with an additional

trainee) worked with a group of up to 6 men over a two-week period, using theatre exercises to work on themes of personal development, life goals and decision-making. An officer would oversee each session, sometimes joining in and sometimes sitting to the side. Each project started with experiential exercises that developed rapport but which also foster discussion about key themes (such as using obstacle courses to discuss barriers to personal development). As the project progressed, the facilitators would introduce fictional characters, often through short theatre performances, to the group, who would then assign a name, personality traits and circumstances onto the character. The group would then be invited to develop the character's journey through a range of creative techniques: for example, if the character left his house after having an alcoholic drink, the group would imagine and improvise what might happen next, such as getting in touch with a drug dealer or getting into a fight. The Geese team would coach through the dramatic development and then use the storylines to facilitate discussions around relevant themes, inviting participants to reflect on their own personal journey. Each project ended with a 'sharing', in which the participants reflected on the progress they had made to an invited audience of staff and peers.

### Good Vibrations

Good Vibrations run Indonesian gamelan music projects in different settings including prisons, secure hospitals and in the community, supporting participants to build more positive futures. Indonesian gamelan is both a music style and the name of the set of instruments on which such music is played. The ensemble consists mostly of traditional Indonesian tuned percussion instruments, and the music has a rich cultural history. It is an accessible and communal art form: it can involve learning a very simple motif which is then repeated multiple times, and the group work together to move between these simple motifs or layer different melodic lines together. Good Vibrations see their music-making activities as a hook through which behaviours such as accountability, concentration, communication and leadership can be developed without overt teaching on those areas.

For Inspiring Futures, Good Vibrations provided four projects, each in a different prison.

#### ***GV1-4: Indonesian Gamelan Projects***

In each prison, the Good Vibrations provided a weeklong project that followed a similar framework. One or two facilitators worked with a group of participants (between 8 and 20), who learned about the instruments and the gamelan culture, rehearsed traditional pieces, practiced improvisation and devised their own pieces. Each project was overseen by an officer or member of staff, who tended to stay in the background but occasionally got involved. Each week culminated in a performance within the prison, to an audience of prison staff, other prisoners, and sometimes invited guests from outside. The participants also received a CD of the work they had done during the week.

## ***The Settings***

**GV1:** The first project took place at HMP Wealstun in March 2020. This was the first of all the Inspiring Futures projects to take place, and the only one that took place before the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns. That said, it was only two weeks before the national lockdowns came into force and there were clear signs that the pandemic was causing difficulties: the prison was on alert for new restrictions to be introduced and additional hygiene measures were brought in.

HMP Wealstun is a Category C men's training and resettlement prison in Yorkshire, holding over 800 adults. The GV project there was overseen by the Reducing Reoffending governor and the Activities Manager. An officer was present in the sessions throughout the week. The project took place in the chapel, and culminated in a performance to which participants could invite their family from the outside. As well as the creative activity, the project also offered an NVQ qualification in Teamwork.

**GV2:** The second GV project took place at HMP Stoke Heath in October 2021. HMP Stoke Heath is a Category C men's training and resettlement prison in Shropshire holding approximately 750 adults. The Good Vibrations project took place in an unused workshop. At the end of the project participants put on a performance to an audience of staff at the prison.

**GV3:** The third GV project took place at HMP Hull in November 2021. HMP Hull is a large, inner-city men's prison holding just under 1,000. The GV project there was hosted by the PIPE unit (Psychologically Informed Planned Environment) and was overseen by the Psychology Lead on the unit. The week culminated in a performance on the unit, where other residents and staff could stand on the landings and watch.

**GV4:** The final GV project took place at HMP Frankland in December 2022. HMP Frankland is a Category A, high-security men's prison near Durham holding around 850 adults, most of whom are on long, indeterminate or life sentences. The GV project took place on a PIPE unit, and culminated in a performance to staff and other prisoners from the PIPE unit.

## Helix Arts

Helix Arts is an organisation based in the North East of England, working with creative professionals and communities to co-produce artistic work. Their mission is to promote equality of opportunity to make art, and have worked for over 30 years to enable vulnerable and marginalised people in the North East of England to make art and have their cultural voices heard. They prioritise coproduction and responsiveness; their projects are designed to enable participants to make informed choices about their creative journeys whilst working with artists from any creative profession.

For Inspiring Futures, Helix Arts delivered a project called *Avant-Guard* at HMP Northumberland, taking place in August-October 2021. It was led by professional actor Craig Conway and facilitated in partnership with Age UK North Tyneside and Teesside.

## ***The Setting***

HMP Northumberland is a private prison north of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, managed by Sodexo. It is a Category C prison for adult males holding approximately 1,300 individuals. The project initially involved prisoners from mains wings and vulnerable prisoner wings; only one mains prisoner maintained involvement, and most work took place on an older vulnerable prisoner house block.

## ***Age UK Partnership***

The partnership with Age UK meant the project was available to over-50s only (although one participant was 49). The Age UK representative worked regularly in HMP Northumberland and a number of other prisons in the North-East of England. His work involves facilitating regular activities with older prisoners, generally focused on everyday wellbeing and engagement. He is a key-holder in the prison, and his involvement meant that directly-employed staff did not feature in the project. Age UK also advocates measures to assist older prisoners, for example at the time of the project they had been working towards creating a dementia-friendly cell in the prison.

## ***HA1: The Avant-Guard Project***

The aim of the *Avant-Guard* project, named at its inception, was to use creative means to facilitate discussions about prison life with those inside and turn these testimonies into a performance piece. Helix Arts values co-production highly, and so the form the piece would take was not decided in advance but in discussion with the participants and in response to their stories.

Due to ongoing Covid restrictions, participants were not all able to gather together with the facilitator; they were 'bubbled' according to their landings. So Craig worked in short sessions with a few participants at a time, or occasionally one-to-one. Craig gave creative tasks based on their artistic preferences (for example, a poetry task for someone who enjoyed writing poetry, or drawing for visual artists, and so on), which participants did in between sessions, and then used their work as the starting point for a discussion about their experiences in prison and their personal stories.

These conversations and pieces were turned into a radio drama which sheds light on prison life, produced by Craig and a producer at Helix. Given the Covid context, it particularly highlights what 'lockdown' looked like for those who were already locked down. The final piece was taken back into the prison in early 2023 to get input from the participants, and will be disseminated publicly.

## Irene Taylor Trust

The Irene Taylor Trust work with groups of people in different contexts to create new music and perform to public audiences. They endeavour to create and record music with groups of prisoners, ex-prisoners, or young people at not in education, employment or training; through the process, participants are given an opportunity for expression and to learn or develop technical skills and personal capacities such as communication skills, increased confidence to try new things, and widened aspirations, which will help them rebuild their lives. Their public performances aim in part to challenge preconceptions people may have of the criminal justice system and to demonstrate the artistic talent within prisons and community justice.

For Inspiring Futures, the Irene Taylor Trust ran four projects: the Lullaby Project at HMP Norwich, two iterations of the Music in Prisons project at HMPs Thorn Cross and Bure, and a course of sessions with a musician in residence at HMP Liverpool.

### ***LP1: Lullaby Project at HMP Norwich***

The Lullaby Project was a collaboration between the Irene Taylor Trust and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at HMP Norwich during October and November 2021, in which fathers in prison wrote and recorded songs for their children.

HMP Norwich is a Category C men's prison in the centre of Norwich city, holding about 700 individuals. The Lullaby Project was hosted by the Education department (run by People Plus) with input from Spurgeon's, a charity supporting prisoners and their families.

Fathers who might benefit from the project were identified by Spurgeons and then allowed to sign up. The project began with a number of facilitators from the Irene Taylor Trust and the RPO working one-to-one with a participant to come up with ideas for a song about their child(ren). The time was limited to one morning or afternoon per participant, but during this time they came up with lyrics, the shape of the song and ideas for style, melody and instrumentation. A professional composer then arranged these into performance pieces. At a later date, a chamber orchestra of RPO musicians went into the prison to practice and record the pieces. This was the first time the participant heard the piece, and each was able to comment and make some tweaks if desired. Each father introduced the piece on the recording, and was invited to sing or speak during the song if they wanted. The project culminated with a performance of all the pieces before an audience of prison staff. Each song recording was sent to the relevant child and family.

### ***MiP1-2: Music in Prisons at HMPs Thorn Cross & Bure***

Music in Prisons is the flagship programme offered by ITT. It is a weeklong programme, during which a group of prisoners come together with a team of professional musicians to write original tracks. The project involves live instruments (keyboards, guitars, bass guitars, drums, vocals) and the group co-create songs, with different participants suggesting lyrics, melodies

or harmonic ideas to contribute. The tracks are recorded onto a CD, and then the week culminates in a performance to prison staff and invited guests.

The first Music in Prisons week (MiP1) took place in April 2022 at HMP Thorn Cross, a men's open prison in Cheshire holding approximately 300 prisoners. The project was overseen by the Education department (run by Novus) and took place in what used to be a farm shop on site. Staff were not present throughout, but some got involved at various points during the week, and the performance at the end was in the chapel with a large audience of prison staff and other prisoners.

The second (MiP2) was in June 2022 at HMP Bure, a category C prison for men convicted of sex offences, holding approximately 650 prisoners. The project took place in a fairly small education room. Staff were not present for most of the sessions, and the final performance took place in the same education room with a small audience of staff.

### ***MR1: Musician in Residence at HMP Liverpool***

The final project offered by the ITT was a course of musician in residence sessions at HMP Liverpool between April and August 2022. HMP Liverpool is a local category B men's prison in Merseyside, holding approximately 700 prisoners. The musician in residence went weekly into the prison to work with two groups of prisoners – one being a group on the Vulnerable Prisoners Unit in the mornings, and the other a group from a Mains wing in the afternoon. The sessions involved participants playing keyboards, guitars or drums, and co-creating their own original music. Intended to be a six-week programme, disruptions due to staffing issues interrupted the course. After the interruption, all the morning group had moved on, but several of the afternoon group were still there. The MR1 series ended with a performance on their wing, where the group played songs they had written to an audience of staff and other prisoners on the wing, who gathered round, looked out over the landings or listened from in their cells.

### **Only Connect**

Only Connect is a creative criminal justice charity based delivering rehabilitation projects in prisons, youth justice settings and through their community centre in Kings Cross, London. Their Membership programme offers a relationship from custody into the community. The foundation of their work is that the artistic process can be a beneficial one for people who participate, and that public performances of the high quality work produced through this process can change audiences' views of people with convictions, by showcasing the skills and potential of this group.

For Inspiring Futures, Only Connect ran four iterations of the Rhythms & Flow workshop – a four- to six-week programme of once weekly sessions in which participants would work with a professional producer and other participants to create and record original music.

The first three of these workshops were run in collaboration with Finding Rhythms, another criminal justice music charity. By the fourth workshop, the programme was run solely by Only Connect, but the format was the same.

#### ***RF1-4: Rhythms & Flow***

The Rhythms & Flow workshops were hosted at the Only Connect community centre in King's Cross, London, where there is a large groupwork space and recording studio. The target group for Only Connect is young adults between 18-26, but the workshops attracted adult participants of all ages.

Rhythms & Flow involved participants going through a course to understand the elements involved in making and recording a song. They wrote their own lyrics, worked closely with a producer to create the beat and backing track, and then recorded their vocals. Throughout this process, they worked with a coach to set goals and reflect on personal progress. Participants who were interested could also gain experience of using different production programmes (such as Logic or Ableton) and mixing and mastering. Each course ended with the participants sharing with one another what they had created. There was the option of moving forwards working one-to-one with the lead producer. Only Connect also hold a Showcase event twice yearly, at which participants were invited to perform; one of these was attended by members of the research team, and the audience here included a range of professional friends of Only Connect including probation officers of some of the participants.

#### ***Open Clasp***

Open Clasp is a women's theatre company based in the North-East of England, working with women from all walks of life, including but not limited to those in the criminal justice system to highlight issues effecting women in different areas of society. Their work is rooted in the belief that theatre changes lives, and can make space for social debate, empathy and understanding. They collaborate with women to create new theatre around themes that affect women, providing a space and medium for personal, social and political change. Together with a playwright, these groups create original plays which are performed in venues nationally and internationally, as well as filmed and made available online, in order to communicate women's experiences to communities and professionals.

For Inspiring Futures, Open Clasp worked in HMP & YOI Askham Grange to create a new piece of performance theatre they titled 'Static'.

#### ***The Setting***

HMP & YOI Askham Grange is a women's open prison in a rural location near York, holding approximately 110 women and young women.

### ***AG1: 'Static' at Askham Grange***

The Open Clasp work at Askham Grange involved collaborating with a group of women in weekly sessions. One member of the staff joined the group and participated in the sessions. The sessions ran in the afternoons once a week in a large hall within the mansion house that comprises the main building of the open prison. A professional practitioner facilitated drama exercises and used dramatic techniques for storytelling. There was a long gap in the middle of the project due to a miscommunication that closed down activities in the women's estate. However, the project was able to re-start. Through the project, the group created a composite character based on different elements of their own experiences and circumstances. These ideas were developed into a storyline, and a script was developed out of their words and suggestions. The final play was entitled 'Static', an apt title for the dramatic representation of the women's experiences. Static represented feeling 'stuck' in the system, encaged in an open prison and bound by rules which did not always make sense. Poignantly, it also drew on the sound of static heard when trying to make telephone contact with families outside, which interrupted and prematurely ended conversations and meant that the women were unable to make the connections they so desired and needed. The final play was performed in the prison, acted by the women who took part and professionals.

#### Koestler Arts

The final Inspiring Futures partner organisation was Koestler Arts, a prison arts charity that runs a highly regarded awards scheme for which prisoner artists can enter their work and receive commendations and prizes in different categories and art forms (for example, creative writing, original songs, spoken word poetry, paintings and sculpture). Selections of these pieces are curated as public exhibitions in galleries and spaces around the country, to showcase the talent behind bars.

The role of Koestler Arts in the Inspiring Futures project was an advisory one. They provided expert guidance on how to showcase artistic work, and shared their insights into conducting larger-scale public surveys to get audience feedback.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The Inspiring Futures research was a mixed-method study of the arts programmes run by the partner organisations in England. It consisted of two sets of investigative activities: the first focussed on the impact of the arts for the participants who attended the arts programmes; the second focussed on the wider impact of the arts programmes for others within the criminal justice settings, for the arts facilitators and organisations, and for the wider criminal justice and arts sectors and the public. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected by means of questionnaires, diaries, interviews and participant observations.

The research adopted a participatory approach in order to develop methods that were sufficiently comprehensive, flexible and nuanced to capture the complex and diverse quality of arts impact and to show respect for the men and women who took part in the programmes.

Participatory evaluation methods have a tradition in community and educational settings (Minkler and Wallerstein, 2011, Cousins and Earl, 1992) but in the hierarchical worlds of prison and probation they are less common. At the beginning of the project a series of focus group discussions with former participants of the arts partners' programmes were held to inform the development of the participant questionnaires and to ensure the interview questions were relevant and appropriate. The arts partner organisations also played an active role in the development of research tools, the interpretation of findings and the presentation of research outputs: the research report and the film of the project. In addition, the research advisory group which included members with lived experience of the criminal justice system provided input on the development of research instruments and reviewed the project's findings.

#### Investigating the impact of the arts programmes for participants

This strand of the research design combined two elements: a before-after study and a process study. The before-after study focussed on the measurement of outcomes for participants attending the IF arts programmes. Alongside the participant group where possible each programme had a comparison group. Quantitative data for the before-after study were collected via questionnaires distributed at three time points: T1 was prior to the programme and established baseline measures; T2 was immediately after the programme and captured immediate outcomes; and T3 took place up to 18 months after the programme to capture outcomes over the longer term. The length between the T2 and T3 measures depended on the timing of the programme and the time available for data analysis.

The process study aimed for close description of the programmes and participant experiences as they happened in order to facilitate exploration of unintended outcomes and mechanisms of impact. It comprised participant observations of the programmes in action, participant diaries, and interviews and group discussions with participants, programme leaders and managers in the criminal justice settings hosting the programmes. These qualitative data provided contextual insights into the lives and experiences of participants and the organisation and running of the arts programmes in the criminal justice sector.

#### Investigating the wider impact of arts programmes

The project's second set of investigative activities focussed on the wider impact of the arts programmes. Interviews were held with arts programme leaders and staff to understand their experiences, the role the programmes had in their professional lives and their perspectives on the broader function of the arts programmes across the criminal justice and arts sectors. Interviews with staff and managers in the criminal justice settings hosting the programmes collected their perspectives on the effects of the programmes for them and their organisations. Data on audience responses to the arts programmes were also collected from audiences attending performances and exhibitions of the Inspiring Futures programmes and the final Inspiring Futures Exhibition. The design of this strand of the research project drew on the expertise of Koestler Arts and other organisations within the NCJAA as well as findings

from previous research on audience responses to the arts (see Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016, Brown and Novak-Leonard, 2013). The audiences attending the performances varied in composition and size. They consisted of current and former justice-involved people, criminal justice staff, families of programme participants, and the wider public.

### **3.3 Research Instruments**

#### **Participant Questionnaires**

The questionnaires at Times 1 – 3 aimed to capture participants' perceptions of themselves and their relationships with others and their views on the arts programme they attended. The questions were mostly the same on each questionnaire so that any change in participants' views over time could be identified. The pre-project questionnaire (T1) also asked about participants' motivations and expectations for the programme and the post-project questionnaires (T2 and T3) invited participants' reflections on the programme. The majority of the questionnaire consisted of statements about the participants' perceptions and feelings, which participants were asked to rate using a Likert scale ('strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'). There were also spaces inviting free text answers and further comments. The questionnaires for the comparison groups were identical to those for the participant group, apart from questions about the arts programme.

#### **Measures**

The questionnaire scales drew on theoretical findings from earlier arts evaluations (e.g. Anderson et al, 2010, Burrowes et al., 2013, Cox and Gelsthorpe 2008, Doxat-Pratt 2019), from desistance studies (e.g. Farrell 2002, McNeill 2006, the Good Lives Model, Ward and Maruna, 2007), and from the focus group discussions with former participants on arts programmes in criminal justice settings. The scales were grouped into three main constructs: personhood (which comprised the scales: wellbeing, self-concept; personal development); social capital (which included the scales: relationships, communication with others and working with others); and creative capital (one scale which measured creative skills and interests). The measures were combined into three sections on the survey 'Arts and Creativity', 'You & Your Life', and 'You and Others' (see Appendix I).

The initial consultations of the literature, previous scales and past participants established the face validity of the scales. We also consulted with former participants and the research advisory group to ensure that the questionnaires did not take too long to complete, that the questions themselves did not make inaccurate assumptions about participants' lives and that they were clearly and respectfully worded. After the first Inspiring Futures programme in March 2020, initial tests of the internal validity of these dimensions were conducted. A few modifications were made to the questions and scales as a result. Subsequent tests at T1 and T2 indicated promising reliability and construct validity of the scales (see Appendix V for further details).

## ***Demographic and Sentence Data***

The fourth section, 'Your Details', captured basic demographic information – age, gender, and ethnicity at T1 and details on sentence type, sentence length and previous sentences at T2. These questions were selected because of how they may affect a person's journey through the criminal justice system, their experience of prison and possibilities for desistance. They also offer potentially interesting insights in relation to people's access to the arts. These questions were split between the T1 and T2 questionnaires following feedback from the pre-project focus groups, so as not to 'overload' the T1 questionnaires with questions that participants may not be liked to be asked. However this approach meant that if a participant did not fill in both T1 and T2 questionnaires, some of the demographic data were missing. The initial intention was to triangulate the sentence data with data from participants' criminal justice records. However, although ethical approval had been granted, a number of participants' refused consent for access to their records and resource limitations prevented individual prisons from providing the data on those who had consented.

## ***Participant Diaries***

Each participant was invited to complete a diary of thoughts and reflections for the duration of the arts programme. Participants could complete the diaries in the way they wanted with words and/or illustrations but each diary included an ideas page in case participants were stuck for what to write (see Appendix II). In total, there were 52 participant diaries, some of which detailed minutely the journey through their project.

## ***Interview Schedules***

Semi-structured interview schedules were developed for participants, prison officers and managers, arts programme facilitators and leaders (see Appendix III for examples). The interviews were semi-structured to ensure that the core elements of the research enquiry were addressed and to give interviewees space to provide supplementary observations and comments.

The participant interviews took place after the end of the programme and provided an opportunity to collect more detailed contextual insights into individual experiences. Participants were asked about the programme's aims and organisation, their motivations for attending, their perceptions of the programme's contribution to their personal development, their interactions with other participants, their observations on the impact of the programme on others and, for the programmes run in prison, the impact on the prison environment.

Interviews with prison staff involved in the day-to-day oversight of the programmes covered their perceptions of the impact of the programme personally and for others within the setting and for their organisations as a whole. Interviews with prison managers asked about their reasons for commissioning the arts programme, their aspirations for the people who attended it, their observations of the running of the programme and their perceptions of its contributions to participants' lives, to the prison and to HMPPS priorities. Interviews with art

facilitators covered their motivations for working in a criminal justice setting, their experiences and views of the individual Inspiring Future programme they ran and how it compared with other programmes, and their experiences of working with criminal justice agencies. They were also asked for their observations on participants' responses to the programme. The leaders of the arts organisations were additionally asked about their rationale for running the arts programmes and their experiences of setting up courses for prisoners and people on community sentences. As data were collected and initial findings analysed, further discussions were set up with arts partners to explore and compare the research findings with their experiences in other criminal justice settings.

