

ARTS, CULTURE AND INNOVATION IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SETTINGS



A guide for
commissioners





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We would like to say a special thank
you to all the governors, heads
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gave their time and input to ensure
this guide is fit for purpose.

FOREWORD

Matt Hancock
Minister for Culture



“I’ve seen for myself how the arts can engage young people at risk, improve prisoners’ health and wellbeing, help to rehabilitate former offenders, contribute to a reduction in reoffending, and stimulate an interest in learning.”

Arts and culture are integral to British society. They are central to our economic success, are a source of pride and are fundamental to the UK’s standing in the world. They also have a hugely important role to play in the Criminal Justice System.

Whether it’s a prisoner taking part in a music workshop or theatre production, singing in a choir, or attending a visual arts class – the arts have the power to improve self-esteem, social skills, empathy, health and wellbeing, and personal development – all things that can lead to a more positive and aspirational outlook.

I’ve seen for myself how the arts can engage young people at risk, improve prisoners’ health and wellbeing, help to rehabilitate former offenders, contribute to a reduction in reoffending, and stimulate an interest in learning. They help find the spark, and the value, that lies in every human soul. Arts and culture should be for everyone and the Government wants to ensure that they are available to all, no matter where you live or where you come from.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s recently published Culture White Paper committed to ensuring that offenders continue to benefit from cultural activities. Many of the projects highlighted in this document continue to change people’s lives for the better, so I encourage you to draw on these inspiring examples and consider the role that arts and cultural activities can have in supporting the health and wellbeing, education, and rehabilitation of individuals within the Criminal Justice System.



Photo courtesy of Irene Taylor Trust © Lizzie Coombes

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INTRODUCTION



About this guide

The aim of this guide is to provide those with responsibility for supporting the education, health and wellbeing and reintegration to society of individuals within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) with clear information on the valuable role arts can play in supporting these objectives.

Drawing on case studies and research evidence this guide focuses on the following areas:

- Contributing to better health and wellbeing
- Supporting learning and employability
- Improving outcomes for specific offender groups
- Adding value and improving prison culture
- Rehabilitation and resettlement
- Supporting the prison inspectorate process.

The structure of this guide highlights the contribution of the arts across a range of settings, including prisons and the community and using different artforms such as music, theatre, visual arts, literature and digital arts.

The variety of artforms and arts activities present a wealth of opportunities to inspire, engage and support those within the Criminal Justice System to develop new skills, as well as discovering new ways of behaving and relating to others.

The guide provides practical information and ideas for those wishing to commission artists and arts organisations. It includes details of how to identify providers and case studies demonstrating how arts activities can be used to meet the needs of offenders. It also highlights the value of working in partnership with arts organisations to co-design arts interventions

and adopt a strategic approach to using arts to support rehabilitation. Further research and evaluations on the impact of arts-based projects, programmes and interventions within the Criminal Justice System can be accessed at www.artsevidence.org.uk

About us

The National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance (NCJAA) is the leading network supporting the arts in criminal justice. Our vision is to promote access to arts and creative opportunities as a springboard to positive change for all those who come into contact with the Criminal Justice System. Our 800 members deliver creative opportunities to people in prison, on probation and in the community, with impressive, internationally recognised results. We provide a network to promote, develop and support high quality arts practice in criminal justice settings influencing and informing government, commissioners, providers and the public. Find out more about our work at www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk

Why do arts in criminal justice matter?

The arts are practised within the Criminal Justice System in many different ways. Arts organisations run workshops and training sessions, they produce art through film, drama, music and exhibitions. Arts take place in education, health and offender management programmes. They are also self-practiced (in-cell for example) with extraordinary results. Using an asset-based approach, arts and creativity can support improved wellbeing, awaken an interest in learning, develop employability skills and can help people build new positive identities. Engaging in the arts can also lead to new skills and employment opportunities, as well as equipping participants with a desire to actively engage in their community and culture.

Theatre, music, dance, visual art and creative writing have a long tradition of successfully empowering offenders and ex-offenders to turn their lives around, helping to prevent reoffending.

