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Inspiring Change: Final Project Report of the Evaluation Team

February 2011

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Introduction

Inspiring Change was a co-ordinated programme of arts interventions that ran in 5 Scottish pilot prisons (Barlinnie, Greenock, Polmont, Shotts and the Open Estate) throughout 2010¹.

The programme involved a wide-ranging partnership between its principal sponsors Creative Scotland, its coordinators Motherwell College and Learning Centre staff located in prison establishments, the Scottish Prison Service, and participating arts organizations: National Galleries of Scotland, Citizens' Theatre, Traverse Theatre, Scottish Opera, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble, National Youth Choir of Scotland.

This document is our Final Report . It aims to gather together in one place as much as possible of the material that we have collected and analyzed, as well as to present a concise review of existing relevant research. This does not mean that it is our last word. We will continue to explore themes and issues from this research in a variety of formats for some time to come. We explain the scope, and limitations, of this report further below.

We are very grateful to all concerned for the enormous help that we have received in conducting this work. It is not, we hope, invidious to single out Kirsten Sams and Catrin Kemp of Motherwell College for their tireless work and practical assistance. At the risk of embarrassment the rest of the research team would like to thank Kirstin Anderson for her extraordinary contribution, far beyond what could reasonably have been expected.

¹ Following a tendering process in the latter months of 2009 the evaluation contract was let to the University of Edinburgh in January 2010 for work by an inter-institutional and interdisciplinary group of academics drawn from the universities of **Edinburgh**: Sarah Colvin (European Languages and Cultures), Richard Sparks (PI) (Law/Criminology), Katie Overy and Kirstin Anderson (Music), Lyn Tett (Education); **Glasgow**: Fergus McNeill (Social Work/Criminology); and **Strathclyde**: Mike Nellis (Social Work/Community Justice).

1 *The Programme*

1.1 *Aims and objectives: what are we evaluating?*

We understand the *Inspiring Change* programme to incorporate the following aims and objectives:

AIMS

- stimulate offenders' engagement with learning,
- improve literacy skills, and
- demonstrate the potential of the arts to support the process of rehabilitation.

OBJECTIVES

- create 6 innovative arts interventions with offenders in custody
- produce 6 performances involving offenders
- create one exhibition of offender art (Prisoner Self Portraits)
- engage ca 200 offenders in high quality arts programmes
- evaluate the impact of engagement in these programmes on offenders' attitudes and behaviours as well as their ability to learn
- positively link prisoners with their families and communities through art
- hold 2 conferences on the subject of arts in prisons and their contribution to rehabilitation
- create a travelling exhibition of the project's work which will go to the communities from which offenders come

From the outset it has been understood that the evaluation of *Inspiring Change* would necessarily comprise both some 'hard' elements (those things that can be recorded, documented, counted or measured with some degree of precision and certainty) and a larger range of less tangible, but potentially perhaps more significant 'soft outcomes' (things observed *in situ* or said in interview; changes in relationships or social 'climates')

within prisons; signs of change in orientation or attitude; indicators or pointers towards future prospects and possibilities and so on).

Amongst the key features of an evaluation of the kind we have undertaken here is the attempt to bring these ‘softer’ and subtler but no less crucial dimensions of change within the frame of what can be evidenced and reasonably assessed.

1.2 Inspiring Change and the NSMO² offender outcomes

One helpful way of framing some the issues at stake in this report is to relate them to the nine ‘offender outcomes’ already adopted in Scotland’s national Strategy on the Management of Offenders (NSMO). The NSMO outcomes are desiderata, and cannot be assumed to occur; but indicators of their occurrence are a legitimate part of the evaluation. NSMO outcomes that may be of relevance here, and the kinds of indicators arising from this research that we may view as signalling progress towards them are outlined in Table 1:

Table 1: Evaluation criteria and tallying NSMO outcomes

EVALUATION CRITERIA	RELEVANT NSMO OUTCOME(S)
Participants’ wellbeing and behaviour during and after the intervention	Outcome (1): sustained or improved physical or mental well-being
Generative skills (i.e. concentration, focus, staying power)	Outcomes (4): improved literacy skills, and (5): employability prospects increased
Confidence and self-esteem; also as expressed in resilience and self-control (the ‘enlightened self-interest’ of <i>not</i> responding to negative triggers)	Outcomes (5): employability prospects increased, and (6): maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community
Communication skills and willingness to communicate; team skills	Outcomes (5): employability prospects increased, and (6): maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community
Empathy, as expressed in engagement with other individuals and with the wellbeing of the group	Outcomes (6): maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community, and (9): improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending and greater acceptance of responsibility in

² Scottish Executive (2006) Reducing Reoffending: National Strategy for the Management of Offenders, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

	managing their own behaviour and understanding of the impact of their offending on victims and on their own families
Critical engagement (e.g. reflection, decision-making, problem-solving, leadership).	Outcomes (5): employability prospects increased, (6): maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community, and (9): improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending and greater acceptance of responsibility in managing their own behaviour and understanding of the impact of their offending on victims and on their own families
Participants' hope for the future and related commitment and motivation to achieve ³	Outcomes (1): sustained or improved physical or mental well-being, and (5): employability prospects increased
Subsequent uptake of learning opportunities	Outcome (5): employability prospects increased

Research to date (e.g. Cox and Gelthorpe, 2008; Cheliotis, 2008; Miles and Strauss, 2008) suggests that the outcomes most likely to be addressed by an arts intervention are (1) sustained or improved physical or mental well-being, (4) improved literacy skills, (5) employability prospects increased, (6) maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community, and (9) improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending and greater acceptance of responsibility in managing their own behaviour and understanding of the impact of their offending on victims and on their own families.

These are issues that arise at many points in what follows. We return to the NSMO

outcomes in the Conclusion.**1.3 The programme in context**

Inspiring Change is very far from being a first foray for arts interventions in Scottish prisons. There is a lengthy if uneven – though in certain respects singularly distinguished – prior history. The singular distinction relates most famously, but by no means solely, to the relatively well-documented experience of the Barlinnie Special Unit, even if the unit has faded somewhat from official attention and popular memory since its closure in the mid-1990s. During its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s ‘the Special Unit’ gained an international reputation for its pioneering work with a small group of formerly violent and resistant prisoners. The creative arts played a major role in developing the unit’s distinctive ethos in ways that have been feelingly recorded by former prisoners in several published autobiographies (Boyle, 1977; Boyle, 1984; Collins, 1997; Collins, 2000) and by

³ Cox and Gelthorpe (2008) and Cheliotis (2008) suggest that arts projects may be particularly effective in building hope and motivation levels

the art therapist (Carrell and Laing, 1982) and psychiatrist (Whatmore, 1987) most closely involved with it.

It was in the nature of 'the Special Unit' that its innovations could only ever apply to a very small number of people, since the unit only ever held six to eight prisoners at one time. There is little doubt that the focus and intensity that characterized that experience was in part responsible for the very high quality of some of the work produced, and the transformative influence attributed to the unit's work by some of its former prisoners (Nellis, 2010). No doubt also the unit's unusual, indeed anomalous, character in the context of the Scottish prison system at that time, led to its retaining the descriptor 'experimental' for the greater part of the twenty-one years of its existence.

Inspiring Change stands in a relationship of both continuity and contrast to these earlier experiences. Most notably, in the single year of its implementation, it involved some 200 prisoners, in a representative group of prisons – young prisoners, women and short-term prisoners – not just the lifers who comprised the population of the Special Unit.

The encounters that took place during *Inspiring Change* were of strictly time-limited duration. None of the prisoners involved has yet written an autobiography. We believe, however, that we can show that these too have often been intense experiences, some of which have also had the potential to make a difference in the lives of those concerned. Much of the work produced during *Inspiring Change* indeed had powerful autobiographical dimensions and, as we go on to show, demonstrably provoked reflection and reappraisal. What we cannot do is extrapolate forward, beyond the limited data that we have been able to assemble.

There is, moreover, good reason to resist the term 'experiment' in this case. *Inspiring Change* was *not* an experiment, except possibly in the loose, everyday sense of this term – something you try out, to see what happens. It was a 'pilot', an exploration of the feasibility of a range of interventions, an attempt to discover what could be done, how far people would engage, and whether their engagement was potentially beneficial. Our research, by extension, is also not experimental – we have no control group, no certain indicators of what constitutes an effect, no hypothesis to falsify or confirm. We cannot in this sense *prove* the value of *Inspiring Change*.

That said, we present in what follows numerous examples of prisoners enthusiastically embracing the challenges that the *Inspiring Change* programme offered them, acquiring new skills and developing an appetite for learning, discovering talents of which they and others had previously had little inkling and, perhaps most significantly, reflecting on their past behaviour, future possibilities and their relationships with their families and others. That we maintain a degree of caution in the terms in which we discuss these effects in no way detracts from their interest, value or potential significance.

There are moreover many problems with conventional approaches to seeking to prove the merits of criminal justice interventions, especially where these rely on reconviction as an outcome measure. McNeill (2009), for example, lists the problem of ‘pseudo-reconvictions’ (that is, those convictions which follow the disposal in question but relate to offences committed *before* its imposition and therefore over which it could exercise no influence); problems in accommodating consideration of the nature, seriousness and frequency of any reconvictions; difficulties in determining the ‘correct’ timescales for analysing reconviction; and, most fundamentally, the insuperable problem that *reconviction* data measure only the justice system’s *response* to reported, detected and prosecuted offending and not actual changes in the behaviour of offenders. These are not minor methodological inconveniences; they call into question not just studies that seek to compare the efficacy of sanctions by comparing reconviction rates, but also much of the literature on ‘what works’ in which reconviction, despite its flaws, has tended to be the preferred measure of treatment effectiveness.

From our perspective, the binary ‘yes/no’ nature of standard reconviction analysis is wholly inadequate to capture the complexities of the processes of desistance from crime that we articulate below. If we take seriously the challenges of supporting that complex process, we cannot rely on evaluation approaches that implicitly misconstrue desistance as a ‘done (or not done) deal’ when, for most of those who have been involved in persistent offending, it is better seen as an evolving and sometimes ‘stuttering’ work in progress. To the extent that we are concerned with examining the role of *Inspiring Change* in supporting desistance from crime, therefore, we are not seeking to assert whether it ‘worked’ to somehow ‘produce’ once-and-for-all desisters, but rather to examine how and to what extent the arts projects contributed to opening up the possibilities of and prospects for desistance from crime (see also Farrall, 2003a, 2003b). We cannot say whether people somehow got ‘over the line’ and became desisters; but we

can say something important about the extent to which and ways in which the projects may have helped them to embark upon or sustain that journey. In other words, we are examining the impact of these interventions on continuing processes of positive change or human development (including but not limited to desistance from crime), not assessing whether or not that process has been completed.

In this quest, that data that we have gathered represents a powerful, intriguing and important series of testimonies from many of the people involved, in their different capacities, reported close to the times and places in which they occurred. These are our data, and the main task for this report is to try to do justice to those perspectives, and to frame some conclusions on the basis of these interpretations.

1.3 *What have we done?*

In the course of our work we have undertaken the following activities.

- 13 prisoner focus groups at an early stage in each project
- 13 prisoner focus groups after completion of each project
- 15 interviews with senior prison staff
- 12 interviews with 10 Learning Centre staff
- 15 interviews with 22 project leaders from the arts organisations
- Undertaken an intensive case-study (Citizens' Theatre – Greenock) using 'embedded' observation and participant diaries – we refer to the case study's findings here wherever possible but it is also fully reported in a separate, accompanying document
- Administered and analyzed 178 confidence level/ literacy questionnaires
- Collected and reviewed 224 session feedback forms provided by the project leaders
- Reviewed data provided by the learning centres regarding participants' engagement with learning before and after the projects
- Collated data provided by the prisons regarding participants' behaviour
- Conducted telephone interviews with programme participants who have subsequently been released.

This report is being produced within a relatively short time of the conclusion of some of the *Inspiring Change* activities. Indeed, at the time of writing the *Mirrors: Prison Portraits* exhibition at the National Galleries of Scotland has only just concluded. It inevitably follows that no really systematic attempt to follow up the fortunes of participants in *Inspiring Change* (in prison or after release) over any meaningful period has been possible. We have, as noted above, made efforts to contact programme participants who have been released where they had indicated that they were happy for us to do so, with modest success. We do have some suggestive and intriguing information on the engagement of some individuals with arts activities following release, and have conducted telephone interviews with them wherever possible. Where appropriate we report this. But these would be slender straws on which to try to base any conclusion about the lasting impacts of participation in the programme, a task that in any case would – according to the standard methods currently used in the field – require many months of further investigation. We were not resourced to accomplish this and our study was not designed with this in view. We wish to be quite clear about these limitations from the outset.

Conversely, much of the research data that we do have has the virtues of having been gathered at first hand, as events unfolded or very soon afterwards. It records and discusses people's hopes, expectations (and doubts and scepticism) before they became actively involved in these projects and their still-vivid responses immediately afterwards. Therefore, the elements of change in attitude, confidence, self-awareness and so on that surface here may or may not be ones that turn out to be sustainable for the long term. To be able to make claims about that with any certainty would require a different kind of study, supported over a much longer period. It is one of our recommendations that, if arts activities in Scottish prisons are to continue and develop, then future evaluations should be designed and resourced to do exactly those things that we have not been able to do – to follow up, to talk meaningfully about outcomes, to compare systematically between properly matched groups of participants and non-participants, and so on.

However, we also want to insist that the characteristics of this study are not only limitations. For reasons that we hope become clearer below, especially in the review of the literature, there is much to be learned from studying these processes *in situ*. If interventions are ever to have any positive bearing on people's learning, or on their capacity to lead more law-abiding and more fulfilling lives, then we also need to understand the opening stages of

those processes. What are the triggers, prompts, catalysts or nudges that might begin to tilt an individual's outlook towards believing that it is even possible to reach such goals? These are the central concerns of this report.

1.4 *The Inspiring Change interventions:*

Seven national companies (Scottish Opera, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, National Youth Choir of Scotland, Scottish Ensemble, Citizens Theatre, the Traverse Theatre and the National Galleries of Scotland) took part in the *Inspiring Change* project to provide a total of 12 projects in 5 Scottish prisons. All projects were designed with the prison population and the prison in which it was to take place in mind.

The following section organizes the twelve projects under the prisons in which they took place. The National Galleries of Scotland worked in all five pilot prisons with an overall theme of self-portraits. These projects are presented separately in the final sub-section.

HM YOI Polmont (Young offenders)

Music for Change, 28 January 2010 – 27 April 2010

The Scottish Ensemble's *Music for Change* project involved 25 young men that worked alongside the Scottish Ensemble's Artist in Residence and the music tutor at Polmont in learning how to play and record music over four months. In the first session participants were divided into four groups (guitar, keyboard, percussion and Garageband/Poetry) to work on a set song. The group then rejoined to practice the song and make a new arrangement of the piece. Subsequent sessions involved participants practising songs individually in the first half of the session with the intention to rehearse the song as a group in the second half of the session. Members of the Scottish Ensemble attended some sessions to assist in teaching playing techniques and to give individual attention to participants. As the sessions developed it was common to see the more experienced participants helping other prisoners learn the pieces. Participants contributed to the music chosen for the final performances, which included popular songs, classical pieces and original compositions by

some of the participants. 15 participants took part in two performances in the prison, one with members of the Scottish Ensemble and a second performance with the entire Scottish Ensemble.

Voice Male, 15 April 2010 – 24 June 2010

The National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCoS) led a 2½-month project *Voice Male* with 16 young offenders. Weekly workshops included song writing, group singing and vocal training. Team building exercises were often used at the beginning of sessions to build a stronger camaraderie amongst the group. Song writing was done as a group with participants contributing and deciding on lyrics together. This process was led by one of the NYCoS leaders on the guitar. Participants performed popular and original songs in a final performance for the prison with some of the men singing solos. The group's original songs were recorded and participants were given a copy to keep.

HMP Greenock (Women)

A Woman's Place, 4 March 2010 – 16 April 2010

The **Citizens Theatre** led 16 women in a 6-week intensive project titled *A Woman's Place* in which the women explored their role in society through drama, music and song writing, textiles and design. Participants worked in pairs, and as a whole group, to develop teambuilding skills through a series of drama warm-ups and creative writing exercises, the outcome of which was mostly used in the development of group poems. These group poems, or collective writing pieces, later gave a framework for the development of the play. A strong element of craft making was incorporated into the sessions that allowed participants to work with collage, textiles and mask making. Song writing and singing sessions were also incorporated in the sessions in preparation for the final performances. Sessions concluded with time for reflection in which all the participants could consider the day's work and progress of the project. The women were also encouraged to keep diaries of their own experiences in the project. The women worked closely with a team of professional artists and created two performances, one of which was performed to a mixed audience of male and female prisoners. The women also recorded an album of their songs, as well as produced a book of their writing and designs entitled '*Dear Future me*'.

HMP Open Estate

OpenWrite, 26 April 2010 – 8 June 2010

Traverse Theatre's *OpenWrite* project allowed 7 prisoners to work closely with a professional playwright for 15 weeks to write, develop and produce their own plays. Participants developed ideas for their plays through a series of writing workshops that focused on character development, plot and setting. The men also took part in introductory workshops that focused on the many roles in a theatre that contribute to the production of a play (lighting technician, sound technician, costume designer and stage designer) and how knowledge of these areas could influence their scriptwriting. Upon completion of the scripts, participants were able to watch a read through of their work by professional actors. This enabled them to make observations and any changes to their work before the final performances. Professional actors performed the original six plays in the prison and in the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh.

HMP Shotts

From Start to Finish: How to Build an Opera, 1 March 2010 – 17 September 2010

Scottish Opera and the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** collaborated for the first time in a 6-month project, *From Start to Finish: How to Build an Opera*, with 25 prisoners. All aspects of the opera from the original story to the music were written, developed and performed by the prisoners. Initial sessions involved participants working as a group in deciding the opera's storyline and characters. Subsequent sessions involved writing character descriptions and scenes that developed into the opera, *Round Five*, which tells the story of a recently released prisoner who has a decision to make between right and wrong. Musical elements were developed together by the Project Leader and the participants by thinking about the mood required for each scene and musical motifs that would correspond to each character in the opera. Taking text that the men had composed for the songs, the music tutor in the prison set up a chord progression and the Project Leader led participants in improvising and developing melodies to be used for the songs. Participants also learned introductory animation techniques in order to create a short animation film that was apart of the final performance. The cast learned vocal techniques and took part in rehearsing the

original script for performance. Participants were also apart of the production team and those that performed, on stage and in the orchestra, had the opportunity to do so with professional singers and musicians in 2 performances.

HMP Barlinnie

Platform 2.10, 28 June 2010 – 22 November 2010

The **Citizens Theatre** led 65 male prisoners over a period of 5 months towards producing and performing an original play, *Platform 2:10*, which explored choices prisoners face upon liberation. The men worked alongside industry professionals in set design, set construction, playwriting, acting, song writing, live music, lighting, sound engineering and stage management. Initial sessions focused on set design in which participants worked on designing a three-dimensional model which they later presented to the group and shared their thought process behind the design. Group writing sessions began next. Participants worked in pairs, small groups and as a whole group in creative writing exercises that were shared with the creative writing group. These communal writing exercises later contributed to the development of characters and scenes to be used in the script for the play. Once a script had been assembled participants took part in a script reading, the main roles being read by professional actors, and made final adjustments for the scripts completion. With the script complete, the next stages of the project could begin: acting, music and production. The music group worked on writing songs by learning about song structures, lyrics, dynamics and form. The drama group used warm-up exercises to develop trust in the group as they very quickly moved to working with pieces of the text from the script. Subsequent sessions took on the exact rehearsal mode one would find in a professional production at the Citizens Theatre, which included working through and refining scenes. The music and acting groups came together for final rehearsals, which allowed the production team to refine their roles for the performances. The cast and band performed, alongside an SPS officer and a professional actress, culminating in four performances to inmates and outside guests. They also recorded their own album of the shows soundtrack entitled '*Songs from the heart*'.

The National Galleries of Scotland

The National Galleries of Scotland worked in all five pilot prisons with an overall theme of self-portraits, which was explored through different mediums in the prisons and led by professional artists. The National Collection was a great resource and utilized by all the artists' in their projects.

Photographer Fin Macrae led 9 participants at HMP Open Estate in a 3-month project (3 March 2010 – 31 May 2010) where the men learned about *pinhole photography* and then built their own pinhole cameras to take photographs of their family life when on home leave. Initial sessions began with group discussions on photography in general. Why do we take photos? What purpose do they serve? Examples from the National Galleries photography collection inspired conversations around topics of social awareness, community, family and justice. Participants then worked in pairs to learn how to build their own pinhole cameras and practiced their photography skills on the grounds of the estate. Issues of lighting, composition and challenges with equipment were discussed as the men became more comfortable taking photographs. Participants took their pinhole cameras with them on home leave and photographed images that represented family to them. Upon returning the Open Estate, the group discussed the photographs they had taken and had an introduction workshop to Photoshop.

Robin Baillie and Lou McLoughlan led a 3-month (10 March 2010 – 9 June 2010) *drawing and painting* project with 14 long-term prisoners in HMP Shotts. Sessions began with a group discussion, often using pieces from the National Galleries collection to inspire conversations centred on analyzing and interpreting self-portraits. These discussions became more sophisticated as the project progressed and participants developed a better use of vocabulary and terminology when discussing art. The group also had practical lessons in drawing and painting. Most often these practical lessons centred around activities that focused on specific components of their self-portraits such as the subject's eyes or the meaning of a gesture in a self-portrait. The figurative portraits often disclose the participant's personal lives and show the process of self-examination taken on by the participants while painting their self-portraits. Participants were able to discuss their portraits and reflect on the process of creating them at length with film-maker Lou McLoughlan, who participated in the sessions from the beginning of the project and

assembled their interviews for a film on the project that was presented in the Mirrors exhibition.