### Audience Questionnaires

The questionnaires developed for the audiences of IF programme performances asked participants for their motivations for attending, whether they knew any of the performers or arts organisations and in which capacity, their expectations and views of the performance/exhibition and any follow up in terms of new actions or new thoughts (see Appendix IV). Questionnaires were distributed at three end-of-course performances, and at each the questions were adapted slightly to fit the context of individual performances. Questions that participants were interested in asking were also included. A modified version of the questionnaire based on the learning from these earlier questionnaires was designed for the Inspiring Futures Exhibition, which ran for a week at Rich Mix in London and was then moved online. Visitors to the exhibition were invited either to fill in a paper questionnaire or to complete the questionnaire online via Qualtrics. Questions covered reasons for visiting the exhibition, whether people had direct or indirect experience of the criminal justice system, and any changes in their knowledge and views of the arts in criminal justice and people in the justice system after attending the exhibition.

### 3.4 The Research Process

Data collection started in March 2020 and was intended to run for 24 months. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdowns led to significant changes to the IF programme of activities and particularly those in prisons. Prisons entered lockdown regimes on 24 March 2020, and all non-essential work including all IF work was suspended indefinitely (HoC Justice Committee 2020). After the national lockdown ended, a 5-stage regime framework was introduced which prisons moved between. Prisons locked down again towards the end of December 2021 and remained so through to at least January 2022 and beyond. Most out-of-cell activity was cancelled again and slow to resume.

The Only Connect community project was able to resume with some minor modifications once the national lockdowns were lifted, however the IF prison-based programmes were more severely delayed. Some IF project partners waited for their preferred host establishments to be back up to a regime stage that could support their work; others had to change their original plans either because their intended host institution was no longer able to accommodate them or because of resourcing issues (e.g. their freelance course facilitators

were no longer available). These partners looked for other host establishments or devised new programmes to include in the IF research project.

The following case illustrates how the knock-on effects of the Covid-19 pandemic affected the running of the IF programmes. One theatre organisation aimed to run 5 two-week projects running periodically from September 2020 until March 2021. The programme was originally planned for one prison but due to personnel changes it had to be rearranged to another prison. Following the first prison lockdowns the first course was rescheduled for January 2022 but there were further prison lockdowns that month and the course was moved to the end of February. The course was cancelled again as social distancing measures were still in force in the prison at that time and it was not possible to run the course under those conditions. It was rescheduled a third time for April but cancelled again as many prisoners were self-isolating and recruitment had been slow. It finally ran in July but over half-days due to a split regime in the prison. The second course planned for August 2022 was cancelled by the prison and so was rearranged at short notice to another prison. Recruitment and retention for this programme were impeded due to the short notice of the course and staff changes at the prison. The third and fourth courses ran in September and November 2022, in the same prison as the first course, but still with notable staffing and regime issues attributed in part to residual problems from the pandemic.

## Recruitment

### ***Initial Recruitment: recruitment into the arts project***

All participants in the Inspiring Futures research study were participants in the creative projects run by our project partners. As such, initial recruitment was done by the project partners themselves in partnership with the prison in which the work took place and other relevant agencies.

In prisons, projects were advertised on posters on the wings or education spaces, with information on how to sign up. More commonly, however, participants were recruited informally through personal interactions. Organising staff at the prisons recommended the projects to those they thought would particularly enjoy it or find it useful. Alternatively, support workers from agencies or charities sometimes recommended participants – for example, the Lullaby Project participants were all recommended by Spurgeons family charity, and the Helix Arts participants were all told about it by the Age UK representative in the prison. Some individuals were encouraged to participate by peers in the prison who had either done the project before or were themselves signed up; several Geese Theatre participants, for example, attended because their cell mate was already coming.

Technically speaking, participation in the creative projects was always voluntary; interested individuals were invited or encouraged to sign up or put themselves forward for participation. However, it should be noted that the power dynamics in prison can make choice a more nuanced idea, and while participants were always free to join or leave as they wanted, at

times the difference between encouragement, cajoling and pressuring was not clear. For example, the first Geese Theatre Project was under-subscribed the weekend before it was supposed to start, and the Head of Reducing Reoffending made personal requests of certain prisoners to sign up to ensure that the project would go ahead. These did, and encouraged others from their wing to join; when they reflected on their reasons for participating they all said it was largely to help out the member of staff. Only half of the group stayed through the whole course, and one of these attended intermittently.

Although most projects tried to maintain a clear start date, it was very common for participants to begin later through the workshop. Facilitators tried to balance inclusivity and welcome with the need for continuity and stability for those already signed up.

For the Only Connect courses in the community, participants were usually signposted to the course from other agencies, including probation and support charities. Some had been working with an Only Connect key worker already and heard about the music course internally.

### ***Secondary Recruitment: into the research***

Once participants had signed up to the course, all were invited to join in with the research elements. This typically meant a member of the research team was present at the beginning of the course to explain the study and distribute materials. This happened either just before the start of the course – as was the case with some of the Irene Taylor Trust projects – or at some point during the first session. If a member of the research team was not able to be present, then the facilitators explained the study and distributed the materials themselves, having been briefed thoroughly by the research team. The research team and facilitators were sensitive to the possibility that the questionnaires would be harder to complete for participants with low levels of literacy or whose first language was not English. In such cases, questionnaire statements were read out to participants by someone they elected, such as a member of the research team, a facilitator or fellow participant.

Almost all participants consented to fill in the T1 Starter Questionnaire; one participant (Clean Break) declined any form of involvement, and some participants took questionnaires but did not fill them in properly, perhaps indicating a lack of willingness to be involved but a discomfort in acknowledging that openly. All participants were invited to fill in a T2 End-of-Course questionnaire. This included those who had done the questionnaire at the beginning, but also included those who had joined late and therefore had not completed a Starter Questionnaire.

All participants were also given a diary as an optional extra in the research; many took them away and 52 filled them in and returned them at the end of the project. Only Connect integrated the questionnaires and diaries into the programme, and so rather than taking the diaries away with them, participants filled in the diary each week at the end of the session.

Those who did not want to provide any specifics gave very brief entries, such as a single word or a smiley face.

Recruitment for interviews was done in collaboration with the partner organisations and the institutions. Where possible, all participants were invited to a one-to-one interview with a member of the research team sometime after the end of the project; where it was not possible to interview all participants, interviewees were selected using purposive sampling (i.e. observing something in the participant that was worth pursuing in interview), or simply based on who was available and willing. In some instances, time limitations or prison restrictions meant seeing participants in groups rather than individually. In total, 43 participants gave end-of-course interviews.

### ***Recruiting the Comparison Group***

In the prison-based projects, recruitment for the comparison group was done more directly by the research team, with assistance from prison staff. It was not possible to recruit a comparison group in all prisons; some were short-staffed and therefore could not provide a staff escort, others gave less clear reasons. Where possible, the team aimed to recruit a comparison group similar in size and composition to the participant group. In addition to the matching of sex and prison setting, there was an effort to recruit participants who were living in routine prison conditions and who were engaged in prison programmes (to capture similarities in terms of motivation for attending activities). There was no requirement to have an interest in the arts. There was, however, an element of convenience in the recruitment of the comparison group - they were prisoners who were available at the time of the research – and as recruitment to the arts courses was managed by the prison and often at the last minute, it was not possible to systematically match the comparison group to the participant group on demographic or sentence-related characteristics. Nevertheless, no major differences were found on such measures between the groups. Further details on the composition and characteristics of the comparison groups are given in Section 3.5.

Prison staff directed the researchers to potential sources for recruitment, which was mostly Education classes or workshops. With permission from the teacher or tutor, the member of the research team explained the research, the reason for recruiting a comparison group and what participating in the comparison group would involve. People were then invited to take part. Successful comparison groups were recruited for several of the projects.

For the Only Connect comparison group, we attempted to make contact with individuals working with Only Connect but who had never been involved in the music project. Key Workers from the Only Connect team tried to encourage their Members to get involved, but only two individuals consented. Neither of these maintained contact in order to fill in a second questionnaire.

## **One Year Follow-Up**

T3 data collection was particularly challenging. Within the prison settings, contact was initiated through staff, but some who had organised the course had moved to different posts and there was no one to coordinate the return research visit; a number of project participants had been transferred to other prisons or had been released. It was easiest to get back in contact with those on long sentences who remained in their prison for the duration of the IF programme. For former participants now in the community, where we had permission and contact details a variety of methods were used to try to make contact, including phone calls, texts and letters, but it was difficult to reach many except for participants who had retained contact with Only Connect. At the time of writing 27 T3 questionnaires have been completed and 16 T3 interviews conducted. We provide some basic descriptive analyses of the responses of participants at Time 3 and the results of a repeated ANOVA of the 21 participants who completed questionnaires at all three time points. We offer cautious interpretations of the statistical data due to the small and varied sample and draw mainly on the qualitative data for indications of the longer-term impact of the projects on participants.

### **3.5 Participant Sample**

In total, there were 182 people in the participant study – by which we mean, 182 people took part in an Inspiring Futures project and also contributed to any of the questionnaires, diaries or interviews. All 182 provided at least one of the questionnaires. Of the 182, four took part in two projects each; the rest just one each. This represents almost everyone who took part in any of the projects, but there were a few arts participants who did not want to be involved in the research elements (exact attendance numbers cannot be provided as the partners did not all keep accurate records). The comparison group had a total of 71 people.

Across the full programme of 20 IF activities, the research team conducted 50 participant observations, interviewed 59 participants (43 at Time 2 and 16 at Time 3), 20 staff in prisons and 23 arts facilitators/organisers.

The tables below show the breakdown of participation, and demographic information about the sample. Table 1 shows the programme of activities that the partners ran.

*Table 1: Inspiring Futures Programme of Activities*

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Total participants</b>
<b>Clean Break</b>	<b>CB1</b> – with Open Book- HMP Downview, female closed prison	(Dec 2021 – May 2022)	5
	<b>CB2</b> – HMP Downview, female closed prison	(May - July 2022)	4

<b>Geese Theatre</b>	<b>GT1</b> - HMP Featherstone Cat C, male prison	(4-14 June 2022)	6
	<b>GT2</b> - HMP Hewell, multi-category, male prison	8-18 August 2022)	5
	<b>GT3</b> - HMP Featherstone Cat C male prison	12-22 Sept 2022)	6
	<b>GT4</b> - HMP Featherstone Cat C male prison	31 Oct - 10 Nov 2022	4
<b>Good Vibrations</b>	<b>GV1</b> – HMP Wealstun, Cat C male prison	March 2020)	18
	<b>GV2</b> – HMP Stoke Heath Cat C male prison	Oct 2021	18
	<b>GV3</b> – HMP Hull Cat B male prison	Nov 2021	12
	<b>GV4</b> – HMP Frankland Cat A male prison	Dec 2022	8
<b>Helix Arts</b>	<b>HA1</b> – ‘Avant-Guard’ with Age UK @ HMP Northumberland, Cat C male prison	Aug-Oct 2021	13
<b>Irene Taylor Trust</b>	<b>LP1</b> – Lullaby Project @ HMP Norwich, multi-category male prison	Oct – Nov 2021	8
	<b>MiP1</b> – Music in Prisons @ HMP Thorn Cross, Cat D, male prison	April 2022)	13
	<b>MR1</b> – Musician in residence sessions @ HMP Liverpool, multi-category male prison	April - Aug 2022	10
	<b>MiP2</b> – Music in Prisons @ HMP Bure, Cat C male prison	June 2022	10
<b>Only Connect</b>	<b>RF1</b> – Rhythms & Flow course	Oct-Nov 2020	6
	<b>RF2</b> – Rhythms & Flow course	April-May 2021	6
	<b>RF3</b> – Rhythms & Flow course	Sept-Oct 2021	13
	<b>RF4</b> – Rhythms & Flow course	Feb-April 2022	9
<b>Open Clasp</b>	<b>AG1</b> – Open Clasp workshops @ HMP Askham Grange female open prison	May -Aug 2022	8
<b>Total</b>			<b>182</b>

## Questionnaire Completion Rate

Table 2: Questionnaire Completion Rate

	Participant Group					Comparison Group (T1 and 2 only)		
	Total	T1 & T2	T1 only	T2 only	T3	Total	T1 and T2	T1 only
Clean Break	9	6 (67%)	3 (33%)	0	0	2	0	2 (100%)
Geese Theatre	21	14 (67%)	7 (33%)	0	0	18	11(61%)	7 (39%)
Good Vibrations	56	45 (80%)	7 (13%)	4 (7%)	15(27%)	28	22(79%)	6 (21%)
Helix Arts	13	8 (62%)	4 (31%)	1 (8%)	6 (46%)	-	-	-
Irene Taylor Trust	41	29 (71%)	11(27%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	20	17(85%)	3 (15%)
Only Connect	34	16 (47%)	12(35%)	6 (18%)	4 (12%)	2	0	2(100%)
Open Clasp	8	3 (38%)	2 (25%)	3 (38%)	0	1	0	1(100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>121(67%)</b>	<b>46(25%)</b>	<b>15 (8%)</b>	<b>27(15%)</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>50(70%)</b>	<b>21(30%)</b>

COMPLETION RATES FOR PARTICIPANTS AND COMPARISON GROUP. T1 REFERS TO STARTER QUESTIONNAIRES AND T2 TO END-OF-COURSE QUESTIONNAIRES.

### T1 and T2 Questionnaires

In total, two thirds of participants (121) completed both Starter and End-of-Course questionnaires<sup>8</sup>. Of the 61 who did not, 46 provided only start-of-project questionnaires (implying that they dropped out before the end of the course, or could not be found to provide end-of-course information), and 15 provided only end-of-course questionnaires

<sup>8</sup> In order to avoid the research becoming too burdensome we prioritised flexibility with partners and a good experience with participants which meant there was some minor variation as to when participants completed the T1 and T2 questionnaires at the beginning and end of courses.

(implying that they started the course late or did not want to participate in the research at the beginning).

As Table 1 shows, Good Vibrations had the highest number of participants and also the highest proportion of full participation, followed in each by Irene Taylor Trust. Only Connect had a high number of participants but a low research completion rate; whereas Geese Theatre had fewer total participants but a higher proportion completed both questionnaires. Helix Arts, Clean Break and Open Clasp had the lowest numbers and retention was particularly low for Open Clasp.

Of the total comparison group, 50 (70.4%) completed both questionnaires, and 21 (29.6%) provided only the T1 Starter Questionnaire. Reasons for non-completion were varied, including not being able to be traced, not completing the prison course they were doing, or being transferred to a different prison. There was full research participation in comparison groups for Geese Theatre, Good Vibrations and Irene Taylor Trust.

### **T3 Questionnaires**

We collected 27 T3 questionnaires from participants representing 15% of the overall total. Of these 27 participants, 15 were participants from Good Vibrations projects, 6 from Helix Arts, 2 from The Irene Taylor Trust and 4 from the Only Connect project. 23 participants had completed questionnaires at all three time points, 3 had completed questionnaires at T2 and T3 only and one had completed questionnaires at T1 and T3 only.

### **Criminal Justice Involvement**

Out of the 182 participants, 148 (81.3%) were in prison and 34 (18.7%) were in the community (i.e. Only Connect participants). All participants were asked in the T2 End-of-Course Questionnaire to give details of their sentence. Many did not give much information but it was possible to work out some trends.

### ***Sentence Type and Length***

As shown in Table 3 below most respondents in prison who provided sentence details were on determinate sentences of at least one year. Long and life sentences were common, and indeterminate sentences (IPP/EDS) were more common than sentences of less than one year. From the total Inspiring Futures participant cohort, of those participants who gave information about the length of their sentence only 4 were on a sentence of 12 months or less (and of these, one was on a community order). The vast majority of the respondents in the community did not give information about their criminal justice involvement; of the 13 who did provide details, four were not currently serving any sentence. Of those who were currently serving a sentence, most were released from prison having served sentences of at least 1 year.

Table 3: Sentence Type and Length

Sentence		Participants		Comparison	
PRISON	Remand	8	4.4%	3	4.2%
	Determinate	60	33.0%	24	33.8%
	0-12 mths	3	1.6%	2	2.8%
	13-48 mths	22	12.1%	8	11.2%
	>4 years	35	19.2%	14	19.7%
	Life	15	8.2%	5	7.0%
	IPP	4	2.2%	2	2.8%
	EDS	1	0.5%	-	-
	Recall	2	1.1%	-	-
	Unspecified*	58	31.9%	35	49.3%
	Total Prison	148	81.2%	69	97.2%
COMMUNITY	No data	21	11.5%		
	Not serving	4	2.2%	-	-
	Released on licence	5	2.7%	1	1.4%
	0-12 mths	-	-	-	-
	13-48 mths	1	0.5%	1	1.4%
	>4 years	1	0.5%	-	-
	Released on parole	1	0.5%	-	-
	0-12 mths	-	-	-	-
	13-48 mths	1	0.5%	-	-
	>4 years	-	-	-	-
	Community order	1	0.5%	1	1.4%
	0-12 mths		0.5%	1	1.4%
	13-48 mths	-	-	-	-
	>4 years	-	-	-	-
	Unspecified sentence**	2	1.1%	-	-
Total Community Sentence	9	4.9%	2	2.8%	

Table 3. Percentages are calculated to one decimal place, so might not add up to 100. Breakdown of sentence lengths only includes where such information has been given. \*Unspecified refers to those on prison projects who did not give any further details about their sentence. \*\*Unspecified Sentence refers to those in the community who said they were currently serving but gave no further details.

Only 2 members of the comparison group reported that they were serving a sentence in the community; the prison comparison group follows a similar pattern to the participant group, with the major difference being that none said they had been recalled.

The sentence details of the research participants may be less clear-cut than these numbers suggest: some of those on indeterminate or life sentences may have given the end of their tariff as their release date and therefore been recorded as being on a determinate sentence.

Further, it is possible that participants were serving concurrent sentences, or were waiting for sentencing whilst serving a previous conviction. People who reported that they were on recall but also gave a sentence length have been reported as being on a determinate sentence; 'recall' is only listed for those who gave no other details about their sentence.

### **Previous Sentences**

All participants were asked how many previous sentences they had had. Only approximately half of respondents gave answers. Some answers were fairly vague, and so the answers were recoded into categories: no previous sentences, 1, 2-5, over 5 previous sentences. Vague answers were interpreted: 'lots', 'too many' and similar were coded as over 5; 'a few' as 2-5. Occasionally people said they had had previous sentences but did not give details; these were categorised as 'unspecified but at least 1'.

Most notably, of those who responded, approximately half (in both participant and comparison groups) had no previous sentences and were therefore on their first sentence. Table 4 shows that 4 participants in the community said they were not currently serving any kind of criminal justice sentence; of these, 3 said they had served at least one previous sentence, and the other gave no information.

*Table 4: Previous Sentences for Participants and Comparison Group*

	Participant Group			Comparison Group		
	Prison	Community	Total	Prison	Community	Total
0 previous	50	1	<b>51</b>	17	0	<b>17</b>
1 previous	7	3	<b>10</b>	3	1	<b>4</b>
2-5 previous	24	2	<b>26</b>	9	0	<b>9</b>
>5 previous	11	1	<b>12</b>	4	0	<b>4</b>
Unspecified ≥1	1	1	<b>2</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>

### **Sentence Stage**

Participants in prison were asked to provide the length of their sentence and the length of time until their release. Only approximately half of respondents gave this information: 99 (54.4%) participants, 34 (47.9%) comparison group. Their responses were manually combined into a new variable: sentence stage. This categorised the approximate point of a sentence when they participated in their arts project: remand, recall, within 1 year of sentencing, middle of prison term, between 1 year and 3 months before release date, or within 3 months of release. 3 months was chosen as the 'pre-release' category because it is at this point that

resettlement work officially begins. As with Sentence Type and Length, the information is not as neat as this implies but it gives an idea.

Of those participants who gave details, no participants identified as being within one year of their sentencing. Around half (47) were in the middle of their prison term, i.e. neither especially close to arrival nor close to release. 22 said they were between 3 months and 1 year before their release, and 20 said it was 3 months or less until their release. The proportions are similar for the comparison group. Most of those participants on life or indeterminate sentences were at least a year away from release: none of these participants were in the 3 months pre-release category and only one (life) was 3m-1y before release; all others were in the middle of a sentence. These numbers are worth noting when considering any focus on reducing reoffending – most participants did not have imminent release dates when they took part in their arts project.

#### Age

All respondents were asked to give their age. 142 (78%) of participants and 70 (98%) of the comparison group gave meaningful information (some participants answered ‘too old’ or similar tongue-in-cheek phrases that have been coded as Did Not Answer). The breakdown of the total cohort and each partner is given in Table 5. As this table shows, all respondents were over 18. The average age of the music participants was slightly younger than those in the drama projects. Helix Arts had the oldest average age, as well as the oldest individual participant, which is unsurprising given this project targeted over-50s. The comparison group has a similar pattern to the participant group, particularly when looking at Geese Theatre, Good Vibrations and Irene Taylor Trust where there were individuals who completed both T1 and T2 questionnaires.