The recent review of education in prison undertaken by Dame Sally Coates¹ outlines a holistic vision for prison education, which includes the provision of arts and music, to enable individuals to obtain the skills they need to unlock their potential, gain employment and become assets to their communities. This provides a fantastic opportunity for the Criminal Justice System to embrace the use of arts to transform prisons, inspire offenders and support rehabilitation.

NJCAA members can help criminal justice partners to innovate, to co-produce new services and to deliver lasting change.

Evidence of impact

There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates the positive impact of the arts in criminal justice settings in engaging, motivating and providing opportunities for people to develop new skills, as well as discover new ways of behaving and relating to others.² Previous research has demonstrated the clear contribution that the arts can make in supporting the pathways to desistance, in particular by improving mental health, addressing drug and alcohol use, improving individuals' ability to maintain strong relationships with families and children and reversing negative social attitudes.³

Transforming individual prisoners' lives through effective education, including arts activities, can benefit society by building safer communities and reducing the significant financial and social costs arising from reoffending.

The [Culture White paper](#) published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2016 makes references to the many good examples of how cultural interventions can benefit prisoners, ex-offenders and people at risk of becoming involved in crime by helping to improve self-esteem, social skills and wellbeing. All of which help to reduce the risk of offending and re-offending, making our communities safer. The White Paper makes a commitment to work with Arts Council England, the Heritage Lottery Fund and other partners to ensure that offenders and those at risk continue to benefit from cultural opportunities.⁴

NOMS review of evidence

The recent review of evidence published by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS)⁵ demonstrates that arts projects are effective at improving in-prison behaviour, such as compliance with rules and engagement with the regime and individual psychological factors, such as depression and a sense of purpose. Emerging evidence suggests that arts projects may be effective at improving educational outcomes and enhancing the effectiveness of offending behaviour programmes. The outcomes delivered by arts projects relate to criminogenic or protective factors identified widely in the academic and research literature, and hence are likely to contribute to the process of desistance from crime.

The evidence base⁶ for the use of arts in criminal justice settings demonstrates that:

- **Participation in arts activities enables individuals to begin to redefine themselves, an important factor in desistance from crime.**⁷
- **Arts projects facilitate high levels of engagement. Engagement in arts projects has also been shown to lead to greater participation in education and work-related activities.**⁸
- **Arts projects can have a positive impact on how people manage themselves during their sentence, particularly on their ability to cooperate with others – including other participants and staff. This correlates with increased self-control and improved problem-solving skills.**⁹
- **Engagement with arts projects facilitates increased compliance with criminal justice orders and regimes.**
- **Arts projects are responsive to participants' individual needs. Current policy documentation on commissioning services to meet offenders' needs highlights the importance of responsiveness in meeting diverse needs.**
- **Arts projects provide safe spaces for individuals to have positive experiences and begin to make individual choices.**¹⁰

We also know that:

- The use of arts in criminal justice settings can directly support the objectives in Arts Council England's strategy *Great Art and Culture for Everyone*¹¹ by ensuring that as many people as possible are stimulated by arts and culture through long-term collaborative action.
- There is considerable value in reputable, professional arts practitioners offering their time, attention and skills to develop arts interventions in criminal justice settings. It is important for commissioners to ensure that they contract with experienced, well-respected and quality practitioners.
- Arts projects in criminal justice settings bring new audiences to different art forms and support the production of diverse quality art.

There are a range of examples that showcase the use of arts within criminal justice settings. These range from a four-year Artist in Residence at HMP Grendon,¹² to focused music interventions operating across a range of prisons, such as those delivered by the charity [Changing Tunes](#).¹³ The [NCJAA website](#) provides details of the work of our members covering a range of artforms and settings nationally.¹⁴

ARTS IN PRISON: MEETING THE NEEDS OF PRISONERS THROUGH THE ARTS



The Irene Taylor Trust

Photo courtesy of Irene Taylor Trust © Lizzie Coombes

Innovative arts projects already delivered in prisons support recovery from the predictors of offending behaviour, such as substance misuse and some mental health problems.¹⁵ In addition, the skills base for many people in prisons is low:¹⁶

- In the general population 85% have literacy skills at Level 1¹⁷ or Level 2¹⁸ whereas in prison this is only 50%
- 50% of the general population have Level 1 or Level 2 numeracy skills whereas 43% of prisoners are assessed at that level.