Kevin Reid worked closely with 9 men in HMP Barlinnie (10 March 2010 – 9 June 2010) on a project that focused on *character drawing and graphic novels*. Beginning with ink line drawings and collages in their first sessions, the men worked towards writing, designing and illustrating their own graphic novel. Most of the men used the graphic cells to tell their personal story of what led them to prison and one participant told an intricate story of fiction in three parts. Most of the work took place in the Learning Centre but it was not uncommon for the men to work on their designs in their cells in between sessions. In addition to the development of graphic skills the men developed linguistic and storytelling skills. The group's individual designs were then compiled into one graphic novel, *Life*, which was presented in the Mirrors exhibit.

Richie Cumming and Fraser Grey worked with a total of 22 young offenders in HM YOI Polmont over a period of 2 ½ months (4 May 2010 – 20 July 2010) to create *life-size portrait figures* based on the participants own self-image and life experiences. Again, pieces from the National Galleries collection provided a platform for discussing various styles of portraiture in the sessions. Participants decided the appropriate location for their figure, such as in a stairwell or sitting on a city bus, so that the artists could take the life-size figures outside the prison and photograph them in that location. The resulting photographs, as well as some of the original figures, were shown in the Mirrors exhibition.

Craig MacLean led an intensive two week *photography* project with 11 women in HMP Greenock (12 May 2010 – 26 May 2010) based on the work of Cindy Sherman, which explores identity stereotypes through characters presented in self-portraits. Participants took part in practical exercises in digital photography (camera techniques, setting, lighting, etc.) and developed their own characters to be photographed. Participants worked in pairs and interviewed each other in order to develop their characters more fully. The women used personal scrapbooks to log their ideas for their characters and develop in more detail the final image they wanted to capture in their photograph. Participants assisted in preparing each other's sets and character's make-up and costume for the final photography session. The women reviewed the photographs for the final exhibition and took part in a reflective writing exercise on the characters they had created in the project. It was agreed

with Greenock prison that an exhibition space for the portraits would be arranged for in the corridor leading to the woman's wing.

A selection of pieces were chosen from all of the participating projects for a final exhibition, *Mirrors: Prison Portraits*, which was held at the National Gallery Complex in Edinburgh from 5th November 2010 – 27th March 2011.⁴

⁴ This run was extended from its originally scheduled closing date in mid-January.

2. The Arts in Prisons as a (re)emergent field: previous and current research

2.1 The range of arts interventions in prisons and their effects.

Arts projects and interventions that take place in prisons have shown a number of positive outcomes for participating offenders and the prison community. Involvement in the arts is sometimes presented within the criminal justice context simply as an easy way for offenders to pass the time. However, anyone who has wrestled with finding the right word for a poem, committed five more minutes to practicing a new chord sequence on the guitar or been part of a cast rehearsing for a play or a dance performance will confirm that the artistic process is often a challenging one, and one that requires dedication, patience and the learning of new skills (The Arts Alliance, 2010).

Here we seek to bring together three of the research literatures that have informed our approach to the evaluation; those concerned with the arts in prisons, with learning in prisons, and with desistance from crime. In the concluding section, we set out some of the recurring and interconnected themes in these literatures, tentatively suggesting some of the means by which engagement in arts projects might contribute to positive personal development and thus to desistance from crime.

Although fairly extensive in itself this is not a systematic or complete review of the relevant literatures – it deals with those issues that we see as most directly relevant to the *Inspiring Change* project, its aims, and our estimation of its progress towards achieving these. The ‘Arts in Prisons’ section highlights some of the prison arts work in both published studies and some grey literature from the volunteer and community arts sector because it is through their work that most arts-based activity (that is reported) happens in prisons. The other two sections are based solely on the published literature.

Because the literature tends to focus on specific art forms, we begin by separately examining the impact of engaging in singing, instrumental music, creative writing and storytelling, drama and theatre, visual arts and dance and then summarise the overall themes.

Singing

Singing in prisons often takes shape in the form of choirs. Singing in a group has shown to improve participants' self-esteem (Cohen, 2009), develop better relationships between prisoners and prison staff (Menning, 2010) and raise awareness of prisoners and penal issues in the community (Cohen, 2007).

Cohen (2007) began studying singing in prisons after attending a concert of a fifty-voice choir made up of minimum-security prisoners and volunteer singers from the community. In her first study, Cohen interviewed prisoners and volunteer singers about their experiences participating in the choir. She found that offenders developed a better sense of self and were able to develop relationships of trust with other prisoners and community members of the choir through the rehearsal process of preparing for a concert. Volunteer singers began to see offenders as individuals and took more interest in criminal justice issues.

In a later study, Cohen (2009) compared the well-being of prisoners singing in a choir to prisoners not singing in a choir. Pre-and post-measures were taken before and after performances in two experiments: 1) a prisoner-only choir (n=10) that performed in the prison and 2) a prisoner-volunteer choir (n=48, 23 prisoners/25 volunteers) that performed outside the prison. Participants were self-selected. While results indicated no significant difference between the choir groups and the control groups (n=10) in both experiments, in the second experiment Cohen found significant differences between the prisoner choir members and the control group in emotional stability, sociability, happiness and joviality.

Menning (2010) focused on the use of a choir to engage marginalized people, in this case the Maori people, in prison populations in the *Singing with Conviction* pilot project with prisoners in New Zealand. A total of 339 prisoners in five prisons participated in the project with 70 participants completing the project and taking part in performing and recording their songs. An external evaluation of the program found that many staff and offenders reported improved relationships as a result of the project and staff reported offenders being more motivated.

Silber (2005) examined the therapeutic benefits of a prison choir through the many relationships choir participants develop through group singing. She explains these three

relationships as follows: 1) the relationship between the conductor and the choir members, 2) the relationships between choir members and 3) the individual's role as a member of the choir. Silber goes on to explain how these relationships were developed and strengthened through the characteristics that make up a choral rehearsal: ritual (the structure that makes up a rehearsal, Silber refers to an 'anchoring' song that was sung at the beginning and end of each rehearsal), listening (individuals having to listen to themselves as well as the group, listening for instructions), eye-contact (watching other singers in the choir in order to create a unison tone, watching the director), breathing (learning how to use the diaphragm for singing properly also served as a way to relax as it slows the heart rate) and trust (choral singing develops trust in a group).

Instrumental Music

The Irene Taylor Trust set up the Music in Prisons (MIP) project in 1995 (Music in Prisons, 2010). The organization ran projects in 3 prisons that year and has since delivered '170 projects in over 50 prisons involving more than 2,000 inmate participants with performances shared by approaching 10,000 audience members' (Music in Prisons, 2010).

MIP projects range from 1-3 weeks up to three months (Goddard, 2005) and focus on guiding participants in creating original music with an aim towards a final performance. Session activities are focused on writing music and theatre is often an element of the projects as well. Goddard (2005: 7) looks at the effects of a 3-week MIP program, in association with the National Youth Theatre, involving the writing and performing of an original musical with women prisoners and young offenders (n=18) at HMP YOI Bullwood Hall. A post focus group immediately after the project's completion was held and participants were tracked over a 24-month period from the project's conclusion. Goddard found that all the women said they had learnt a new skill, they had made new friends and they would like to participate in arts based project in the future. Two of the women did take part in a music project fifteen months after the original project (Goddard, 2005, p. 29).

Cox and Gelsthorpe (2008) evaluated the impact on eight five-day Music in Prisons projects (n=71 men) on prisoners' well-being, their motivation to attend further education courses, and behaviour. Data was gathered through interviews, focus groups and questionnaires from the participants and staff from the prisons. Key findings from the study include: MIP

programs can contribute to resettlement pathways to reducing re-offending; participants reported an increase in confidence and feelings of hope for the future and participants reported their participation in the project had made them feel differently about themselves and others.

Good Vibrations is an organization that 'aims to help prisoners, patients in secure hospitals, ex-prisoners and others in the community develop team-working, communications and other important life skills, through participating in Gamelan [Indonesian percussion] workshops' (Good Vibrations, 2010). The organization has worked with more than 2400 individuals in 33 institutions since 2003 (ibid, 2010). Digard, Graf von Sponeck and Liebling (2007) evaluated a Good Vibrations project that took place with women who were at risk of self-harm at HMP Peterborough (n=12). The evaluation of the project included researcher's observations and semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The researchers found that music programs, such as Good Vibrations, offer prisoners the opportunity for self-reflection in a 'non-threatening and accessible' way (12). The project not only increased the women's interest in music but also encouraged them to participate in further education courses and projects within the prison.

Anderson's and Overy's (2010) study examined the use of music and art classes as a way to engage Scottish young offenders (n=14) in education found that their participation in arts based projects seemed to encourage them to take up further education projects or classes in the prison learning centre. The men completed pre- and post-interviews about their experience, and education enrolment records, and behaviour records kept by the prison were reviewed for three months pre- and three months post-project. Results showed an increase in engagement with education during and after the project for all participants, and in particular for the men who had taken music classes.

Creative Writing and Storytelling

Despite the lack of published studies on creative writing and storytelling projects that take place in prisons, these two art forms are often a steadfast component of arts based projects.

The Writers in Prisons Network places writers in residencies in UK prisons to work with prisoners and staff. Similar to the Music in Prisons projects, the work of the writer in

residence in each prison is different and is reflective of the individual writer and participants in the prison. In addition to a writer's own work, the Network also offers a series of workshops for prisoners who want to learn about writing for theatre, video, screenwriting, radio, storytelling, reading groups or designing a prison magazine (Writers in Prisons Network, 2010). The inclusion of many art forms is intentional for the Writers in Prisons Network. Director Clive Hopwood (2010) writes that if the Network only offered writing workshops they would then 'risk alienating two thirds of the prison population'. Once prisoners are involved in projects that are engaging their interests, the writers can often begin to work with participants on further writing skills.

Palidofsky (2010) writes about her experience in directing Storycatcher's Theatre, an organization based in Illinois, USA that uses a group playwriting process to write a musical theatre piece, the process of which is designed to help incarcerated youth make better decisions by reflecting and thinking more critically about past decisions that led them to prison. Palidofsky works with young female offenders at Illinois Youth Centre (IYC) to share their own traumatic experiences (which Palidofsky points out are often various levels of physical and sexual abuse) in developing the story and script for the play. The year-long project begins with a five-month writing period where participants worked closely with students from the College of DuPage on a series of writing exercises, including journaling and writing their own life stories, which later became the script and song lyrics for the production. Participating in the project often enabled the young women to better communicate with their families and often acted as a springboard into therapy (Palidofsky, 2010).

Drama & Theatre

Drama and theatre interventions are some of the most popular art forms utilized by outside organizations when working in prisons (Hughes, 2005).

Blagg is a drama based offending behaviour workshop developed by the Theatre in Prisons and Probation Research and Development Centre (TiPP), which is based at the University of Manchester. Blagg uses drama methods as a way to engage prisoners, and those at risk of offending, in workshops that address issues that contribute to their offending behaviour. Hughes (2003) describes how the workshop is centred on the creation of the fictional character Joe Blagg. The group creates details of Blagg's life: his interests, his relationships

with others, his work and, ultimately, the offense that he commits. Role play is used by workshop participants to explore the thoughts and feelings of Blagg and other characters that were affected by Blagg's offense. The group also looks at how Blagg could have made different choices in scenarios leading up to his offense. Hughes found that the programme 'had most significant impact on young people's awareness of the effect of offending on victims, self esteem and ability to use effective strategies to avoid trouble' (2003: 49).

Goodrich (2004) led semi-structured interviews with prisoners and staff (n=16, 5 staff and 11 prisoners) from HMP Dovegate's therapeutic community about their participation in a drama program led by the organization Rideout (Creative Arts for Rehabilitation). Rideout leads drama and theatre workshops with prisoners as a way to examine the causes that led them to prison and the consequences of being imprisoned. The researcher reported that both prisoners and staff found the process of self-selection for the project to be positive and it fitted alongside the therapeutic unit's goal for prisoners to make their own choice. Numerous benefits, both personal and skill based, were reported by participants. Personal benefits developed were increased confidence, self esteem, listening skills and patience. Participants also reported learning practical skills in the following areas: script writing, learning lines, acting, film making and delivering drama based workshops (Goodrich, 2004: 2).

Moller (2003) argues that writing, producing and performing a play can offer offenders of all learning levels opportunities for growth. She writes:

For those with less than a high school diploma or GED, the program provides opportunities to enhance literacy, as well as problem-solving and communication skills. For those with more formal education (some college, an undergraduate or masters degree), the program provides an oasis for a unique subculture of artists, writers, and actors who are hungry to channel their creativity into a collaborative project (Moller, 2003: 53).

Moller (2003) is discussing the work of Rehabilitation through the Arts (RHA), an organization that works with prisoners in New York State to produce original and established theatre productions. Moller suggests that it is the 'sensory' experience of a play (the lights, the set, live actors on a stage) that 'transport the audience beyond the walls of a prison' (2003: 54). It is through the medium of theatre that both the actors and the audience can

consider often 'silenced issues' in prison: love, loyalty, manhood, morality, power, and freedom (Moller, 2003: 54).

Safe Ground is an English charity that uses drama and group work as a vehicle for offenders to reevaluate their relationships with their families with the goal of leading a better life (Safe Ground, 2010). Boswell, Wedge and Price (2004) interviewed prisoners (n=17) who participated in the Safe Ground's parenting program *Fathers Inside* at HMP Ashwell. All prisoners taking part were interviewed before the commencement of the project and two weeks to five months after the project. The researchers found that participants had increased levels of confidence, were able to reflect on the feelings of others, in this case their families, and enhance their parenting skills which contributed to stronger relationships with their children.

Theatre Nemo works with individuals affected by mental health issues in Scottish prisons, hospitals and in the Glasgow community, where the organization is based (Theatre Nemo, 2010). McCue (2010) reported that prisoners from the social care unit in HMP Barlinnie (n=9) participated in a six-week project where participants worked in various arts based mediums (e.g., visual art, drama workshops, creative writing, animation) towards a collective group piece. Feedback from prison staff and the project facilitators showed an improvement in participants' ability to better interact with others socially and participate in constructive activities within in the prison (McCue, 2010).

Dance

Miles and Strauss (2008) evaluated a initiative led by Dance United, The Academy, that works with persistent young offenders, young people from inclusion units and referrals from Youth Offending Services. The Academy is a physically demanding program, which also requires participants to take part in research and written project work (Dance United, 2010). Miles and Strauss found the program to increase participants' self-confidence, self-control and communication skills. Additionally, they reported that recidivism rates for Academy participants were considerably lower than among the general population of young offenders on community orders. They suggest this is because the Academy, which requires participants to be highly disciplined in attitude and behaviour, provides the same level of

professionalism it expects from its participants by supporting individuals and treating them with respect.

Miles and Strauss (2008: 9), however, are careful to point out that evaluations based on outcome measures alone are not sufficient to show the complexity of changes in social and cultural projects that examine disadvantaged peoples interaction with the arts. Data for the evaluation was both qualitative and quantitative in nature and was gathered by means of 'interviews, questionnaires, observation, focus group work and data from official records' (9). Additionally, an embedded ethnographer took part in the sessions. The researchers felt this allowed insight into the daily workings of the program and the relationships formed by all participants.

Visual Arts

Out of all the arts the visual arts are the most present in prisons. Access to learning about the visual arts, and making art, is typically gained through the prison education department. The Koestler Trust, a UK prison arts charity, has been running a prisoner arts competition for 49 years (Koestler Trust, 2010). Additionally, prisoner's works can be exhibited and purchased through the work of the Trust. Prisoners typically work on their submissions while taking classes in the Learning Centre and are often encouraged by tutors to submit their work to the annual competition. The Koestler Trust publishes testimonials on their website from offenders that take part in the completion. One participant reflects on their experience:

You know it has been great winning awards and selling my work but the event gave me more than that, it provided me with something positive to talk about with my family and another stepping stone to help me through my sentence (Koestler Trust, 2010).

The Koestler Trust added another voice to the project in 2010 when they asked victims of crime to curate the exhibit. Curator Vanessa Pearson commented on her experience:

'I used to believe offenders should not be given any privileges – as they didn't deserve it. Now I believe activities like art can make a big difference to offenders in a good way.' (Koestler Trust, 2010)

The Koestler Trust also works with released prisoners by running a mentoring program for prisoners who have won a Koestler award and are about to be released. The mentor works alongside Probation and other resettlement programs to 'maintain and develop their arts activity in the community' once the individual is released from custody (Koestler Trust, 2010). The Koestler Trust maintains, 'participation in the arts can lead to employable skills, high self-esteem, collaboration with others and a feeling of purpose in life' (ibid, 2010).

Summary

This section of the literature review has shown the role of the arts in:

- 1) developing better relationships between offenders (Goddard, 2005; Silber, 2010), with prison staff (Menning, 2010) and with their families (Boswell et al, 2004; Palidofsky, 2010);
- 2) improving self-esteem and self-confidence (Cohen, 2009; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; Silber, 2005; Goodrich, 2004);
- 3) developing communication and social skills (McCue, 2010; Cohen 2009; Miles & Strauss, 2008);
- 4) enabling people to work as part of a group (Moller, 2003; Palidofsky, 2010).

Specifically in relation to education, arts classes and projects appear to have the ability to:

- 1) engage offenders who would not take part in education often because of negative associations with learning in school (Hughes, 2008).
- 2) enable offenders who have a positive experience in an arts based project to engage with further classes and projects through the education centre (Anderson and Overy, 2010; Digard, Grafin von Sponeck and Liebling, 2007).
- 3) develop higher self-esteem by participating in arts projects while incarcerated (Digard, Grafin von Sponeck and Liebling, 2007; Silber 2005; Goodrich, 2004).

2.2 Learning in Prisons

Attitudes to engaging in formal learning are strongly influenced by people's previous experiences of 'success' or 'failure' in the education system particularly in school experiences (Jonker, 2005; McGivney, 2001). Learning is not only about acquiring new skills and practices but is also about changes in people's identity. However, learning identities tend to act as self-fulfilling prophecies, and so play a critical role in determining whether the process of learning will end with what counts as success or with what is regarded as failure. This is because identity as a competent learner is shaped by the complex interaction of a number of factors that include past learning experiences and the mediating effect of family influences upon them (Rees *et al.*, 2000), as well as the norms and values of the social networks to which individuals belong (Gallacher *et al.*, 2002; McGivney, 2001). So, identities feed into, and are fed by, learning experiences (Sfard & Prusak, 2005).

People in the criminal justice system tend to have lower than average attainment and this is a finding that is consistently reported internationally (Hawkins *et al.*, 2000; Morgan & Kett, 2003; Muth, 2006). Similarly a survey in England found that, in the custodial setting, 51 per cent of young offenders were below level 1 in literacy and 52 per cent in numeracy (ECOTEC, 2001). Longitudinal studies have shown that weak basic skills make it more difficult to find consistent employment and this in turn heightens the chances of becoming socially marginalized (Bynner, 2004; Bynner & Parsons, 2002). Therefore, interventions that increase offenders' skills and impact on their attitudes to learning are likely to be very important in their influence on the prospects of and possibilities for desistance from crime. This brief review of the literature will identify the main barriers to engagement with learning and, drawing on the themes and evidence addressed in the previous section, will discuss whether and how arts interventions might increase participation.

Attitudes towards education

A significant proportion of offenders have had a very negative experience of school. For example, Hurry *et al.*'s (2005) study of young offenders found that forty per cent rated their experience of school as 'awful', while others mainly enjoyed its social dimension. They found that problems seemed to surface at secondary school when young people began to truant. Similarly the Skills for Life Report *Offender Learning* (2009) found that:

School is an unproductive experience for many young people who end up offending ... where mainstream schools struggle to work with many of these children. Consequently, although they may often remain on the school roll, they are not in school – either because they have been excluded or because they are truanting (8).

There is also considerable evidence that the qualifications of all offenders are well below the national average (Hurry et al, 2009; Skills for Life, 2009) and this implies negative school experiences.

The literature shows that most adults who have had poor early education experiences have negative attitudes to learning and so are very resistant to forms of education that are like school (Barton et al; 2007; Belzer, 2004; Maclachlan et al, 2008). A specific study of young offenders (Hurry et al, 2009) found that provision focused only on discrete skills such as spelling tended to promote little learning and a great deal of resentment. Hurry et al (2009) found that one in three students complained about the requirement to study English and Maths -- 'I am in f***ing prison, not primary school' (268) -- even though the researchers found that the staff managed very challenging behaviour with sympathy and tact. On the other hand, if the learning was more contextualized and active, particularly when art and drama were used, then they found that offenders became more engaged and participated in more effective learning.

HMIe (2010) also pointed out that many offenders had previous negative experiences of learning and that 'in most cases prison literature and arrangements to promote learning were unimaginative and not presented in a style to attract and encourage participation' (34). Other research (e.g. Crossan et al, 2003; McGivney, 2001; Tett et al, 2006) has shown the importance of making access to learning and education easy and promoting it in ways that make it interesting and relevant. This is more likely if it is going to lead to positive outcomes that offenders can relate to and is going to help engage the outside world, particularly families (Muth, 2006). The arts, particularly when there is a public performance or exhibition, are effective in engaging participants in learning experiences that are of interest to them. Where families can also be involved, through attending performances or sharing the outcomes of the activities in other ways, effectiveness is enhanced (Muth, 2006).