*Table 5: Age Information for Participant and Comparison Groups*

	Participant					Comparison				
	Min	Max	Range	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Range	Mean	Median
Clean Break	30	59	29	47.11	54.0	36	40	4	38.00	38.0
Geese Theatre	22	65	43	39.16	38.0	23	48	25	32.67	31.0
Good Vibrations	21	59	38	38.55	37.5	22	55	33	37.50	36.5
Helix Arts	49	76	27	57.82	55.0	-	-	-	-	-
Irene Taylor Trust	20	55	35	35.33	34.5	18	60	42	34.95	32.0
Only Connect	18	51	33	29.67	28.0	22	42	20	32.00	32.0
Open Clasp	31	63	32	49.00	51.0	58	58	0	58.00	58.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>38.83</b>	<b>37.0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>35.71</b>	<b>35.0</b>

## Gender

Participants were asked to give their gender. Most of the IF work took place in men's prisons, and out of those 131 participants, 110 identified as male, 2 as a trans-woman, and 19 did not give information. Out of the 17 participants in women's prisons, 13 identified as female and 4 did not give information. Out of the 34 participants in the Only Connect community project, 2 were female, 23 male and 9 did not give information. All the comparison groups were from projects in men's prisons. One of these identified as a trans-woman, the rest as male. The one major difference between the participant and comparison groups was that there were no cis females in the comparison group. Indeed numbers of cis-women taking part in the IF study were low and there is scope for further research on potential gender variations in the experience of criminal justice arts programmes.

## Nationality and Ethnicity

Participants were asked about their ethnicity and nationality. Ethnicity was given as a list of options (including an 'Other' option with a comment box), while Nationality was asked as an open text question. 126 (69%) of participants gave meaningful information about their nationality, and 138 (76%) about their ethnicity. However, it was clear in both categories that some respondents rejected the premise of the question, giving answers such as "earthling", "anticolonial" or "human" in either or both sections; these were treated as missing. Others gave answers that indicated they were conflating concepts of ethnicity, nationality and other regional or cultural identities, with answers in both categories including 'Muslim', 'English', 'Cornish' or 'Afropean'. We recognise that these identities may be deeply held, however in a legal sense these are not nationalities, and therefore these entries were either manually recoded (i.e. any British regional identities were recoded as British National) or treated as missing. For ethnicity, ambiguous answers like these were put as 'Other'.

Being a foreign national in a prison in England has been found to affect the experience (Warr, 2016) and therefore the open question for nationality was turned into a binary categorical variable. In total, 116 (92%) of participants who completed this question indicated they were a British National. Just 10 participants (from ITT (5), Only Connect (3), Clean Break (1) and Good Vibrations (1)) identified as foreign nationals: Greek Cypriot, Hungarian, Mauritanian, Mauritian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Sudanese, Thai and Turkish. Only 2 of the 64 respondents in the comparison group identified as a foreign national (Nigerian, Polish).

Table 6: Participant and comparison group ethnicity

	Participant Group		Comparison Group	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Asian (Chinese)	1	.7	-	-
Asian (Indian)	4	2.9	1	1.5
Asian (Pakistani)	1	.7	2	3.0
Asian (Other)	1	.7	2	3.0
Black (African)	10	7.2	2	3.0
Black (Caribbean)	13	9.4	5	7.5
Gypsy/Traveller	2	1.4	1	1.5
Mixed Race	13	9.4	1	1.5
Roma	2	1.4	-	-
White	73	52.9	50	74.6
Other	16	11.6	2	3.0
Prefer not to say	2	1.4	1	1.5
<b>Valid Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Missing	44		4	

Ethnicities were far more varied, as shown in Table 6. In both the participant group and the comparison group, the single most common ethnicity was White, with Black ethnicities being the second most common in each. There were few clear trends across different partners or projects, however some elements are noteworthy. All of the Helix Arts participants identified as White. While approximately half of both the drama and music participants were White, nearly one quarter of music participants identified as either Black Caribbean or Black African, whereas only 1 out of the 31 drama participants identified in these categories. Overall, the participant group was somewhat more ethnically varied than the comparison group. The participant group also had a lower proportion of people identifying as white compared to the general prison population, which in 2022 was approximately 72% white, and 13% black or black British (see Table 1\_4 from Prison Population Tables December 2022, available to download: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>). It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions or implications from these trends, but

these findings do suggest that while ethnicity is not a barrier to arts participation in and of itself, it is worth investigating the extent to which cultural associations and assumptions about certain art forms may be shaping access, recruitment and participation.

### Reflections on the Participant Sample

While there was some variation across programmes, overall participation rates in the study were encouraging. The comparison group, although much smaller in number than the participant group, showed a similar demographic and sentence profile which strengthened the comparative analyses. As was to be expected, there were some missing or incomplete responses in the questionnaire data. Interestingly around half of all participants on the prison-based courses were in prison for the first time. We do not know the proportions of first-time prisoners in the prison populations in the study but it would be interesting to explore further whether arts programmes are of greater interest to some parts of the prison population than others. Overall, the combined qualitative and quantitative dataset of the Inspiring Futures study has generated a unique collective picture of the running and experience of arts programmes in criminal justice settings in England and Wales. We describe the detail of this picture in the following chapters.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the participant and comparison questionnaires were analysed using the software programme SPSS. Once all the participant and comparison group data were entered and cleaned, further confirmatory tests of reliability of the theoretical constructs were conducted followed by analyses of programme impact. Descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted on the data: mean scores for each construct at Time 1 and Time 2 were calculated for both participant and comparison groups. One-way ANOVA tests were run to check for similarities and differences in the responses from participants in different settings: men's and women's prisons and the community centre. The results from the tests (ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis) established that differences between participant responses in different settings would not majorly affect the overall findings (see Appendix V for further details). Thirdly, and to identify between-group and within-group change over time Wilcoxon signed rank tests were run<sup>9</sup> comparing the whole participant group with the comparison group. Due to the absence of T2 questionnaires from comparison group members in women's prisons and in the community setting, comparisons were only made between participants and comparison group in male prison settings. Finally the sample of T3 surveys one-way repeated measures ANOVA tests were run to investigate any change over time in the scores of the sub sample of participants who fully completed full surveys at Times 1, 2 and 3.

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<sup>9</sup> Wilcoxon signed rank tests were chosen as earlier descriptive analyses showed that the constructs were non-normally distributed and consequently non-parametric test of difference was the appropriate choice.

Data from interviews were transcribed and diary data entered as photographs and transcribed into text memos. The qualitative data were coded using the software tool NVivo.<sup>10</sup> They were analysed thematically using an iterative approach which drew on existing theories of impact but allowed for the emergence of new themes from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The coding frame was reviewed and revised by the research team following coding of initial interviews and a small number of interviews were double coded by members of the research team at the start of the data analysis to ensure that the approach to coding was consistent.

The multiple sources of data from the course participants (the quantitative survey results, the develop interviews, the diaries) were pooled together and coded using a pre-agreed coding frame covering personal background (motivations etc), general thoughts and impressions, personal/interpersonal/creative factors, views on impact on longer-term impact and the criminal justice system. The following three themes emerged from these analyses: looking inwards (e.g. sense of self) looking outwards (e.g. interactions with others) and sustainability of influence over time. Data from the second evaluation activities were analysed in relation to the different wider spheres of influence of the arts programmes: the criminal justice settings (staff, staff-prisoner relationships, prisons as institutions and the criminal justice sector) the arts partners (course facilitators and managers, the organisations as a whole and the arts sector); and the public.

The project's theoretical framework was developed and refined following these initial analyses. It considered the similarities and differences in the role and meaning of the different types of arts programme, compared these findings with existing theorisations of the arts in criminal justice and with other external initiatives in criminal justice settings e.g. sports programmes.

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<sup>10</sup> The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of Dr Jane Dominey, Dr Joana Ferreira and Alexandra Giannidi to the process of coding and initial analyses of the data.

## 4 Outcomes and Impact for Participants

This section presents our findings on how participants experienced and were affected by the arts projects. It describes the quantitative and qualitative data in relation to three inter-related ‘spheres’: the creative sphere (‘creative capital’), the ‘internal’ sphere (wellbeing, self-concept and personal development) and the ‘social sphere’ (relationships with others, and social networks and opportunities). In all these areas, our statistical analyses of the quantitative data show small but significant positive changes in the overall participant group score at the start and at the end of the projects. We further compared participant scores at T1 and T2 in the men’s prisons with the scores at T1 and T2 of the comparison group who were in men’s prison settings. These comparisons showed similar directions of change, although the differences in the mean scores for some of the measures of the men’s participant group were not statistically significant. Notably none of the differences in the comparison group scores at T1 and T2 were statistically significant. (A brief guide to understanding the statistical reporting is given in Appendix V). Our qualitative data identify rich themes in similar areas of importance for the participants. This section then discusses some further aspects of impact including variations between projects, the endings of programmes, and the sustainability of impact over time.

### 4.1 Creative Capital

Drawing on the previous work of one of the authors (Doxat-Pratt, 2019), the Inspiring Futures study included creative capital as an area of potential impact. This included learning technical skills, the place that creativity had in one’s life, and identifying oneself as an artist or someone with abilities and potential within the arts world.

*Table 7: Creative Capital*

<b>Creative Capital</b>	<b>Participant group (total)</b>	<b>Men’s prisons participant group</b>	<b>Men’s prisons comparison group</b>
<b>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests – Mean comparison</b>	Mean T1 = 3.92 Mean T2 = 4.18	Mean T1 =3.84 Mean T2=4.15	Mean T1 = 3.62 Mean T2 = 3.76
<b>Test scores</b>	Z=-3.41      p<.001 r= .32	Z=-3.4      p<.001 r= .23	Z=-1.45    p>.5

*Participants’ scores were on a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 = low and 5 = high*

The results from the Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests indicate a small but significant increase in the creative capital score for the participant group from 3.92 to 4.18, and not for the

comparison group.<sup>11</sup> Our qualitative data offer some explanatory insights into these changes including people's motivations for signing up to the courses, and the extent to which they were keen to develop their creative and technical skills.

Although participants expressed various motivations for taking part in the projects, a substantial number joined the projects because they had a love of music, theatre or art. They enjoyed being creative and did not feel they had many opportunities for such activities:

*I'm creative, I'm creative anyway. And in here, you don't really get a lot of opportunity to be creative.*

(Irene Taylor Trust, Lullaby Project participant)

Many also signed up to learn technical skills and were gratified to do so:

*I learnt the technical terms for putting a play together, like blocking. It was nice to go through the whole process from start to finish.*

(Clean Break participant)

*I was already interested in this stuff beforehand, so this just helped me sharpen up what I was already capable of.*

(Geese Theatre participant)

Indeed some participants wanted to go further than they were able:

*Yeah, it was what I expected it to be, but as a music man, I'm not gonna lie, I wanted more. I wanted more. [...] I wanted to delve deeper.*

(Only Connect participant).

Notably, the Only Connect project had the most consistent theme of people wanting to develop technical skills – perhaps because this course emphasised music production and learning about the music industry, it appealed to people who were already motivated to develop their existing musical skills and even perhaps become professional:

*I made a checklist at home of everything I wanted to ask .. and then when I'd come in I'd ask him everything, like, what does this do, what does this type of compression do, this type of EQ, and what does this do, and what is this called?*

(Only Connect participant).

It is understandable that these projects attracted people who were already interested in the arts and wanted to develop their creative skills and, although not statistically significant, the

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<sup>11</sup> There is also a small increase in the comparison group creativity scores. Small fluctuations in the scores of comparison groups are not unusual and may be linked to other activities and experiences within the settings but as these fluctuations are not statistically significant there is a likelihood that they are due to chance.

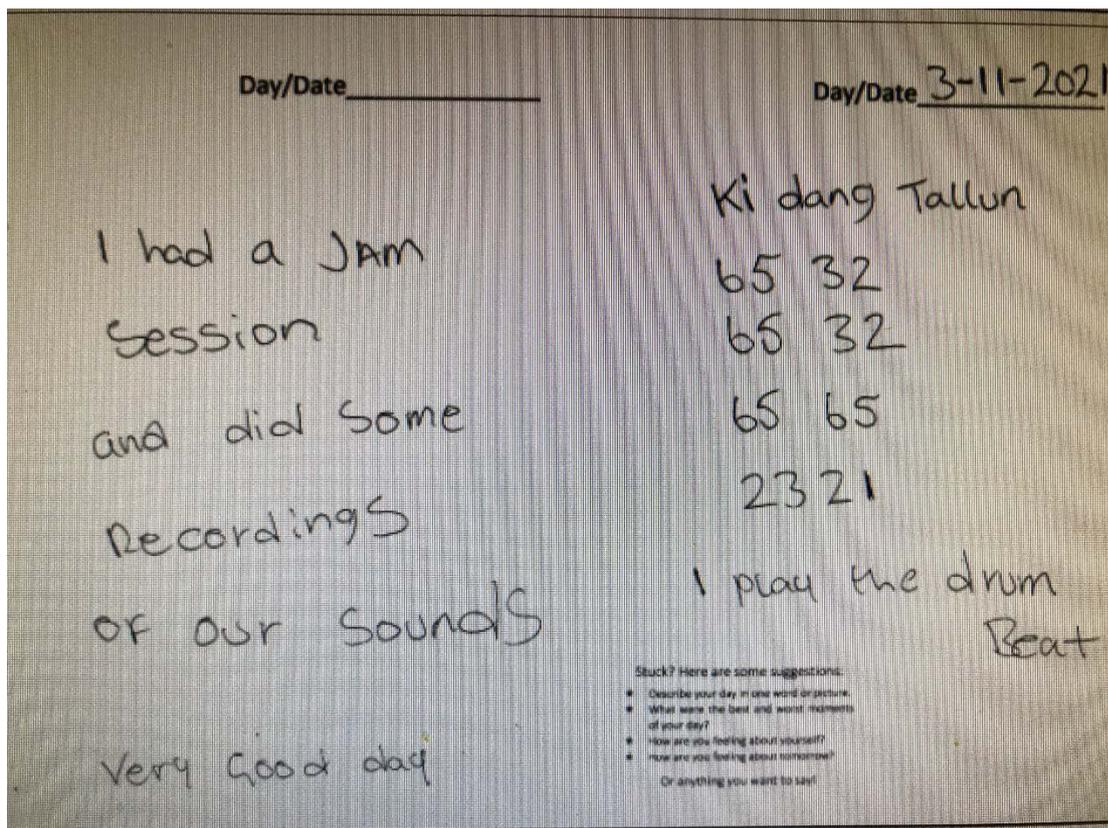
participants' creativity scores were slightly higher than the comparison group at the start of the project. Indeed some participants suggested that others had not signed up because they thought it would require more artistic skill than they had or that it would involve acting or singing which they did not want to do.

However, not all participants in the projects stated they had a prior interest in creative activities. Some were encouraged by their friends to join:

*And I wouldn't really do nothing like that, I wouldn't usually. It's only because [other participant] said 'I've seen it before, it's good, trust me, come.' So that's why I just thought, you know what...*

(Geese Theatre participant)

Others said they were just keen to learn a new skill and their interest in the art form developed through the course of the project. This is evident in the diaries of participants, particularly on Good Vibrations courses which contain explanations and diagrams of how to play the instruments, the groupwork process, and the songs they learnt.



Others were surprised by how much they had learnt when they did not know exactly what they were signing up for.

*I went there with not much hope, it I'm honest with you, I thought, well can't teach me much, I'm 43, but, yeah, I was learning something new.*

(Irene Taylor Trust, Music in Prisons project participant)

In this way, the opportunity to learn technical skills contributed to a new way of seeing themselves and their capacities. Open text answers in the questionnaires show that some participants were surprised by what they learnt or how much they enjoyed the creative processes:

*I didn't realise how much I enjoyed being creative.*

(Geese Theatre participant)

Learning technical skills and developing their creative abilities opened up new possibilities for the future as well as a new sense of self.

*Being able to be creative has broaden(ed) my mind to try new activities.*

(Open Clasp participant)

*Once you get that one bit of push to do something, you've been taught something, you can start making up your own beats, or your own tunes up. And, you might end up going on to think, right I want to do a music producing course, and I want to go on and do this or do that. It just gives you loads of avenues.*

(Irene Taylor Trust, Music in Prisons project participant)

## **4.2 Looking Inward: Personhood**

Inspiring Futures participants also identified the contributions the arts projects made to their wellbeing, their self-concept and their personal development, which we have collectively defined as 'personhood'. Some emphasised the contributions of the projects to their present lives, others emphasised the projects' contributions to shaping their futures. This sense of future agency could also inspire small and immediate actions in the present, such as the decision to attend further courses in prison.

### Wellbeing

The Wellbeing questions asked participants about their levels of happiness, interest, energy and sense of belonging. Participants' scores for this dimension showed a small but statistically significant increase between T1 and T2. There was an increase too for the men's prison participant group although this was not statistically significant. In contrast there was almost no change in the men's prisons comparison group, and it was also not statistically significant.

Table 8: Well-Being

Wellbeing	Participant group (total)	Men's prisons participant group	Men's prisons comparison group
<b>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests – Mean comparison</b>	Mean T1 = 3.82 Mean T2 = 3.98	Mean T1=3.90 Mean T2=4.02	Mean T1 = 3.80 Mean T2 = 3.84
<b>Test scores</b>	Z=-2.3      p<.05 r= .21	Z=-1.8    p>.05	Z=-1.92      p>.05

Our qualitative data support the finding that participation in the arts projects contributed to participant wellbeing. They show that the projects provided opportunities for stress relief and release and emotional expression. The activities were also fun and engaging and stimulated the mind. This experience was particularly valuable when compared to a fairly dreary life otherwise:

*You scrape off the grey and show that there are still rainbows. It gives a sense of humanness.*

(Clean Break participant)

Participants recognised the value of ‘just having fun’:

*I always used to think there were certain things out of my reach, that I'm not good enough, but now I know the process, life doesn't have to be all perfectionism and impossibility. Fun is a good enough reason. I like the play.*

(Clean Break participant)

In their diaries participants described how being productive and busy on the projects had positive effects:

*Normally I can't sleep well and am up all night, I virtually slept all night through.*

(Diary, Good Vibrations participant)

*How you feeling about self? I feel positive, had a really productive day. [...] Tried something I'd never done before in terms of performing.*

(Geese Theatre participant)

Although participants generally spoke very highly of the projects in terms of wellbeing, the courses could also be an emotional journey with highs and lows throughout as this diary extract from a Geese Theatre participant illustrates:

*Day 1: Key moment: Turning up and being open minded. Usually I just stick to the things I know.. I am not really the creative type... Best moment: I enjoyed meeting the people who came in, they all seemed nice and genuine and I felt comfortable with them straightaway. Sum up day in one word? Energetic.*

*Day 3: Key moment:.. it was very intense and a bit traumatic, made me think about things I had done and left me feeling regret, guilty and a bit sad. How do you feel about self? A bit shit. How do you feel about tomorrow? Hoping its very different from today. Sum up day in one word? Draining.*

*Day 5: How feeling about tomorrow? Mixed, the course has taken me through a lot of painful past events. But also is full of hope for future and positivity.*

*Day 8: I'm proud that I have seen the course through even though it has brought up a lot of difficult things from the past .. How feeling about self? I feel good. Very positive and happy I tried something very different to what I'm used to. How are you feeling about tomorrow? Thinking about what I can get involved in next. Sum up day in one word? Proud.*

### Self-concept

Our quantitative measure of self-concept combined two related components: a positive sense of self pertaining to an ability to look to the future and address things of importance to oneself, and a negative sense of self related to an offender identity and feeling unable to make changes in one's life. Our data for the whole participant group show a significant increase in positive self-concept between the start and end of the course. The mean score for the participant group in men's prisons also increased slightly although the change was not statistically significant. There was a very small negative change in the comparison group score between T1 and T2, but also not statistically significant.

*Table 9: Self-concept*

Self-concept	Participant group	Men's prisons participant group	Men's prisons comparison group
<b>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests – Mean comparison</b>	Mean T1 = 3.53 Mean T2 = 3.69	Mean T1 = 3.56 Mean T2 = 3.66	Mean T1 = 3.59 Mean T2 = 3.57
<b>Test scores</b>	Z=-2.13      p<.05 r= .19	Z=-1.7      p>.05	Z=-.91      p>.05

Our qualitative data show that for the courses facilitated new ways of thinking about oneself and one's future. Participants related how the creative opportunities for self-expression, for

role-taking and for personal reflection on the courses created led to greater self-understanding:

*I have thought about consequences, I have thought about rewards or negatives and positives. I've thought about all that stuff, but it's never come into play for me. Because even though I'm thinking about it, you can look at a little picture, but never be able to see the text underneath that picture, because the writing is too small. But if you get up close, you can see the picture, innit? So what I'm doing now, now I know how to see the picture clearly, now I can see it clearly, but before, it was just like I could only see bits of it.*

(Geese Theatre participant)

*Yeah, so when I first got to know [the facilitator] and all that, it's like, I wanted to try and make music, try and make things happen...But then, after being there and talking to other people, I started to understand myself a bit better...*

(Only Connect participant)

The courses could also open up for participants new visions of their future:

*I just want to be a better version of me before all this even happened. And I can see that now, I can see that end bit and I can see now where I want my future to be.*

(Open Clasp participant)

*It pushed me to continue trying to sort my life out, believing in myself. You know that I am capable of doing other stuff other than crime, drugs.*

(Good Vibrations participant)

For some participants, particularly in the community setting, a vision of a better future was already established and the arts course represented a step towards it:

*Cos basically I'm trying to change my whole life. I've recently come out of prison so I'm trying to add new things to my life, of things to do. So instead of my past life, I'm like, let's put that over there, and let's have a new life. So this is one of the things that I'm doing to have a new life.*

(Only Connect participant)

Crucially, participants' reflections suggest that this sense of agency was not idealised but grounded in a realistic appraisal of themselves and the future challenges they faced. This is illustrated in the following quote from a Geese Theatre participant reflecting on an activity in which increasing numbers of socks, representing life's challenges or commitments, were thrown between the group in a pattern that occasionally sped up or changed:

*Obviously, if one person falls out of line and that pattern messes up, obviously it'll either slow down, or people start dropping socks. So it makes me think, well, in life do we need a certain pattern? I need a certain pattern that goes in a certain way, and if I'm sticking to the pattern and then I start doing things differently, or I speed it up or I slow it down, or I add more things to it too soon without getting, without it adjusting to my rhythm of the way I'm living, then it could backfire, like, I could start dropping socks.*

(Geese Theatre participant)

As this quote demonstrates, many participants were able to make connections from their lives into their artistic work, and apply what they were learning in the arts programmes to how they saw themselves and their futures.