Many also experience anxiety and depression or other adverse health effects as a result of incarceration.¹⁹ Arts have a role to play in mitigating these effects, contributing to learning, improving mental health as well as the ability to cope with prison and set a better course for the future.

Professional artists bring their talent in music, painting, photography, dance, drama and creative writing to help offenders develop key social and life skills that they need to support their rehabilitation.

The arts can provide the distance and the engagement that together provoke reflection and empathy.²⁰ The arts have also been used in innovative ways to support work with victims of crime and to overcome prejudices about people in the Criminal Justice System.

Arts supporting better mental health and wellbeing

Mental ill health is one of the most prevalent and challenging issues in prisons. It is closely associated with high rates of suicide and

self-harm in custody. Mental health needs range from mild forms of depression to serious and enduring conditions, such as psychotic illnesses and severe personality disorders, which can be much more difficult to manage.

There is evidence from a range of arts projects showing their effectiveness in improving mental wellbeing and supporting recovery and rehabilitation from mental health problems.

The evidence base also demonstrates the value of integrating art therapy within existing treatment programmes in order to improve their effectiveness.

For example, in HMP Pentonville art is a central component of the activity programme provided at the daycare unit. The unit is run by a team of occupational therapists from Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust who are subcontracted by healthcare provider Care UK. Creative activities, including pottery, visual art, creative writing and music, are used to create a safe space where more positive relationships can flourish in an environment that is vibrant and productive. This approach has proven effective in improving participants' concentration and focus and gradually increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

Promoting wellbeing and changing behaviours: Geese Theatre Company

Geese Theatre Company has worked in CJS settings since 1987. The company is one of the world's leading organisations in developing and delivering theoretically sound, innovative and ground breaking creative interventions with people who have committed offences.

Scratching the Surface and Journeyman were five-day groupwork projects aimed at promoting wellbeing and hope with prisoners who have a variety of vulnerabilities. Funded by NOMS, who were piloting projects to reduce suicide and self-harm, the projects were facilitated by Geese between February and June 2016. Journeyman was delivered once at HMP Bristol and three times at HMP Hewell, and Scratching the Surface four times at HMP Foston Hall. A total of 49 prisoners participated in the projects with support from the Safer Custody staff.

The projects explored themes such as asking for help, connecting with others, letting go of negative beliefs, goal setting and developing new skills. The projects used active exercises, role-play and theatrical metaphors such as mask and an exploration of cognitive behavioural models. The project, independently evaluated by the University of Birmingham's School of Psychology, has delivered significant improvements in wellbeing and significant

reductions in hopelessness,²¹ and achieving increases in confidence and changes in behaviour.

“ I had 8 years in mental health with nothing that helped – Geese gave me techniques to help me help myself...”

Project participant

“ It made me see the positives in my life ... it's built confidence – having confidence helps me do my sentence and pursue other things when I leave.”

Project participant

“ I've had 15 positives after that course for going more than normal duties, like helping. I've put it into action. Like when staff said they thought I was gonna punch someone in the face last week – they said they had their hands on their alarms but then I didn't. I clenched my fists and had the lump in my throat and would normally go wild but didn't and felt so proud of myself.”

Project participant

“ [P1] was considered vulnerable by management and didn't engage with staff and there was no interaction with his peers. On completion of the project, [P1] grew in stature and his confidence seemed to double over night. He started attending work regularly, he was associating on the House Block, he completed his Level 1 Mentoring Award and he became a Keyworker in Education and became a Shannon Trust mentor.”

Member of prison staff, HMP Hewell

Arts supporting recovery to addiction to drugs and alcohol

Substance misuse in prison remains a serious challenge. Drug using prisoners can suffer from a range of physical and mental health conditions and rates of recovery are low. Recent press reports highlighting the damaging effects of new psychoactive substances have sharpened the focus on the need to address problems of addiction and drug use.