Engaging in learning

Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding that takes place in

interaction with people. Illeris (2003: 4) has pointed out that:

Learning implies ...an external integration process between the learner and his/her social, cultural or material environment, and an internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration.

In order to learn, people need to believe in their competence in structured, or 'learning-conscious', learning (Rogers, 2003: 27). Rogers distinguishes the everyday learning that happens through living in and interacting with the world around us from acquisitional or 'task-conscious' learning (16). He maintains, however, that many adults with negative experiences of compulsory education struggle to marry their construction of themselves as capable 'task-conscious' learners with their sense of self as able learners in structured educational contexts. Although adults may recognise their competence in relation to the acquisitional learning that they regularly encounter, their perceptions and experience of organized education inhibit the transfer of this positive self-construct in formalised learning contexts. They can therefore construct themselves as not competent because this is how the educational world has hitherto labelled them and because they equate learning primarily with formal education.

Viewing learning in this way shows the importance of creating an environment where learning can take place that takes account of those who have negative feelings towards education. A study of disadvantaged adults by Maclachlan et al (2008) found that the practice that was most successful in helping people to engage in learning operated from a 'strengths', rather than a 'deficit', approach to tuition. This involved building on and extending the knowledge and skills that people have, based on their needs, desires and interests.

This same study (discussed in Crowther et al, 2010) also identified the importance of supportive relationships between tutors and learners and amongst peers where expertise and support were offered within reciprocal relationships through exchanges of skills and knowledge. HMIe (2010) also identified the value of peer mentors in encouraging and supporting learners to recognize and address their own needs, as well as the value of supportive staff. Arts activities often prioritise working together, expect that people will help each other as peers, and provide demanding leadership. They also draw on participants' knowledge and help them to progress in terms of the distance they have

travelled themselves rather than operating to a pre-set agenda.

Another aspect of the learning environment is the influence of the dominant culture on decisions to participate in learning. For example, a study of working class men in Ireland (Corridan, 2002) found that:

Fear of ridicule by other men emerged as a key concern ...[where] harsh treatment was expected and a culture of 'slagging' prevailed. Some participants suggested that participation in adult education ...could sometimes be seen as inappropriate for men [and] the macho self-image may be threatened by participation in education.

These attitudes are very common amongst offenders too as HMle (2010) have indicated. Other research has suggested that refusing to engage in learning might be a defensive reaction especially when offenders' previous experiences have been highly negative (Morgan & Kett, 2003). However, the arts are often a more acceptable medium for learning: Hurry et al's study found that young offenders had much more positive associations with art and drama activities than formal education (2005: 7).

Another reason why participation in Arts activities might represent a more engaging form of learning is that adults have 'spiky' literacies skills profiles, with areas of strength and weakness according to how, where and when they need to use these skills (St. Clair et al, 2010). For example they may be able to read song lyrics because these are important to them but find reading a novel difficult because it is not relevant to their lives. Again the range of activities that participating in the arts requires enables adults to work to their strengths.

Outcomes of learning

HMle (2010) pointed out that in prisons:

In many cases, access to literacy provision was limited to 3-4 hours per week and arrangements for learners to receive support and practise their skills outside timetabled class times were very poor. As a result, learners took longer to learn and did not have sufficient opportunities to consolidate their learning or develop the confidence to further develop their skills outwith their classes (34).

There is a great deal of research (e.g. Comings, 2009; Bynner & Parsons, 2006) that shows

the importance of enabling learners to access tuition and practice their skills over a reasonably intense period, otherwise these skills do not become embedded in their lives. However, there needs to be an interesting and appropriate context in which skills can be practised and again the intensity of arts projects, particularly where there is a final performance or exhibition, provides a context where learning is more likely to become embedded.

Tett et al (2006) demonstrated that participating in literacy education led to increased confidence in three main areas: psychological (such as increased self-esteem and a growing sense of their potential, ability and achievements), skills related (included being better at communicating; using the computer; reading newspapers and books; shopping) and related to participation in a variety of activities, linked to feeling more independent (such as going to the cinema and museums; standing up for themselves; not needing an interpreter). Other research has also shown that social interaction and support as part of a learning environment are important in increasing confidence and self-belief because 'although the individual learner can affect his/her own level of confidence, tutors, peers and mentors can help increase the learners' confidence by providing support, encouragement and constructive feedback' (Norman and Hyland, 2003: 270). Engaging in arts activities similarly can increase confidence and self-esteem especially when the activities encourage social interaction through being part of a team.

Engaging in learning is also an effective way of people acknowledging and taking action about weak literacy skills. Bynner & Parsons (2006) found that a very low number of adults with assessed literacy difficulties sought tuition to improve their skills unless they were prompted to do so. Such prompts included being actively engaged in work, leisure or family activities that make them aware of the gaps in their abilities and gave them an incentive to do something about these gaps. Arts based activities can be a trigger for participants to realise that they lack particular skills as well as the motivation to take action to improve them so that they are able to fully engage in specific projects. This in turn leads to skills enhancement that opens up opportunities in other areas, such as being more 'employment ready'. Improved self-confidence as a result of this increase in skills also leads to a range of more positive life outcomes such as better health (Bynner & Parsons, 2006).

Summary

This section of the review has identified that participating in the arts can enable offenders to engage in learning, particularly in terms of improving their literacy skills, in four main ways:

- 1) By helping to change negative attitudes to education through providing contextualised activities that are interesting and fun, in which literacy skills are used in ways that are very different from those experienced at school.
- 2) By building on and extending the knowledge and skills that offenders already have and helping them to progress.
- 3) By providing a range of different activities that enables people to work to their strengths in collaboration with their peers.
- 4) By increasing confidence and self-esteem through increasing skills and encouraging social interaction through working together on absorbing projects.

2.3 *Desistance from Crime*⁵

The two previous sections, drawing on two distinct but complementary research literatures, have reached similar conclusions about the potential contribution of arts-based interventions in prison. But to what extent does this evidence suggest that such interventions can also play a part in promoting desistance from crime? This subsection provides a brief overview of desistance theory and research, as well as considering its implications for models of intervention with prisoners, before finally examining how and why arts-based interventions might contribute to desistance processes.

There is a wealth of research evidence which confirms that offenders tend to have faced and to continue to face serious and chronic disadvantage and social exclusion. The Social Exclusion Unit's (2002) report 'Reducing re-offending by ex-offenders' revealed that, compared to the general population, offenders were 13 times more likely to have been in care as a child; 10 times more likely to have been a regular truant from school; 13 times

⁵ This subsection draws heavily in places on McNeill and Weaver (2010); we are grateful to Beth Weaver for permission to adapt and use that material here.

more likely to be unemployed; 2.5 times more likely to have a family member who has been convicted of a criminal offence; 6 times more likely to have been a young father; and 15 times more likely to be HIV positive. In respect of their basic skills, 80 per cent had the writing skills of an 11 year old; 65 per cent had the numeracy skills of an 11 year old; 50 per cent had the reading skills of an 11 year old; 70 per cent had used drugs before coming to prison; 70 per cent suffered from at least two mental disorders; 20 per cent of male offenders had previously attempted suicide; and 37 per cent of women offenders had attempted suicide. For younger offenders aged 18-20 these problems are even more intense; their basic skills, rates of unemployment and previous levels of school exclusion are a third worse even than those of older offenders (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002: 6).

'Primary' and 'secondary' desistance

Against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that desistance from crime, particularly for persistent offenders, is a complex and demanding process. It is also a process which has become the focus for an ever-increasing volume of criminological research (for recent overviews of this literature see Farrall and Calverley, 2005; McNeill and Weaver, 2010). In defining or conceptualising desistance, some have suggested that there is a difference between *primary* desistance, meaning a lull or crime-free gap in a criminal career – a change in behaviour - and *secondary* desistance, meaning a change in the way that an 'ex-offender' sees him or herself (Maruna and Farrall, 2004). Essentially, secondary desistance is about ceasing to see oneself as an offender and finding a more positive identity; it is about successfully peeling off the criminal label that criminal justice systems are so effective at applying. Though not all researchers concur that this kind of reconstruction of identity is a *necessary* aspect of desistance for all offenders (see Bottoms et al., 2004; Laub and Sampson, 2003), it is likely to be particularly important for those whose offending has been persistent and who have deeply entrenched criminal identities (and perhaps less important for those whose engagements with crime and justice have been more transitory). It is also important to note the connections between behaviours, attitudes and identities are complex and contingent; sometimes the attitudes and identities change *in advance of* behaviours.

Achieving desistance is often very difficult. Taken together, the research suggests that the process of desistance, again focusing on those who have developed persistent offending patterns, is typically characterised by ambivalence and vacillation (Burnett, 1992). It is not an

event, it is a process; a process of 'to-ing' and 'fro-ing', of progress and setback, of hope and despair.

Theories of desistance tend to focus on the significance of aging and developing maturity, on related life events and social bonds, or on related narrative changes in the offender and his or her sense of self (Maruna, 2001). Most scholars now tend to stress the interplay between these three factors (Farrall and Bowling, 1999); it is not just getting older, getting married or getting a job, it is about what these kinds of developments mean and signify to the people involved and whether they represent compelling enough reasons for and opportunities to change the pattern of one's life.

Hope for the future

Given the significance of these subjectivities, it is interesting, but perhaps not surprising, that *hope* plays a key part in these processes (Burnett and Maruna, 2004; Farrall and Calverley, 2006). Desistance can, it seems, be provoked by someone believing in the offender; someone who perhaps carries hope and keeps it alive when the offender cannot do so for him or herself. Of course, the reality is that the social circumstances of the lives of many prisoners and ex-prisoners suffocate hope.

Against this backdrop, Maruna (2001) describes the prognosis for many persistent offenders as 'dire' (precisely because of the criminogenic backgrounds, environments and traits that they experience). Perhaps because of their experience of adversity, both research evidence and practice experience tend to confirm that persistent offenders are very often highly fatalistic; to use psychological terms, they often evidence 'low self-efficacy' and an 'external locus of control'. They feel a lack of capacity to determine the direction of their own lives. Yet Maruna (2001) discovered that, *despite* this background and previous outlook, desisters somehow managed to acquire a sense of 'agency' – of control over their own lives.

However, desistance is not just about the acquisition of new personal narrative and a new sense of personal empowerment; far less it is simply about the acquisition of the new skills that offender programmes typically focus upon. Desistance requires social capital as well as these forms of human capital that programmes may provide (Farrall, 2002, 2004). Important ongoing studies of desistance in both Sheffield and Tübingen have suggested that for young men involved in persistent offending returning home and rebuilding ties with their parents

and families is an important aspect of desisting from crime (see: <http://www.scopic.ac.uk/SPOOCS.html>). The social and structural contexts within which obstacles to desistance are both constructed and overcome (or worked around) are as significant as the subjective elements of the process; the 'objective' and 'subjective' aspects of pathways to desistance interact in complex ways.

There is also evidence that for many ex-offenders desistance is about personal redemption, not necessarily in the spiritual sense but rather in the sense of finding a way to 'make good' on a troubled and troubling past by making a positive contribution to families or communities now and in future (Maruna, 2001). Developmental psychologists refer to this as 'generativity'; it takes little imagination to see the generative potential that resides in reparative or restorative interventions and processes; this may explain why such interventions sometimes outperform rehabilitative ones, even in terms of reducing reoffending (McNeill and Maruna, 2007). Engagement in the arts is also intrinsically generative.

Processes of Desistance

A developing strand of the desistance literature is concerned with seeking a clearer account of the processes of desistance, or of the stages of the desistance process. In conceptualizing the first stages of desistance, Giordano et al. (2002) discuss the significance of 'openness to change', while Vaughan (2007: 393) posits an initial stage of 'discernment' where one 'reviews possible choices and puts them beside our multiple, persisting concerns around which one has hitherto structured a life dominated by crime'. Here Vaughan suggests that 'a pre-requisite for change is that the agent is at least willing to consider different options' (394).

Table 2: Three Models of Desistance Processes

Giordano et al (2002)	Vaughan (2007) ⁶	SPooCS (ongoing)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General cognitive openness to change 2. Exposure to ‘hooks for change’ 3. Availability of an appealing conventional self 4. Reassessment of attitudes to deviant behaviour 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discernment: review of possible lifestyle choices 2. Deliberation: review of pros and cons of various options (a comparison of possible selves 3. Dedication: commitment to a new non-criminal identity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current offending is influenced by a triggering event 2. The decision to try to change 3. The offender thinks differently about himself 4. The offender to take action towards desistance 5. Maintenance – the offender looks for reinforcers but may encounter obstacles

The SPooCS (Sheffield Pathways out of Crime Study) authors suggest a five-stage model of the desistance process: current offending is influenced by a triggering event; which leads to the decision to try to change; which leads the offender to think differently about himself; which leads the offender to take action towards desistance; which requires maintenance – the offender looks for reinforcers but may encounter obstacles. Findings from SPooCS confirmed that new and strengthening social bonds appeared to be linked to successful desistance, but that the desire to change is also critical and central to this.

This finding would appear to mirror Giordano et al.’s (2002) suggested second stage in their theory of cognitive transformation; namely, ‘exposure to a particular hook or set of hooks for change’ (1000) and ‘one’s attitude toward [such hooks]’ (1001). Additionally, the SPooCS

⁶ Unlike the other two models, Vaughan’s model is based on an analysis of theoretical developments and previous empirical studies, rather than on original empirical research. Nonetheless, it is an important contribution.

team discovered that empathy seemed to increase over time, manifesting in the need to take into account others' feelings, a sensitivity which the authors consider as an emerging feature in moving towards desistance. Again, this process is reflected in what Vaughan (2007) terms 'the second stage of *deliberation*':

What gets accomplished here is a review of the pros and cons of potential courses of action and a comparison with sticking in a well worn groove or custom. What ultimately emerges is a comparison of selves—who one is and who one wishes to be (Vaughan, 2007: 394).

Again this seems to require what Giordano et al (2002: 1001) describe as the envisioning of 'an appealing and conventional replacement self'. Vaughan (2007) emphasises that there is an influential emotional component to this comparative process which involves thinking about the reactions and feelings of others and envisaging how one's current self or identity is perceived by others.

In similar vein, Maruna and Farrall (2004: 27-8) explain that:

A lull can turn into secondary desistance when two things happen. First, the person finds a source of agency and communion in non-criminal activities. They find some sort of 'calling' -- be it parenthood, painting, coaching, chess or what Sennett (2003) calls 'craft-love'⁷ -- through which they find meaning and purpose outside of crime...The second part of our desistance formula, like that of Lemert's deviance theory, involves societal reaction. The desisting person's change in behavior is sometimes recognized by others and reflected back to him in a 'delabeling process' (Trice and Roman, 1970). (Maruna and Farrall, 2004: 28).

The authors of the SPooCS study, in discussing their five-stage model, suggest that failure to maintain desistance in the face of obstacles may lead to relapse and a return to the beginning of the cycle (as similarly implied by Burnett, 1992).⁸ Healy and O'Donnell (2008) citing Vaughan (2007) propose that:

⁷ Maruna and Farrall (2004: 28) explain that 'much criminal behaviour is maintained by rewards that are extrinsic (status, riches) or fleeting (the buzz of a drug). The discovery of an alternative, intrinsic rewarding pursuit can be a necessary, but not sufficient component of the successful abstinence from such highs'. The authors offer the example of from Sennett (2003) who referred to his own cello playing in his adolescence as an example of 'craft love', describing the manner in which this activity provided him with a pleasure in itself, for itself and a sense of self worth which wasn't dependent on anyone or anything external.

⁸ For many this will evoke Prochaska and DiClemente's cycles of change model (Prochaska et al. 1994).

Even when offenders have nominally dedicated themselves to a new non-criminal identity, they may still experience setbacks as they negotiate their way from a criminal lifestyle with its associated benefits and demands to a completely new way of being. In the chaotic, uncertain times of primary desistance, their long-term goals may become temporarily sidelined (Healy and O'Donnell, 2008: 35).

In secondary desistance however, crime not only stops, 'existing roles become disrupted' and a 'reorganization based upon a new role or roles will occur (Lemert 1951: 76): 'desistance does involve identifiable and measurable changes at the level of personal identity or the "me" of the individual' (Maruna et al. 2004: 274). The SPooCS authors themselves ultimately agree that successful maintenance and reinforcement in the face of obstacles may result in the adoption of a crime free identity as a non-offender. It is in this secondary desistance phase that Vaughan's (2007) tertiary and final stage of 'dedication' might be positioned. He argues that to establish desistance, agents must regard their commitment to their new identity as incompatible with ongoing criminality and regard criminality as 'morally incompatible with whom they wish to be' (Vaughan, 2007: 394). Indeed, the individual experiences at this juncture the fourth stage in Giordano et al.'s (2002: 1002) four part theory of cognitive transformation: 'a transformation in the way the actor views the deviant behaviour or lifestyle itself'.

Healy and O'Donnell's (2008) Irish study lends further weight to the foregoing arguments. The authors studied Irish male probationers who were in an early stage of the change process and who were comparable in age with the SPooCS sample. They found that while their narratives contained a high level of motivation and modest goal aspirations in relation to the acquisition of employment or in reference to relationships, they contained little evidence of agency or generative concerns consistent with notions of secondary desistance. Healy and O'Donnell propose that their findings therefore support the view that, at least in the early stages of change, whilst ex-offenders do not necessarily possess a strong sense of agency, the development of social bonds may be intermediate goals that indirectly lead to desistance. The authors suggest these goals in turn forge new commitments, which then perhaps invoke a sense of an agentic self, result in a new identity and a focus on a different and possibly more altruistic set of goals.

Desistance and Rehabilitative Interventions

Drawing on these and other studies, a body of scholarship has emerged which, following Farrall's injunction that practice should become 'desistance-focused', seeks to interpret

desistance research for practice (for example, see Maguire and Raynor, 2006; McCulloch and McNeill, 2008; McNeill 2003, 2006, 2009; McNeill and Weaver, 2010; Porporino, 2010; Weaver and McNeill, 2010). This work tends to stress (albeit to varying degrees) six central themes:

1. Since desistance is an inherently individualised and subjective process, approaches to intervention must accommodate and exploit issues of identity and diversity. One-size-fits-all interventions will not work (Weaver and McNeill, 2010).
2. The development and maintenance not just of motivation but also of hope become key tasks for workers (Farrall and Calverley, 2006).
3. Desistance can only be understood within the context of human relationships; not just relationships between workers and offenders (though these matter a great deal) but also between offenders and those who matter to them (Burnett and McNeill, 2005; McNeill, 2006).
4. Although we tend to focus on offenders' risk and needs, they also have strengths and resources that they can use to overcome obstacles to desistance – both personal strengths and resources and strengths and resources in their social networks. Supervision needs to support and develop these capacities (Maruna and LeBel, 2003).
5. Since desistance is about discovering agency, interventions need to encourage and respect self-determination; this means working with offenders not on them (McCulloch, 2005; McNeill, 2006).
6. Interventions based only on human capital (or developing offenders' capacities and skills) will not be enough. Interventions need to work on social capital issues with communities and offenders (Farrall, 2002, 2004; McNeill and Maruna, 2007; McNeill and Whyte, 2007).

These messages have had particular salience in those Anglophone jurisdictions within which 'what works?' initiatives have had the greatest impacts (see Raynor and Robinson, 2009). Such initiatives typically involve implementing risk-need assessment tools and related programmes (usually of a cognitive-behavioural nature) aimed at reducing reoffending. In England and Wales, attempts to implement this kind of approach represented a rehabilitation experiment on a grand scale but with somewhat disappointing results. Though the reasons for these results are complex and contested (see Raynor, 2008, McNeill,

2009), some have suggested that conceptual limitations underlie the ‘what works?’ model – at least as implemented in some jurisdictions (see Ward and Maruna, 2007). Crucially, ‘what works?’ puts the intervention itself at the heart of the process of change. By way of contrast, desistance-based perspectives stress that the process of change exists before and beyond the intervention (McNeill, 2006, 2009; Porporino, 2010). Interventions and programmes, in desistance-based perspectives, become an element of a rehabilitative process, which is itself, part of a wider enterprise called desistance. It has therefore been argued that thinking about supervision needs to be ‘embedded’ within an understanding of desistance (McNeill, 2006) – and, more recently, that desistance itself is not the ultimate concern (McNeill and Weaver, 2010). People do not simply desist, they desist *into* something. Desistance is perhaps best understood as part of the individual’s ongoing journey towards successful integration within the community.

Summary

1. Desistance from crime is a complex process, which is likely to be made more difficult both by the social and structural disadvantages that ex-prisoners typically face and by the experience of imprisonment itself.
2. Desistance is best understood as arising from the interfaces between age and maturation, developing social ties and shifting narrative identities.
3. Though shaped by their social and structural contexts, these interfaces and interactions can only be apprehended and experienced subjectively, which means that desistance is an inherently individualised experience.
4. Attempts to support desistance need to be based on an understanding of this complexity, and need to work both with and through the individual and with and through the social and cultural contexts of his or her life. This involves working to develop motivation for change, exploiting existing strengths and resources, developing new skills and building social networks and relationships that can support the change process.

