

Arts Alliance calls for government and commissioners to recognise the value of arts projects in the rehabilitation of prisoners

*“Taking part in music workshops in prison was life changing, it was the first time that I started to make positive choices for myself, it began to change the way I think, in a very deep way”
(music workshop participant)*

The Arts Alliance is calling on the government and commissioners not to ignore the value of arts-based interventions when it comes to the rehabilitation of offenders. A new report *Re-imagining Futures*, commissioned by the Arts Alliance highlights the positive impact of creative opportunities for individuals in the Criminal Justice System. The Arts Alliance warns that cuts to arts budgets and a drive towards payments-by-results contracts could put some organisations at risk.

Re-imagining Futures: Exploring arts interventions and the process of desistance - examines how music, visual arts and creative writing interventions can play an important part in an offender’s journey to a crime free life. The research was carried out by Charlotte Bilby and Louise Ridley from Northumbria University, Newcastle and Laura Caulfield from the Bath Spa University.

As the criminal justice landscape changes dramatically with the ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ agenda, Tim Robertson, Chair of the Arts Alliance says it’s vital that the impact of arts based projects are recognised:

“With average current reoffending rates just over 25% and proven re-offending rate for juvenile offenders released from custody as high as 70% innovative projects that can engage offenders need to be protected. By using both qualitative as well as quantitative data, we get a fuller and more informed picture of a person’s journey away from crime. Arts Alliance members work with over 40,000 offenders a year in the community and in prisons and their work often goes unrecognised.”

Nick Hardwick, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons, adds:

“We all know from our personal experience how participating in or creating art has the possibility to change how we see the world and our place in it. This is true for prisoners too - and I have seen how great arts projects in prisons can play a crucial role in helping prisoners see a new crime-free future for themselves. I hope this report will be of value to all those concerned with the prison system making the best use possible of the opportunities created by the link between the arts and rehabilitation.”

In the report *Re-imagining Futures* visual arts are shown to enable individuals on long term sentences to develop empathy as well as co-operate more effectively with one another and staff. Creative writing and craft supports women offenders to reach out to their families, whilst music making is shown to enable individuals to engage with education and learning opportunities. One project in Birmingham run by the local Youth Offending Team (YOT) uses music and deejaying to engage young offenders. Ian Clarke who runs the project says:

“Young people taking part in arts projects gain a wealth of personal and social development, it provides a huge boost to their self-efficacy whilst learning many new transferable skills.

Young people can often become inspired and find new pathways open to them which they never knew existed”

The Arts Alliance is now looking to commission the biggest ever study of arts with offenders, across different criminal justice settings. This project will showcase the resulting creative outcomes such as exhibitions, films, theatre and music performances to the public, whilst simultaneously collecting qualitative and quantitative data about its impact on offenders.

The report is officially launched today at Southbank Centre, London. The event will include a range of speakers including Kim Evans, Gerard Lemos and crime writer Caspar Walsh. More details of the event are below.

ENDS

For further information or interviews with key spokespeople, please contact Jessica Plant (Arts Alliance Manager) at:

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Notes to editor:

Details of the event

ARTS ALLIANCE RESEARCH LAUNCH - Thursday, November 7, 2013 - 18:00 to 20:30
Exploring arts interventions and the process of desistance and the annual Anne Peaker debate, followed by a drinks reception

***Please note this event is FULLY BOOKED. However we can provide press passes and exclusive interviews with Tim Robertson (Chair of the Arts Alliance| CEO the Koestler Trust), the guest speakers and the researchers for journalists.**

Where: Level 5 Function Room, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London. SE1 8XX

Speakers include; Kim Evans OBE (Clean Break). Professor Rodney Morgan (Emeritus Professor of Criminal Justice, University of Bristol), Gerard Lemos (Lemos & Crane), Caspar Walsh (crime writer). The event will also feature a performance from Femi Martin.

For more details: <http://www.artsalliance.org.uk/arts-alliance-research-launch>

Notes to editors

1. *High resolution photographs and quotes from participant's available if required

2. About the Arts Alliance

The Arts Alliance is the national body for the promotion of arts in Criminal Justice. It represents a growing network of over 470 arts practitioners and organisations working in prisons and the community to support people to lead crime free lives. The Arts Alliance is managed by Clinks

3. About the researchers

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- Professor Sarah Colvin - Research advisor for the project at the University of Warwick

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4. Potential case study – Birmingham Youth offending team

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More information

Information on reoffending rates can be found on the Ministry of Justice website:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/225090/proven-reoffending-oct10-sep11.pdf