Enabling sustainable recovery from addiction to drugs and alcohol and improved mental health services

for people in the justice system is a priority for NHS England. In partnership with the National Offender Management Service and Public Health England, they ensure that commissioned health services in custodial settings support both health and justice outcomes.²² Arts activities can play an important role in supporting these priorities and helping prisoners to engage in purposeful activities as part of their recovery journey.

There are a range of examples of arts being delivered successfully in prisons to support dependency recovery and to assist prisons putting in place effective interventions as part of a wider



Photo courtesy of Geese Theatre Company © Gina Print

Geese Theatre Company



The Irene Taylor Trust

Photo courtesy of Irene Taylor Trust
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Working in partnership with substance misuse teams: The Irene Taylor Trust

The Irene Taylor Trust (ITT) has been running inspirational creative Music in Prisons projects since 1995. The music projects teach participants valuable transferable life skills as well as improving self-confidence and encouraging further constructive activity.

Following exploratory discussions with the Substance Misuse team at HMP Highpoint, ITT has introduced a musician in residence to the prison. The project was initially funded by Public Health Suffolk, following a successful partnership bid from ITT and the Substance Misuse team. Following the initial two years of the residency it is currently funded through the Big Lottery Fund and a number of other grants.

The project has provided a holistic programme of support which, through using intensive projects and weekly sessions, has helped service users in their recovery and facilitated their engagement with treatment programmes delivered by the Substance Misuse team. Over the last 18 months, a total of 71 offenders have worked with the musician in residence as part of the twice-weekly sessions delivered on the substance misuse wing and 24 have taken part in the three intensive projects.

The project has delivered a range of wellbeing and recovery outcomes for participants, including:

- 90% reported their level of confidence had increased since taking part
- 83% noticed a change in their level of motivation
- 78% reported they felt more comfortable working in a group
- 68% reported they had more hope for the future.

“ Interacting with music as well as listening makes me feel great which helps mental health and staying off drugs.”

Project participant

“ Keeps me busy, takes my mind off using, helps me to maintain my recovery.”

Project participant

In particular, the contribution of the residency in supporting the work of the Substance Misuse team has been recognised in helping participants engage with other treatment programmes.

“ Team members have been astonished at the difference these interventions can make to clients’ attitudes and engagement with other programmes. Further training and musical opportunities in the community makes this programme a true investment in participants’ long-term development and wellbeing.”

drug and alcohol strategy. For example, the Substance Awareness Package (SAP) delivered by **Odd Arts**, uses drama and associated teamwork,

problem solving and discussion methods as part of a two-day package that aims to reduce alcohol and drug harm and consumption.

Art therapy improving wellbeing: Soft Touch Arts, HMP Glen Parva

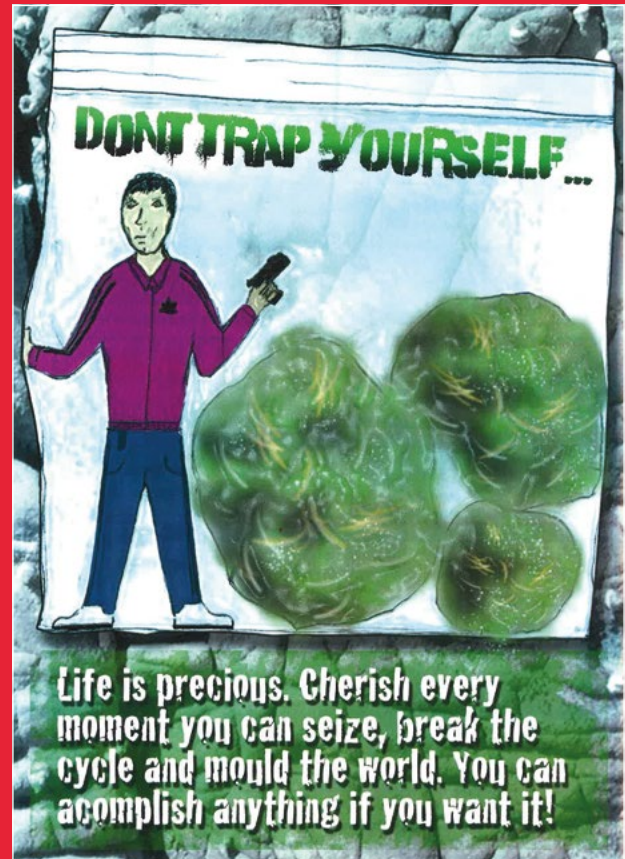
Soft Touch Arts was contacted by an Occupational Therapist (OT), working in the Therapeutic Drug and Alcohol Support team (TDAS) based at the NHS clinic in HMP Glen Parva, who were looking for new ways to support the recovery of prisoners with a dual mental health and substance use diagnosis, especially those deemed particularly vulnerable and not coping well in the prison environment.