2.4 Conclusion: Desistance, Learning and the Arts in Prisons

Trying to develop a desistance-supporting form of sentence planning (or offender management) within (and beyond) prisons is highly challenging. The nature of imprisonment itself means that it runs against the grain of desistance by limiting agency and responsibility, delaying maturation, damaging social ties (and sometimes building anti-social ones) and cementing criminalised identities. Although this would tend to suggest that the first principle must be to use prisons as sparingly as possible, where imprisonment is necessary the challenge is to create whole regimes (not just offender management or resettlement processes) that foster hope, motivation and responsibility, that maintain and develop positive social ties (and that enhance offenders' personal capacities to sustain positive roles and relationships, for example as parents), and that help to build new pro-social identities and social networks and contexts in which these new identities can be embedded, nurtured and sustained.

The literatures reviewed in the first two sections of this review suggest several ways in which arts-based interventions can play a key part in this process. As we have seen, such interventions help to engage offenders in educational and personal development processes, they help offenders to recognise and develop their existing strengths and their positive potential (rather than focusing on 'deficits'), they build self-esteem and self-confidence, they both use and encourage peer support and team or group work, and they encourage participation in other forms of learning.

Putting this in the terminology of desistance theory and research, arts-based interventions offer more than 'just' the development of the skills of offenders; they may enable offenders to begin to think differently about themselves, their families, their relationships with their peers, and their relationships to the prison regime and the opportunities it offers. More generally, they may help offenders to 'imagine' different possible futures, different social networks, different identities and different lifestyles. In and of themselves, arts-based interventions are unlikely to deliver the concrete, realisable sentence and resettlement plans which many offenders will need to tackle the full range of issues and challenges that they face; but they may help to foster and to reinforce commitment to such planning processes and to the change processes that they exist to support. They may also play a part in bringing positive social contacts and networks *into* the prison-based process.

3. Findings

3.1 Questions of quality

The creative ambition of *Inspiring Change* was extraordinary and the final artistic outputs were impressive, including concerts, plays, recordings, exhibitions, a graphic novel and even a fully staged opera. We know of no other prison programme anywhere in the world that has attempted a coordinated and systematic set of interventions and creative outputs across such a range of art forms and media.

A single definition of ‘artistic quality’ was not attempted in our evaluation, since each project had such different artistic aims, artistic outputs and approaches to the process. The participants’ diaries, scrapbooks, rehearsals, conversations and individual artistic growth were integral to the creative process, and cannot be separated from the resulting artistic products. The projects were also wide ranging in their nature, using different creative approaches with different numbers of participants (from less than 10 to over 60), different participant groups (including women, young offenders and open estate), across different art forms (including photography, song-writing and painting) and for different lengths of time (from just 2 weeks to 6 months). Each project produced a highly professional artistic output and we did not consider it necessary to attempt to evaluate the relative artistic quality of this output.

Rather, we focused on the concept of ‘quality artistic engagement’, which we argue is more central to the aims of *Inspiring Change*. We focused our evaluation on what the participants and artists reported about their experiences – what they seemed to value most highly about the artistic engagement that took place.

A strong theme to emerge was the enormous value placed by the participants on the opportunity to work with professional artists and musicians: ‘being able to compose an opera with a professional singer there and with a pianist and a cellist, it was an extraordinary experience’, “just having the opportunity to work with these people that are at such a standard...”, “it was great working with professional people”.

The participants also seemed to value the personal challenges of the creative, artistic process: 'I've enjoyed the challenge that they've given us', 'this project is really specialized... it reminds me exactly of being at art school in that we're looking at works of art critically, we're having to use our mind...', 'when I was at home, I was trying to think, you know, how do you tell a story with people?'. Many also mentioned their discovery of their own abilities, and their appreciation of having those valued: 'I loved doing the art project, I didn't think I had it in me so I'm glad I took part in it'. 'It's great when people think you're good at something, you know? It's really, really inspiring'.

The personal qualities, commitment and positive attitude of the artists also seemed to be important to the participants: 'the people that are coming in are great. They're fantastic. It's brilliant to have the opportunity to work with these people, to be with these people', 'they're extremely motivating and they are actually making the best of each and everyone', 'she really encouraged us, you know?', 'I've worked all my life, you know and I felt nearest I could as if I was back working with normal people, you know?', 'It wasn't a case that they came in to teach prisoners, you know what I mean? It just felt like they just came in to teach people.'

The creative process within the arts sessions was a key part of the work, and the arts practitioners were often surprised and impressed by the high level of interest, engagement, concentration, enthusiasm, and commitment of participants: 'it was stunning watching these guys give it their all', 'seeing one student's face light up when he was successful after almost giving up - there is so much potential with a number of these young people', 'a great session with so much learning taking place - it was difficult to keep up', 'I mean it was probably one of the most powerful creative processes I've ever been part of in twenty-five years working in this kind of area'.

Another theme to emerge was the pride in creating a high level artistic product that could be shared with others, and the exhilaration felt from the performances that concluded some projects: 'the best moment through this whole project was after we took our bows to the audience after the first when we walked off stage. The euphoric feeling and celebrations I had with my fellow cast members was one of the best moments of my life and I will never forget it', 'the most memorable moment for me was when our family and friends stood and gave standing ovation it made me feel like all our hand work was complete'. The rarity and strength of such positive experiences in a prison environment

were also expressed, 'you don't get many days in prison that are happy, but it was', 'I said they should send in the industrial cleaners to wipe the smiles off their faces'.

The artists also seemed to appreciate the intense experience of the final performances for some of the projects: 'they are really operating like an experienced company now and understand the routine of the preparation', 'it was a totally euphoric end with a standing ovation. There was a lot of back slapping, hugging and even some tears, actually from people I didn't think would even complete the project let alone give this response. It was very moving to see the cast with their families and hear their proud comments'.

One inevitable consequence of such powerful performance experiences was the disappointment felt by the participants after the performance was over ('my most negative moment was realizing it was over'), with artists noting the participants being 'gutted': 'it was of course also very tough as this brought the project to a close and difficult when the moment came for everyone to part', 'there was definitely a come-down', I think some of them probably felt quite low. I think some of them felt quite lost like we did', 'a few wind down sessions with the group are essential'. This aspect of a final performance was discussed at the very beginning of the planning stages of *Inspiring Change*, with a recommendation made for any performances to be scheduled around two-thirds or three-quarters of the way through a project. Unfortunately, most projects still ended with the final performance or exhibition, instead of scheduling extra sessions after the event. Fortunately though, the final focus group discussions did provide an opportunity for many of the participants to meet again (which might not happen in the prison halls), to discuss and share their experiences together.

Of course, not all artistic experiences within the *Inspiring Change* projects were positive. We have focused here on the overwhelming majority of positive reports, but some participants chose to withdraw from the projects, and many arts practitioners expressed their frustrations with certain aspects of the work. The extended length of the sessions, the limitations of the spaces involved, the security restrictions, the irregularity of attendance for many projects, the variability of attitudes across participants and across different sessions, were all predictable difficulty areas that are common and sometimes inevitable within the prison environment, but were nevertheless problematic. Many participants expressed an initial skepticism about the project, and many artists reported finding it difficult at times to manage difficult personalities or disagreements within the

various groups, particularly at the earlier stages. What seemed to be clear across all projects though, was that the extraordinary and challenging nature of the *artistic process*, leading to a final high quality *artistic product* was both powerful and rewarding for all concerned. The group unity created, the camaraderie, the tremendous sense of achievement, and the high caliber of the work was recognized by all. As one participant put it:

'We've seen the response in how it's taken a hold of people that have taken part in it and people who haven't taken part in it. I was out on the landing after Friday night's show and people were like, "I wish I done it. Are they going to do another one?" and "I want to get my name down." It was an exciting buzz'

3.2 People and process

Interaction and Collaboration

Direct interaction between all the different arts organisations, learning centre staff, SPS staff and the research team was scheduled for two key stages: during the planning stages in 2009 (both pre and post bid), and at the final conference in Glasgow, 25 February 2011. After the initial planning meeting, interaction between the arts organisations, learning centre staff, SPS staff and participants was managed on an individual project basis. Artistic collaboration between arts organizations took place in one prison only: the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Scottish Opera worked together for the opera project at HMP Shotts.

Overall, we found the level of interaction and collaboration between the relevant organisations involved with *Inspiring Change* to be exceptional for this type of work. The scale and ambition of the project was met with equal planning and preparation, in which all or most relevant parties were invited to the two large initial planning meetings. These meetings were well organised, informative, and led to genuine and important discussions between staff who would have a crucial role play in the smooth running of the projects once they began. The overarching aims and approaches were made clear, and all parties had the opportunity to voice their opinions and contribute to both the wider and the more project-specific decisions.

During the running of the projects themselves, communication and interaction between staff became somewhat variable. For many projects, communication remained at a very high level, with a admiration and respect often expressed for SPS staff: 'the prison was great and lots of different departments were involved', 'everybody was generally supportive', 'there were some prison officers who really went the extra mile', and often directed at particular individuals: 'he was just brilliant. He made everything work like clockwork'. One SPS officer even took part in a theatre performance. For other projects, communication and interaction was less evident and conflicting priorities became difficult. For example, in one of the first pilot projects to run, frustrations were expressed about learning centre staff and prison staff not being supportive, or artists not taking prison rules seriously. For the project involving two arts organisations, some confusion arose over whether the key aims were to do with the creative process, or the final performance. Even in such cases the artistic outcome was considered by most of those concerned to have been highly successful. In all cases, professional respect, regard and collaboration was maintained, and virtually everyone interviewed expressed that communication was extremely important and could make or break the smooth-running of such projects: 'I learned a lot about communication on a professional level and lack thereof and the impact that has on a project'.

One theme that arose clearly was the importance of the full involvement of the learning centre staff in such educational work. In addition to some staff members taking part in the projects directly, such as assisting guest practitioners with the running of sessions or rehearsals, it was noted that often members of the learning centre staff, and sometimes SPS staff, would contribute to the smooth running of a project by covering classes when needed, helping with logistical matters such as accompanying practitioners in and out of the prison and supporting the prisoners that took part in the arts projects on the days when the arts practitioners were not in the prison. Another theme was the need for face-to-face planning meetings early on in the planning process, and the absolute necessity of budgeting for these meetings. One artist also suggested 'getting the prisoners involved in the initial planning' of the artistic aims of each project, and also mentioned that when 'the researchers come in and spoke to the prisoners and stuff, the prisoners love that'. Another artist suggested that 'a specific meeting just between all the artists might have been good at the beginning to discuss and share ideas'.

In one project, the Activity Sheets (completed by the artists after each session, at the request of the research team) served as a communication tool between the learning centre staff and visiting artists: 'I got a lot of information from those activity sheets, about what they've done, what they've covered, what their aims were, how they went about it'. In general the completion of these forms were a source of administrative irritation for the artists, but most reported that they were glad to have completed them 'it's a useful thing to do', 'they were quite important', 'when you read through these things you see changes', 'they're useful for us for keeping our record of what we were doing', 'they were therapeutic'. One unique form of interaction was the comments collected by visitors to one of the exhibitions: 'surprising thought provoking work', 'interesting', 'moving', 'inspiring', 'good to engage the inmates', 'powerful stuff', 'imaginative', 'a reminder of the heterogeneity of prisoners', 'would never want to be one', 'brilliant', 'please keep up the good work'.

In summary, there was a good general level of communication and interaction between projects, and a perceived need for much greater levels in future projects of this kind. Budgeting for early planning between all relevant parties is considered essential, as well as continuing and maintaining face-to-face contact. The aims and priorities of each partner (SPS, the Learning Centre and the arts organisation) need to be considered early on and placed within the framework of the overall project. Finally, it is vital that each individual within a particular project communicates clearly to the others their way of working, which should probably include prison-specific security training for visiting artists and perhaps even arts workshops for prison staff.

Ownership and involvement

We interviewed senior management staff in each of the five prisons involved before and after the completion of the arts projects.

We found clear expressions of commitment to *Inspiring Change* from managers. In some instances this went beyond the general SPS mandate to deliver rehabilitative services towards a deeper personal commitment to arts activities on the part of some staff.

Only one person interviewed would make the future of arts in prison dependent on demonstrable evidence of effectiveness. For most it is one way of ensuring that a variety of meaningful and interesting activities are available within the regime.

There was a clear sense among managers that the *Inspiring Change* project has been well thought out and well-prepared for. Most activities have been project managed within existing systems and structures, usually at 'head of offender outcome' level, sometimes lower than that. In most cases a lot of work has fallen to Learning Centre Managers, which they have expected and (mainly) welcomed. Stories were told of particular prison officers who had show great dedication to these projects, and, in one instance, of a prison officer who regularly teaches guitar to prisoners, independently of any formal educational arrangement. Some learning centre managers cited incidents of difficulties with prison officers in connection with *Inspiring Change* but as the exception, not the rule. There may be good reason in any future work to seek to involve prison officers more intensively.

We did not encounter in these interviews any sense among prison managers that the projects only worked or worked better with one prisoner group or in one kind of prison than another. This is not to say that there are no differences – different interventions may be more appropriate or more engaging at one stage of life, or one point in a sentence than others. For example the reflective character of the National Galleries portraits project in Shotts or the pinhole camera work undertaken by men in the open estate seem to have had great resonance for those involved, just as the collective fun of the choral singing and music-making at Polmont engaged a younger group.

There can no doubt be additional practical difficulties for some kinds of work in shorter-term environments, characterized by the notorious 'churn' of high turnover of prisoners arriving and departing. This was not raised as a reason for not seeking to enhance the regime in the ways that several of these projects, including those at Barlinnie and Greenock where this might have been an issue.

3.3 Literacy and engagement

Changing negative attitudes to education

The participants in *Inspiring Change* said that school had not provided positive learning experiences for most of them. As prisoners in more than one establishment put it, 'school didn't really teach you anything' because 'in school you've got too much on your mind and you want to do other things'. Some people now regretted that they had messed about at school: 'when I left school and I lost my job I couldnae go back to school cause I was fighting and all that - just daft stuff' and thought that they needed a second chance. It was also pointed out that 'in the education system... you just get hammered on your weaknesses and then everyone gets to feel that they're failures'.

Clearly participating in education brings many benefits and so it should be made as easy as possible for everyone to take part. However, many offenders from across the estate reported that there were delays in getting into the more popular classes, especially in the arts, and that there were often discontinuities where subjects they had enjoyed or wanted to develop to a more advanced stage simply disappeared. Some were also concerned about the timing of classes since 'if you go one day and then wait a full week to go back again ... it's like starting over again' (Polmont). Others pointed out that the emphasis on reading and writing in prison meant that 'the whole spectrum of different academic levels [isn't] really addressed and if it does it does so reluctantly' (Shotts).

There are some problems in accessing appropriate education that need to be tackled if reluctant learners are to change their negative attitudes to education. There is, however, clear evidence that, in the view of the majority of the participating offenders, education in prison could overcome many of their earlier negative views about the value of learning and really engage them in productive, appropriate learning.

Building an active learning culture

Another aspect of changing negative attitudes to education and learning, as the Skills for Scotland Report (2009) argued, is to build an active learning culture where a balanced programme of opportunities are available. Participants in *Inspiring Change* demonstrated that they had learnt a lot from their participation. For example:

It was a long process for us to do it. But, it's something that I really enjoyed cause I learned something. We have still got a thirst to learn (Shotts).

It's about self-achievement and learning more skills that I can add to, skills I've already got to progress through (Shotts).

Several participants thought that the project was well named as it was 'inspiring us and trying to see that maybe we've got hidden talents we don't know anything about' (Greenock). This woman also pointed out that participating in the project enabled people to see what they were good at and so opened up prospects for the future, a comment echoed by offenders from across the estate.

There was quite a lot of evidence that participating in the *Inspiring Change* projects had motivated offenders to improve their skills through providing engaging and challenging activities. At the most general level it was suggested that the arts projects showed participants 'that they're good at something' (Greenock). There were also advocates for specific types of projects as a means of improving skills – 'I think drama is a great way of introducing ... reading or writing, a great way of getting them into it' (Open Estate) or art 'I'm dyslexic, and I feel like through my art it lets me express myself a lot more. I find it harder to put something down on paper even when I'm getting help with adult literacy in here (Shotts). Another pointed out that,

[music] gives you extra skill ...it can open your eyes and you say [to yourself] 'I didn't know I could do that before I came here' and it turns out I can and I'm quite good at it (Polmont).

Participating in the *Inspiring Change* projects built an active learning culture and motivated offenders to improve their skills. The individual projects enabled participants to learn in ways that suited them and encouraged them to achieve their goals. Engaging in the arts provided more acceptable activities than normal educational provision and were more motivating. However, further work is needed to engage those that do not normally participate in the education classes.

Enabling people to work to their strengths in collaboration with their peers.

Building on and extending the knowledge and skills that offenders already have and helping them to progress was important. An aspect of this was engaged, enthusiastic and

encouraging staff who helped because 'if you've got somebody encouraging you to say you can do these things, you're not the bottom of the rung. You are able to do something' (Shotts). Participants in most of the projects also got lots of feedback and this helped people 'to move on to the next achievement' (Open Estate). They also learnt that they had new talents and also that they could build on what they had already done: 'I learnt that if I actually put my mind to it I can do a story and put pictures to it' (Barlinnie).

Another aspect of the project was that it enabled better communication by creating opportunities for interaction since 'you very rarely get to speak to anybody' (Shotts). Once offenders learned to express themselves better they could express a wider range of emotions and 'let myself go a bit' (Shotts).

The arts interventions were particularly effective in encouraging participants to develop their own ideas, although some people initially found this difficult. At first they found it frustrating when the artists insisted that it was their own, personal ideas that were important.

As well as a focus on individual achievement prisoners worked together and supported each other because they had an overall goal. This meant that they were putting all their different ideas together and learning from each other particularly if 'you ran out of ideas' (Shotts). The artists were particularly effective because 'they teach you to work together, to be creative and enthusiastic' (Polmont). Working together also involved people being aware of their own abilities and taking a back seat if that would help to encourage others. For example: 'I know my grammar is good enough to write and I have reasonable ideas but [if someone] is struggling my... responsibility is to shut up and give him a chance' (Shotts).

Positive action to support fellow participants was also apparent either through help with specific skills, such as writing clearly, or in terms of building each other's confidence. For example: 'I had to keep telling x that he could do it and it was sounding good. And sometimes when he wasn't, saying, "Listen, you're a bit nervous. You gotta relax"' (Shotts). Offenders also helped each other to 'just keep going' (Shotts) when projects got difficult and their motivation dipped or they were too stressed to think clearly. Finally the way that many of the projects were set up meant that everyone had to work together and this emphasised the group effort and the importance of being able to rely on each other to do their fair

share. Working together meant that 'the people you were doing it with became part of your family and kept you going' (Polmont).

Learning was taking place through participation in the *Inspiring Change* projects that built on the participants' strengths both in terms of the arts and also in improving the verbal and written skills that were embedded in the work for the projects. As a result offenders learned to work together more effectively. They were also more trusting and supportive of each other, rather than bringing each other down, which had been a more apparent mode of behaviour in other settings.

3.4 *Increasing confidence and self-esteem*

Across the whole estate offenders spoke about how participating in *Inspiring Change* had developed their confidence. This finding is demonstrated especially vividly in Sarah Colvin's case study of the Citizens Theatre project at Greenock. Most participants, across the projects, referred to the psychological aspects of confidence that related to their growing sense of their potential and ability to achieve. This took a number of forms. One aspect was to do with others believing in you and seeming to care about what you did. For example, 'when people come in and make you feel you're worth something...it just builds up your self esteem seeing people generally care' (Shotts). Part of this was about being given a chance by those whose opinions you value, especially when offenders felt that they were normally judged as people that 'should be thrown on the scrap-heap' (Shotts).

As well as gaining confidence from others' positive assessment of the work that had been done, offenders also reported that they had become more able to judge their own work 'knowing that you done a good thing' (Polmont). This feeling was often contrasted with their prior experience of not doing well and being judged as failures. One aspect of being able to make these judgements was about the intensity of the projects they had been engaged in, which had been so absorbing that they had forgotten their usual anxieties and this in turn had increased their self-esteem.

The projects that had involved working as a team also built confidence because every person mattered and had to participate, and this led to 'better self esteem and confidence' (Greenock). This experience also transferred to other parts of the offenders' lives, for example, giving confidence 'to actually participate in working with groups instead of just as an individual' (Shotts) and to 'learn to trust others' (Polmont). For some too it helped to bring 'back good memories from the past. It just makes you feel good' (Polmont), and these good feelings in turn built confidence to participate in other learning activities.

Offenders reported that when they had participated effectively it opened up 'other prospects for us... and shows that we've got other skills' (Greenock). Discovering these skills in turn led to being 'more focused' (Polmont) and could help people to 'break away their shell' (Open Estate) and so open themselves up to other possibilities. These possibilities were linked to increasing abilities, and the positive feelings these generated made offenders 'want to do good in here' (Barlinnie) and could 'bring a better side out of you' (Shotts).

A final aspect of the ways in which *Inspiring Change* had built confidence and increased self-esteem was the positive impact of the public performances. Several things contributed to this. One was the ability for offenders to link to their families and do something that was going to make them 'proud' (Polmont). Another was being able to give people outside 'inspiration' (Shotts) and a final one was the impact on their fellow offenders who were 'genuinely jealous' (Shotts).