### Personal Development

Linked to participants' changes in self-concept were strong themes of personal development and self-improvement. The quantitative measures indicate significant positive differences in the personal development mean scores for the overall participant group and the men's prisons participant group between T1 and T2 but no significant difference (indeed a drop in the mean score) for the men's prisons comparison group.

Table 10: Personal Development

Personal Development	Participant group	Men's prisons participant group	Men's prisons comparison group
<b>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests – Mean comparison</b>	Mean T1 = 4.14 Mean T2 = 4.37	Mean T1 = 4.18 Mean T2 = 4.38	Mean T1 = 4.40 Mean T2 = 4.22
<b>Test scores</b>	Z=-3.16      p<.005 r= .29	Z=-3.06      p<.005 r=.20	Z=-1.33      p>.05

These findings are supported by participants' comments and observations in interviews and in their diaries. Participants reported that a desire to work on their personal skills had been reignited or inspired by the courses:

*Well ironically enough..., whatever my vision was at the beginning, rapidly changed into something more, how can I put it, it became more, like, how do I put it, erm, basically, my purpose of being there, it kinda shifted (to) like personal development, if you know what I mean?*

(Only Connect Participant)

*I liked how it was a course and, yeah, it was like personal development and that. Yeah, like I say, I liked how it refreshed me. Like, the skills I learnt, they're still there but sometimes, you just kind of forget because it's been a while. So it was just nice, it was like a top up for me, a refresher.*

(Geese Theatre participant)

The experience of participating could be challenging and take participants out of their 'comfort zone' but many said they felt that the journey was beneficial. They spoke about developing patience and team working skills:

*...it's good because it puts you in, like, different scenarios, as in, like you're working with different people, you're working with strangers, like you might get put on the spot to write lyrics or, like, it kind of puts you out of your comfort zone, but in a good way, type of thing....*

(Only Connect participant)

Some participants observed for themselves and others that completing the course generated a strong sense of achievement and greater self-confidence:

*Last day today. First course I have completed in 11 years. I found it quite hard but there have been moments that I will remember fondly. Glad I stayed the course.*

(Diary, Good Vibrations participant)

*A journey, yeah, and being able to leave the group when it finished and make other decisions through doing that group, the drama, that gave them the courage to say 'Right, so now I can do this'.*

(Open Clasp participant)

### **4.3 Looking Outward**

Participants also spoke of the social impact of taking part in the arts courses and the relationships that were built or strengthened with others in and outside of the criminal justice settings. They spoke of friendships developing with other participants and of ongoing mutual support or creative activities that sometimes continued after the end of programmes. The theme of social capital, of developing 'ties, norms, and trust transferable from one social setting to another' (Putnam, 1994) emerges strongly in the quantitative data. On the three dimensions of communication with others, relationships and working with others, there was a significant positive increase in the mean scores for the overall participant group and the men's prisons participant group. In contrast there were small, insignificant declines in the mean scores for the men's prison comparison group.

Table 11: Social Capital

Social Capital		Participant group (total)	Men's prisons participant group	Men's prison Comparison Group
<b>Communication with others</b>	Mean comparison	Mean T1 = 4.02 Mean T2 = 4.17	Mean T1 =4.06 Mean T2 = 4.21	Mean T1 = 4.16 Mean T2 = 4.13
	<b>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests</b>	Test scores Z=-2.10 p<.05 r= .20	Z=-2.28 p<.05 r=.15	Z=-0.18 p>.05
<b>Relationships</b>	Mean comparison	Mean T1 = 3.94 Mean T2 = 4.14	Mean T1 = 4.06 Mean T2 = 4.19	Mean T1 = 4.13 Mean T2 = 4.00
	<b>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests</b>	Test scores Z=-3.16 p<.005 r= 0.29	Z=-2.84 p<.05 r=0.19	Z=-0.10 p>.05
<b>Working with others</b>	Mean comparison	Mean T1 = 3.93 Mean T2 = 4.14	Mean T1 = 3.96 Mean T2 = 4.20	Mean T1 = 4.03 Mean T2 = 3.99
	<b>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests</b>	Test scores Z=-3.25 p<.005 r= .30	Z=-3.67 p<.001 r=.25	Z=-.59 p>.05

In interpreting the qualitative and quantitative findings on social capital, we have found it helpful to draw on recent scholarly work identifying two linked but distinct forms: 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (Claridge, 2018).

#### Bonding Social Capital

'Bonding' social capital 'describes connections *within* a group or community' (Claridge, 2018). We see a trend in our data of participants finding that the arts course had either strengthened existing relational ties, both within the prison and with communities outside, and/or had enabled participants to develop new friendships from within the group of participants.

The group dynamic was important to participants, and friendships that develop through the shared experience were talked about as a significant outcome of the courses. Participants reflected on the difference in relationships between members of the group to those that often characterised prison life or their relationships in other settings, and forged new connections with people with whom they discovered shared experiences or attitudes.

*...they always say real recognises real, so I guess like when you're around like-minded people, without having to try and force things, things just click into place naturally.*

(Only Connect participant)

For those in prison, where social life can be very fraught, establishing stronger relationships could make a difference outside of the project as well:

*Because in here, people don't talk to each other often... But to be on that course and see how we bonded and to come out from it and then, after the course was finished we're still talking to each other, saying hi in the morning, hello, because they didn't ever say morning to me in the morning, or the rest of the time. And then for them to say morning, it's a good thing, it's really helped that.*

(Irene Taylor Trust Music in Prisons project participant)

*... you can get like an image of people and 'Oh she looks a little bit like stepping off-ish', but then once you get to do that group work with them you know you realise that we've all got problems, we all have to deal with us problems, you know, and together it does help to talk about it and to support each other and the confidentiality. [...] And then while we were in the establishment if I seen somebody in the group and she was a bit down and sad I knew then that I could approach her and say 'Are you okay?' and if she says 'Do you know something, I'm just not and do you want to have a chat?' Whereas before ... I'd have seen that she was sad but not approached her, so yeah, it actually brought us closer together, yeah.*

(Open Clasp participant)

Some participants felt that attending the arts courses had brought them closer to their families: their children, their partners, and parents. They spoke of three ways in which the courses supported family relationships. First, the courses helped to maintain communication by generating something interesting and uplifting to talk about. Many participants found taking part in the courses a joyful experience which they wanted to share with their families. Secondly, some participants were able to apply the social skills and confidence they had learned in the projects to their familial relationships, particularly those that were more difficult:

*I think, when you've been doing your role play, standing up and, like, saying that to your partner is nothing, do you know what I mean, it's, so your confidence is already up there now, so you can say it over the phone easy! Because, face to face would probably be a bit difficult as well, but, as it stands I've already been doing things face to face, where I can just get on the phone and say anything I want now.*

(Geese Theatre participant)

Thirdly, participants valued being able to share the artistic output with their families, for example being able to invite them to attend showcases or performances, or giving them a CD recording of the music they had created. The Lullaby Project in particular offered fathers in prison a way of connecting with their children and demonstrating their care for them even from a distance.

*It's a piece of music that's personal, so you know you can keep it, you can hear it, you can enjoy it over and over and again. And it shows that you care and that you were thinking of your child.*

(Irene Taylor Trust, Lullaby Project participant)

The sharing of achievements enabled participants to present themselves to their families in a regenerating and positive light. Their personal growth narratives could kindle responses of pride and warmth in response:

*(I told) my sisters and I told them I took part in drama club and my younger sister went 'Really? You hated drama in school.' I was like 'Yeah, but it's completely different here', ...She went 'Oh I'm proud of you' and she goes 'Does it help?' because she knew I was quite an anxious person, I said 'Yes, my confidence from being in drama it's gone literally up there, brilliant.'*

(Open Clasp participant)

### Bridging Social Capital

Where 'bonding' is to do with developing existing relationships or forming new friendships within an existing community, 'bridging' social capital addresses 'associations that "bridge" between communities, groups, or associations' (Claridge, 2018). Participants spoke of developing new or latent social skills that they felt they could apply to other areas of life, which would help them in progressing onto new things and fostered opportunities for social integration.

Working as a team and developing related interpersonal and communication skills was something many participants spoke about. These skills were seen as a necessity for engaging well in the project, but participants were often able to see how these skills were applicable to other areas of life:

*'Like, if I'm in a group with people and I'm working with them, whether I'm working on the course or out in the real world, doing a job or whatever, I've still gotta work with them, I've still gotta be patient with them, and I still gotta listen to their ideas and listen to what's going on. So it was the same kind of aspect, but again, you don't have these practicing aspects when you're on the roads. It's a lot more violent. It's not working in groups and asking people this, this and that, so it's, it's difficult for me to*

*listen to other people and be patient, but I was able to do it because I was put in the environment which then made me be like that. [...] It's made me a little susceptible to just people giving me advice, and me being patient with people.*

(Only Connect participant)

For the participants in prison, the courses could foster a sense of connection to the outside world by giving them 'a taster' of how their future life could be:

*There was no barrier of any sort between us. We were just a part of a theatre group. We could have been in London. It was important to be taken out of the microworld of prison and be a member of a group, of outside society*

(Clean Break participant)

The arts facilitators played a hugely important role in establishing new connections and networks. Participants generally spoke very highly of the facilitators and often commented on the fact that they felt treated like a 'human being' or a 'regular person' rather than as a prisoner or convicted offender. This formed the starting point for the group dynamic, and also the basis for a trusting relationship with the facilitators themselves. In prison projects, this element was particularly important to participants because the facilitators came in from the outside world, and in some way represented society or life outside of 'the system' to them. They were people participants felt they might not often or ever get a chance to interact with normally:

*It's rewarding, you know, get a chance to work with musicians, which is something I wouldn't do on the outside, let alone inside.*

(Irene Taylor Trust Lullaby Project participant)

For some, being able to forge these kinds of relationships and learn from the facilitators' approach and lives gave hope to their own aspirations for reintegration. Seen as experts, their praise also meant a lot.

On prison courses which had through-the-gate provision, and on the Only Connect course in the community, the relationships with facilitators also directly linked to new networks for participants: facilitators might either continue working with individuals, or at times provide references or connect participants in with new contacts who could help fulfil creative or professional aspirations. One Only Connect participant, for example, got accepted to a university course and credited it in part to the facilitator's contacts and references.

The possibilities for 'bridging social capital' generated by some of the courses align with theoretical work on 'tertiary' desistance (McNeill, 2016). This posits that desistance from crime requires not only behavioural or attitudinal change (although these are important

steps) but also a sense of belonging in society. This sense of belonging derives from both how people see themselves and how they are seen and responded to by others. Having opportunities to network with new people or participate in different forms of community life can contribute to this.

#### 4.5 Variations

Not all participants reported the same experiences or perceived outcomes of attending the arts programmes and we identified a number of participant, programme and organisational features that were linked to the variations in the nature and strength of the impact that participants reported.

##### Starting Points

As identified earlier, participants' **artistic starting points and motivations** for the programmes varied. There were some who joined because they had an interest in the art form and wanted an opportunity to be part of that creative activity again. For those who signed up with particular creative goals in mind, it was important that these were in some way fulfilled – and this was variable depending on whether they considered themselves novices or already experienced in their art forms. Others had no real knowledge or expectation of the course. Some had signed up initially because they were interested in developing artistic skills but these motivations shifted over the duration of the course to a stronger focus on personal development. For others, personal development was already an aspiration and signing up for the arts course was a means to develop their skills and capacities. Yet others in prison spoke of the opportunities the courses provided to escape the monotony of prison life. These differences in motivation affected participants' expectations and experiences of the arts courses and individual evaluations of its impact.

##### Attendance Variance

As is commonly the case with arts programmes in criminal justice settings, some projects had difficulties in participant retention or continuity of attendance. One reason we noted for this was that some participants were dealing with **personal issues outside of the programme** which meant they could not participate fully in terms of attendance and/or engagement with the activities. They sometimes missed sessions for health or legal reasons; or they came to sessions but were clearly distressed and distracted by their personal circumstances.

Since we only interviewed participants who completed their project, it is harder to know why some participants ended up dropping out entirely from a project. However, informal conversations with participants and, occasionally, with those who dropped out when seen around the prison, gave some indication. At times, they simply found that the course was **not what they had expected** it to be. Somewhat contrastingly, sometimes this was because there was *more* artistic activity than they had expected, and for others there was *less*. This highlights again the way in which people's artistic starting points and motivations is a key factor in understanding their engagement with a project. In other instances, we observed that

interpersonal elements were a factor: particularly, in some courses we observed **conflict between participants** resulting in some not returning to the activities. This observation is held in slight tension with the finding that courses provide opportunity for developing teamwork and other social skills; there were some instances in which an individual participant caused strife, and their disengagement actually enabled the rest of the group to maintain their involvement with less tension.

### Organisational Factors

In contrast to the community-based course, the institutional element of prison life was integral to the impact of the arts courses and shaped their direction and orientation. An arts course can be a challenge to organise and administrate, and it was clear that organisational factors made a difference to the running of the project and participants' experiences. Courses tended to run much more smoothly when there was good communication between prison staff, facilitators and participants and where there was a level of consistency in the organisation. It meant that participants (and facilitators) were able to focus on the course content. Some prisons managed better than others to ensure that other aspects of life, such as calls to family and healthcare appointments, were able to take place outside of the course times, but sometimes this was not possible, and participants missed sessions.

There were courses which were hindered by more serious organisational issues. Sometimes these were prison-wide problems, such as an incorrect roll count leading to lockdowns and therefore delays or disruptions to the course. However, sometimes the disruptions seemed to be specific to the arts project: for example, staff escorts not arriving for facilitators; participants not being unlocked from cells in time to be escorted; spaces not being viable for the activities planned. In these and similar instances, sessions were shortened or cancelled and the overall timeline of courses had to be altered. When sessions were resumed, participants' frustration about the earlier disruption often became a dominant feature that needed to be moved past before the proper content could begin.

We also observed differences between courses in the level of engagement from both managerial and frontline prison staff, which again made a difference to the smooth running of a course and to participants' experiences. There were certainly courses where participants felt that the prison staff were showing an appropriate level of interest, whether that was by joining in, giving encouragement, attending performances, or simply doing their administrative tasks effectively. This could have a positive impact on participants' relationships with staff in the prison settings.

However, there were occasions where participants felt slighted by the lack of interest shown by prison staff. For example, in one drama project only one member of staff attended the performance at the end, and this was by accident. The participants were disappointed because they had created scenes that they hoped would raise awareness of particular issues within the prison to staff who might be in a position to make changes. The lack of staff presence left participants feeling dejected at the end of the course and exacerbated feelings

of dissatisfaction with the prison authority. The member of staff who did attend, however, was deeply moved by the performance and organised a follow-up event for staff.

These variations highlight how the processes of recruiting participants and the leadership and organisational support in the host settings play a direct role in shaping the impact of the courses. In particular, they demonstrate the pivotal role of the programme facilitators in setting and managing participant expectations and experiences, in directing the programme activities, and in negotiating the complicated world of the prison. They also signal the importance of a consistent presence in the host setting and of staff in the host setting being fully 'on board' with the course.

### Men's and women's prisons

There are two broader elements of variance that we want to highlight here. The first is the differences between the work done in men's and women's prisons within the Inspiring Futures programme. Two partner organisations ran courses in women's prisons – Clean Break and Open Clasp, which are both drama organisations working exclusively with women. Several of the other partners work across both the men's and women's secure estates but their courses for the Inspiring Futures programme only took place in men's prisons. We know that the work of these partners follows a similar pattern in both men's and women's prisons, but we have no primary data, for example, on how the prison-based music projects are experienced in women's prisons. We held a focus group discussion with arts partner leaders to explore their views on similarities and differences in working in men's and women's prisons. Their views combined with our own observational data of the courses running in both types of both prisons suggest that although there were many similarities in terms of the outcomes the men and women reported from the prison courses, there were variations in the emotional tone and atmosphere of the courses which asked for different approaches from facilitators. In the women's groups, where personal stories and emotions were shared openly and often quite early on in the courses, the facilitator's role was directed particularly towards managing disclosure and keeping the space emotionally safe. With the men's groups, the facilitators tended to need to work first on establishing trust and confidentiality, and then encouraging a level of openness amongst group members.

### Community vs. prison settings

The second wider point of variance within the Inspiring Futures programme was the difference between arts courses in prison and community settings. Our data are limited for this comparison to the findings from the Only Connect courses as all of the other courses on the Inspiring Futures programme took place in prisons. While the relevance of our findings for other community arts projects will vary, there were some notable differences between the community and prison settings which are worth noting here.

In particular, because participants in Only Connect had agency to come and go as they wanted, they showed a far greater connection to the physical location of the Only Connect

studio and long-lasting emotional connection to the work of Only Connect. Both projects in prisons and in the community provided a sense of psychological escape from otherwise quite harsh realities, but in the prison these were still contained within the institution. For the Only Connect participants, however, the Only Connect space became a place of safety that they came to frequently. They referred to Only Connect as their community and support network, even being at home. Rather than it being the individual project or the particular group, the organisation as a whole was important. The lead facilitator was also an essential figure in providing ongoing support and encouragement, something that was not possible for facilitators in prison projects. These findings were supported by the comments of former members of the arts organisations who had taken part in the focus group discussions at the beginning of the Inspiring Futures project. Former participants spoke of how important the organisations' community bases were for maintaining a sense of connection to the organisation and for providing ongoing encouragement and support in their lives:

*- When you come out of prison, and you don't have nothing, you go down those routes where you just feel isolated*

*-Yeah*

*-And plus it don't help when you've got a Probation Officer who's very more control-based than welfare. So, when you get included into Irene Taylor, it brings like a social inclusion aspect*

*- Hope.*

*-So you don't feel you're ostracised, or marginalised, which is good'*

(Irene Taylor Trust focus group)

It was clear that where it was an option, ongoing involvement with organisations in the community was valuable for participants.

#### **4.6 Endings**

Some participants reported how difficult it had been when their course ended and there was no clear signal of what their next step in their personal journey could be.

*This is what it feels like for us at the end of something. It's massive for us. We're teetering on the edge, arms flailing – will we fall, or will there be a bridge to get across?*

(Clean Break participant)

In the prison projects, partner organisations tried to pay attention to how they were closing sessions and the course as a whole. Some were able to provide some measure of follow-up after the end of a project, such as by having members of staff check in with each of them, or encouraging sign-ups to education courses or other activities. However, some participants

wanted a more formalised progression plan which enabled them to build on what they had learned.

Endings and the immediate aftermath of a project affected how participants reflected on the course. Having nothing to help them build on the personal and social development that has taken place through the programme could curtail the impact of the programme. This is shown quite clearly in these two contrasting quotes, both from Only Connect participants:

*Erm, personal development, see here's the thing, when I'm here, I don't know, my personal development, it feels like I can actually achieve a lot, but it's like, like I said, as soon as I'm out, I'm alright, on the bus I'm alright, and then I get home, open the door, as soon as I open the door it's like, enter the room it's like, what I just came from is just gone, it's just gone.*

*During the course I felt really positive, but after the course I felt even more positive because even though it was done, I had my next step.*

The impact of arts courses, then, can be enhanced or limited by what happens afterwards and the extent to which participants are able to build on their personal progress.

*It just kind of ends, doesn't it. You do stuff like this and then it ends, don't it. You know what I mean, but that's the system, innit. That's how the system is, you know what I mean.*

*(Good Vibrations participant)*

Indeed, the importance of sustaining the energy and value derived from the courses in the longer-term has emerged as a key theme in the Inspiring Futures project.

#### **4.7 Sustainability of impact over time**

The T3 participants comprised a small subset of the overall sample and just participants from Good Vibrations, Helix Arts, Irene Taylor Trust and Only Connect courses. We collected T3 surveys from 26 participants approximately a year after attending a course. In addition, we interviewed 14 members of the T3 group about their reflections on the programme and their views of its longer-term impact on their lives.