With Lottery funding, the Hear Me Out project ran for 20 months. The NHS Partnership Trust contributed a small amount of commissioned funds plus the time of TDAS staff, bringing the project into the therapeutic programme. The prison supported the project by purchasing art materials. Additional small funds came through grants from a local trust and the local council and Soft Touch's own fundraising.

TDAS staff, delivering alongside Soft Touch, fostered stronger relationships with prisoners leading to a significant impact on the level and quality of engagement with the therapeutic process. This happened both within and beyond the project sessions, enabling the OTs to have positive conversations on difficult subjects, such as anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse and violence within and outside the prison, both on an individual and group basis.

The first year of the project demonstrated a range of therapeutic, attitudinal and learning outcomes for the participants, including:

- More positive relationships between prisoners
- More positive relationships between prisoners and family members
- Raised aspirations (77% of participants)
- Improved confidence and self-esteem (69% of participants)
- Improved behaviour (58% of participants).



Whilst the scope of Hear Me Out could not provide longitudinal monitoring of substance use, a referral pathway was established with probation, linking participants into Soft Touch as soon as they come out, as part of their rehabilitation process.

“It’s helped me to be creative, it really is therapeutic. The message I want this piece to say is that some things are not worth putting your life at risk for.”

Project participant

“Art is an excellent way of reaching out to offenders with mental health or substance misuse issues and it is great that we will have their artwork on display around the prison.”

Alison Clarke, governor of HMP Glen Parva

Arts supporting learning, employability and providing purposeful activity

Engagement in learning and purposeful activity delivers a wide range of personal, social and educational outcomes for prisoners. Learning new skills and engaging in creative activities can improve participants' feelings of self-worth and deliver positive impacts on the wider prison environment. Personal progression in the arts can help to change individuals' self-identify which, in turn, leads to a stronger sense of control and hope for the future.²³

The recent Coates Review of education in prisons highlighted a need for greater provision of high quality creative arts to support prisoners in obtaining the skills needed to gain employment, as this has been shown to play a key role in reducing reoffending. However, the review emphasises that employability should not drive the entire focus of the curriculum, given that many prisoners will have previously had unsatisfactory experiences of education.

Arts activities are effective in encouraging and supporting prisoners to take their first learning steps. They are well placed to respond to a shift in focus to Personal and Social Development by helping to improve self-knowledge, develop self-confidence and help tackle reoffending amongst participants.

Analysis by the Ministry of Justice found that grants given by the Prisoners' Education Trust to prisoners for arts and hobby materials led to a reduction in re-offending.²⁴

The Arts can be effective in providing opportunities for higher-level learning and in helping participants gain valuable creative skills that may support progression to a range of employment routes, including within the growing creative industries sector.

NCJAA members have a long history of working with arts and education departments. They are already delivering a wide range of arts activities using different art forms and approaches in order to develop skills, build confidence and improve motivation to participate in other education and learning opportunities.

There is considerable potential for governors to establish partnerships with arts organisations to integrate arts activities within learning and personal development programmes and commission new innovative approaches.

This would respond directly to the recommendations outlined in the Coates Review and support prisoners' personal and social development.