Data from the confidence scales

As well as the qualitative data from the focus groups with offenders there was also quantitative data using a scale designed to assess changes in participants' self-confidence to handle a variety of situations involving effective communication in the prison setting. This questionnaire was derived from a scale designed by Tett and colleagues (2006) and involved offenders answering the questions at the beginning of their involvement in the projects and again after the projects had been completed in order to assess any changes. There were some difficulties in assessing the individual distance travelled by each offender, as very few were able to complete both pre and post questionnaires. There were also some questions that the majority answered either completely positively (questions 5, 6, 8, 9) or were dependent on individual relationships or circumstances (7, 9). For these reasons the data have been analysed for the whole cohort for questions 1-4 only (Meeting new people;

Joining in a group of strangers; Speaking up in a group; Defending your position in an argument without becoming aggressive) in order to assess changes in these aspects of the scale. In addition the qualitative data summarised above showed that these questions covered the area in which prisoners reported that the projects had made the most changes.

Table 3 – Results of the Confidence Scale Analysis

Prison	Average pre-intervention score	Average post intervention score	Difference
Barlinnie, National Galleries	7.5	11.2	3.7
Greenock, National Galleries	11.5	11.5	0
Greenock, Citizens	12	13	1
Open Estate, National Galleries	13.6	13.6	0
Open Estate, Traverse	14.5	14.5	0
Polmont, NCYCOS	13	12.5	-0.5
Polmont, National Galleries	12.	12.6	0.6
Polmont, Scottish Ensemble	11.4	12.5	1.1
Shotts, National Galleries	11.3	13.5	2.2

As can be seen from the above table there was one project that resulted in a negative change and this appears to be because one offender felt considerably less confident as a result of his participation in the project. In three other cases there were no changes at all. The large increases in Barlinnie and Shotts appeared to be due to positive changes in all the prisoners that had participated in the projects.

These data support the findings of the qualitative data but do not add significantly to it and so it has to be concluded that this scale is of limited value in situations where it is difficult to follow up individuals over time.

Bringing the qualitative and quantitative data together shows that participating in *Inspiring Change* had the capacity to build confidence through prisoners’ growing sense of their potential and ability to achieve. This was the result of both outsiders believing in them and an increase in their own abilities to judge themselves more positively. Working in teams and in intense projects that had a performance element was particularly effective. Growing confidence led to an increase in other skills and a willingness to be

open to other possibilities and enabled offenders to engage with other people in more appropriate and effective ways.

3.5 *Desistance*

Methods (and notes of caution)

In order to manage the volume of data collected in 26 prisoner interviews or focus groups and in 27 closing interviews with the various arts, education and prison practitioners, we used thematic coding, with the selection of codes being informed principally by themes identified in the literature review, although themes and codes also emerged from the data.

In interrogating the data we collected with desistance from crime in mind, there are two important caveats to note. Firstly, given that the participants were still in prison (and some faced very long sentences) at the point of data collection, we are not able to say anything about the impact of the projects on their behaviour in the community; in this sense, we can say little or nothing about primary desistance (i.e. desistance as measured in behaviour terms). Secondly, the focus of the data collection was on the experience and impact of the projects and not on desistance from crime per se. It seemed more sensible, and more defensible, to focus the discussions on these processes and impacts in the present, rather than on 'mere' aspirations about future behaviour after release (although we do report such data where it emerged in discussion). In essence, this means that the data that we have to present is about the extent to which the processes and impacts of the projects seem to have contributed to 'secondary desistance' (i.e. desistance as evidenced in a developing positive identity).

With this in mind, the three principal codes that we used to explore desistance were 'maturation' (i.e. evidence that the arts projects contributed to developing personal maturity); 'social bonds' (i.e. evidence that they positively affected constructive social ties and relationships); 'identity' (i.e. evidence that they influenced positive identity reformations), although under each of these codes we found several sub-themes linked to processes of desistance.

Choices and chances

Our findings provided clear evidence that many prisoners were able to articulate the way in which the arts projects encouraged them to become more open to change, to look at issues and problems in new ways, to gain confidence in their abilities, to acquire new skills and to begin to see themselves differently. Particularly in those projects involving performances, the participants also spoke about the significance of audience reactions to and endorsements of their efforts, and the potential for change that these efforts represented. As will become clear below, these proved to be recurring themes as more data became available for analysis.

Despite these encouraging findings, it is important to sound a cautionary note about the extent to which the projects could make a significant and direct contribution towards reducing reoffending. By their nature, these are very short interventions and they had no aspiration to directly or comprehensively tackle the wide range of 'criminogenic needs' evidenced by many prisoners and targeted by traditional 'offender programmes' of the sort that have been extensively used within SPS. Some participants themselves sounded a similar note of realism⁹:

LISA: I'll be honest, right. I don't think that things like this will stop people from reoffending. If you're going to reoffend, you're going to reoffend. So, they cannae kid on and say, throw in a couple of people from the Citizens Theatre, let them all run about and let them do a wee play and that will help them from not reoffending. I don't think that.

INT: Yeah.

LISA: If someone's going to reoffend they're not going to go, 'Oh, wait a minute, well I done that drama thing so forget it.' Do you know what I mean? (National Portrait Galleries, Greenock).

That said, despite this simple stress on choice, the participants in the same focus group soon arrived at a more nuanced position:

INT: ...Do you think that these projects are meaningful to have in prisons?

LISA: Aye, they are meaningful.

SHIRLEY: They help people find themselves, as well. You learn about yourself.

LISA: Like people don't think they're good at things and then they realise that, aye, they are.

⁹ Where we report the words of more than one speaker in conversation we have given them names – for clarity, and to convey the importance of active dialogue in this data. These are not individuals' real names, nor do they begin with the same letter as people's real name.

SHIRLEY: They are talented. Or maybe they make bonds with people and it makes it easier for them, some of them. Do you know what I mean?

INT: Yeah, definitely. So, I think it's those things, which could maybe contribute later to whether you reoffend, or not.

LISA: Aye. (National Portrait Galleries, Greenock).

This more subtle notion of contributing to rather than 'producing' desistance was a recurring theme, with participants noting the way in which the arts projects might awaken belief in the participants' capacity for or opportunities to change their lives for the better.

While participants tended to stress that desisting from crime was a matter of personal choice, and that successful desistance relied on personal motivation and commitment, the arts projects helped people to realise that leading a different life might be a viable possibility; they helped people to realise that they might have a chance to change and the ability to do so.

Maturation

As we noted in the literature review, aging and developing maturity appear to be significant factors in desistance from crime. In many respects, prisons represent a poor environment in which to develop maturity, at least if we assume that maturity involves a growing sense of personal responsibility and a capacity to plan and order one's life, as well as appropriate concern for the welfare and interests of others. By its nature, imprisonment requires prisoners to be subject to a regime which removes choice and the capacity for many aspects of self-determination

Another key aspect of these challenges and changes was committing to a collective effort – and this was linked to developing a position that was both less defensive and less self-centred:

MARK: It also changed your thought. Instead of thinking like a prisoner it also got you thinking again like a normal person.

INT: When you say thinking like a prisoner, what do you mean? Like, I don't...

MARK: Instead of thinking about yourself, right? Which is in here you look after yourself first and that. You're thinking about yourself but you're also thinking about the group as a whole.

(Citizens Theatre, Barlinnie)

In one focus group, participants noted how the theme of the play that they had written and performed directly addressed the decisions they would have to make when released -- decisions about the direction of their lives. They also noted how the play prompted greater reflection about these decisions:

ALEC: I think it was a good idea. I don't know initially where they got the idea for the project, you know? A prisoner stands alone on a platform waiting for a train.

INT: And has a decision to make.

ALEC: Aye. You know because we all get libbed. You know, we've all got a date for getting out...Well, we're going to have to make that decision.

STEVE: Exactly.

ALEC: Because we've all got family and friends.

INT: That specific decision.

ALEC: Oh, aye, every single one of us will have to make that decision of whether we go to the licensed grocers or whether we go get the bus straight home. Every single one of us is going to have to make that choice. Because every single one of us has been locked up for X amount of time.

INT: Right.

ALEC: And we all have X amount of things that we want to do.

JOHN: I know.

ALEC: And our family want us to come home. (Citizens Theatre, Barlinnie)

This is one particularly striking example of how this creative process itself directly prompted reflection about issues around crime and desistance. As we will see in the next section, however, it was perhaps more common for the creative process itself to prompt reflections about family and about identity.

There is evidence that for many participants the projects allowed their participants to become more open to another and to change processes; that they secured significant commitment to collective efforts; that they challenged self-centred thinking; and that they encouraged participants to reflect on their future options. To this extent, the projects may have played a significant role in encouraging a more mature outlook, and more mature relationships, amongst participants.

Social bonds

The last quote in the previous section makes reference to family, and to the importance of family in prisoners' thinking about the future. The literature review noted the important role of developing social bonds in promoting and supporting desistance from crime. Although, set within their prison contexts, the arts projects did not aim to engage directly with issues

around family and employment (the two most significant and most obviously 'generative' social bonds discussed in the desistance literature), these were nonetheless recurring themes in the focus groups.

Family

In some cases, the nature of the work in the arts projects itself highlighted or expressed prisoners' concerns about, with and for their families, or prompted reflection about the impact of their offending and their imprisonment on their families:

JIM: ...I took the photograph of the bed made with the stuffed bears on it not with what I had in mind with what Finn came up with. When the photograph came out and he went, "Oh, I really like that one. I feel that that's you and your wife represented by the bears." But, I never thought of that when I took the photograph. But, then when he said it I could look at it and see it. (National Portrait Galleries, Castle Huntly)

However, beyond the 'surfacing' of these family concerns in the process of the work itself, performance and exhibition provided vital opportunities for families to have some involvement in the process. This regularly and repeatedly emerged as being very important to the prisoners:

INT: Do you think it's important that there's that element in projects in prisons, that you can involve your family?
RAB: Of course it is.
KENNY: Aye, very important.
RAB: You got to remember. They're out there sticking by us. Putting up with all this crap, know what I mean? And it's the good things they should be involved in as well, in our life, you know?
KENNY: When we are put in prison, it's not just us that's punished. It's our families as well.
RAB: Aye, everybody round about us.
KENNY: So, when you're doing something like this, it's letting them see that you're trying to better your ways, so to speak. You're not just in here being a thug. (Traverse Theatre, Castle Huntly)

This desire, of which many participants spoke, for their families to see them in a different role or a different and more positive light invoked considerable pride and satisfaction:

TOM: Your family got to see you do something good.
INT: Yeah.

TOM: Something that they thought you could never do. (Scottish Ensemble, Polmont)

In very practical ways, involvement in the projects also allowed some participants to experience a different kind and quality of family contact during their sentences; one that was focused on something beyond their prison experiences:

INT: [Referring to meeting families after the performance] Would you say it was a different kind of visit then?

MIKE: Oh, aye.

ALEC: It was a different atmosphere.

MIKE: A different atmosphere.

ALEC: It was almost like you're family were coming to visit you at the end of your shift at work.

INT: Right, yeah?

MIKE: And it was different kind of talking to them and that as well because it wasnae all the usual.

INT: What's the usual? I don't know. I've never visited anyone in prison.

ALEC: Normally, they ask you how you're doing and what you've been up to and you ask them how they've been and what they've been up to but it was like talking about the play and all that and, again, you forgot that you were in the jail. Do you know what I mean?

INT: Yeah.

GARY: It was hard going back to your cell that night, wasn't it?

MIKE: Aye, it was shite going back. Wasn't it? I was a bit gutted going back to reality. (Citizens Theatre, Barlinnie)

For some, the skills and interests developed in the projects provided one means by which they might endeavour to address or overcome troubles in the community, in order to protect their families from the effects of any further involvement in crime and punishment.

DAVY: Well, I'm thinking of my weans. Doing art and maybe if I was struggling or something. I don't know if I would go off my back and do it but maybe I would do something and take what I learned in here in art. (National Portrait Galleries, Barlinnie)

Work and Training

The connection between the skills and interests developed in the projects and future training or work was another recurring theme. Several participants had developed aspirations that were directly or indirectly related to their role and activities in the projects:

INT: Lesley, is there anything that you got out of doing the project?

LESLEY: I don't know. Helping with hair and make up made me realise that I want to go back to college and finish up my hairdressing qualification. (National Portrait Galleries Greenock)

BARRY: I want to be a musician when I get out. I want to play the guitar on a full time. I feel inspired to take it and practice it. You know what I mean? Where as I was quick to quit at things before that. But, I used to kind of fancy being a guitar player and I think I'm going to take professional lessons when I get out and follow up on what I want to do. It's giving me a bit of inspiration. (Scottish Ensemble, Polmont)

For some, the skills that had been acquired in the projects mattered irrespective of work opportunities that might or might not arise; beyond potential pathways to employment they felt they had acquired life skills. For others, while employment or training was an aspiration, the possibility of accessing new social networks linked to the arts was itself an attractive prospect, and potentially a route to reintegration:

ALEC: Also I thought it gave me the opportunity to get in touch with people outside as well.

INT: Okay.

ALEC: You know, the Citizens Theatre. So it gave me maybe some chance of work. Some chance of...

INT: connection.

ALEC: becoming integrated back into the community again without having to rely on negativity, you know?

JOHN: Aye.

ALEC: And doors getting closed, you know? It afforded me the opportunity for maybe some doors to get opened. (Citizens Theatre, Barlinnie)

Across the range of projects therefore, we can find evidence that, although they were not focused on family or work, many participants were encouraged to reflect upon the impact of their offending and imprisonment on their families; that this motivated them towards change; that performing or exhibiting their work – and thus better aspects of themselves – to and for their families was very important to them; that some acquired skills which they felt they could use for work or develop further in training; that others identified life skills that they have developed; and that some planned to develop new and more positive social networks linked to arts organisations or activities in the community.

Identity

The significance of performance and exhibition discussed in the last section clearly linked both to seeing oneself in a different light and to being seen differently by significant others. Though we focused on family (as the audience for these different selves) in the preceding discussion, a similar pride in displaying skill or potential or excellence arose in relation to other audience members, including prison managers and staff, social workers and others more used to dealing with and perceiving prisoners *as* prisoners, rather than as performers or artists.

You don't know how it's going to go down and you're in front of the governor and the deputy and what not. I thought it was a success because I got my message across. I enjoy what I do. Personally, I think I'm quite good at it and people agreed with me, you know what I mean? They thought it was good. (Scottish Ensemble, Polmont)

The warden was there. All the social workers were there. There was other people there. And it all came together like a proper concert. Your family could come in. I thought it was fantastic. Very good. (Scottish Ensemble, Polmont)

Clearly, these findings relate directly questions of identity, and particularly to its reconstruction in and through revised personal narratives. Several participants in the projects spoke about their 'spoiled identities' as 'addicts' or 'offenders' or prisoners – and the associated feelings of stigma and worthlessness. For many participants, these negative self-perceptions were challenged (often perhaps unwittingly) by the arts practitioners, whose commitment to the projects and the prisoners evoked significant reactions:

This is working with people. It's great when people think you're good at something, you know? It's really, really inspiring.... Really, I got a lot of self-respect back. It felt good working with really decent positive people. I really looked forward to it. And I was proud, you know? I was proud to actually be able to stand up and do it. It took a lot. (Scottish Chamber Orchestra & Scottish Opera, Shotts).

ALEC: To get people to come into the prison and actually want to work with us, you know, is amazing. It makes you feel quite blessed, you know? To think that people come in here and they want to help you put on a performance.

INT: Yeah.

ALEC: That's amazing cause I think sometimes people think you're just a con. You're out of society. You're out of the mould.

STEVE: And they didn't judge us, definitely.

ALEC: They weren't judgmental in any fashion.

INT: Yeah.

ALEC: They asked us questions. They wanted our input. (Citizens Theatre, Barlinnie)

Perhaps because they were able to develop significant, positive and trusting relationships with the prisoners, the arts practitioners were able, through the creative process, to challenge the participants in significant ways. Though this kind of challenging was perhaps more subtle than that which prisoners face in conventional offending behaviour programmes, that data suggest that its strength and salience should not be underestimated:

INT: Is there anything about those workshops or those sessions that is different from the classes you would normally have in education?

SHIRLEY: Aye, it's really different 'cause it's about personal boundaries. It's like challenging ya...other parts of your personality that you didn't know you had really, ain't it? It just challenges ya to, I don't know, have confidence, I think. (Citizens Theatre, Greenock)

For many, participation in the arts and in the projects allowed them to discover and express new or different aspects of themselves, and in some respects, through their work, to challenge the stigma that they face:

A lot of them represent me and my feelings towards what I do for a living. So, it was similar in that respect, you know, like when I refit somewhere. You refit it along your style. You refit it along the image that you're wanting to project. (National Portrait Galleries, Castle Huntly)

In sum, for many prisoners participation in the arts projects seemed to constructively challenge and disrupt the negative identities that they had internalised, and which they felt were sometimes communicated to them from others within and outwith the prison system. Because the arts practitioners invested their time, talent and efforts for the participants, and established trusting and respectful relationships with them, these negative and hopeless narrative identities were disrupted and challenged. The public successes of the participants' efforts – in performances and exhibitions before audiences of significant others – opened up new personal and social identities (as artists or performers) that confirmed the possibility and viability of change in one's character and identity; in the language of desistance

research, participation in the arts projects seemed to help many prisoners begin to imagine or envision an alternative, appealing, conventional self.

Summary

As we noted at the outset, given the complexities and difficulties of the desistance process, particularly for those involved in persistent offending who tend to have a wide range of background needs and to face significant resettlement problems, it would be unrealistic to expect relatively brief involvement in arts projects in and of itself to somehow 'produce' desistance. Rather, we have drawn on the evidence provided by the participants themselves, in the focus groups, to suggest how their involvement might have prompted progress towards desistance.

We found evidence that, for many participants, the projects allowed their participants to develop a more mature outlook, and more mature relationships. We also found, across the range of projects, evidence that many participants were encouraged to reflect upon the impact of their offending and imprisonment on their families; that this motivated them towards change;; that some acquired skills which they felt they could use for work or develop further in training; that others identified life skills that they had developed; and that some planned to develop new and more positive social networks linked to arts organisations or activities in the community.

Further, for many prisoners, participation in the arts projects seemed to constructively challenge and disrupt negative identities that they had internalised, and which they felt were sometimes communicated to them.

Looking across the three themes of maturation, social bonds and identities, it seems important to stress the apparent role of performances and exhibitions. Drawing on recent developments in desistance theory (Maruna, 2010), it may be that performances and exhibitions provided a kind of ritual where an esteemed audience recognised and celebrated achievement and change. It seems significant that these audiences comprised both professional and authority figures, and family members – both the public and the private 'audience' of the prisoner's performance. Part of the function of certification rituals is that they confirm not just to the audience but to the participant the authenticity of their achievement. The potential of such experiences in terms of encouraging nascent belief in the possibility of progress or change is easy to see.

Sustaining change?

The resources available to this evaluation did not allow for the longer term follow up required to produce more conclusive evidence about the links between participation and primary (or behavioural) desistance; in any event, the links between the projects and post-prison outcomes would necessarily depend on the extent to which the progress begun in the arts projects was followed up in other aspects of prison regimes and resettlement processes.

Though we did not have access to this kind of data, some of the concluding interviews with staff and with the arts practitioners, as well as confirming in broad terms the findings from the participants themselves, provided some evidence of changes enduring beyond the lives of the projects themselves:

INT: Did you notice any changes in any of the women during the course of the project?

SUE: Not particularly during the course of the project. But, I have noticed one of the women, A___ M___, we are going to have a recognition day and one of the things I want to give her is an outstanding students, what have I called it, commitment and service to others. She's a listener in the hall. She's on the prisons health thing. She's the prison rep. She's encouraging the girls to do a fun run. She's become really responsible. She's coming off her methadone. She's nearly off her methadone. (Learning Centre, on Citizens Theatre, Greenock)

They're starting to develop ideas of what they're doing outside, and that's become very, you know, one or two of them have very strong ideas, or one that was showing me all his correspondence with [something] today, about what to do when he gets out. So, I mean, there's talk of a couple of them, um, well, they're secure at the moment, but in trying to start up a gallery for prisoners art. (Learning Centre, on National Portrait Galleries, Shotts)

Two or three have been in touch with the Citizens and they're keeping in touch with them. Hoping to maybe, you know, find or guide them or give them some guidance when they come out. (Learning Centre, on Citizens Theatre, Barlinnie)

In these respects at least, for some of the participants, there is evidence that participants had progressed through and beyond the projects, and remained committed to the changes the projects had initiated and the chances that they provided.

3.6 *And afterwards...?*

As we indicated at the outset our main research effort was focused on the projects as they happened. We have good focus-group and interview data with prisoners, Learning Centre staff, arts practitioners and prison managers, all of which we have drawn upon above.

Notwithstanding the time-limited nature of our work we made a number of attempts to gather other indicative or corroborative information about participants before, during and after the projects. These included the following:

From Learning Centre Managers: whether prisoners completed the project; comments on any observed changes in behaviour or attitude; whether prisoners appeared to gain confidence following the project; whether prisoners remained engaged, or engaged anew, with education following the project.

From the prisons: Whether prisoners incurred any misconduct reports in the three months prior to and the three months following the project.

By telephone interview: Where participants indicated it was acceptable for us to do so we attempted to contact those who had been released prior to the end of January 2011 by telephone.

For various reasons all this information is, in differing degrees, patchy and unsystematic. The clustering of entries in our 'master sheet' makes it clear that we have relatively good information for a couple of establishments, much less for others. Prisons are complex and difficult environments. In the few short months during and since the *Inspiring Change* projects took place people have been transferred (sometimes more than once), conditionally liberated into home detention curfew, and released. A few have gone 'backwards' on their journey through the system – back into closed conditions, into segregation or into protection.