The small and partial sample of T3 participants prevented meaningful comparisons of the T3 survey data with the T1 and T2 survey results. We looked to see whether there were indications of within-person change amongst the 19 participants who fully completed all three surveys over the three time periods. Table 12 presents their mean scores of the questionnaire dimensions at Times 1 -3. On their own, these figures do not tell a clear story. There is variation in terms of the directions of scores amongst this sample at T1 and T2 in comparison to the overall sample results, and one-way repeated measures ANOVA tests indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between individual scores at the three time points. These findings are not unexpected given the small sample size and

partial composition of the T3 sample. A tentative observation, when looking at the differences between the scores at T2 and T3, is that the overall impact of the courses may fade over time as scores on all dimensions fell slightly over this period except for two (well-being and self-concept). Scores on these dimensions dropped at the end of the courses and increased at Time 3.

Table 12: Participant Survey Responses T1-T3

Dimension	T1 Mean (SD) (n=19)	T2 Mean (SD) (n=19)	T3 Mean (SD) (n=19)
Creativity	3.84 (0.80)	4.20 (0.50)	4.14 (0.57)
Wellbeing	3.96 (0.63)	3.80 (0.86)	3.87 (0.81)
Self-concept	3.56 (0.71)	3.47 (0.66)	3.65 (0.66)
Personal Development	4.29 (0.46)	4.37 (0.33)	4.27 (0.38)
Communication with others	3.93 (0.45)	4.15 (0.59)	4.14 (0.53)
Relationships	4.15 (0.60)	4.10 (0.83)	3.91 (0.76)
Working with others	4.07 (0.59)	4.25 (0.52)	4.17 (0.44)

In contrast the qualitative data at T3 data indicated that the views of participants about the value of the programmes had remained consistent over time. All 14 participants from the arts programmes who were interviewed up to 18 months following their attendance on the courses spoke warmly about the course and described some of the ongoing impact. These differences in the quantitative and qualitative data at T3 suggest the value of analysing individual trajectories combining both sets of data to capture a more nuanced understanding of long-term impact. This will be the focus of follow-up analysis of the data. Nevertheless, there were some common themes arising out of the T3 interviews which we summarise here.

The participants of the music programmes spoke of the intrinsic value of the experience, reflecting on how the activity had brought disparate people together into a cohesive group which had produced something special:

*... what more evidence do you need? A bunch of guys that don't really know each other, that start off, as I said, we were a dynamic group, and so dynamic. And then you end up producing such beautiful pieces of music, it speaks for itself.*

(Good Vibrations participant)

Participants' views of the value of the programme for promoting a sense of wellbeing had not changed. One participant reflected on how being taken out of his ordinary stressful environment had helped to calm him down, another reflected on how the programme had added a touch of vibrancy to the monotony of prison life:

*Yeah and especially in a place like this, it does bring a bit of colour to your life doesn't it? It's basically bland. Like you come out of your cell, you see the same people, you go get your food and you go back in your cell, you get half an hour outside, you're back in your cell and it's your life. So to go out and do something is quite...it's vibrant, I like it.*

(Irene Taylor Trust Music in Prisons Project participant)

One participant explained how his experience of learning a new instrument, and not being discouraged by making mistakes, had provided him with a broader confidence to persevere when things go wrong:

*[the facilitator] said, if you mess up, just carry on. And I've taken that little thing he said, and I kind of apply it and it works: mess up, just carry on.... It's, yeah, we all mess up sometimes, and we've got to carry on. Don't worry about it as much, and... it'll sort itself out.*

(Good Vibrations participant)

Many participants continued to speak of how the programmes had generated a sense of self-confidence which was in part linked to the sense that others recognised and valued what they had done:

*...it's had a massive impact on me, doing that course, and especially like when, uh, I'll get feedback ... like, that CD, they showed it to some like kids in the youth justice system and all that, and they like picked that track that I done... And I don't know, it made me feel that like, they could feel what I'd put into that track. You know what I mean? I think it was good, like, you know that they picked that track.*

(Good Vibrations participant)

Reflecting on the longer-term impact, one participant noted that the course, having generated a sense of confidence and self-belief, was foundational to his decision to pursue further studies.

*Yeah. I'm not, I'm not gonna get into uni this year, but maybe like maybe next year.... But that's all off the back of the Good Vibrations course. 'Cause I did reach the point like where I was gonna like just give up and all that. You know what I mean, and then, you know, it's like projects like that, there is stuff that like actually works.*

(Good Vibrations participant)

There were indications in some participants' responses of the cumulative benefits of attending several courses:

*...because it got me to stop and think, which is something I learned on my courses that I've done over the years, so it's stop and think, right, well, how can I go forward? What avenues can I look into?*

(Helix Arts participant)

Several participants described how the friendships or acquaintances that had been made on the programme had continued:

*So in that way I think it built like lasting like prison friendships, in prison like, you know what I mean?*

(Good Vibrations participant)

Those who had been able to share their creative output with families described their positive responses. One participant said that his lullaby had been well-received by his family – his mother said she was proud of him and his partner cried when she heard it. His daughter thought it was 'a bit cheesy' but he thought she liked it and his son 'just liked hearing my voice, he didn't know I could sing.' The product created a point of focus in participants' relationships with their families, generating warm and positive interactions and represented something constructive that had come out of imprisonment and separation.

Several of the participants said that their course had encouraged them to offer support to others and take on a mentor role:

*I can help others to bring stuff out, that they're trying... It's not trying to hide, but it helped me with my mental health work, my violence reduction and stuff I was doing. So people can come to me then, and talk to me.*

(Helix Arts participant)

*I do believe I might have convinced other people to take part in things they wouldn't have in the past. Like, when they said, oh no, no, and I might have talked them into it, because from that starting point of trying something new myself, I know it's not as bad as you think it's going to be. ...which, in the past, I would have just thought 'that's it, this isn't – done'.*

(Good Vibrations participant)

This support of others could be expressed as a wish to 'give something back':

*Even going down to Age UK, I didn't have to, but I thought just to help out and I'll donate something. You keep giving them prizes, and I'm thinking, well, no, it's cost you*

*all the time, well, Age UK. And I think, no, just give a little bit back. That's never been me.*

(Helix Arts participant)

*Yeah, I'm fine with that. Because I think with music, I will just keep continuing writing. I don't know. I may do something good with the music I am doing, maybe help change people, or help different people, or something like that.*

(Irene Taylor Trust Music in Prisons Project participant)

As will be discussed further in the next section, these words resonate with the concept of generativity in the desistance literature (e.g. Maruna, 2001).

It was salutary in light of these positive responses to recognise the challenges that participants experienced after leaving prison. Two participants on the Lullaby Project had been released and then returned to prison. One had completed the course while on remand and after his court trial received a suspended sentence. However, as a remand prisoner he was given no support in finding accommodation on release so he ended up with the friends he had been using drugs with:

*...because I wanted to be sustainable, you know, and jumping from sofa to sofa, you know, and then I started mixing up with the wrong people again...Only way I could actually go, even though like it was the wrong people, I could still go there and have a roof over my head, you know.*

(Irene Taylor Trust Lullaby Project participant)

The other spoke of the difficulty of escaping his criminal past. He said he and his family want to move house:

*... just find somewhere different, somewhere out of the way where we can just start again, because we seem to be in the shit loop where this [the prison] seems to be my second home.*

(Irene Taylor Trust Lullaby Project participant)

Their observations reinforce the importance of ongoing support in the community for released prisoners that the arts programmes could contribute to. On their own, the arts programmes would not be sufficient to prevent re-involvement in the justice system.

#### **4.8 Perspectives on desistance from crime**

As noted earlier, there were variations in the motivations and experiences of the participants on the courses. Of the prison participants, for those for whom the prospect of release was unlikely or many years away the value of the courses was discussed in relation to their therapeutic value or helping with their sentence progression, rather than to do with post-

release aspirations. Nevertheless, the comments and observations from participants and indications of change in our quantitative data provide robust support to existing research findings about the potential for arts programmes to contribute to desistance from crime (see discussion of previous research).

Many participants identified the contribution the programmes made to their personal development – the development of skills and qualities that they recognised would be helpful in the future. These included the strengthening of coping skills and strategies for addressing triggers of negative behaviour, combined with the provision of spaces to reflect on the type of person they would like to be and the lifestyle they would like to lead in the future. For those who were artistically oriented, the creative skills they developed generated hope that these skills could lead to a more fulfilling and sustainable lifestyle. Participants recognised too the value of the projects for developing interpersonal awareness and abilities to work collaboratively with others. In the longer term, the participants we interviewed spoke of the ongoing value of the projects they took part in. They treasured the creative outputs: the CD recordings, the lullabies for children. These acted as permanent reminders of their creative achievements and often served to bring them closer to members of their families. The development of such personal and interpersonal skills and qualities have been linked to a shift in self-concept and sense of personal agency associated with secondary desistance from crime (Maruna and Farrell, 2004, Healy 2010).

And for some participants, the projects themselves represented a ‘hook for change’ (see Giordano, 2002) inspiring interest to seek out other opportunities for self-development. Indeed the awareness of such personal development provided a strong motivation not to return to a previous lifestyle:

*...when you're not doing anything, there's always that temptation to get back into it, but when you like actually start doing positive things and you start coming to things like that, like, even when you're not here you're thinking, you know what I'm already doing this I'm going to this course I'm doing that, you feel like it's progression, I'm progressing, I'm doing something, so it's like, you're not gonna wanna go backwards, type of thing? Right, yeah.*

(Only Connect participant)

Further, as mentioned above, the opportunities for developing bridging social capital through the links to new professional and social networks in the community provided important resources for participants and established the potential for ‘tertiary desistance’ (McNeill, 2016, Weaver, 2012). Relatedly, participants’ narratives illustrated the transformational effects of being recognised. The courses themselves communicated a message of care which was highly valued and in some participants inspired a desire to ‘give something back’ in the form of support and mentoring to others.

However, and in line with other research findings, participants were realistic about the contribution of the courses to reducing re-offending:

*So, will I reoffend again? [pause] Probably not, no. But I can't just say that's entirely because of them, but it's helped. They contributed. Positive thinking.*

(Geese Theatre participant)

*It's hard to say. I mean, if there was more than one course, I think it would. So a one-off course, no.*

(Helix Arts participant)

Indeed, the importance of ongoing support and opportunities for personal development to help mitigate the negative dimensions to prison life (see also Schinkel, 2015) or life in the community, continued to be reinforced in participants narratives:

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*I feel I kinda owe Only Connect, cos if it wasn't for them, who knows, I could have reoffended by now, I could have been back on drugs by now, I could have, do you know what I mean, but it's like, the hope of being a part, the hope of being able to be with them and all that, it kinda kept me from all that stuff, do you know what I mean, ...Outside the building, it's just a survival, do you know what I mean? It's, like a, it's a survival trying to not break the law, reoffend, it's a survival not to get caught up in any kind of thing that, that's not meant to be caught up in. And, you know what I mean, it's just, it's trying to, maintain really, as well, like, you know. Yeah, and it's so hard without that.*

(Only Connect participant)

#### 4.9 Reflections on participant impact

*So as long as people are taking positive things away from it, whether they're short term or long term, it's worth doing, isn't it? It can only be a good thing.*

(Good Vibrations, participant)

Overall our data show the potential of the arts programmes in prisons to have both short and longer-term impact on participants lives creatively, inwardly and socially. There are variations in terms of who gained from the courses and in which ways; longer-term effects were less predictable as they were dependent on opportunities and support to build on what had been learnt both in prisons and in the community. the handling of course endings was particularly important where there was no immediate prospect of ongoing involvement in creative activities, as participants could find the return to the monotony of everyday life after the vibrancy of the course experience difficult to cope with.

Overall, our data highlight the way that the impact of arts courses is embedded in the interpersonal elements of the projects, and the critical role of others for enabling the courses' varied forms of impact. The social connections that developed on the programmes created opportunities for new friendships, new forms of support and new activities which could lead to lifestyle change. However, the gap between the possible and the actual role of the arts for participants was defined not just by learning and interactions on the courses, but also by the settings in which the courses ran and the wider social networks and opportunities participants had access to.

## 5 Arts Organisations, Facilitators & the Arts Sector

Alongside an analysis of the impact of arts projects on participants who attended, the Inspiring Futures research study aimed to capture the broader impact of the arts in criminal justice settings. We discuss here the role and meaning of the arts projects for the partner arts organisations and the individual facilitators who ran the course. We also offer some reflections on the contribution of the arts in criminal justice settings to the wider arts sector.

### 5.1 Arts Organisations

An important facet of the Inspiring Futures study was understanding the behind-the-scenes elements of the criminal justice arts projects, including the organisational structures involved. For all the partners, the criminal justice sector was the setting for all or a significant portion of their work. For all partners, the work represented an important source of income and for some the work was fundamental to their existence. However, among the IF arts partners there was a range of organisational and delivery models, with differences in how they staffed and structured their activities. Some employed facilitators directly, others worked with freelance artists; some worked to a hybrid model of employed and freelance artists. For some projects, arts organisations partnered with other organisations: for example, the Irene Taylor Trust's collaboration with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) for the Lullaby Project, and Helix Arts's work with Age UK in HMP Northumberland.

The Inspiring Futures project highlighted the fragility of the arts in CJS sector. Working in prisons is complicated and unpredictable, and for organisations who get their income from this work, last-minute cancellations and changes can be very disruptive. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted this fragility, but also amplified the resilience of the sector: many organisations were able to move their activities online and come up with innovative and creative ways to continue to provide some activities or resources. Nevertheless, most of the organisations recognise that their work is predicated on in-person groupwork, which was vastly limited during these years.

### 5.2 Facilitators

The frontline facilitators<sup>12</sup> were probably the most important people in ensuring the successful implementation of a project. Facilitators were highly valued by the project participants, and much of the impact on participants' changing self-concept, skills, or wellbeing, came as a result of the way facilitators ran the projects and treated those involved. The significance of the facilitators to the participants has been frequently recognised in evaluations and literature (e.g. Anderson et al, 2011), but the experiences of facilitators

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<sup>12</sup> 'Facilitators' here refers to anyone whose role in the project was primarily the facilitation of artistic activities. It therefore includes the Finding Rhythms producers who worked on the Only Connect courses, but does not include representatives from Age UK, who partnered with Helix Arts and whose role was more organisational within the prison, or Open Book, who partnered with Clean Break and who facilitated research sessions but not creative ones.

themselves is only more recently starting to receive scholarly attention (Anderson, 2015; Simpson et al, 2019). Interviews with IF facilitators gave fruitful insights into their backgrounds and motivations, and the impact that their work in the criminal justice system had on their own lives.

### Backgrounds

The facilitators came from a variety of artistic backgrounds. Most were trained as performing artists; some arts training had including facilitation coaching, and a few facilitators had trained explicitly in social work or therapeutic methods. There was a vast array of other artistic involvement: some facilitators worked entirely within the criminal justice sector; others worked in a variety of education and community-based settings; some continued to have portfolios of activities including performance, writing, and facilitation. Many of the IF facilitators had been involved in their organisations for a long time (a few since their inception) but some were new recruits and their IF work was a first or early career project.

### Motivations

#### *Desire to make a difference*

There were varied routes into the work in the criminal justice system: some responded to advertisements for employment, others were introduced via social or professional networks. Howsoever they started, all were motivated by a desire to make a difference:

*I think I've always just had this feeling of like wanting to give opportunities to people who haven't had the best start in life and ... as you know I'm sure there's so many people in the prison system who are from care and it's just all of these really complicated lives that people have led. So yeah, it just really fit well and I'm really enjoying it*

(Good Vibrations facilitator)

*It's really important to me in my career that I feel like I'm doing something of use [...] it feels good to be doing something good, and...it's really simplistic and basic but I really like everyone to be happy and if I can do little bits on the way then that feels like I'm doing something on my life's journey that's of use.*

(Geese Theatre facilitator)

Although facilitators clearly also gained personal fulfilment from their work (discussed further below), almost always their aim for any one project focussed on participants' journeys and experiences. And indeed, facilitators were highly confident that this work was making a difference to people's lives; while they were interested in the results of the evaluation, they said did not need it in order to prove the value of the work they did. Either from gut feelings or from general anecdotes and observations, they were convinced that the work they did was powerful and transformative:

*'It's really tangible [...] we do check-in and check-out at the end of each day, and it's not just like token gestures but real genuine insights that people have.'*

(Geese Theatre facilitator)

*Oh, I don't need convincing. That's the first thing, because, because I, whether it's faith or belief or whatever, I don't know, it's, erm, this is the word, transformative. This work is basically transformative, and, but that can take place on many different levels and intensities, of course.*

(Irene Taylor Trust facilitator)

As is evident in the above quote, facilitators did not tend to be starry-eyed about the impact of their work: as well as an awareness of the challenges of measuring impact, most facilitators recognised that their work would affect people differently and that some participants would gain more or less than others. While they believed that most participants benefitted from the activities, they felt they would be transformative for only a few. Several acknowledged that their insights were almost all in the immediate term, and were interested to know the longer-term impact of their work and the longevity of the effects. There was sometimes a recognition or even a sense of frustration that their own measures for success were not always recognised by governors or funders; their own aims tended to be about the group process, individual wellbeing and small steps of personal development, whereas those funding or overseeing might be more interested in reoffending rates or job prospects, elements they felt they had little power over.

### *Employment*

Despite the clear motivation being a desire to make a difference, it is evident that the need for employment was also a reason why people became involved in this work. Employment in the arts sector is notoriously precarious and, as Simpson et al (2019) note, for some facilitators in the sector the inducement to criminal justice related work is in part financial.

The precarity of the sector was evident in many facilitators' descriptions of their working lives. A few interviewees found the facilitation work paid enough to enable them to continue with their primary goal of developing their own performance and writing:

*Erm, well, my, my dreams, I guess, are like to write my own music and sing, and I guess the reason I'm doing [this project] is to help pay for that, cos obviously it's hard to get into the music industry as like an artist, so I need a job to kind of help pay for promotions and stuff. Obviously I'm going to learn a lot from [this project] and I do enjoy it, but at the end of the day it's just a stepping stone for me, to something else.*

(Only Connect facilitator)

However, facilitators more commonly found that the combination of part-time, gig-based work and charitable wages were not sufficient to maintain a living, and took on private teaching or other more lucrative jobs in order to maintain their facilitation work, which was their priority:

*I wish I could do this pretty much, just this, I wish I could do this and write my own music. But I don't get paid for writing my own music, so realistically I wish I could just do this kind of work. Yeah, love it.*

(Only Connect facilitator)

And yet, the inconsistency of the facilitation work when on a freelance basis made balancing other jobs that might provide more secure incomes very difficult:

*So, yeah, it's very piecemeal, it's not a steady income by any means and it's one of the I would say biggest challenges because I love the work but it's very hard to find other jobs that will allow that work to happen alongside it, because you have to take these weeks off. And so either you are using your annual leave or you're freelance but then ...if you have something regular then you're going to have to stop it for that week, so it's tricky.*

(Good Vibrations facilitator)

And indeed, the unpredictability of the work, particularly in prisons, could be highly stressful for freelancers:

*Yeah. It's kind of nerve-wracking actually, to be honest, when I book in projects, looking at my calendar, I always tend to prioritise Good Vibrations projects, cos it's always been the core of my work really, and then I get three weeks booked in, but before it you're always thinking, is it going to get cancelled, is it going to get cancelled? And then what happens if it is? It's too late to get any other work in, it's suddenly, it's a huge chunk. You know, the reality is that at the end of last year I had two projects cancelled very close, back to back, and that's suddenly, two weeks a big chunk of work, nothing.*

(Good Vibrations facilitator)

Several also pointed out that not everybody would be able to deal with the logistical challenges of the work, such as spending five days away from home and family.

All the facilitators interviewed as part of Inspiring Futures were enthusiastic about their work, whether as the whole or one part of a broader portfolio of creative and facilitation work. As with participants, we do not have data from and facilitators who decided such work was not for them. It is evident, though, for those who pursue these career paths they consider it worth the challenge.

## Impact

### **Personal fulfilment**

Evidently, the facilitators find their work incredibly fulfilling, despite the challenges. Across the interviews there was a strong theme of being fortunate to do the criminal justice arts work and the sense of reward that facilitators achieved from it:

*Regardless of all that [the stresses of working in prisons], the work has remained exciting and I think exciting and nourishing and, yeah, exciting and nourishing and satisfying and rewarding.*

(Irene Taylor Trust facilitator)

*[It's] completely varied, soul nourishing, important, privileged, always developing new skills, always meeting people...*

(Geese Theatre facilitator)

*I'm so biased because I love gamelan and I love working with people and I think this is kind of my ideal job!*

(Good Vibrations facilitator)

One of the things that facilitators appreciated about the work was the immediate feedback and enthusiasm from the groups with which they worked.

*This is my absolute favourite kind of work [...] it's just really nice to have someone that's so enthusiastic about everything. And I think yeah the enthusiasm that I've seen at these sessions is so far beyond almost any of the other jobs I do. Which I think is like great.*

(Only Connect facilitator)

*[It's] very different to me sitting down in an orchestra and playing the notes in front of me, which I really enjoy doing, [but you] don't get that immediate feeling of, yes, I've really helped somebody today, uhm, which I really like.'*

(RPO/ Irene Taylor Trust facilitator)

However facilitators also had to deal with disappointment at times, for example when projects did not meet all their aims or when the prison environment frustrated the direction and development of the project. Facilitators recognised that some participants were in austere circumstances and struggling in life, and that their artistic work could represent a lifeline of support. When a project did not go well, facilitators could struggle with the feeling of having not provided something as well as they could.