Innovation is evident across a wide range of arts activities and interventions. The Design Academy at HMP Thameside provides just one example of how arts can be used to help equip prisoners with new skills that can improve their employability and employment prospects on release. The project enables prisoners and staff to use a collaborative design process to generate new ideas aimed at improving everyday life in prison through a project entitled Innovate Inside. The Academy draws on design methodologies introduced as part of the Makeright Design course, an initiative from the [Design Against Crime Research Centre](#) run by Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design that aims to teach design inside prisons.

Supporting improvement and the prison inspection process

On the following areas of the common inspection framework,²⁵ arts can provide a clear contribution to the inspection process by presenting evidence of innovative and high quality activities that support the findings made by inspectors:

- Overall effectiveness of learning and skills and work activities
- Effectiveness of the leadership and management of learning and skills and work activities
- Quality of learning and skills and work activities, including teaching, learning and assessment
- Personal development and behaviour
- Outcomes for prisoners engaged in learning and skills and work activities.

Arts activities can be tailored to focus specifically on improving basic literacy and numeracy skills, whilst also developing individuals' personal, social and employability skills, thus contributing directly to resettlement plans and rehabilitation.

Arts transforming prison spaces: HMP Wakefield

The Co-Mission-d Art Group at HMP Wakefield has been developed by, and delivered under, the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) contract. Through the group, long-term prisoners have been engaged and supported to create high quality artwork for a range of departments around the prison. The purpose of the group is to provide real creative employment for prisoners by giving them responsibility for how different areas of the prison are improved.

The group has 10 mentors (five per group) and there have been 21 participants over the past eighteen months. Originally the group ran for one three hour session per week but this has now been increased to two full days (12 hours per week).

The Co-Mission-d Art Group has been allocated its own personal and social development code through the OLASS contract. This is significant, as it has enabled greater flexibility as the project isn't required to work towards criteria and a qualification.

The group operates from a dedicated classroom, which has provided benefits in encouraging ownership of the workspace by the participants. Effective use of prison mentors has supported the delivery of the sessions and the progression of participants, in both their pro-social behaviour and artistic skills and abilities.

The output of the art group has transformed and improved prison spaces, provided an improved sense of community within the prison and contributed to improving levels of wellbeing amongst participants.

“Being involved in the group has allowed me the opportunity to not just expand or enhance my artistic or creative skills but to also improve my confidence and social skills. As someone who has previously struggled with self-esteem and self-doubt, the co-Mission-d art group has helped give me confidence to be more positive about myself and working in a group. It’s been a great atmosphere and I have felt supported by both the artist and my peers in a really positive way. It has definitely been a beneficial part of my journey in prison.”

Project participant

“The Co-Mission-d Art Group is what I believe offender learning and arts education should be about. Anyone can participate and achieve, because individuals can work in a way that suits them and helps them develop the skills they need or want to improve. I am extremely proud of the group and the art work we have created. None of it would be possible if the participants didn’t invest in the project and be willing to work with me, even when they may doubt themselves, their skills or abilities.”

Rachel Forster (Artist)





The Irene Taylor Trust

Photo courtesy of Irene Taylor Trust © Lizzie Coombes

For example, the Summer Arts Colleges delivered by **Unitas**,²⁶ are intensive educational projects designed for young people on Detention and Training Orders and subject to Intensive Supervision and Surveillance. They re-engage these young people in education, training and employment through the provision of vibrant arts experiences and work with the arts

to improve literacy and numeracy skills and to achieve an accreditation through the **Arts Award**.²⁷

Arts organisations can also work in partnership with prison library services to encourage reading for pleasure that, in turn, can support a range of learning and personal development outcomes.

Using literature to support personal development: The Reader

The Reader is a charitable social enterprise working to connect people with great literature through shared reading. Their Shared Reading groups are informal, voluntary gatherings of around 6-10 people. The programme currently engages over 650 individuals across 33 criminal justice settings. The sessions are led by a trained leader who reads aloud extracts from novels, short stories and poems. Group members listen or read the text as they choose.

The Shared Reading groups are funded through a range of routes, including direct commissions (HMP Frankland and HMP Low Newton), through NHS Trusts and with support from major funders including OPD Pathway, NHS England and NOMS.