Similarly our own attempts to contact participants by telephone have been less successful than we had hoped. People change their phone numbers, or the number turns out to be that of a relative, or they are no longer at the address; they are out at work or college; they

have gone back into prison. We made some forty phone calls but only succeeded in speaking to eight participants. We later found out that some participants, who we were unable to reach on the telephone for the reasons mentioned above, had made contact with the arts organisation that they had worked with during their sentence. We have direct knowledge of at least three individuals who did this.

For all these reasons we do not think it useful to attempt to tabulate these data or, for the most part, to make any attempt to base empirical claims on them. There are a small number of points that we can make with reasonable confidence, as follows:

- The majority of those who took part in the *Inspiring Change* projects completed them. Given the importance attached in the wider literature on prison programming and rehabilitation to questions of programme integrity and completion this, though no evidence of rehabilitative impact in itself, is no small matter. It corroborates the view that the projects did succeed in engaging participants as well or better than other activities or experiences they might have been offered. We know of some twenty cases (out of nearly 240) in which people were reported as having withdrawn because the activity was 'not for him', or as 'not enjoying' the project, or where they withdrew themselves with no reason being given.
- In most cases requests for observers' ratings of prisoners' behaviour were either left blank or logged as 'no noticeable change'. Of those that were completed several made reference to prisoners as having enjoyed the project; some indicated that they saw the prisoner as having grown in confidence, awareness and/or self-esteem, or as being more helpful to others. In a few cases these were elaborated as having 'gained more insight' or 'developed good team spirit'.
- As regards discipline and conduct within the prison, the great majority of participants were reported as having between 0 and 3 misconduct reports in the three months before the programme began (with the clear majority having none). This remained the case in the three months afterwards. Moreover in most cases we have no further information on the nature of any reports. We felt bound to conclude that this information provides no basis for empirical generalization one way or the other. There are one or two striking outliers. One woman had no reports in the three months prior to the project but five in the three months following (although staff also reported that she had become more communicative).

Conversely one man had no fewer than twelve misconduct reports in the preceding three months (including one assault and three instances of issuing threats) but only one in the three months following the project. We cannot tell with any certainty whether any misconduct reports occurred during the project work itself – we have no grounds for thinking that behaviour was a major issue for any of the projects.

- Although we were only successful in speaking to a small minority of participants on the telephone, the calls were by no means entirely fruitless. Of the eight people to whom we spoke several were somewhat non-committal. They were ‘persevering’ or ‘just getting on’. A couple said that their project ‘was beneficial’ or ‘had been good’ without elaborating, or said that they had gained a bit of confidence. However three of the eight were in one way or another still involved in the arts. One was ‘still making music’ and had recorded some songs. One had enrolled on a sound production course at college. One had joined a local camera club. Additionally, three participants had made contact with the Citizens’ Theatre to find out about upcoming events and to participate in classes and productions.

Whilst these observations are inconclusive they are suggestive of a need for future research (not just research on the arts in prisons but more generally) to focus more rigorously and intensively on the post-prison transition, and to track the differing fortunes of people leaving prison much more carefully and sensitively than we have been able to do here, or than is generally attempted. They also point to the need for arts interventions to be followed up in resettlement processes and practices, so that the progress towards desistance that we referred to above is built upon and reinforced.

4. Evaluation Case Study. 'A Woman's Place': the Citizens Theatre production for Inspiring Change

HMP Greenock, 8 March–16 April 2010

*Sisters will definitely do it themselves. Go on lassies. Get in there.
(Project participant)*

4.1 Introduction

The case-study that follows is an in-depth report of a six-week participative theatre project carried out by the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow, in the context of the wider *Inspiring Change* project. It augments our systematic evaluative overview of the projects that comprised *Inspiring Change* with an in-depth analysis of one particular arts intervention with women prisoners in HMP Greenock.

The Citizens Theatre is based in the Gorbals area in Glasgow and has a strong community and learning focus. The Citizens contributed two projects to the *Inspiring Change* programme: 'A Woman's Place' at HMP Greenock (the subject of this in-depth evaluation) and 'Platform Two Ten' at HMP Barlinnie (dealt with in the wider evaluation). 'A Woman's Place' was designed specifically for women prisoners, and focused on women's role in society and the participants' self-understanding as women.

The rationale for using the Citizens project in Greenock as a case study is not its representativeness – all the other projects for *Inspiring Change* (except the National Galleries in Greenock) involved male prisoners, who constitute approximately 95% of the prison population in Scotland and across Europe. Rather this case study responds in the Scottish context to recent calls from the UK, Europe, and beyond for more attention to be

paid to the specific situation of women in prison, who 'continue to be marginalised in a criminal justice system designed by men for men' (Fawcett Society, 2009:7; compare Panayotopoulos, 2008; SCCJ, 2008; King's College London International Centre for Prison Studies, 2008; Fawcett Society, 2009; National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 2010). That makes it all the more important to ask, as we have asked throughout the *Inspiring Change* evaluation process, not 'what works?' but 'what works for whom in what circumstances?' (Tilley, 2000:4).

Summary of outcomes

What did surprise me was ... the dedication of the women to the project and how they pulled together as a team. (Learning Centre staff member, Greenock)

The women exceeded my expectations – we were very happy and satisfied with what the women achieved and feel a tremendous sense of pride (Citizens team member)

Sisters will definitely do it themselves. Go on lassies. Get in there. (Project participant)

Detailed conclusions and recommendations from the case study appear in the Conclusions and Recommendations section for the evaluation overall. In summary:

'A Woman's Place' offered women prisoners the **opportunity to reflect on themselves and their society in gender-specific terms, via a project designed specifically and explicitly for women in prison**; this is an important starting point for inspiring change in women held in 'a criminal justice system designed by men for men' (Fawcett Society 2009). The **benefits of both process and product** in arts interventions are highlighted in the wider evaluation of *Inspiring Change*, and the Greenock case study illustrates the importance of both the activity and its concrete end point, in this case the performances: enhanced confidence and self-esteem were achieved in the context of preparation for the show and rehearsals; but the performance, attended by families and friends, was also key. **NSMO outcomes that were strongly indicated** are outcomes 1 (enhanced wellbeing), and 6 (maintained or improved relations with families). Outcome 5 (employability prospects increased) is difficult to measure on the basis of the limited follow-up data that this project could achieve; but evidence that 'A Woman's Place' enhanced teamwork skills, self-confidence, and communicative skills augurs well for employability prospects relative to prospects prior to the intervention. NSMO outcome 9 (improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending and greater acceptance of responsibility in managing their own behaviour and

understanding of the impact of their offending on victims and on their own families) is supported by the empathy developed in the context of group work. **Effects beyond the duration of the intervention** are perennially difficult to measure, and a far longer-term data collection process than was possible in the context of *Inspiring Change* would be necessary to do so. **Enthusiastic uptake of education subsequent to the project was indicated for some participants, as well as hope for the future and a future motivation to achieve.**

Case study methodology

A key element in the design of the overall *Inspiring Change* programme was to use the evaluation process to encourage ownership of the project in participants, by asking them to reflect critically on the arts projects at the same time as participating in them. The arts projects and the evaluation become two parts of an organic whole (rather than the arts projects being the ‘thing itself’ and the evaluation an ‘add-on’ element). The overall methodology for the *Inspiring Change* evaluation therefore foregrounds self-evaluation by participants and the participants’ evaluation of what was offered them by the projects.

This case study uses quantitative and qualitative data. It shares the evidence base for the overall evaluation, generated from

- a) data provided by the Learning Centre regarding participants’ uptake of educational opportunities pre and post *Inspiring Change* (for reasons outlined below this is difficult to gather and the data is incomplete); and on numbers of misconduct reports issued pre and post *Inspiring Change* (again, for reasons outlined below, this data in its raw form is more misleading than useful)
- b) transcripts of interviews with Learning Centre staff and arts practitioners;
- c) self-reflective records designed by the evaluation team and completed after each session by the arts practitioners (‘activities sheets’);
- d) focus group work with participants during and soon after the intervention;
- e) follow-up interviews conducted three months after the intervention (whereby familiar problems arose in the availability of released participants for interview)

Additional methods specific to the case study were

- f) ‘embedded’ or participant observation (where the researcher was present as an active participant during the intervention);

- g) prisoner diaries, which have been shown to produce high-quality data in work with women prisoners (Miles and Clarke, 2006:7, 45)
- h) an 'open diary' in the form of a blank sheet for reflections by participants during the rehearsal period.

The case study also takes account of email correspondence copied to the research team for evaluation purposes by Motherwell College and Citizens Theatre staff.

Like the evaluation of the *Inspiring Change* project overall, this case study was prepared in the context of the **nine offender outcomes** identified in Scotland's National Strategy for the Management of Offenders (see 1.3(?) above). This case study therefore seeks in particular to observe and/or deduce from data the effects of the Citizens theatre project at Greenock on behaviours pertinent to those outcomes, where outcomes (1) sustained or improved physical or mental well-being, and (6) maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community must be seen as particularly relevant to the specific situation of women in prison (see 4.2. below).

The case study also offers an opportunity to seek to assess any effects specific to the nature of the arts intervention (the particular dynamic, if there is one, of a participative theatre project; see 2.3. below); and the effects of the intervention on the prison environment.

4.2 Background and context of the case study

The prison context

HMP Greenock serves courts in the West of Scotland. It holds around 200 male and around 50 female prisoners; Greenock has become an overflow facility for Scotland's only female prison, Cornton Vale. Women prisoners in Greenock are accommodated in Darroch Hall, which has 55 cells. Single occupancy is the norm, which was described by women participants in the theatre project as a mixed blessing, particularly during long lock-in periods over the weekends. Most female prisoners in Greenock are serving short sentences or the remainder of sentence following a move from Cornton Vale.

The original intention in the context of *Inspiring Change* was that the Citizens should deliver a theatre project in Cornton Vale. For practical reasons the project had to be moved to HMP

Greenock, a much smaller facility than Cornton Vale. During planning discussions it emerged that there were 33 women prisoners eligible for the project (based on the criterion that their sentence should extend to the project's end). 14 of those, however, were employed in the joiners and the laundry, and the prison was reluctant to permit them to leave their sheds. In the event, however, all the women who qualified were released part-time to join the project if they wished, and a group of sixteen began work with the Citizens' team. During the first three weeks of the project in particular (the preparation weeks; the final three weeks were designated rehearsal weeks), the constitution of the group shifted, and ten women completed, not all of whom had belonged to the initial grouping. Women who joined the project late did so largely because they had only just arrived in Greenock. The arts practitioners felt that the late arrivals 'rocked the dynamics a bit.' Women who left the project did so (a) very quickly after arrival because they felt it was 'not for them'; (b) for reasons that were variously attributed to negative dynamics in the hall or personal issues (in 2 cases); or (c) because they were released or tagged (in 2 cases).

Women and prison: marginalization, gender-specific stigma and self-harm

Across the UK and Europe the female prison population has risen sharply over the last ten to fifteen years, in line with significant increases around the world (Quaker Council 2007: 8; Medicott 2007: 245). Between 1997-8 and 2006-7, the number of women in Scottish prisons increased by 90%; over five times the growth experienced in the male prison population (SCCCJ 2008: 1). Nonetheless, women in Europe still constitute an average of only around 5% of the total prison population, and 'the organisation and structure of detention centres continue to satisfy mainly male prisoners' needs' (Panayotopoulos 2008; see also Dünkel, Kestermann, and Zolondek 2005). A European Commission-funded study at the University of Greifswald, Germany in 2005 noted that

women in European prisons experience specific problems and structural disadvantages. Prisons are geared towards male prisoners ..., women's educational and work opportunities are (even) more restricted [than men's], and the inmate structure reveals that female prisoners show a high incidence of substance abuse, and well as psychological and psychosomatic complaints. ... women in prisons are a minority whose special needs are given no or merely scant attention in most of the member countries. (Dünkel, Kestermann, and Zolondek, 2005: 3-12)

Women prisoners are perceived to be less aggressive than men, although given

high levels of self-harming (van Wormer 2010: 4) we should perhaps be asking questions about where aggression is being directed. Women commit around half of all self-harm incidents in prison even though they represent only 5% of the total prison population (Fawcett Society 2009: 8); overall, more than one-third (37%) of all female prisoners self-harmed in 2009, compared with 7% of all male prisoners (Ministry of Justice 2009: 56). There is a feasible connection between disproportionate levels of self-harm and anecdotal evidence suggesting women in prison experience feelings of shame and guilt disproportionate to those suffered by men. Gender-specific experience is an exacerbating factor, specifically (a) being subject to expectations of 'good' behaviour that produce a particular stigmatization of women prisoners (Dünkel, Kestermann, and Zolondek 2005: 11), (b) being exposed via the media and/or personal experience to an association of criminality in women with aberrant sexuality (Lloyd 1995; Jewkes 2004; Walklate 2004), (c) the sexual abuse that has been suffered by nearly half of all women prisoners (Dünkel, Kestermann, and Zolondek 2005: 11, 24; Panayotopoulos 2008: 4), and (d) being subject to the pressures produced by women's social role in reproductive work (motherhood). Currently more than one-half of women prisoners in the UK and in the wider European context are mothers, and one-third of those are lone parents (Fawcett Society 2009; Panayotopoulos 2008). Maintaining family contacts is key, and yet the small overall numbers of women prisoners means a scarcity of facilities, so that prisons are often too far away for families to visit regularly; costs of telephone calls are also higher (Fawcett Society 2009: 7). Concern about being or being perceived as a 'bad mother' is a recurring theme in women prisoners' testimony:

It's my children – they are my biggest concern because I've not spent a day away from them since they were born. I was still breast feeding my baby when I came in here. I think me being in prison has mentally affected my children. My son's school work has suffered. I didn't get the chance to explain to him that I was coming to prison. (Female offender, cited in Fawcett Society 2009: 9)

Research for the EU Directorate-General in 2005 observed an internationally consistent connection between motherhood and women's particular experience of prison:

Losses and ruptures due to separation from family members and especially children were very much emphasised by all country reports as a major source of pain in prison for the women ... The feeling of failure as a mother, and guilt feelings were especially strong, as evidenced by all national reports ... Fears that children would turn away from their criminal mother were also discussed ... imprisonment

causes serious ruptures in the life of women due to separation from their children, which becomes a key source of everyday stress, guilt feelings, worrying and experience of failure. (Cruells and Ingareda 2005: 40)

Similar concerns were in evidence among women prisoners in Greenock. One diary entry under the rubric *Things I'm proud of* gave the response: 'my son for being brave when I am in here,' and under *My ambitions*: 'to bring my son up the right way and to make sure his education goes as far as he want them to go.' Another listed under the heading *My fears*: 'Losing my kids. Not being able to support my kids,' and under *My hopes*: 'for my kids to make something of their lives and not be anything like me.'

In the terms of Scotland's nine offender outcomes, all this leaves women prisoners facing particular challenges with outcomes 1 and 6 (sustained or improved physical or mental well-being; maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community). It is therefore particularly important to address wellbeing, confidence, and self-esteem, and women participants' sense of hope for the future as a motivating factor for change even in the face of emotions such as guilt, stress, and worry.

Theatre in prison

A case study of this kind must take account not only of the specific situation of the prisoner participants but also the particular nature of the arts intervention: in this case participative theatre-making. One Learning Centre manager expressed the view that 'a science project, any group work where people are working together and having a lot of individual attention is good for them ... to quote Basil Fawlty, "it's bleeding obvious".' There is clearly truth in this, but *Inspiring Change* raises and seeks to address the question: what are the particular effects and potential of the arts in prisons? We need to address the question of the particular effects and potential of the art form in comparison with and contradistinction to other kinds of group work. Data from research and practice to date suggest that:

- like other group activities, arts-based or not, theatre work benefits the prison environment, counteracting the isolation and stress of institutional life (Baim, Brookes, and Mountford 2002: xii);

- theatre shares with some other arts (particularly music) the need for common endeavour or teamwork, developing interpersonal, organisational, and communicative skills, leadership and co-operation;
- the informal learning context provided by arts interventions in particular (including theatre) benefits those whose 'learner identities' incorporate 'hostility towards education, particularly mainstream or formally structured.' Arts activities have recognised and particular strengths here, and drama work may have specific benefits because it offers 'particular opportunities for promoting and exploring communication skills and self-expression' (James and McNeil 2006: 8);
- more than other art forms participative theatre engages and develops verbal and physical communicative faculties. Improved communication means improved socialisation, and 'analysis of the role of participatory theatre suggests a range of positive impacts on personal and social development, particularly in terms of social inclusion' (James and McNeil 2006: 11);
- theatre engages corporeal and emotional memory as well as intellectual memory, and thereby makes any lessons learned lasting: 'Drama-based methods harness the power of learning by doing ...The memory of a discussion can easily be lost. The experience of *doing* is harder to forget, especially if the *doing* is closely related to one's own life experience' (Baim, Brookes, and Mountford 2002: xii)
- devised drama provides an opportunity for participants to develop their sense of identity: 'to shape their identity and skills by reinventing or drawing upon existing personal identities and life experiences' (James and McNeil 2006: 3).

Arts projects' particular strength, then, is their accessibility as learning spaces for those who might resist more conventional learning. The more specific context of devised participative theatre, as provided by the Citizens for *Inspiring Change*, might particularly support communicative and social skills and a stronger sense of identity in participants.

4.3 *Evaluating 'A Woman's Place'*

Project description

The project designed by the Citizens Theatre was specifically aimed at women prisoners and offered a variety of ways for the participants to be involved: performing, singing, writing, and making fabric banners for the show. The focus was on what it means, in the broadest sense, to experience life as a woman. The participants were encouraged to create texts and songs, individually and in group work, that drew on their own narratives, autobiographical and fictitious. The Citizens team—Elly Goodman and Kate Black (directors), Rachel Mimiec (design), Lynda Radley (writing), Carol Laula (songwriting and music), Lynda Gray (costumes), plus technical support—shaped this into a performance and a stage set that included Tracy Emin-style embroidered wall tapestries depicting texts written by the women involved.

Representatives from The Citizens were in touch with the prison, largely via the Learning Centre, in the build-up to the project. Members of the team visited the prison in the week before the project start to meet with prisoners and engage the interest of potential participants. The theatre project ran for six weeks from 8 March 2010, twice weekly for the first three weeks (Mondays and Thursdays 10-12am and 2.15-4.15pm) and daily on weekdays for the final three weeks. In the two weeks before the performance the start time shifted by negotiation with the prison to 9am to allow more rehearsal time.

The first three weeks revolved around team-building and developing prisoner commitment to the project. Led by dramatist Lynda Radley, the participants wrote poems and self-reflective texts individually and as a group, some of which would later be part of the performance. In some of their writing they began developing characters and stories for the show, and simultaneously started the process of making wall hangings that would later form part of the stage decoration, bearing the text of a poem written collectively. As one means of embedding the evaluation in the project, Citizens designer Rachel Mimiec co-designed the prisoner diaries with researcher Sarah Colvin, and supported the prisoners in designing individual printed fabric covers for their own diaries. Making the diaries for the evaluation thereby became part of the project, encouraging self-expression as well as a sense of ownership. Alongside games and team games, participants did some preparatory drama work, experimenting with the physical expression of their own ideas, and with social preconceptions about 'a woman's place'. The second three weeks saw a clear move to

focused preparation, including songwriting for the show with Carol Laula, casting, choreography, costumes with Lynda Gray, and rehearsals.

The texts and some images from the project were subsequently published by the Citizens Theatre as a keepsake book for the women involved; they were also given a CD of their performance, with Carol Laula, of the songs created for the show. The Learning Centre manager enabled follow-through by putting those who were still pre-release after the show on an intermediate drama course, so that they could achieve an education certificate as an additional outcome.

4.4 Evaluating the prisoner experience

Intentions, expectations, and hopes

On the first day participants were asked to reflect in writing on their expectations and wishes for the project. The top theme in their responses was **interaction with other people**: ten of the original sixteen participants described better relations with others as a goal or motivation. This was closely followed by the theme of **confidence and self-esteem**, which plays a role in successful interaction and was named by eight respondents (50%) as a key potential outcome, whereby six of those eight expressly linked increased confidence with better interaction. Six out of sixteen hoped for **better verbal communication skills and better self-expression** (whereby five of those six again put this expressly in the context of interaction with other people). A number of the responses combined all three desiderata:

I would like to get out of this experience to be more confident and express my feelings a bit more in front of other people as I never used to like speaking out or anything in front of anyone.

I came to this drama to try and get some self esteem and to try and communicate with other people.

I would like to achieve very good confidence and be able to communicate well among other people and have a clear mind.

I would like you to help me be more confident as I feel when I am in front of people I shy away or just say I'm not doing it because it's a brass neck

Six named **experience and self-development** as a goal; and four anticipated **enjoyment**.

One week into the project, a focus group was conducted with ten participating women.

Confidence and self-esteem now moved into first place as a stated goal (eight out of ten or 80% named this as a primary purpose), followed by **experience and self-development**, whereby challenging yourself to do something new was described as important by three in the group:

If you only stick to what you know you're never going to achieve anything.

I want to see how far I can push my boundaries. See how far I can go.

For me it's about letting my barrier go and existing outside my comfort zone, which I haven't done for a long, long time. Do you know what I mean? ... Just to let go. I've been that tense and stressed out for years.