### **Professional and creative development**

The criminal justice arts work also gave facilitators opportunities for developing professionally, both in their creative skills and in their other professional capacities.

Although their motivations for working in the criminal justice system tended not to be primarily about their artistic outputs, many facilitators talked about how their work gave new inspiration in their other creative work and gave opportunities to hone their technical skills.

*Maybe vocally, [it] gives a chance to try a few different things, to sing in a different way.*

(Irene Taylor Trust facilitator)

*In terms of acting, I mean, it's great, I've met a lot of really different kind of characters, it's a really invaluable experience if I'm just to think about freelance acting.*

(Geese Theatre facilitator)

*I think actors who lock themselves off from connecting to the real world miss out, you know. You could have a great lifestyle and live like you're some kind of Lord, but really an actor is just a person telling somebody else's story. So you better go meet the other people, because otherwise how are you going to do a real portrayal of it.*

(Helix Arts facilitator)

*I've learned a lot, I've got a lot better since [starting]. So I could play trumpet and piano before and could hack out a few chords on a guitar, and now I, I mean I, I kind of still just hack out chords, but hopefully a bit more proficiently [chuckles]. Yeah, so yeah, I could play them all, but I have improved since, I'd say.*

(Irene Taylor Trust facilitator)

The development for those facilitating the Only Connect courses included learning from the participants about current musical trends and new production techniques. This mutual learning experience had the dual result of improving the facilitators' own knowledge and skills and adding to the rapport built with the participants by allowing them to be the teachers for a time.

*I love that part because the banter is great, because we get some great dialogue going back and forth about new things that are happening and I can share with them new concepts that I've found. So I find there's a bit of learning on both sides from that, so I'm learning from them and they're learning from me, and I think that's a wonderful thing.*

(Only Connect facilitator)

As well as specific technical skills needed for their creative work, facilitators also reported developing other professional skills including leadership and facilitation. Facilitators from different projects reported their professional confidence increasing as they received good feedback from officers or participants, and being pushed into new professional situations which broadened their professional profile and which could be applied in other contexts.

*I really like being able to try and develop myself as someone who's good at mentoring, and teaching a bit, yeah, I feel like I'm getting, I'm practicing and getting good at something new, which I haven't done in a while ... yeah, I'm glad to have the opportunity to get better at something that isn't necessarily dependent on music, in a way.*

(Only Connect facilitator)

*But yes in a professional way, I mean, just being able to facilitate a group. Group work in and of itself is like a really useful skill that you can apply to loads of different things.*

(Geese Theatre facilitator)

Some facilitators also valued the opportunity of learning from other facilitators on the team, and more experienced ones enjoyed being able to provide some coaching and assistance to those newer to the work. These teams also provided networks through which facilitators could further develop their careers.

### ***Personal development***

Although the focus of arts evaluations tends to be on the ways that participants develop through their artistic engagement, facilitators also talked about ways that they had developed or changed as a result of their work in the criminal justice system. The Geese Theatre facilitators in particular, whose work with the participants was very overtly about personal development, spoke of applying their techniques to their own lives:

*...you can't run those workshops without applying it to yourself personally as well. You are like, am I actually practising what I preach here or what we are discussing? I think it keeps you questioning those sort of things in a really useful personal therapeutic way.*

(Geese Theatre facilitator)

*It really also makes you reflect a lot personally, so like the whole masks thing, I'm always 'What mask am I using? Why am I doing that?' and kind of challenging and questioning. So the things that we bring up in groups I don't separate and go 'This is for you guys, I'm sorted', so like obviously we're always on our own little journey as well.*

(Geese Theatre facilitator)

Even those whose work was less explicitly focused on personal development felt that they had opportunities for personal growth. New facilitators in particular spoke of being taken out of their comfort zone (in a similar way to how participants spoke about the courses) and of reflecting more on themselves and their own journeys. Indeed, to an extent facilitators also noticed a change in their self-concept – their work in the criminal justice sector changed their perceptions of what it meant to be a musician/actor/artist and person.

### ***Attitudes towards course participants***

Some facilitators said that working with participants on the arts courses and learning more about their lives and past experiences had given them a greater understanding of how and why people offend:

*I think when you're growing up thinking of people in prison your perception of that is one thing and then now having done work for 13 years and just met so many different types of people and realising that people are people, I think that's really useful. [...] When you do get an insight into people's worlds... you get more of an understanding of why people may have made inappropriate choices.*

(Geese Theatre facilitator)

*I think it was Wandsworth first of all, and I had never ever been in, into prison and I was very interested but I had no idea what it would be like. And ...I definitely had preconceived ideas that they would all be [puts on more forceful voice] obviously really bad people and, [normal voice] ... I had no idea.. that they would just be normal people and that is what every single time takes my breath away... And, and I think it just, it's a real wake up call when you, just to experience that, actually, you know how easy would it be for any of us to have taken the wrong journey in our lives.*

(Irene Taylor Trust facilitator)

Whilst a deepened understanding of the ease with which people can fall into the criminal justice system could strengthen their empathy towards and connection with participants, some facilitators also found it deeply worrying to realise how they or their loved ones could end up in that situation. Some said that their inside look at the inadequacies and harms of the system added to their concerns.

### ***Emotional Labour***

Although the work is undoubtedly generally a very positive experiences, facilitators spoke about the large amount of emotional labour required of them in their criminal justice work. Many found being in such emotionally charged environments could take its toll.

*Then also like sometimes with the performances, some of the stuff we're doing triggers something from my own individual experience and so it kind of takes you there and you reflect on that. So I think because it's such work that's around just life and the rawness of life it's a constant sort of dialogue and reflection.*

(Geese Theatre facilitator)

*I just get moved by it. I have kids myself [...] it makes me think, God, I can't imagine what they're going through, to be apart from your children for however long it is.*

(Irene Taylor Trust facilitator)

The emotional labour did not affect people equally of course, but most facilitators recognised the need to decompress in some form or other. This might be simply by talking with friends or family. Some organisations recognised the potential for vicarious trauma, and ensured there were debriefing and support measures in place to help facilitators process their experiences. Not all organisations offered this, and some freelancers accessed clinical supervision by themselves. But there was a general understanding of the importance of self-care and supporting one another.

*So I know that when...there are organisations that recognise that this work can throw up difficult feelings, that it can be really challenging and that .. supervision would be beneficial. ... One of the nice things... about us going away together and living together doing this work is that there is always forum for discussion and ..there is always latitude for openness about the work that we do. I hope now as I come into my 20th year of doing it I hope that I can offer insight to newer people.*

(Irene Taylor Trust facilitator)

However, despite such challenges it was clear that the emotional content of the work was one aspect that made it both important and fulfilling, and facilitators deemed it a privilege to have access to this type of work.

### **5.3 The Arts Sector**

The data on impact that the Inspiring Futures programme has generated offers evidence of the small but significant contribution of the arts in criminal justice settings to the wider activities of the arts sector in England and Wales. It highlighted three ways in which the arts sector benefitted: first, the criminal justice arts programmes played an important part in widening access to participation in the arts amongst populations who are marginalised socially and structurally as a result of their involvement in the criminal justice system. This may have broader implications for arts inclusion, given the links between criminal justice involvement and other forms of marginalisation, such as economic deprivation and limited education experiences. Second, there were economic benefits - arts partner organisations and the artists who worked for them were sustained in full or in part by income from the criminal justice sector, and the public showcasing of arts activities generated revenue for

the arts venues. Third, community arts and education are becoming increasingly important activities not just for those organisations dedicated to such work, but also for performing arts organisations and high-profile ensembles who receive public funding. The co-facilitator from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra who took part in the Lullaby Project explained:

*...the orchestra has.. to...work for its funding. And one of the ways ...is to provide music in all these different environments. I don't think it's enough anymore to just say, oh we'll do concerts in these concert halls. I think you've got to do more than that.*

(RPO/Irene Taylor Trust facilitator)

Arts programmes in criminal justice settings offer another avenue for fulfilling these community outreach aims and obligations, and in ways that are impactful for all those involved.

## 6 Criminal Justice Settings

Our discussion of the impact of the arts programmes in criminal justice settings is to a large extent oriented towards the arts in prisons, as there was just one Inspiring Futures project – the Only Connect Rhythm and Flow course – that ran in the community. The prisons which hosted the arts programmes varied significantly; they included both men’s and women’s prisons in several different regions and covered a range of security classifications. We interviewed 20 members of staff (in ones and twos) at several of these establishments: organising staff who tended to be senior managers or governors, charity workers who were part of the organisation of the project at the establishment, and also the frontline staff and officers who watched or joined in with the programmes. From these interviews, we have generated a picture of the way in which individual staff members and the wider establishments may be impacted by hosting an arts programme.

### 6.1 Motivations

While there were a variety of reasons that organising staff gave for commissioning an arts project, there were some common themes in their narratives. Some staff were familiar with the arts organisation they hosted, and others were recommended the course by colleagues and acquaintances. Several expressed the hope that the arts course might be conducive to developing the sorts of life skills helpful for participants’ rehabilitation, which the highly structured regime in prison was not so well suited to doing. They also acknowledged the challenges of prison life for residents and saw the arts projects as an opportunity for participants to do something different that might break the monotony of prison life and be beneficial for wellbeing.

Some of the frontline staff who oversaw the day-to-day running of the courses had not been involved in their organisation and had simply been assigned to the duty. Some acknowledged scepticism at the start, but we observed many seeming to enjoy their involvement and becoming convinced of the benefits by the end:

*I think my initial idea of it was ‘I’m not sure this is going to work. How is this going to help?’ so I was a little bit curious to start with, to be honest. But I think having gone through the fortnight, I can see how it works and I can see how it’s ... a subtle way of helping them explore their issues, and it works because people were really engaging, weren’t they?*

(Prison staff member, Geese Theatre course)

*I originally thought ‘oh my God what have I done this for?’ but then as the week went on it obviously became more noticeable that there was a lot more teamwork going on.*

(Prison staff member, Good Vibrations course)

Indeed, though of course many staff treated their involvement as nothing more than their assignment for the day, there were those who were more deeply moved by the projects. Some officers rearranged their schedules or came in on days off in order to continue their involvement and see the final performance; others were not able to do that and regretted that they could not.

## 6.2 Staff Development and Wellbeing

Some of the staff who were allocated to oversee the day-to-day running of the programmes participated directly in activities, whether playing a musical instrument or taking a part in a drama game or role-play. Some of the experiences of these staff mirrored those of the participants: they tended to find it enjoyable and interesting and sometimes felt a bit out of their comfort zones in a way that led to their own confidence developing:

*And performing it was nerve-racking... because I was practising with them, and I thought that's just all it was going to be, but when they asked me to perform, I got nervous about it and I was really unsure. But then I thought, this is a great way of encouraging the ladies to do stuff. So I thought, why don't I get involved? [...] It's definitely given me confidence that I felt I needed within this environment...and it's reminded me that even if you're not familiar with something, go for it, and it usually turns out really good.*

(Prison staff member, Clean Break course)

Some staff also contrasted their involvement in the programmes to their regular work, much as prisoner participants found that the projects gave a feeling of not being in prison:

*I didn't feel as if I were at work, no [...] it was just the atmosphere, the way the lady spoke to them all, just took control if they were getting out of hand, it was just like freedom.*

(Prison staff member, Good Vibrations course)

*You know, cos our lives, our jobs, what we do on a daily basis can be quite stressful, so this just takes some of that away, you know, it's more of a pleasure than anything else.*

(Prison staff member, Irene Taylor Trust Lullaby Project)

Those involved directly or in an organising capacity found that seeing the project run successfully and observing the impact on the participants added to their job satisfaction:

*I think, er, it gave me a boost to be honest, I think anyone that was involved, you can't help but be inspired by it... prisons ... are very structured, very regimented, for good reasons, but now and then you see the real person behind that mask, so that gave me a boost, gave me a lift. It had a feel-good feeling about it.*

(Prison staff member, Good Vibrations course)

*I tend to leave work at work but this is something I was really keen to tell others. Professional, professional life is just the sense of achievement, the sense of, erm, the fact that we were able to make it work.*

(Prison staff member, Irene Taylor Trust Lullaby Project)

*I'm quite proud of the men that were on there and the work that they did and it makes you feel quite proud of them. You feel like...you see them day-to-day and you get on with them but when you see them achieving something it makes you feel like this is why I do my job.*

(Prison staff member, Irene Taylor Trust Music in Prisons Project)

These reflections are particularly important when considering the staffing challenges in prisons (discussed above), and the difficulties of the job of a prison officer or manager. They suggest that it may be worth considering how overseeing arts programmes in prison could go beyond logistics and perhaps form part of staff training and development. It is possible that such assignments could be particularly targeted at staff who will contribute to the successful running of the project and potentially benefit the most from being involved.

### 6.3 Staff-prisoner Relationships

The participation of members of staff in the arts activities could also serve to strengthen participants' trust in and recognition of those staff members which could yield longer-term benefits for relationships between staff and prisoners in the setting:

*So yes, it's nice to interact with them slightly differently, yes. [...] yet actually, I saw quite a much softer side to them. It made me realise, yes, they're still people as well. And I know that already but because you see them in certain situations and yes, you can see them vulnerable sometimes.*

(Prison staff member, Geese Theatre)

Similar observations made by participants on the prison courses as well:

*It was strange being with officers to begin with...I'm not good with authority, but I came to see the staff differently...they were more human than expected.*

(Good Vibrations participant)

*The staff who came were brilliant. I am still talking to them.*

(Good Vibrations participant)

Staff enjoyed seeing participants thrive during and after the project, and hearing the positive feedback afterwards. This could have a lingering impact on their relationships which added to their job satisfaction in the longer term:

*It's a very personal thing and, and, and for me, I felt sort of privileged that I was part of it and they were sharing it. It was fantastic.*

(Prison staff, Irene Taylor Trust Lullaby Project)

*...it was really, a really nice week, and it was really nice to see the prisoners in such a positive light, and to get that feedback as you're going round, and, you know, even after, when guys had seen me around the prison or on the wings, still coming up and talking about it, being appreciative that they were given the opportunity to go on the course. It's quite nice to see the personal impact that that had.*

(Prison staff, Good Vibrations project)

The presence of prison staff and managers at in the sessions or at performances also demonstrated an important message to participants about the prison support of their activities:

*I think showing that I'm not just a member of staff or we're not just staff who are here to do a job, actually we care about what we do and we want to make sure that they're achieving what they need to.*

(Prison staff, Irene Taylor Trust Music in Prisons Project)

This sense of institutional buy-in was important to participants and to organising staff, and the presence particularly of senior staff (including governors) at final performances ascribed significance to participants' achievements. In some instances, it could lead to a change in prison practice: for example, in response to a drama presentation where the subject of menopause in prison was addressed in a scene, one senior manager was moved to consider how to bring this up in an upcoming staff meeting. In contrast, when performances were poorly attended or there was a sense that senior staff did not care what happened in the programmes, this could communicate institutional indifference or negligence.

#### **6.4 Wider Institutional Aims**

The impact of an arts programme, and the work required to run it, varied according to the extent to which it was recognised and supported by prison managers and staff. Certainly, projects had the potential to benefit staff in different ways, including their personal and professional development, their relationships with prisoners, and their job satisfaction. All of these contribute to the way the arts programmes can impact prison life. Beyond the impact on participants or individuals involved, the programmes also had potential to impact prison culture and contribute to wider establishment and justice aims.

Overall, our findings on the impact of arts programmes in individual criminal justice settings, in prisons and in the community, serve as an indicator of the wider collective impact of arts programmes across the criminal justice sector. Specifically, it is possible to see how the arts programmes are making an active contribution to several of the HMPPS priorities, including Respect, Purposeful Activity and Rehabilitation and Release Planning. In prison projects, staff involved tended to think that arts programmes were clearly tied in with what the prison was aiming to do, even if it was not immediately obvious:

*...every time I see Music in Prisons I sort of get inspired a little bit. I see how good the team are, how good the guys are, everyone is working together and having a laugh and it really sort of inspires you to think we need to do more of this, this is what prison should be, they should be encouraged to do things like this.*

(Prison staff, Irene Taylor Trust Music in Prisons Project)

*But you know, this is the sort of thing that is good for everyone, isn't it, it's good for the guys and it's good for the profile of the prison.*

(Prison staff, Irene Taylor Trust Lullaby Project)

Some staff mentioned the way that the prison as a whole seemed to benefit from the presence of the arts programme. The arts programmes sometimes created a 'buzz' in the prison, which could have a knock-on impact even for those not directly involved in the programme. This also highlighted the opportunities available to prisoners:

*I think it is just nice for the wider prison, because we saw quite a lot of prisoners during the course of the week that weren't involved as well, and it's just nice for them to see some different people, and recognise that there are different courses and enrichment events happening in prison. And that gives them, you know, even though they haven't necessarily been involved that gives them some hope, you know, that there are different things going on.*

(Prison staff, Good Vibrations project)

For some projects, then, there was a sense that in hosting the arts project the prison was demonstrating to the prisoner population its commitment to rehabilitative and therapeutic aims. However, the extent to which the presence of the arts programme was evident within the prison setting varied significantly: some programmes involved practicing and performing on wings or in other public spaces where many could observe and listen, one prison facilitated the recording of the programme for a radio broadcast, while in some prisons the activities seemed entirely hidden from view and those not involved were unaware that an arts programme was running. In many prisons the arts programmes had a localised remit – there was often a central department (most commonly Education or Reducing Reoffending) which was responsible for hosting and organising the programme, and only a handful of staff directly involved in the daily oversight.

The differences in prominence, as well as structural elements, were significant for staff thinking about the establishment-level impact of arts programmes in criminal justice settings. While some staff felt that having more of these kinds of programmes available would give a very more positive feel to the prison, many asserted that more than a one-off programme was needed in order to make any long-term institutional impact. Nevertheless, there was a sense of possibility, that the arts *could* be transformative: staff suggested that in the aftermath of a project there was momentum that could be built on, and other wings or departments could learn from the experience. Indeed, many of the staff involved in organising courses were inspired to run the same or similar programmes again, being convinced that these were a worthwhile use of time and resources.

## 7 Audience Impact

Although the personal and social development of those involved in the projects has been the primary focus both of the project delivery work and the research, a strand of Inspiring Futures involved showcasing in prisons and in the community. Performing, or ‘sharing’, to an audience is a central element of the work of the Inspiring Futures partners, and it was often important to participants that their work was shared with an audience of some sort. Performance adds to the personal development of participants (Doxat-Pratt, 2018) and shapes the artistic direction of the projects, but is also intended to make an impression on the audience in a way that is impactful.

Though it takes different forms, performance is an embedded part of the Inspiring Futures partners’ way of working. Clean Break use their performances to ‘captivate audiences with ground-breaking plays on the complex theme of women and criminalisation’ (<https://www.cleanbreak.org.uk/about/>). Geese Theatre’s prison work culminates with a ‘sharing’, the content of which is decided with the participants. Good Vibrations end every prison project with a performance or ‘sharing’ of the work done that week, to an audience comprised of prison staff, other prisoners and sometimes invited guests from outside. Helix Arts aims to ‘produce amazing art that begins to address the many issues facing us’ (<https://www.helixarts.com/about-us/our-purpose/>) and their IF piece ‘Avant-Guard’ was always intended to be shared with an audience to communicate stories of life in prison. Irene Taylor Trust’s prison projects end with a gig or performance within the prison. Their Sounding Out project for ex-prisoners includes public performances which ‘allows participants to demonstrate on a very public platform the positivity, talent and creativity locked inside our prisons, challenging the often negative perceptions of people who have spent time in prison’ (<https://irenetaylortrust.com/sounding-out/>). Only Connect has regular showcases where the musicians on the courses can perform to a public audience, as well as disseminating the music produced on widely available streaming services. Open Clasp perform regularly in different spaces, and have created digital versions of their plays to broaden engagement; they use their theatre productions ‘to influence public opinion, train service providers and influence policy

debates' (<https://www.openclasp.org.uk/about-us/>). Their work addresses directly issues that affect women and girls; for example, some of their plays have been performed in men's prisons, in order to bring understanding and challenge to some of those who perpetrate violence against women, and inspire change that way.

In the IF projects, while many participants were nervous about the idea of performing, there was also a common theme of participants expressing a desire that their work would be shown publicly, in the hope that sharing their stories or ideas would inspire change. For these participants, the impact of their creative project was not just about their personal journey of growth, it was also about how the world might change as a result of their creative production. Many participants pointed out that some of the barriers that facing them on leaving prison or serving a community sentence, such as stigma, lack of access to opportunities, or inadequate housing, were not problems that could be solved simply by them changing their own ways or developing their own skills:

*I've done my punishment, I'm doing stuff to better myself...and when I'm getting out, I'm meeting a brick wall.*

(Good Vibrations participant)

For some participants, then, the possibility of their creative work having an impact on an audience was of equal importance to any personal and individual benefit they had got from participating in the programme. Some wanted their work to be shown to specific groups – for example, they wanted staff at the prison to see their work, both to impress upon staff their abilities, but also in some projects to understand the journeys they go through and the challenges of prison, and to heed their suggestions for improvement. Others wanted their work to be shown to people in power and those who could effect systemic change: one Clean Break participant, for example, said that the play they had written about limiting women's agency in the world should be shown to 'misogynists'. Others simply wanted their artistic outputs to be a way of communicating with others about life in the criminal justice system and the talent that exists even in criminal justice settings.