Interaction with other people was now in third place: only two participants mentioned getting to know other people in the prison context as a target. Conceivably this now appeared less pressing a goal because it was already happening. Two key categories in the original written responses, verbal communication skills and enjoyment, were not described as key by this focus group. Possibly the former goal loses relevance during a verbal feedback exercise (anyone who speaks is evidencing her verbal communication skills, and she therefore does not thematise them); and the latter (enjoyment) is considered either too trivial or insufficiently 'cool' to be mentioned in group feedback. Interaction with other people falls from first to third place; again, the group context might be relevant here, as it might be regarded as dropping one's barrier publicly to admit difficulties with interpersonal interaction.

Prisoner expectations for the project tallied quite closely with researcher assessments of the potential benefits of a theatre intervention detailed in 2.3 above (communicative and social skills, and a stronger sense of identity), particularly if we read confidence and self-esteem as

linked to a stronger sense of personal identity. This is true even for the expectations recorded before any contact was had between the prisoner participants and the research team. Prisoner desiderata for this project also tally with a number of NSMO offender outcomes; this is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 explains the research design for the observation by mapping the measures or research questions used for the observation of ‘A Woman’s Place’ on to the potential benefits of a participative arts project as indicated in the research to date (detailed in 2.3 above), on to certain NSMO desiderata, and on to the participants’ own hopes and expectations.

Table 4: Observation questions and their rationale

HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS DESCRIBED BY PARTICIPANTS	NSMO OUTCOME(S)	POTENTIAL BENEFITS INDICATED IN THE RESEARCH	OBSERVATION QUESTIONS
Better interaction with other people; enjoyment	Outcome (1): sustained or improved physical or mental well-being	The team-building mechanism triggered by drama work; the positive impact of arts projects on stress / anger levels ¹⁰	How do participants interact (signs e.g. of empathy, support, anger, stress, leadership and collaboration)?
Better verbal communication skills	Outcomes (4): improved literacy skills, and (5): employability prospects increased	The ‘offbeat learning’ mechanism that enables learning in those resistant to classroom methods	Does the work build focus? How is the engagement with creative thinking and writing exercises?
Better interaction with other people; experience and self-development	Outcome (5): employability prospects increased	The ‘learning by doing’ mechanism triggered by the physical, emotional, intellectual skills need to create theatre	Is concentration or distraction observable? Do participants join in fully? How committed are they to a group outcome?
Confidence and self-esteem; better interaction with other people; better verbal communication skills	Outcomes (1): sustained or improved physical or mental well-being, (5): employability prospects increased, and (6): maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and	The identity-building mechanism or enhanced self of self triggered by the demands of creative self-reflection and the performance aspect of theatre	Are participants confident enough in themselves to take risks? Are they relaxed in the group context? Can they respond critically to the process, to assume leadership and solve

¹⁰ Cheliotis, 2008.

	community		problems?
Better interaction with other people; better verbal communication skills	Outcomes (5): employability prospects increased, and (6): maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community	The communicative mechanism triggered by the demands of creating theatre	How are participants communicating with each other and with the arts team? Are they expressing critical engagement with the process?
			Are there unexpected outcomes?

Research design for the observation

The starting hypotheses for this evaluation, based on the arts- and theatre-specific benefits indicated in research to date (outlined in 2.3 and table 2 above) were (i) that the group work of drama might improve relationships, empathy and co-operation, building leadership skills, team skills, and wellbeing (where empathy is a key element in resocialisation; Hughes, 2005) (ii) that the communicative context of drama work might help overcome communicative barriers and build interpersonal skills, impacting on confidence and wellbeing and therefore positively impacting on the wider environment in the prison; (iii) that the informal learning context might enable learning outcomes for people resistant to formal learning situations, (iv) that the self-expression encouraged by participative devised theatre might help develop a confident sense of identity in participants, especially if they felt protected by a group/team context, and their ability to communicate that identity, and (v) that the physical and emotional requirements of participative theatre might enable an intense and/or lasting learning.

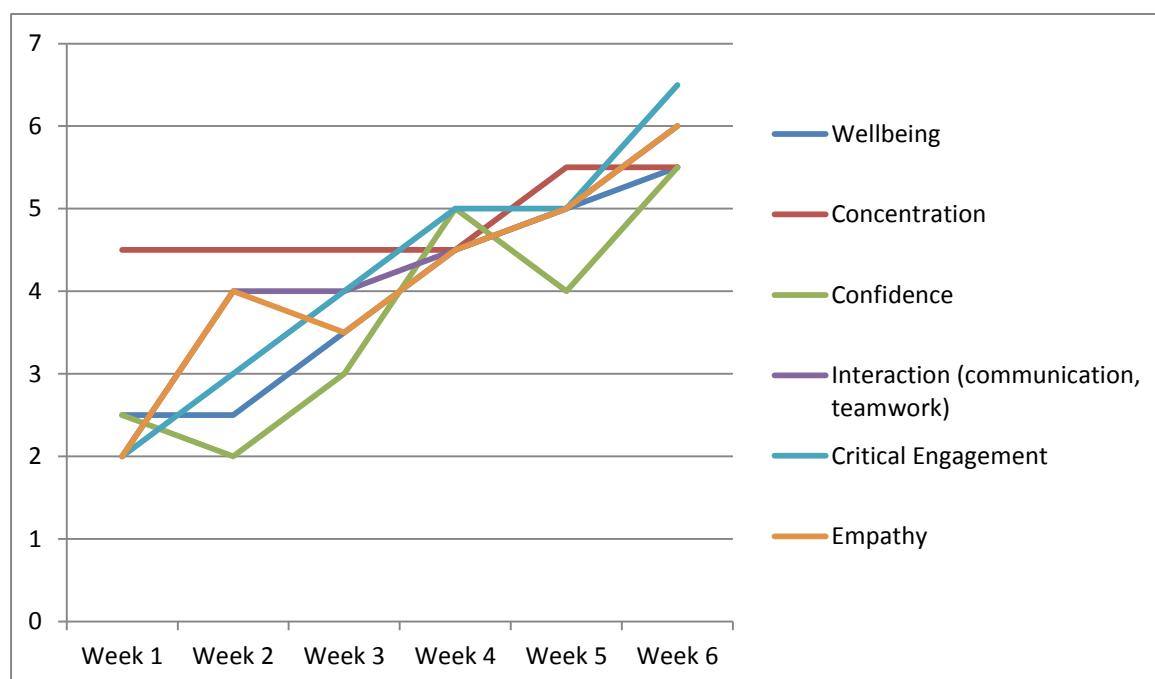
An open question in every evaluation must be what unintended and/or undesired outcomes might result from the specific activity (in this case, importing a women’s theatre project into a prison with a minority female population at rather short notice).

Observation process

Observation is a work-intensive and time-consuming mode of evaluation that is often avoided not least for cost reasons. It also produces a breadth and depth of data that cannot be achieved in any other way, and is increasingly becoming a recommended methodology in arts in prisons research (Miles 2008).

Participant observation was chosen for the case study because it is a mode of data-gathering that avoids exacerbating prisoners’ sense of being watched objects (a common experience in prison); this was important in the context of an overall evaluation process that sought to support the arts organisations in helping participants develop as self-reflective subjects, rather than experiencing themselves as objects in an observed experiment. An embedded researcher needs to be part of and accepted by the group, and must therefore be prepared to engage in all activities the group engages in. For this project it was of practical advantage that the researcher was female, and was therefore able (a) to engage in games, trust exercises, and other physical activities without serious anxiety about perceptions of misconduct, and (b) to participate in the gender-specific sharing of experience that was central to the project’s process and product. The observation log was both narrative (a record of researcher observations day-to-day) and tabular: for each morning and afternoon, the key observation questions could be addressed by marking boxes in an observation matrix. Figure 1 gives a week-by-week mapping of the observation matrix, where 0 is low (i.e. the measures listed are not observable or are observably counterindicated) and 7 is high (i.e. the measures are clearly observable).

Figure 1



Wellbeing in the closing stages of the project was high, but tempered by outbreaks of stress in the face of imminent public performances in front of prison staff, fellow prisoners, and

finally invited guests, including families. Overt signs of aggression or anger were extremely rare throughout (as one would anticipate in a group of women prisoners).¹¹ Concentration was good throughout: in general, the experience and high energy levels maintained by the Citizens team alongside a carefully planned mix of activities kept concentration levels high. Activities favoured by the group, and generally performed with particularly high concentration and low stress levels were mask-making (of Venetian-style masked ball masks), and singing the songs they had written to music composed for them by Carol Laula. Blips in concentration levels (when they were not caused by straightforward tiredness or medication issues) were observably confidence-related: participants appeared to become stressed, distracted, or withdrawn in situations where they felt exposed or unsafe (e.g. when activities such as games were perceived as detrimental to a tough image; in some cases when asked to perform, sing, or remember a choreographed routine). A striking shift in confidence levels was apparent in the fourth week of the project, when the women designed and performed choreographed mini-routines in groups with energy and self-confidence; this went hand-in-hand with significant improvements in communication and teamwork in the group, reflected in noticeably higher levels of mutual support and empathy. Confidence levels were good in the closing stages but affected by performance nerves—wellbeing, however, was maintained at this stage even when confidence dropped because in-group levels of support and empathy had become extremely high. Critical engagement with the project—active participation testifying to the prisoners’ sense of themselves as (confident, supported) agents—was highest shortly before the performance. A keen sense of investment in an ownership of the project emerged when participants offered suggestions for changes, made decisions about the show’s content, and engaged actively in the business of choosing costumes.

A key observation that was anticipated in the prisoners’ own expression of their hopes and expectations for the project, is that the evaluation criteria are not distinct categories, but interrelated. **Wellbeing enables concentration; wellbeing and concentration enable confidence; and confidence enables communication, critical engagement, and empathy with others.**

¹¹ The question arises whether it is less frustrating for women to adjust to the external constraints of prison because they are accustomed to being controlled and constrained in society outside.

The diaries

The observation process was augmented by an 'open diary': a blank sheet available for written comments during the rehearsal period. The open diary was used sparsely, and always to indicate feelings of wellbeing in the group. It functioned as affirmative communication within the group (e.g. 'I really like it it is my best thing to do in the jail I get to spend all my time way [with] my sister's ... I really love my sisters loads'), mixed sometimes with indicators of anxiety in the face of a challenge:

I like it and I'm thinking it would be really good, a bit worrying but that will pass, and I feel really good

I'm enjoying it but still worried about doing it in front of audience

I am a bit worried but looking forward to doing it.

The personal diaries were designed by the researcher in collaboration with the Citizens team. The Greenock participants designed the covers, which were then printed on to fabric and used to bind the diaries. Each page in the diaries (dated to reflect the dates of project sessions) asked participants to record

- a) their 'hope level' on that day (on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 was high)
- b) their feelings and what they thought was causing those feelings
- c) their response to the day's session and feelings about themselves in the context of the project session

Other, undated pages asked participants to reflect under headings such as *Things I'm proud of; My ambitions; My fears; My hopes; My favourite memories*; etc. Some participants who did not respond to the request to keep a daily record did self-reflect on those additional pages, very often referencing their children and families (see above). At the end of the project, participants loaned their diaries to the researcher on a voluntary basis, for photocopying and analysis. The diaries were returned as a keepsake.

The diaries were designed to give insight into phenomena that cannot be reliably observed from the outside, e.g. participants' hope for the future as a foundation point for self-development and motivation to learn (Cox and Gelsthorpe 2008; Cheliotis 2008). Working on the premise that if I reflect on my feelings I can more easily influence my response to them (my behaviours), the diaries were designed to encourage self-reflection. and in order to

facilitate self-reflection during the project, personal diaries were also custom-designed for the project participants. Miles and Clarke (2008) note that diaries produce a low response rate (only a small proportion of participants will tend to keep a diary consistently), but that the quality of the data yielded is very high. This was also true for the Greenock project. Three diaries were kept in enough detail to provide material for the evaluation. Only one participant recorded her hope levels regularly: the scores she recorded on the 1 to 10 scale were 5 – 4 – 3 – 6 – 8 – 8 – 7 – 7 – 8 – 8 – 8 – 8 – 8. A single example cannot be taken as evidence of a wider mechanism, but this individual case shows a clear elevation in the felt level of hope for the future over the course of the project. The diary narrative produced by the same participant indicates that this increase was triggered by her experience of the project, rather than by other factors; over the first two weeks we find:

Unsure! Still don't know how this will all turn out. [hope level: 5] ...
Fears of ridicule or just looking like an ass in general! [hope level: 4] ...
It's been so long since I let my guard down and just tried to enjoy myself I feel like I'm always on edge. [hope level: 3] ...
It was brilliant learning the routine for a woman's touch! We all just came together! [hope level: 6] ...
I have more faith in the project! It seems to all be coming together, it's amazing! I thought I did well! [hope level: 8]

Feelings of panic/nervousness as the final performance approaches do not impact negatively on recorded hope levels for this participant. In the last two weeks of the project we find:

I'm terrified but in a good way! I have lived with a barrier for years and for the first time I am trying to exist outside it! It's hard but I love a challenge, for me it's about overcoming mentality (my own) pushing boundaries and trying to get over myself! FUCKIN TERRIFIED BUT I like adrenaline! I felt like my personality just keeps coming out! [hope: 7] ...
Panicking! We need to learn more material and the show is next week! I feel like I am growing as a performer. I've definitely got something in me along those lines! Everyone is putting 100% effort in and doing well! [hope: 7] ...
Feeling a mix of emotions now. On the one hand I'm terrified but it's in a good way! I'm realising we can pull it off and I'm beginning to enjoy myself! [hope: 8] ... Tired (exhausted) scared excited. The performance approaches! [hope: 8]

These diary entries, while they cannot be taken as representative, tally with the observation measures, indicating a significantly raised level of confidence in the participant towards the end of the project that she could succeed in a challenging endeavour.

The other two diaries that provided material indicate wellbeing in the context of the project:

going to the drama really picks my spirits up! ... I feel great I always do after going to drama

I felt like I belonged at the group today ... it was great we were a group we all came together and worked as one. It was loads of fun.

In the latter case this was a progression from an early entry that suggested lack of confidence and lack of a sense of self: 'I felt like I wanted to join in with everyone ... I feel I have lost my personality'. The indication that confidence levels have improved is supported by an entry shortly before the final show that describes a level of wellbeing even in the face of a felt challenge: 'It was hard work. I am having fun but it is stressful'. Enhanced confidence in the group context appears to have had a positive effect on resilience for this participant.

Post-project feedback from participants: expectations and experience

The digital recording device failed during the post-project focus group at Greenock, so responses were available only in the form of a summary provided by the interviewing researcher. However, the Citizens team elicited further post-project feedback from participants and this too was made available for the evaluation.

The project itself was described by the five prisoners who participated in the post-project focus group as engaging because the creative and subjective nature of theatre-making was felt to rule out failure: 'It's about expressing your feelings ... Everybody can be good at it.' (The motivating nature of the project itself was testified to in the participation rate: the drop-out rate was extremely low and mostly due to planned or early release.)

All of the women in the post-project focus group said the project was better than they had expected. It was described as both more demanding and more rewarding than they had anticipated:

I thought I would just come and have a laugh

It was something to do, get you out of the hall

I thought we were doing a panto¹²

The women noted collectively that the project had demanded more energy than anticipated. However, they expressed satisfaction with the results of their hard work. They also expressed pleasure and pride in the professional look of the final performance: the design, music, film backdrop, and lights. Compared with regular educational opportunities in the prison, the project was described more 'fun' and more 'creative.' Three said it was totally different from anything they had done before; one described it as the best thing she had ever done.

One participant explained that she had had to hold back during the project, so as to better be able to work in a team; she described the experience of subsuming her own needs under those of the group as challenging, and the experience as difficult but informative in the sense that she had learned about herself (a member of the prison staff present noted aloud that this participant had not missed a single session). The same participant described feeling low after the final performances, even though she claimed to have enjoyed the experience of the project.

At the start of the intervention, **confidence and self-esteem** had been a priority category in prisoner hopes and expectations (see above). Of the five prisoner participants in the post-project focus group, three described having more confidence after the performance, and a fourth said that it 'brought her out of her shell.' Two participants described a sense of pride in themselves that mirrored pride in them expressed by family members present at the show (an indicator not only of self-esteem but of NSMO outcome (6): maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community). In the written reflections elicited by the Citizens team on the final day of the project, six of eight prisoners described enhanced confidence, e.g.

I have enjoyed this experience. It showed me I can achieve stuff.

I really loved today. I know I was nervous but I pulled it off on most of it today. I would just like to say that I have more confidence that I can go out in front of 100 people and do myself proud. I loved it most definitely.

¹² These and the following comments from the post-project focus group are not transcribed but cited as recorded by the interviewing researcher in her summary of the focus group feedback.

I now have more confidence and am more happier. I also made lots of friends. We also had a great team to work with and I love them all. I would like to thank everyone from the group. I would definitely do this again. I loved it.

I have learnt a thing I was never able to do. It opened doors for me. I hope I can keep this with me forever.

Sisters will definitely do it themselves. Go on lassies. Get in there.

Another priority category at the outset had been **interaction with other people**: all the women in the post-project focus group said they had enjoyed working as a group, and discussed how they went from being a group of strangers or set of cliques to an inclusive team: the women said they now greeted each other in the hall. Four out of five agreed that they now trusted each other enough to confide things they would not have said before, and still would not say to other women in the prison. Similarly, in the feedback to Citizens staff, six of eight respondents described improved interaction with others and the group experience as a particular pleasure and highlight, e.g.: 'I made lots of friends ... We had a great team to work with and I love them all'; 'I have really enjoyed ... getting to know the girls better'; 'the project has ... made all the girls appreciate each other a bit more.'

Experience and self-development, mentioned at the outset by many as a hope or expectation of the project, featured in the participant feedback at the project's end largely in the context of interpersonal relations, but also in the context of skills development: 'I have learnt a thing I was never able to do. It opened doors for me'. Three specifically saw this in the context of plans or hopes for the future:

I hope I can keep this with me forever

it's encouraged me into wanting to continue and I will 110%

I would like to bring my 25 year old daughter to try some more drama when I get out this jail.

Subsequent uptake of learning and longer-term effects

In the post-project focus group, in response to the interviewer question whether they would continue to take part in education even though the project was over, all the women said yes. Subsequent uptake of learning opportunities is difficult to measure in a meaningful way. It was particularly hard in the Greenock case because the women prisoners involved were on short sentences: some arrived in the prison during the project, and most were released soon

after the project's completion. Data from the Learning Centre indicated that all but one of those who completed had previously engaged with learning opportunities in the prison. However, the one who had not engaged previously arrived in the prison during the project and joined late, so could hardly have been involved with the LSE Centre beforehand. The same data indicates that five of the ten completers engaged subsequently with learning opportunities in prison; but again, the data is complicated by the fact that four of the five who did not engage subsequently could not have done because they were released, or in one case drafted. We cannot, in any case, assume that subsequent uptake of learning opportunities occurred *because* of the Citizens' intervention. Using only the hard data, all that can confidently be said is that the project did not negatively impact on the will of participants to make use of educational opportunities for while in prison. 'Soft' data gives a more precise picture, however. Reports from learning centre staff indicate that three participants in particular engaged in post-project learning associated with a gain in confidence and self-esteem acquired in the course of the Citizens' intervention. Of one it was reported that she 'grew in confidence', appearing 'more confident' with 'improved self esteem'. Since the project, it was reported,

X has been a fantastic student and has made excellent progress. She has almost come off her methadone (down to 4mls), she is a Listener in the hall, she is the prisoner rep on the Prison Health Committee, she entered the prison fun run and won! She raised £55 in sponsor money for the Ardgowan hospice. She has applied to Motherwell College for a Sports course.

Another showed a 'definite improvement in confidence throughout her sentence but the project gave her a significant self-esteem boost'. This participant was described as 'probably the most to benefit from the experience,' and as 'an enthusiastic student who has had a full engagement with the LSE Centre.' The third in this group again seems to have used her prison term and a gain in confidence to impact positively on her drug use as well as to continue her engagement with learning: she

found it difficult to start with but seemed to enjoy the experience ... [is now] more confident and shows improved self esteem. [She] self-reduced to nil methadone in custody and was well supported by Addictions Services. [She shows a] full engagement with the LSE Centre.

Effects on the wider prison environment

Measures for the effects of the Citizens theatre project on the wider prison environment included feedback from SPS and LSE staff (dealt with in detail below), and data from provided by the prison Learning Centre on prisoner attitudes and behaviour reports.

Of the ten women who completed the project, none had behaviour reports before the project began; four participants incurred between one and five reports in the three months subsequent to the project. A primitive assumption based on this data would be that the project negatively impacted prisoner attitudes, but the data is too crude to give an accurate picture. Because the Greenock project required participants who would be there for its duration, many of the prisoners had not been in Greenock long before the project start – their scope for incurring previous reports was therefore limited. And the ‘soft’ data provided by the LSE Centre on these four prisoners here provides an interesting contrast to the raw figures. In three cases, the narrative information received from the Learning Centre paints a quite different picture: the participant with one subsequent behaviour report is the same participant described as ‘probably the most to benefit from the experience ... an enthusiastic student who has had a full engagement with the LSE Centre’ (see above); the prisoner with two behaviour reports is noted to be ‘more confident and improved self esteem. Granted HDC ... accepted support of Circle prior to HDC’; and the participant with four reports is the same participant characterized above as ‘a fantastic student’ who reduced her methadone intake, engaged actively in prison citizenship, and ran for charity. Informal feedback to the embedded researcher during the project clearly suggested that the fourth case, who incurred five subsequent reports, was well known to staff for her behavioural issues, particularly for an aggression problem. Data provided for the evaluation by the LSE Centre noted that this prisoner ‘seemed less aggressive or stressed during sessions,’ though her behaviour was ‘still questionable at times in the hall environment.’ After the project she was ‘more communicative with some staff; still had behavioural issues.’ This tallied with informal feedback from SPS staff that this participant was much improved in her behaviour for the duration of the project, but reverted to her more familiar aggressive mode after its completion.

From the prisoner perspective, a beneficial effect on the wider prison environment was indicated by positive coverage of the show on the prison radio, an extremely positive response (a standing ovation from the prisoner audience) to the show, and by a card made

by other prisoners in the women's hall to congratulate the performers on the show; pride in and admiration for the performers were expressed.

In summary, the effects for the prisoners for whom data was received were positive during the intervention in all cases, and in some cases further positive activity was noted after the project's end. On a methodological note, behaviour reports do not in themselves appear to provide a useful measure.

4.5 Evaluating the experience of the arts practitioners (Citizens Theatre), SPS, and LSE Centre staff

We have touched above on unplanned mechanisms: the accidental, unexpected, or undesired effects of taking an arts project into a prison environment. In the case of the Citizens intervention in Greenock the unexpected and undesired effect was a breakdown in relations between the arts practitioners and Learning, Skills, and Employability (LSE) Centre staff, which started about ten days in to the project and lasted until the finish. The problem was addressed and resolved in subsequent meetings, and lessons learned from Greenock were the basis for much more successful relations in HMP Barlinnie during the Citizens' second theatre project for *Inspiring Change*.

That this intervention was not originally planned for the prison it was delivered in made it untypical of *Inspiring Change*, and there was a sense (expressed by a member of LSE staff) that it 'was imposed upon us. You know, we didn't seek it out.' Interpersonal challenges particularly for LSE staff and arts practitioners subsequently arose that were equally untypical of *Inspiring Change* as a whole. They do, however, provide some valuable lessons for future project planning, and highlight the importance of considering (as our evaluation overall was designed to do) not only the impact of such projects for the prisoner participants but their impact on the prison environment.

Intention, expectation, and outcomes

In post-project interviews, the LSE Centre manager at Greenock described her initial intention to create a partnership with the Citizens Theatre that might help solve the problem

of prisoners having no follow-on after release for education work done in prison. Because the Citizens runs a community theatre project in Glasgow, there is scope for prisoners who have worked with its theatre practitioners while in prison to follow up and develop that activity. She also described a wish to help motivate prisoners to have a more active engagement with learning, given that arts projects are a 'good hook' for prisoners who have 'been disenfranchised from education'. The Citizens team described an intention and wish to 'empower' the women prisoners they would be working with by increasing their confidence, self-esteem, and well-being, and harnessing their creative skills. They hoped to build a 'lasting legacy' with the prison establishment and with the prisoner participants. At the point of the post-project interviews, however, one of the Citizens team expressed doubts that their goal of building a lasting legacy with prison establishment had been achieved.

There was unanimous agreement among representatives of Motherwell College in the LSE Centre at Greenock, and among prison staff from SPS, that the theatre project delivered by the Citizens team was of significant value to the women who participated.

There was disagreement, however, regarding the impact of the project on the prison environment. SPS staff who provided feedback generally felt that the project had a positive effect on the wider environment, even though it was acknowledged that the disruption to a prison's routine caused by projects from outside was a real challenge. The positives cited included an improved atmosphere in the women's hall; the integration of some women who had previously seemed isolated or outsiders; a temporary calming effect on one particularly energetic character who otherwise tended to aggression; and positive coverage of the project on the prison radio station. Two SPS officers who had initially seemed sceptical took on enthusiastic ownership of the project and gave it their active and engaged support; one in particular was described good-humouredly by colleagues as 'transformed' by the experience.

By contrast, LSE Centre staff who provided feedback felt that the project had a positive effect for the women involved but a negative effect on the wider environment. The negatives cited included a lack of discipline during the early group sessions (participants smoking in the toilets), and increased levels of stress for Learning Centre staff. Causes for stress included miscommunication over invitations to the public performance that led to more guests being invited than there were spaces for; safety and security issues (e.g.

handling of the sewing needles and scissors needed for the project, and filming of participants); and by an exacerbated sense of division between LSE staff and their SPS colleagues, whom the arts practitioners were felt to have 'got in with' or co-opted in their own cause. The embedded researcher in the theatre group was also felt to have been co-opted by the Citizens team, and there were concerns that she was therefore no longer 'unbiased' in her approach: 'because Sarah came in with the Citizens and travelled with them and everything I don't feel she was, I don't think she's been unbiased in her research' (LSE staff member). A situation was felt to have been created that excluded LSE staff, and a sense of disenfranchisement was in evidence, supported by a perception that the 'strong personalities' and strong group cohesion of the theatre team made it 'difficult to intervene' in their activities. This led to one staff member from the LSE Centre feeling disempowered or publicly humiliated in front of the women prisoners she worked with.

Communication and perception issues

The project leaders were felt by LSE staff to have too little regard for security, where the rigorous security insisted on by the Learning Centre was there to safeguard the project as a valuable opportunity for the prisoners. Here and elsewhere a sense was implicit in feedback from LSE staff that they were left to play the role of bad cop; one staff member described her perception that they were cast as 'control freaks,' and 'mean minded.' The practitioners on the other hand reported feedback that they were seen as 'arrogant and bullying'. On both sides there appears to have been a perception that their being or personality was under attack, rather than specific behaviours.

Differing perceptions of the participation and absence of LSE staff were in evidence on the two sides. Where Learning Centre staff described feeling excluded, Citizens practitioners registered surprise and disappointment at a perceived lack of interest and support. All the arts practitioners involved in *Inspiring Change* were asked to complete an 'activities sheet' at the end of every working day with the prisoners, as a means reflecting on the day's activities and to provide detailed notes for the evaluation. A number of the Citizens practitioners in Greenock noted disappointment at an apparent lack of interest in their work from the start, from SPS and LSE staff. While the situation with SPS staff shifted to a point where officers were later described as 'fantastically supportive', relations with the LSE

Centre continued to be difficult, and all practitioners involved noted feeling that their presence was seen as a burden rather than a blessing:

I feel we are an annoyance and a hindrance.

We don't feel supported and are made to feel unwelcome ... Very much feel we are in the way.

the programme has been an unwelcome burden to the learning centre

One notes that LSE staff appeared 'distressed and harassed by our project'.

The disappointment felt by Citizens staff was mirrored in the Learning Centre: 'Okay, I was disappointed ... I was really disappointed', one staff member reported, and confirmed the practitioners' perception that there was stress or even distress on the LSE side: 'It was a living nightmare for us'. The 'nightmare' was the responsibility for maintaining security during the project felt by the LSE Centre. That responsibility was clearly felt to be more burdensome by LSE staff than by SPS officers, a situation that might be clarified for future interventions as recommended below.

Perceptions not only of the process but of the product—the final show—were different: where a member of the Citizens team described it as 'a fantastic celebration of womanhood', a member of the LSE staff found it 'close to the bone' on gender issues and took the view that the women involved 'didn't get the irony'. With regard to the process, however, what is striking in the data is that the perceptions of Citizens and LSE staff mirror each other. Both groups note an emerging division between SPS and LSE staff in the course of the project, although they disagree on the causes. Both note a lack of participation by the Learning Centre in the theatre project, whereby there is disagreement whether this is due to exclusion from the project or lack of interest in/support for it. Both groups describe a sense of injustice and of being misunderstood by the other (of being seen as bad people, where intentions on both sides were felt to have been good), and both feel personally and professionally unappreciated and refer explicitly to a lack of recognition and thanks from the other side: 'they never even said thank you' (LSE staff member); 'we ... were not thanked' (Citizens team member). A communication gap that left both sides feeling puzzled and helpless can be illustrated by a key situation in which a member of the Learning Centre who had initially enjoyed and been active in the theatre project later withdrew her active support (in the perception of the practitioners), or was excluded (in the perception of the staff

member). Both the practitioner team and the LSE staff responded to this situation in feedback with mystification:

*something shifted and we don't know what ... I honestly, we honestly ... don't know
(Citizens team member)*

I don't know what I did (LSE staff member).

Lessons from the staff experience

The differing views that developed in the course of the Greenock intervention do not appear to have impacted negatively on the experience of the prisoner participants in the project. Nonetheless an understanding of how the situation arose and what might be done in the future to avoid or ameliorate similar situations is necessary.

The effects of bringing an externally funded project by a professional arts organisation into the LSE prison environment should not be underestimated. LSE staff noted that their own drama projects were far less well funded ('we haven't had all the flash stuff') but were nonetheless successful; the well funded, temporary presence of the *Inspiring Change* project and its practitioners seemed to render invisible the ongoing and long-term efforts of the Learning Centre: 'We work with the prisoners day in and out. What do you think we're doing if we're not trying to rehabilitate them ...?' (LSE staff member)

At no point was the beneficial nature of the project for the prisoners called into question. However, all parties saw 'better communication' between themselves as important for future projects. One practitioner recommended more hands-on Learning Centre involvement as a possible solution: 'For this project to work more positively in the future it is important that the member of staff from the learning centre present in the room participates in the project and is allowed to perform with the girls ... This person must be allowed to fully take part'. A further wish was that SPS staff had been in the cast and involved hands-on. Both of these desiderata were subsequently realised in the second Citizens project for *Inspiring Change*, in HMP Barlinnie.

5. *Conclusions and recommendations*

5.1 *Observations on good practice*

Quality

Inspiring Change has been a considerable achievement. Its successful implementation lends great credit to the skills, enthusiasm and collaborative spirit of all the organizations concerned. The high quality of the artistic engagement and the positive ways in which arts practitioners have worked with the prisoners have been absolutely key to the other outcomes.

We **recommend** that future arts interventions in prisons place a similar emphasis on:

- *the high level, professional nature of this work*
- *the unique value of contributions by external arts organizations*
- *the intense benefits of a final artistic product or performance which can be shared with family, friends and guests;*
- *the importance of the positive and creative nature of the process, including self-expression, real skill-acquisition and positive social interactions*
- *the crucial importance of budgeted communication and planning sessions between organizations;*
- *the need to schedule the 'final performance/exhibition/event' several weeks before the end of the project.*

None of these recommendations imply a preference for 'high-art', nor do they suggest that only high-profile projects by national arts organizations are of value. Arts interventions in future may come in a variety of forms and nothing reported here should be taken to suggest that there is only one appropriate path. Commitment, sensitivity to the practical difficulties and professional skills of those working in the prison, the sharing of experience between arts practitioners and the development of networks and resources to inform people undertaking such work are all key.

The prison environment

There is considerable value in reputable professional arts-practitioners offering their time, attention and skills to develop arts interventions in prisons. This was integral to the enthusiasm generated in many of the projects and the artistic and personal progress made by many of the participants.

Prison managers spoke eloquently to us in interviews about their support for these projects and the enhancement they offer to the prison regime and experience. Amongst prison officers, we found examples of staff who were initially sceptical who were later described as

‘fantastically supportive’ and of several who made pivotal contributions to the success of activities in their prison. The centrality of the skills and enthusiasm of LSE centre managers and staff demands special mention. To this extent there is evidence of support for arts interventions and a developing understanding of their value on all sides.

Nevertheless inter-professional working is widely understood to present challenges in many sectors and many forms of partnership. It is absolutely vital to avoid marginalizing or de-skilling prison officers and Learning Centre staff, both of whom have major contributions to make. It is on one level blindingly obvious that all projects have the best chance of success when the various professional groups concerned work effectively together. Yet cooperation is all-too easily dissipated if relevant people are not adequately consulted, or left feeling, however inadvertently, that their role and skills have been slighted. When such misunderstanding occur they can be corrode trust, cause distress and create real risks for the successful realization of projects. Examples of the latter were the exception rather than the rule during *Inspiring Change*.

- *Careful planning and excellent communication processes to enable profound mutual understanding are necessary to bridge the gap between working practices in the arts and the working life of a prison.*
- *Three-way planning meetings between Learning Centres, SPS, and arts organisations or practitioners are advisable, whereby each party should provide clarity about their needs and expectations of the other parties.*
- *A formal memorandum of understanding clarifying the rights and duties of all parties might be recommended.*
- *Rather than simply receiving standard training from SPS staff, arts practitioners might join LSE Centre staff for experience-sharing workshops prior to the intervention, where professional experience in arts practice and professional experience in prisoner education come together.*
- *Additional attention might be given to the role of prison officers in supporting, and being supported by, external organizations.*

5.2 Participant responses to the programme

Inspiring Change involved more than 230 prisoners in a wide range of activities. These were experienced as overwhelmingly positive and affirmative by prisoners, prison staff and arts practitioners. Prisoners experienced their sessions with the arts practitioners as follows:

- Sessions were conducted with a high level of professionalism. Participants felt they were treated like artists (not prisoners)
- Participants felt they were able to influence the content of the art, music and plays
- There was a focus on group work (not always found in prison classrooms) and on working towards a final goal - a product or performance
- Organizations embraced participants talents and encouraged new ones
- Sessions were positive, reflective, active and meaningful to participants.

We have no evidence to suggest that arts interventions can only ‘work’ with one prisoner group rather than another or in one kind of prison. In the past some of these activities have been largely confined to long-term prisoners, which by extension tends to mean overwhelmingly to adult men. Careful consideration should continue to be given to the relevance, appropriateness and accessibility of the activity in question to the participants for whom it is intended. But there is no need to think that any group should be excluded.

Gender and prison

Reports from around the world indicate that women in prison are very often ‘invisible’ - held in prison systems designed by men, for men - and that their particular needs are still far from being adequately recognised and met.

Inspiring Change offered women prisoners a project designed specifically and explicitly for women in prison. Given that worry about their children, a sense of guilt towards their children and families, and a disproportionate tendency to self-harm characterize women’s experience of prison, it is significant that the evidence collected during the Greenock intervention indicates that ‘A Woman’s Place’ supported enhanced wellbeing in participants and maintained or improved relationships with their families.

- *Further arts projects designed specifically for women prisoners might be delivered in Scottish prisons, and consistent and systematic attention given to the specific situation of women in prison in Scotland.*

Performances and exhibitions

Performing or exhibiting one’s work to audiences offered endorsement, satisfaction in completing a complex task, and a sense of celebration. It seems significant that these audiences comprised both professional and authority figures, and family members and friends – both the public and the private ‘audience’ of the prisoner’s performance. Performances brought expressions of pleasure and pride from the prisoners’ families.

- *The key role of designing projects that built towards performances and exhibitions deserves special emphasis.*

5.3 Outcomes and opportunities

Inspiring Change and NSMO outcomes.

There are clear relationships between the *Inspiring Change* projects and the following NSMO offender outcomes:

- (1) **sustained or improved physical or mental well-being.** There is clear evidence that the *process* of the arts projects addressed this outcome.
- (4) **improved literacy skills.** Participating in the *Inspiring Change* projects built an active learning culture, motivated prisoners to improve their skills and learn in ways that suited them and encouraged them to achieve their goals.

- **(6) maintained or improved relationships with family, peers, and community.** Benefits were most evident for those whose families attended the performances and shows. We also found numerous instances of enhanced peer relationships.
- **(9) improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending and greater acceptance of responsibility in managing their own behaviour and understanding of the impact of their offending on victims and on their own families.** Many participants insisted that participating in the projects encouraged them to re-evaluate aspects of their previous behaviour.
- **(5) employability prospects increased.** This has a more tentative relationship with the project. This outcome is difficult to measure in a climate of economic crisis and rising unemployment and given the limited follow-up data available. There is, however, good evidence for enhanced teamwork skills, an enhanced sense of self and self-confidence, and enhanced communicative skills, all of which augur well for employability prospects relative to the participants' prospects prior to the intervention, as does anecdotal evidence of some participants' subsequent engagement with the LSE Centre.

Literacy and engagement

At a minimum, for the duration of the projects, participating in *Inspiring Change* built confidence and self-esteem through prisoners' growing sense of their potential and ability to achieve. Working in teams and in intense projects that had a performance element was particularly effective. Growing confidence led to an increase in other skills and a willingness to be open to other possibilities.

- *For reluctant learners and those with negative experiences of formal education arts interventions can build a bridge towards the acquisition of new skills and a positive engagement with learning.*

Desistance

Effects beyond the duration of the project are inherently difficult to measure, and a longer-term project than was possible in the context of *Inspiring Change* would be necessary to do so. Enthusiastic uptake of education subsequent to the project is indicated for some participants; hope for the future and a future motivation to achieve were indicated in participant feedback at the end of the interventions.

There is thus ample evidence of 'secondary desistance' - evidence of developing positive identities consistent with starting to move away from crime - from the analysis of the data from prisoners. Moreover, some of the concluding interviews with staff and with the arts practitioners, as well as confirming in broad terms the findings from the participants themselves, provided indications of changes enduring beyond the lives of the projects themselves. However, we cannot confidently claim impacts on subsequent behaviour or offending history (effects known in the literature as 'primary desistance').

- *It is clear that arts interventions can play a valuable role in encouraging reflectiveness, cooperativeness and a hopeful orientation towards future challenges. But maximising this positive impact depends on following up, in*

sentence planning and resettlement processes, on the progress towards desistance that arts interventions can stimulate.

Long-term outcomes

The scope of this evaluation did not involve a long-term follow up beyond the lifetime of the projects themselves, and short-term follow-up data has proven difficult to obtain on a systematic basis. Even so, the limited data that we do have on this is encouraging and leads us to conclude that further work in this direction would be warranted. We discuss below a number of more immediate outcomes of the *Inspiring Change* programme, several of which are promising and have implications for practice.

- *Future research on interventions of comparable kind or scope should be designed and resourced to facilitate longer-term follow-up.*

5.4 Questions of Sustainability and Value

Longer-term programming

There was a recognition on the part of prison managers and LSE Centre staff that *Inspiring Change* had brought in new resources and that this would eventually end. Sustaining arts activities after the programme ended would on the face of it have to come from existing prison resources, unless the success of *Inspiring Change* can be used to generate new investment.

Prison managers were well aware that this programme created expectations that may not be sustainable in the future, but a number of them equally felt that failing to build upon its achievements would be a missed opportunity.

Participant feedback suggested that longer projects were desirable. Practitioner feedback included concerns that the sudden disappearance of the projects would feed negative self-stories in the prisoners ('another disappointment because my life is full of disappointments and let downs') and that the practitioners for *Inspiring Change* were 'parachuting in and out'. A wish was expressed for year round programming for arts projects in Scottish prisons.

A number of arts practitioners have told us that participating in *Inspiring Change* has made a difference to them and to the priorities of their organization. We are also aware of discussions that have begun between some organizations and particular prisons about the possibility of longer-term collaboration. Nor should we forget that even in the absence of systematic follow-up we know of several individual participants who had made contact with arts organizations on their own initiative after release.

- *There is a growing body of experience as a result of Inspiring Change, and there is evidence of willingness to sustain continuing involvement on the part of relevant organizations. Means should be sought of making this possible.*

Cost-effectiveness

A formal measure of the cost-effectiveness of these interventions lies beyond the scope of this evaluation. It would form part of the wider and deeper agenda for future research that we note above. Neither can we quantify the ancillary costs in terms of prison staff time and related in-kind contributions, though these have been significant. However the overall budget of *Inspiring Change* was around £417,000 (of which the funding from Creative Scotland, including the evaluation element, was some £300,000). Since this equates to the annual cost of about ten prison places but delivered interventions to nearly 240 prisoners the case for further exploration of the cost-effectiveness of arts interventions is a strong one. On a *per capita* basis this appears comparable to the costs of other constructive prison-based activities¹³. To reiterate, we can say with reasonable certainty that:

- there is evidence of progress in respect of a number of NSMO outcomes;
- that changes in attitude and outlook reported by numerous participants were ones favourable to progress towards desistance;
- that most participants viewed their involvement in *Inspiring Change* as an enhancement of the prison experience; and that
- whilst our follow-up was very limited and the numbers involved small a significant minority of our contacts had pursued further engagement in arts activities post-release, some of them in a committed fashion (and we were unable to reach a number of others because they were in employment and at work on the occasions we tried to contact them).

The evidence base for beneficial potentials from arts interventions in prisons is currently building internationally¹⁴. On a broad, but not unrealistic, view of the benefits that accrue from these projects the case for saying that they represent good value for money is credible. If cost-benefit is interpreted to mean re-offending alone, on the other hand, then further, longer, intensive and methodologically demanding work will be necessary.

Sustaining the work.

There is a strong case for urgent attention to the task of sustaining constructive interventions of the kind pioneered by *Inspiring Change* across the Scottish prison estate for the longer term. Scotland has achieved an internationally leading contribution.

- *There is a pressing need to identify the resources that would enable this work to continue.*

¹³ Few such activities – including accredited offending behaviour programmes – have really been subjected to rigorous cost-benefit analysis, and agreed costs (let alone benefits) are strikingly difficult to discover (see National Audit Office, 2002; Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2007; House of Commons Justice Committee, 2009). Arts interventions are in no sense alone in this respect. Our understanding is that programmes such as Enhanced Thinking Skills cost a minimum of £2000 per person (or £50 per hour for a 40 hour course) and more intensive programmes, especially in high security environments cost considerably more. The simple *per capita* cost of *Inspiring Change* (£417000/240) is a bit lower than this minimum at about £1750.

¹⁴ This is discussed in the literature review of our Final Report.

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