### **7.1 Audience Surveys at Partner Performances**

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how audiences were engaging with the work they saw, we collected audience responses at three performances at the end of course performances on the Inspiring Futures programme:

- Good Vibrations @ HMP Wealstun. The prison week ended with a performance in the prison; the audience included prison staff, other prisoners, and some family members who came in from outside.
- Clean Break @ HMP Downview. The participants performed 'A Proposal For Resisting Darkness' to an audience of predominantly invited guests from the outside who had a connection to Clean Break. Some other prisoners came, and a few members of prison staff.

- Only Connect @ Only Connect Community Centre, London. Several of the participants from the Rhythm and Flow courses organised by Only Connect performed at an evening showcasing event at the organisation's centre in London. The audience was predominantly people within the Only Connect network, including funders of the organisation and probation officers who worked with the participants. It also included people from the general public who used the co-working space that Only Connect manages.

The audience questionnaires asked people for their reasons for coming along to the performance, any connection to a performer, and for their thoughts about the performance. For each event the questions were tailored in recognition of the uniqueness of each occasion, and the Clean Break participants added some questions for their performance that they were particularly keen to ask (regarding actions people might take in response to what they had seen). Audiences were clearly moved by the performances they saw, and their survey responses were full of praise for the performers. Where participants were known personally to the respondents, survey responses often showed a great deal of pride.

These questionnaires demonstrated the way that each performance made an impression on the audience. They were also useful in honing questions for the larger-scale audience survey at the Inspiring Futures Exhibition.

## 7.2 Inspiring Futures Exhibition

The fourth survey was of audiences to the Inspiring Futures Exhibition. This took place in person at Rich Mix, an arts venue in London, and featured work from each of the partner organisations and more information about each. Visitors to the exhibition were invited to fill in a questionnaire either on paper or online. The exhibition was installed for one week, and then was moved to be an online exhibition, which was publicised publicly.

A total of 40 people responded to the survey, with 36 coming from visitors to the in-person exhibition, and 4 from the online exhibition. Far more people visited the exhibition online: as of the end of July 2023, there were a total number of 651 views from 430 visitors, averaging 2-3 minutes spent exploring the online exhibition.

### Raising Awareness

One of the arts organisations' aims for public performances was to raise awareness amongst the public about life in the criminal justice system. Out of 38 respondents to the survey, 27 people agreed or strongly agreed that the exhibition had broadened their understanding of the criminal justice system. The free text responses gave more details:

*Loved 'Avant-Guard', really interesting format made me put myself in the shoes of someone in prison.*

*Some of the personal revelations [were the most interesting]. The fact that people can be released onto the streets and must find their own accommodation with limited support.*

*It was eye-opening. Hard to hear and watch at times but happy there are programs like this.*

Phrases such as ‘eye-opening’, and indeed specific instances of learning such as the possibility of people being released from prison homeless, are noteworthy. This information is publicly available and common knowledge amongst those within the system; it was evidently the accessible format that presented the information in an engaging and memorable way. In many, this sparked a desire to learn more: in answer to the question, ‘Did the exhibition inspire you to do anything new?’, many respondents said they wanted to learn more about the criminal justice system or the organisations involved. These responses suggest that showcasing artistic work created by and with people in the criminal justice system can be an engaging way to communicate people’s stories and the challenges of living with a conviction.

#### Changing perception and action

The extent to which the exhibition changed people’s perceptions about people in the criminal justice system was less clear from the survey. There was some indication, though, that the communicative function of arts was able to engage people emotionally as well, which led to a response. Out of 38 respondents, 16 agreed or strongly agreed that the exhibition had changed how they thought about people with convictions. However, 17 people said they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, perhaps indicating that their perceptions of people with convictions were already nuanced. It is possible that several respondents already felt a degree of care and concern towards people in the criminal justice system and did not want to tick a box that might be interpreted as them having previously had very negative attitudes. The free text answers included lots of comments about the importance of rehabilitation and the need for improvements to the system. However, it should be noted that some were keen to point out that their attitudes existed before visiting the exhibition and were reinforced rather than created by their visit.

#### Attitudes to the arts in criminal justice

The exhibition seemed to be an effective way of demonstrating what the arts offered to people in the criminal justice system. While there were very mixed responses about previous knowledge of arts-based programmes in the criminal justice system, 37 out of 38 people agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘*it seems the arts in criminal justice settings are worth putting time and money into*’.<sup>13</sup> The free text answers also suggested that people were impressed by the contribution the arts could make to the lives of people in the criminal justice system:

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<sup>13</sup> While we cannot say for sure, it seems that the one respondent who answered negatively (with ‘strongly disagree’) may have made a mistake, as their free text responses were full of approval and positivity.

*Great example of excellent work being done.*

*Thank you - this seemed to me an excellent way of capturing, preserving and presenting a range of work being done in relation to the criminal justice (and some other) system.*

This perhaps runs contrary to some of the fears that exist around running these kinds of projects in criminal justice settings, the so-called 'public acceptability' argument whereby there can be a fear that such work is represented poorly in media or political rhetoric. There is an argument here that deliberate and active engagement with the public may in fact be beneficial to furthering the work and profile of the arts in criminal justice.

#### Reach

Visitors to the Inspiring Futures Exhibition who filled in a survey were all over 18, and of those who gave details about their age over half were between 18 and 34. This may be reflective of the venue, which appealed to a younger adult demographic.

There is a danger that such exhibitions 'preach to the converted', i.e. those who go are already familiar with the criminal justice system and pre-disposed to favour reform measures. However, there was some evidence in the survey results that this is not totally the case. 24 of the survey respondents said their visit to the exhibition had been unplanned, and 25 said they did not have any personal, secondary (i.e. friends and family) or professional experience of the criminal justice system. This suggests that the Inspiring Futures Exhibition was engaging those who had no specific reason to be interested in the criminal justice system themselves, and that such an exhibition might be a good way of engaging the 'general public' in this kind of work. Only two respondents indicated they had lived experience of the criminal justice system themselves, which suggests more work may need to be put into engaging people who might have reason to contribute to the work in the exhibitions.

## 8. Conclusion

The Inspiring Futures has been an ambitious project which has identified multiple dimensions to the impact of the arts in criminal justice settings: for people taking part in the programmes, for the facilitators and organisations that run the programmes, for the staff in criminal justice settings, for the wider criminal justice and arts sectors and for the public. We summarise in this concluding section the main findings from the study and the theoretical insights they have generated. We first return to the research questions and provide a summary of the contributions and limitations of the research. We then present some early theoretical reflections on a cross-arts theory of impact and offer some recommendations for future policy, practice and research.

### 8.1 Review of the Research Questions

#### **What are the effects of arts programmes in the criminal justice sector?**

Our findings on the impact of participating in an arts programme resonate with the those of previous studies: many of the men and women who took part spoke of how the programmes brought personal, social and creative benefits to their present lives and inspired new ways of envisioning their futures. What our findings add is evidence that these effects are most likely attributable to participation in the arts programmes (because equivalent changes were not reported by the comparison group). The value of the programmes was to be found not just in their content, but in the relationships and interactions with the arts facilitators and other participants and in the direct and indirect affirmations of support from staff in the setting. Indeed, our findings show that these outcomes are common across different forms of arts programmes for different groups of participants in different criminal justice locations. Of course, it is important to note that individual experiences of the programmes varied significantly depending on people's starting points, motivations and the extent to which other parts of their lives complemented rather than acted as a barrier to participation.

Beyond the observations of individual impact, the participants in the IF programmes identified a broader communicative dimension to their participation: the creative and performative opportunities they generated provided a means to tell others about their lives and their criminal justice experiences and to draw attention to the issues they faced. For many participants, the creative collaborative environment of the arts programmes humanised the prison even if only temporarily. It was a space in which their offender identity was set aside as they became musicians, actors, creative writers. It was a space for hope and for personal and social growth. These experiences are in and of themselves valuable, but they also open up opportunities for the future.

Although not the core focus of the study, the Inspiring Futures findings reinforce insights from earlier research on the contribution of arts programmes to the process of desistance from crime (e.g. McNeill et al., 2011; Sparks et al, 2012; Bilby et al, 2013; Maguire et al., 2019). As these other studies are careful to note, there are limits to what can be reasonably claimed

about the connection between participating in an arts programme and desisting from crime; nevertheless the changes participants reported to their personal and social selves may help to facilitate the desistance process by opening up possibilities for different ways of being. As Crossick and Kaszynska (2016:152) note, 'Desistance from crime is a long journey, and developing in these ways is thought to be critical to that journey, indeed critical to whether that journey is even embarked upon further'.

The social interactions generated by the arts programmes may also serve as a means of developing social or bridging capital to families, friends or wider social networks, and in this way foster opportunities for social integration. These findings resonate with the concept of 'tertiary desistance' (McNeill, 2016): a stage in the process of desistance from crime beyond a shift in behaviour or identity (secondary desistance) which is associated with a sense of belonging to a community. Community membership cannot be achieved by the actions of an individual alone; it equally requires recognition from others. Encouragingly, the survey responses to the Inspiring Futures exhibition indicate the possibility of strengthening public responsiveness to the desistance journeys of people with a criminal record.

The insights from the facilitators running the Inspiring Futures programmes contribute to the small body of literature on the experience of delivering of arts programmes in criminal justice settings (e.g. Simpson et al., 2019; Anderson and Willingham, 2020). The facilitators spoke of the personal and creative fulfilment of running the programmes alongside professional and financial benefits. For some, particularly those new to the experience of facilitating programmes, their creative interactions with participants foregrounded participants' identities as people, as learners, or as family members, and dispelled earlier preconceptions of offenders. Yet the emotional weight of these encounters arising from the stories of struggle and pain that some participants shared was significant and facilitators spoke of the value of collegial support and opportunities for reflection and debriefing during and after the projects. Different modes of engagement (contracted or employed) shaped facilitators' potential for establishing and developing a professional profile within this sector.

The research has also shed light on the experiences of the organisations who set up and run arts projects within the criminal justice sector. For the partner organisations on the IF project, the arts courses represented either the entirety of their work or a significant tranche of it. Their specialist knowledge and expertise were well-regarded across the criminal justice settings where they worked. However, opportunities for continuity and development of working relationships were constrained by the contractual models many criminal justice organisations were required to operate within. The organisational insecurities arising from the reliance on contracted work, which were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, shape not only the organisations' working practices but also their aspirations in the criminal justice sector. The aspirations of the contracting criminal justice organisations are similarly constrained. If the arts in criminal justice settings are to develop further, a collective government/voluntary organisation vision and strategy which recognises and addresses current structural barriers is needed.

Stepping back and thinking more broadly to the role of the arts programmes within the arts sector, it is evident that they represent a small but significant part of the sector's activities because they reach people and settings with limited access to the arts. Arts Council England's strategy for 2020-2030, 'Let's Create' (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create>), emphasises the importance of inclusivity in creativity and is concerned to engage communities that are currently under-served by the arts. The organisations working in the criminal justice sector are making an important contribution to that aspiration.

The Inspiring Futures research also identified the wider impact of these programmes on the settings in which they were located. This was particularly notable in the various prison settings and the reach of the arts programmes to prison staff and prison culture. Staff involved in the organisation or oversight of the courses, as well as those participating, found job satisfaction in seeing that prisoners benefited from the programme. Setting up and overseeing the programmes required a significant amount of energy and resourcing, but was considered worthwhile. The views and experiences of prison staff who took part in the programmes were similar to those of the participants – prison officers variously described the opportunity to participate in a creative activity as fun, daunting, challenging, affirming, inspiring, therapeutic. The opportunity for a different form of interaction with prisoners, a collaborative way of working which involved mutual recognition and exchange of ideas, humanised the prison environment for staff as well as prisoners and rendered visible the person behind the label of prisoner or officer. The creative space for these different forms of interaction was set apart from the rest of the prison and how staff navigated the relational transition to the routine spaces of the prison and the more common form of interactions with prisoners was experienced differently. There is more to understand about these relational transitions from the creative space to the wider prison spaces, including around themes of vulnerability and disclosure.

As well as the individual and relational legacies of the arts programmes on life within the prison setting, people spoke of a broader cultural impact. Instrumentally the programmes contributed to the wider prison agenda for purposeful activity and rehabilitative programmes, but the courses could also create a 'buzz' within the prison that was energising. A common sense of purpose and community within the prison was reinforced when staff and managers were visibly supportive of the programmes and disappointment was sometimes expressed by participants when that did not happen. Indications of recognition and regard communicated directly or indirectly by those in authority to the participants about their involvement and achievements on the programmes mattered. Indeed, within prison settings, an absence of institutional commitment renders the impact of the arts programmes vulnerable to the dynamics of carceral clawback (Carlen, 2002), by providing lip service to the agenda of rehabilitation and transformation but fundamentally serving to sustain a carceral agenda of risk management and control (see also Cheliotis, 2014 on 'decorative justice').

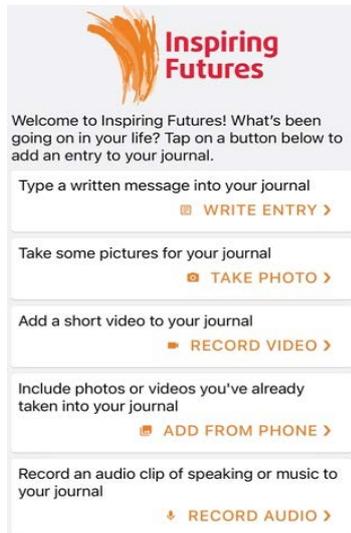
**How can these effects be measured in a way that is participatory and inclusive and which is accessible, meaningful and empowering to participants and builds research capacity amongst arts organisations?**

The Inspiring Futures project aimed to be a collaborative initiative from its inception. The research design was developed together with partner arts organisations and former participants of their programmes. The focus group discussions with former participants, discussions with members of the advisory group who had lived experience of the criminal justice system and with arts partners at the beginning of the project helped to ensure survey and interview questions were relevant and worded respectfully. The process of data collection was planned to avoid any one data collection point becoming too onerous and care was taken to ensure that participants with lower levels of literacy or proficiency in English could participate fully. Some facilitators integrated the IF tools into their own evaluative activities or the Inspiring Futures research team and arts facilitators developed a joint plan for sharing out evaluation materials on the courses. Participants were able to keep copies of their diaries if requested and summaries of the research report will be distributed to those who expressed an interest. This is not to suggest that data collection ran without a hitch! The plan to spread collection of demographic data over different time periods came at times at the cost of completeness of data for some participants, and despite best intentions the completion of the evaluative questionnaires at the end of the courses at times took longer than was ideal. During data analysis, arts partners were consulted over the interpretation of findings and were involved in the development of research outputs: the research report and the film of the project. These collaborative processes are ongoing and conversations about next steps continue.

**How can these effects be collated to establish a collective evidence base for impact which can be further developed and sustained by arts organisations in the future?**

The Inspiring Futures research instruments, samples of which are provided in the appendices of this report, are available in a range of formats for other evaluators of future arts activities. In addition to digital and paper materials, the research team have developed an open-source data collection app based on the Inspiring Futures research instruments. It was created by Robin Message of Lamda Cambridge and is accessible on both Android and IOS platforms. The app has been designed so that after downloading it and signing in, participants can record their views on the arts programmes before, during and after participation. It provides them with the option to complete questionnaires (including having each question read aloud rather than being only text on-screen), and to make journal entries in different media formats, including written text, audio recordings and by uploading photos and videos. The research team can also send prompts to individual participants' phones/tablets to fill in a questionnaire or upload a journal entry. Data collected via the app can be uploaded to a secure server. The code written for the app is open-source and available under the Apache Licence, Version 2.0. The app has been internally tested but is still to be fully piloted and remains a resource for future evaluations. The use of these tools in future evaluations offers the potential for

building on the evidence base of arts impact developed from the Inspiring Futures programme.



**How can the evidence of arts impact be disseminated to policy makers and the wider public in order to facilitate a transformation of approaches and attitudes towards people in the criminal justice system?**

Generating opportunities for dialogue with policy makers are an ongoing legacy activity of the Inspiring Futures research and various research outputs have been created to this end. In addition to this report, video recordings were made of research presentations at the final project conference and a short film about the research has been produced by Ed Owles from Postcode Films. The film targets organising and commissioning staff in criminal justice settings and outlines the benefits of hosting an arts project and what needs to be in place in order for a project to run well. We will continue to monitor the impact of these and other policy-related dissemination activities.

The broader potential of arts programmes in criminal justice settings to shape public opinion was evident through Inspiring Futures Exhibition, organised by the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance. The feedback from visitors to the exhibition, over half of whom had happened upon it and had no connection with the criminal justice system, demonstrated the potential for publicity and information about the arts programmes to positively influence public opinion. In contrast to political and media representations of a punitive public (see Cheliotis, 2014), visitors who gave feedback recognised the value in the arts programmes and the benefits to the lives of individuals within the system. It is important to note, however, that these findings are drawn from a small sample of visitors to one exhibition and there needs to be more research to establish how common such responses might be across different sectors of the population.

## 8.2 Contributions of the Inspiring Futures programme

The Inspiring Futures project reinforces many of the findings from existing studies on the potential beneficial impact of arts programmes in criminal justice settings. It builds on this body of work in the following ways:

- 1) Cross-arts insights. As a result of its multi-arts evaluation design, it has been able to identify similarities and differences in the effects of different forms of art programmes and similarities and differences in the mechanisms that lead to change. These observations provide a useful base for further theoretical reflection.
- 2) Emphasis on social interaction. One of our core observations was that the outcomes of the arts programmes, whether personal, social, institutional or structural, arose out of social interaction. It was through interpersonal activities that intra-individual change might occur: that these social interactions stimulated individual reflection and opportunities for participants to discard debilitating self-appraisals and develop a more positive self-concept and vision for their future. This observation aligns with the theorising of relational sociologists who centre human networks and interactions at the heart of sociological analysis (Crossley, 2011).
- 3) A temporal perspective. By collecting data over a longer period than is common for arts evaluations it has been able to comment on the shorter and longer term effects participants report from attending the programmes. However, although the project was able to collect some data, more is needed to fully understand the longer-term effects of the programmes.
- 4) It has provided a platform for programme participants to communicate their views, feelings and experiences to others who would not normally hear them (whether in the criminal justice setting itself or more widely in society through public exhibitions or media broadcasts) with the aim of changing the discourse about prisoners and more generally people who have received criminal convictions.
- 5) It has provided a holistic perspective of impact which includes impact not just for participants but also for audiences, arts facilitators and arts organisations, criminal justice settings and the wider criminal justice and arts sectors.
- 6) The project was able to record audience responses to the arts programmes within criminal justice settings and in the public sphere. It has shown how information and exposure to the work of arts organisations in criminal justice settings can positively shape the attitudes of observers inside and outside of the criminal justice system. Although drawn from small samples, these insights serve as a useful starting point for further research on role of the arts can play in changing public attitudes towards people with a criminal record.

- 7) A data collection App has been created which provides an accessible and easy means of participation in the evaluation of a project. It can collect qualitative and quantitative data simply and quickly via a phone or tablet and as it is open source, it can be adapted for use by voluntary organisations across multiple sectors. We will make details of this widely available in due course.

### **8.3 Limitations of the Research**

The Inspiring Futures research project experienced a number of setbacks to its plans as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Arts courses were halted and then re-started slowly which meant that the scope for the long-term follow up of participants was significantly reduced. We encountered challenges in setting up a comparison group in all settings, which has limited the comparisons that can be drawn between the experience of attending a programme and 'life as normal' in the settings in which the projects were run. Also participant numbers on some courses were lower than anticipated because of social distancing measures and the general challenges of recruitment post-Covid.

The arts projects included participants of different gender identities but there were comparatively few female or transgender participants and the findings are limited to adults (over the age of 18). Nevertheless we were able to collect a significant amount of demographic information and although numbers and missing data limited the potential for statistically reliable between-group comparisons or claims about the relationship between demographic characteristics and arts impact, our data suggest that the roles of gender, age, race and ethnicity could be a fruitful avenue for further qualitative and quantitative investigation of the impact of the arts in criminal justice settings.

### **8.4 Towards a Cross-Arts Theory of Impact**

As a result of its evaluation of multiple arts programmes, the Inspiring Futures study has been able to generate unique insights into the similarities and differences in the effects of different forms art programmes. As described above, we identified some notable similarities in the contributions that the different courses made to participants' lives. They offered an experience that broke the monotony and provided respite from the challenges of everyday life. They generated opportunities for personal achievement and growth. They enabled people to meet others they might not otherwise have met. Through these collective activities, teamworking was fostered and new friendships and partnerships were formed. For those in prison, interactions with the programme facilitators were a refreshing contrast to interactions with prison staff (and indeed, interactions with prison staff took on a different form). They generated a sense of normality in social interactions which felt humanising and fostered trust. Yet many of the prison programmes created conditions for strengthening relationships between prisoners and staff and communicated to prisoners that the prison was actively working to support their wellbeing and personal development. These findings make it possible to refer to a collective effect of the arts in criminal justice on participants' personal, social and creative presents and their future potential.

While there is clearly a collective impact of ‘the arts’ as a combined concept, we also considered whether there were any differences between the arts courses, for example between drama or music programmes, in terms of the role that they played for participants in the criminal justice settings. We noted the following possible differences:

- Embodiment of the self. Through their participation in drama activities, participants would re-enact roles they had themselves played earlier in their lives or act out the roles of others. These experiences could foster intensive self-reflection on one’s own and others’ behaviours.
- Improvisation and free expression. In contrast to the music programmes, the drama programmes offered greater flexibility in terms of improvised self-expression. Drama participants could draw on their earlier life-experiences and vocabularies to improvise. In contrast, self-expression on the music programmes was shaped by the language and technical skills of music making.
- The music programmes provided greater scope for technical skills to be developed (e.g. instrument playing, composing, singing, producing). Indeed, the primary motivation for some of the participants on the community music programme was to develop their musical skills. The acquisition of new skills of music-making were tangible outcomes of attending the arts programmes and could be developed further in the future.
- The different modes of self-expression and communication in different arts activities provided a unifying creative activity for people from different backgrounds and cultures. The sound worlds created on the music programmes and the visual and mime landscapes on the drama programmes incorporated different cultural experiences, enabling groups to hear about different artistic traditions and to learn from one another. While language barriers could still present a challenge to communication and groupwork, working together to create artistic outputs often overcame these barriers, and facilitated the sharing of experiences and emotions.

### **8.5 Reflections for policy and practice**

Drawing together the findings from the Inspiring Futures programme of research, we conclude with three observations for future policy, and practice on the arts in criminal justice settings.

First, while the impact of participation varies, the evidence from this study shows that arts projects can make a unique and valuable contribution to the lives of participants in the present and future – enhancing wellbeing and facilitating positive personal and social change. The creative abilities and interpersonal skills of the arts facilitators are pivotal here. Indeed, much of the power of the projects arises from their presence as experts in their field and their positioning outside the criminal justice system. The projects also need the ‘right’ environment

to run in: a conducive physical space and the supportive presence (whether participatory or observing) of staff in the settings. In prisons, this includes ensuring that the participants are able to attend courses without interruption by other activities and appointments.

Second, ongoing and follow-up activities are important for maintaining the positive outcomes of the projects for participants. Our data show that while participants a year after the courses continued to appreciate their value, the personal impact had faded for many. However some people in the community were able to maintain ongoing involvement and others actively sought out further ways to be creative, including occasionally re-enrolling for a particular arts course if the opportunity arose.

Finally, we observed how much of the work of the arts organisations in the criminal justice sector depended on establishing relationships with individual probation services or prisons. Notwithstanding the unavoidable disruptions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, these relationships were also constrained by wider structural, financial and regulatory procedures within the criminal justice sector. If the potential impact of arts programmes for men and women in the criminal justice system is to be achieved and sustained on a wider scale, then a collective strategic commitment to and long-term vision for the arts in the criminal justice system is needed.

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## 10. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I – PARTICIPANT SURVEY QUESTIONS

#### **Wellbeing**

There are many things in my life that make me happy

There are good things in my life that give me energy

Life feels interesting to me

I feel like my life has a good balance to it

There are places where I feel I belong

#### **Self-concept**

I have ways that I think are healthy for dealing with stress

I am able to address things that I think need dealing with in my life

I find it easy to push through barriers to achieve long-term gain

I struggle to stop myself doing things I don't really want to do

Other people mostly see me as just an offender

These days I mostly see myself as just an offender

#### **Personal development**

I have skills that will help me get a job

I have skills that will help me keep a job

I am talented and able to do things

It's important to me that I am developing my skills

I want to take part in activities that will help me develop as a person

#### **Relationships**

I have a good relationship with my family

I have a circle of good friends

There are people who I can be myself around

There are people in my life who will help me achieve my goals

There are people I can turn to when I have a problem

#### **Communication with others**

I am interested in what other people have to say about things

I find it easy to express myself to people who are important to me

I can say "no" to people when I need to

I can communicate with people in powerful positions about things I think are important

I am good at interacting with a variety of people

#### **Working with others**

I am good at working in a group

I am happy to accept help and support

I get on well with people I don't know  
I respond well to people in authority  
I am good at listening to other people

### **Creative Capital**

Creative activity is an important part of my life  
I am good at some creative activities  
I have skills that would allow me to work in the arts world  
I am more myself when doing a creative activity than the rest of the time

### **Expectation (T1) / Experience (T2) / Reflections (T3)**

I think this course will help me develop my creative skills  
I think this course will help me develop my personal strengths  
I think this course will enhance my life (while I am doing it)  
I think this course will give me tools that will help me have a more fulfilled life going forward  
I think this course will change how I see myself  
I think this course will help improve my relationships with others  
I think I will get on well with other people on the course  
I think I will get on well with the course leader(s)  
I think this course will help me improve how I am around other people

### **T2**

This course helped me develop my creative skills  
This course helped me develop my personal strengths  
This course enhanced my life (while I was doing it)  
This course has given me tools that will help me have a more fulfilled life going forward  
This course has changed how I see myself  
This course helped me improve my relationships with others  
I got on well with other people on the course  
I got on well with the course leader(s)  
This course helped me improve how I am around other people

### **T3**

The course helped me develop my creative skills  
The course helped me develop my personal strengths  
The course enhanced my life (while I was doing it)  
The course gave me tools that have helped me have a more fulfilled life since  
The course changed how I see myself  
The course helped me improve my relationships with others  
I got on well with other people on the course  
I got on well with the course leader(s)  
The course helped me improve how I am around other people

## APPENDIX II – PARTICIPANT DIARY (EXTRACT)

### Introduction

To help us understand your life at the moment and what is important to you day by day, we invite you to complete this diary. You might want to write, draw pictures or use diagrams – or anything else you, it's up to you. You can write as much or as little as you like. If you're stuck for ideas, have a look at the next page or find suggestions at the bottom of the pages.

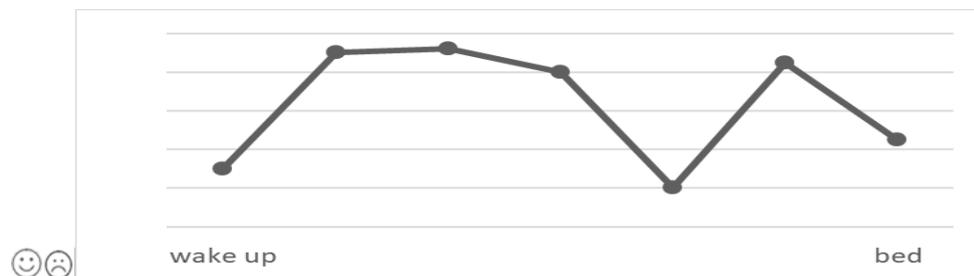
### Ideas Page

If you're stuck for what to write, you could answer one or all of these questions:

- What was a key moment of your day?
- What were the best and worst moments of today?
- Sum up your day in one word or describe it with a picture.
- How are you feeling about yourself?
- How are you feeling about tomorrow?

If you'd rather not write and like to draw, you could do a picture for each day, showing important moments, achievements or people.

You could also do a diagram. For example, you could create an emotions graph like this one:



You can make notes on it if you'd like, to explain what happened to change your mood.

It's your diary – you can do whatever you want.

### Day Pages

Day/Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Use these spaces to tell us about your life and/or how the course is going. If you're not sure what to do, have a look at the Ideas Page at the start.*

Stuck? Here are some suggestions:

- ★ Describe your day in one word or picture.
- ★ What were the best and worst moments of your day?
- ★ How are you feeling about yourself?
- ★ How are you feeling about tomorrow?

Or anything you want to say!

## APPENDIX III – SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

### Participant Interview Schedule

#### Overall Impressions

1. How would you describe the course?
2. What do you remember most about it?
3. Which areas did you find particularly interesting? Challenging?
4. In your own words, can you describe the main aims of the course? What do you think of these aims?
5. What motivated you to do the course?
6. Have the expectations you had before the course been met?
7. Do you think you were the 'right kind of person' for this course?

#### Experience

8. How did you feel about the way the course was led? Was there anything you thought worked especially well, or didn't work so well?
9. How did you find the balance between learning and creating?
10. How did you feel about sharing your finished track with the rest of the group, and talking about it in front of them?

#### Personal development

11. Has the course had any effect on the way you think in general? New ideas? New ways of looking at things?
12. Can you think of an occasion where you have drawn on the course or its content in any way since?
13. Can you give me any examples of something that has gone well for you since the course, where you feel it may have helped you deal with a situation or person better?
14. Has the course raised any issues for you in your personal life or for you being in prison/ on probation?

#### Interactions with others

15. How would you describe your relationships with others in the group? What are these like now?
16. Has it changed the way you interact with others in your community at all? How?
17. Do you think the course has changed the way you interact with your family or in any way? How?

#### Observations on CJS link

18. Did you tell other people that you were doing the course? How did they react?
19. Has this had any impact for you in terms of how you are approaching being in prison/ on probation, or your relationship with prison staff/your probation officer?
20. Do you think there's any way that the course fits with the Reducing Reoffending agenda (for probation)?

#### Follow-up

21. If (name of organisation) was going to run the course for a second time, what would you suggest they did differently?
22. What evidence will convince you that the course is beneficial to people who go on it?
23. What do you think other participants think of the course? What would they say are the most important aspects/least important aspects of the course?
24. Is there anything else about the course we haven't discussed that you think is relevant?

## Staff Interview Schedule

### Overall Impressions

1. How would you describe the project?
2. What do you remember most about it?
3. Which areas did you think were particularly interesting for the participants?
4. Which areas did you think were particularly challenging for the participants?
5. In your own words, can you describe the main aims of the project? What do you think of these aims?
6. (For organising staff) What prompted you to pursue hosting the project?
7. What aspirations/expectations did you have for the project? Were these met?
8. (For organising staff) What were the selection criteria for the project?
9. Do you think the participants were the 'right kind of people' for this project?

### Effects of project on staff and participants

10. Have you noticed whether the project has had any effect on the participants since then?
11. Do you think it has changed the way participants see and interact with others in the prison in any way? How?
12. Do you think the project has changed the way participants interact with their families in any way? How?
13. Do you think the project will have an effect on participant's re-offending? How?
14. Has the project had any impact on your personal or professional life? E.g. changing relationships with prisoners, hope, personal interest in arts?

### Observations on the prison

15. What was been the reaction to the project at the prison – by managers / staff / those who helped to set up the project? What about other prisoners?
16. Do you think anything has changed in the prison as a result of this project?

### Follow-up

17. If the .... project was going to run again, what would you suggest should be done differently, either by the organisation or by the prison?
18. What evidence would convince you that the project is beneficial to people who go on it?
19. Is there anything else about the project we haven't discussed that you think is relevant?

## Facilitator Interview Schedule

### Background

1. How did you get into the arts in criminal justice field?
2. Can you tell me about your work with [APO]? How did you get involved with them at first, how long you have worked for them, what the work generally involves?

### Impressions of the Course

3. How do you think the course went?
4. How 'typical' was this particular course, compared to other [APO] courses?
5. From your perspective, what went particularly well?
6. From your perspective, what did not go very well?
7. Do you think the group of participants were the 'right kind of people' for this course?
8. How was the organisational side of this course? From your perspective, did anything from the prison side impede or increase the impact of the course for the participants?
9. With the gift of hindsight, is there anything you would have done differently?

### Facilitator Role

10. How would you describe your role in the course?
11. What were your aims for the course? Were these fulfilled?
12. What does your work with [APO] mean for you as a creative professional? How does it fit in with other arts-based work or activities you do?

### Impact

13. What kinds of impact do you think [APO] has? *Follow-up with some suggestions if things aren't mentioned – families, prison culture/relationships etc.*
14. Do you think this course was successful in any of these ways?
15. Do you think the impact is mostly felt in the immediate term, or in the longer term?
16. What evidence convinces you that these are worthwhile courses to do?
17. Is there anything else about the impact of the course we haven't discussed that you think is relevant?
18. Is there anything else about your work in the Arts in Criminal Justice that we haven't discussed that you think is relevant?

## APPENDIX IV – SAMPLE AUDIENCE FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

### Inspiring Futures Exhibition Audience Survey

#### Section 1: Background

1. Why did you come to the exhibition? [Tick all that apply]

To see/hear the artistic work of someone I know

I was invited by a friend/family member

I didn't plan to but I walked past and came in

I had to for my job/training/school

I'm interested in arts and culture

I was curious

To find out more about the criminal justice system

To find out more about the arts in criminal justice

To do something out of the ordinary

Other (please specify)

2. Did you know anyone whose artwork contributed to the exhibition? Y / N

If yes, how?

3. How did you find out about the exhibition? [Tick all that apply]

From Rich Mix

Public advert (online, leaflet, poster etc)

Social media

Through the NCJAA

Through work

Through college/school

Friends/family

Other (please specify)

4. Are you... [tick all that apply]:

A person with lived experience of the criminal justice system

A person with family or friends with lived experience of the criminal justice system

A person who works within the criminal justice system [if so, please give details]

A person who works/volunteers with an organisation connected to the criminal justice system [if so, please give details]

None of the above

Please give details of your work in the criminal justice system, if relevant:

## Section 2: Thoughts on the arts in criminal justice

5. Please say how much you agree with the following statements. There is space afterwards to comment on your answers if you would like to.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Before this exhibition, I had never really thought about the arts in criminal justice					
Before this exhibition, I thought the arts had a lot to offer in criminal justice settings					
It seems the arts in criminal justice systems are worth putting time and money into					
This exhibition has broadened my understanding of the criminal justice system					
This exhibition has changed how I think about people with convictions					

Do you want to add a comment to your answer?

## Section 3: Thoughts on the exhibition

6. Overall, what did you think of the exhibition? *E.g. did you enjoy it, how did it make you feel, what was the best bit for you?*

7. What did you find most interesting or surprising about the exhibition?

## Section 4: Response

8. Did the exhibition inspire you to do anything new? If so, what?

9. Is there anything you would like to do differently or see changed within society after seeing this exhibition?

10. Do you have any other comments about the Inspiring Futures exhibition?

### Section 5: Personal details

We ask for a few personal details so we can learn a bit about the audiences at the exhibition. All information is anonymous, but please leave them blank if you would prefer not to provide this information.

Age:

Gender:

Nationality:

Ethnicity:

Arab

Black (African)

Roma

Asian (Chinese)

Blac (Caribbean)

White

Asian (Indian)

Black (Other)

Prefer not to say

Asian (Pakistani)

Gypsy / Traveller

Other (please specify)

Asian (Other)

Mixed Race

### Section 6: Prize draw

If you would like to be entered into the prize draw to win one of three £20 Love2Shop vouchers, please give your name and contact details.

Name:

Contact (phone / email):

Thank you for filling in this survey.

## APPENDIX V – GUIDE TO STATISTICAL REPORTING

### Questionnaire scales

*Tests of Reliability:* Cronbach's Alpha:  $\alpha$

The Cronbach's Alpha score ( $\alpha$ ) provides an indication of the internal consistency of a scale. It is expressed as a number between 0 and 1. A score of .70 and above is considered a reliable indication of internal consistency.

### CREATIVE SPHERE

**Creative Capital:** Cronbach's Alpha: T1  $\alpha$  = .87; T2  $\alpha$  = .86

Creative activity is an important part of my life
I am good at some creative activities
I have skills that would allow me to work in the arts world
I am more myself when doing a creative activity than the rest of the time

### INNER SPHERE

**Wellbeing:** Cronbach's Alpha: T1  $\alpha$  = .85; T2  $\alpha$  = .89.

There are many things in my life that make me happy
There are good things in my life that give me energy
Life feels interesting to me
I feel like my life has a good balance to it
There are places where I feel I belong

**Self-concept:** Cronbach's Alpha: T1  $\alpha$  = .71; T2  $\alpha$  = .72

I have ways that I think are healthy for dealing with stress
--

I am able to address things that I think need dealing with in my life

I find it easy to push through barriers to achieve long-term gain

I struggle to stop myself doing things I don't really want to do

Other people mostly see me as just an offender

These days I mostly see myself as just an offender

**Personal development** : Cronbach's Alpha: T1  $\alpha$  =.84, T2  $\alpha$  =.82

I have skills that will help me get a job

I have skills that will help me keep a job

I am talented and able to do things

It's important to me that I am developing my skills

I want to take part in activities that will help me develop as a person

## **SOCIAL SPHERE**

**Relationships**: Cronbach's Alpha: T1  $\alpha$  =.82, T2  $\alpha$  =.86

I have a good relationship with my family

I have a circle of good friends

There are people who I can be myself around

There are people in my life who will help me achieve my goals

There are people I can turn to when I have a problem

**Communication with others**: Cronbach's Alpha: T1  $\alpha$  =.76, T2  $\alpha$  =.78

I am interested in what other people have to say about things

I find it easy to express myself to people who are important to me
I can say “no” to people when I need to
I can communicate with people in powerful positions about things I think are important
I am good at interacting with a variety of people

**Working with others:** Cronbach’s Alpha: T1  $\alpha$  =.81, T2  $\alpha$  =.81)

I am happy to accept help and support T1
I respond well to people in authority T1
I am good at working in a group T1
I get on well with people I don’t know T1
I am good at listening to other people T1

Two important questions arise in relation to a combined analysis of the effects of arts programmes on participants attending different projects and in different settings concerning the comparability of the groups: 1) Are the participant groups sufficiently similar in their scores to enable a meaningful combined comparison of change over time? 2) Can any change in the participant groups over time be meaningfully compared to the comparison group’s scores? We conducted some initial statistical analyses to answer these questions.

- 1) Are the participant groups sufficiently similar in their scores to enable a meaningful combined comparison of change over time?

To establish whether it was meaningful to group participants together in the analysis we conducted one-way between-groups ANOVA tests (or the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test where there was no homogeneity of variance in the groups). These explored whether participants’ scores in different criminal justice settings (men’s prisons, women’s prisons, community) varied for all the core measures at T1 and at T2. The majority of the analyses showed no significant differences between the participant groups. There were, however, two T1 measures where differences were found.

For Creativity at T1, project participants in the men’s prisons had a mean score of 3.84 (SD =.78) whereas project participants in the community setting had a mean score of 4.32 (SD=.86). However no significant difference between the groups was found at T2. This would mean that including the community project participants in the overall participant group would reduce the level of change (effect size) found.

Contrastingly project participants in the men's prisons had a higher mean score for Relationships at T1 in comparison to the community participants (men's prisons:  $M=4.10$ ,  $SD=.65$ ; community setting:  $M=3.6$   $SD=1.07$ ; women's prisons:  $M=3.95$   $SD=.95$ ). A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that this difference was statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). However there was no significant difference between the groups at Time 2. Thus, by including project participants in the men's prisons the size of the effect between T1 and T2 in the overall sample effect is reduced. We concluded that the reported differences between the participants attending projects in different settings did not alter the main conclusions about the overall effects of attending arts projects; rather they resulted in some cases in more conservative estimates of change.

- 2) Can participant group scores over time be meaningfully compared to the comparison group's scores over time?

With no T2 comparison group data from the women's prisons or the community setting we limited our comparisons of participation in the arts projects to 'life as normal' to men's prison settings. Wilcoxon-Signed Rank tests identified that there were no significant differences in the scores between comparison and participant groups in men's prisons at T1 except for 'personal development' where the comparison group scored higher at T1 (participant group  $M=4.12$   $SD:0.58$ ; comparison group  $M=4.38$   $SD:0.68$ ,  $p<0.5$ ). It is not clear why the comparison group scored more highly on this measure, but one possibility is that some of the participants recruited to the arts projects had not attended education or other programmes in prison and so may not have been as directly focussed on personal development as participants in the comparison group, many of whom were recruited through education or vocational workshops. Our qualitative data support this interpretation in that some participants reporting that personal development was not the initial motivation for their attendance (see page 42).

#### **Testing for differences between the participant and comparison groups:**

Having established the above parameters for the analyses, we used Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests to assess differences between participant group scores for each of the scales at Times 1 and 2. These tests of difference are designed for variables which are non-normally distributed.

The findings tables present the mean (average) scores for each scale at T1 and T2 for the participant groups. Participants rated their level of agreement with the statements in the questionnaires on a scale of 1 to 5.

The 'Z' score is the test statistic, which is used along with the number of participants to calculate the effect size.

The 'p' value measures the significance level. This gives an indication of how likely it is that the difference can be explained by the phenomenon being tested (in our data, participation in the arts programme) rather than by chance. A 'p' score of less than .05 is considered

statistically significant. It indicates that there is a less than 5% probability that the difference between measures at T1 and T2 is due to chance.

'r' is the effect size. When a statistically significant difference is found between two scores, it is relevant to identify the size of the effect. The theoretical maximum effect size is 1 and the minimum is 0. According to Cohen (1998) an 'r' score of between 0.1 and 0.3, as is the case in our data, is small. This is to be anticipated given the short length of the Inspiring Futures courses. Where the 'p' value is higher than .05 (as is the case for the comparison group in all measures), the 'r' value is not given as any change is not statistically significant.