Prison libraries are regularly used as venues for the shared reading groups and The Reader has trained librarians and library assistants across a range of criminal justice settings.

Evidence from the Shared Reading groups points to the contribution that the sessions make to a range of outcomes²⁸ in prisons including:

- Modelling prosocial behaviour
- Enabling relational development
- Increasing wellbeing
- Increasing interest in other educational services provided
- Increasing confidence and aspirations leading to a belief in the self as an agent for change
- Enhancing staff/prisoner relations
- Supporting staff development and professional progress.

A recent survey of participants found that:

- 70% agreed that listening, reading and discussing the literature helped them think about changes they would like to make in the future

- 88% indicated that hearing other people's views about the literature helps them think differently about things.

The effects of the sessions are wide-ranging. Prisoners and prison officers jointly experience an exhilarating environment where they hear readings that are both moving and perplexing. The process of reading and reflecting together in a safe environment makes it possible for offenders to believe in their own capacity to change.

The collaborative nature of the discussions fosters communication skills and relational development, the benefits of which are felt across the health, employability and education agendas. Staff report 69% of those attending the Shared Reading groups have shown an improvement in pro-social behaviour.

“ Personality disorder populations are often rigid thinkers so even grasping the idea that there are different viewpoints and different ways of thinking about things has massive implications in terms of risk reduction.”

Kimberley Gibson, Clinical Lead, Westgate Unit, HMP Frankland

“ When you read, and particularly in a group, all the time you're hearing other people's views. What happens is you don't have to keep your old narrative going - you become less defensive and you can test out a new narrative, and the thing is you're doing it with the story - the story removes it slightly from you, so you don't have to expose yourself too far, you can put something out there and see what people make of it. You're growing your capacity to explore varying views on how life is, to test out various ideas and perspectives.”

Nick Benefield, formerly Joint Department of Health/NOMS Offender Personality Disorder Programme Head

ARTS THROUGH THE GATE AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Transforming Rehabilitation

The Ministry of Justice's Transforming Rehabilitation programme²⁹ highlights a need to invest in extending and enhancing rehabilitation and adopt new ways of working that can improve efficiency and give front-line professionals the flexibility and resources to innovate and do what works best. The reforms to be implemented in the strategy include a new statutory supervision extended to offenders sentenced to less than 12 months in custody, and fundamental change to the way the prison estate is organised. This includes putting in place a nationwide through the prison gate resettlement service, meaning most offenders are given continuous support by one provider from custody into the community.

People are especially vulnerable when leaving prison. Programmes that offer continuity can ensure that, on release, individuals continue to progress through education, training and employment and avoid reoffending. Several arts organisations are already actively involved in the resettlement and rehabilitation of former offenders, working in partnership with Community Rehabilitation Companies³⁰ to best meet the needs of offenders. The implementation of the strategy presents opportunities for further dialogue between criminal justice partners and arts organisations on how the arts can be used to support the effective rehabilitation of offenders, both in custody and in the community, by tackling the causes of offending and enabling offenders to turn their lives around.

There are already some excellent examples of work delivered by arts organisations that is prolonging and enhancing desistance from crime through providing former prisoners with opportunities to continue engaging with the arts after release. Examples of this

are the **Koestler Trust** Arts Mentoring Programme³¹ which develops ex-offenders creative practice in the community, and **Intermission Outreach** who use Shakespeare texts and acting workshops as a mode of redirecting and refocusing young people who are considered at risk of offending and reoffending.

Arts supporting resettlement

Resettlement is a major focus of all prison interventions and subject to emphasis during inspections. The recent joint thematic review of resettlement provision for adult offenders by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted³² confirms the central importance of an offender's family and friends to their successful rehabilitation.

“ Helping offenders maintain or restore relationships with their family and friends, where this is appropriate, should be central to the resettlement effort.”

Arts activities have been shown to help prisoners to maintain or improve relationships with family, peers and community and contribute directly to successful resettlement.^{33,34}

“ The arts produce exactly the skills and common humanity that offenders need if they are to be rehabilitated back into our communities.”³⁵

There is considerable potential for arts organisations to work with people prior to, and following, their release from prison to help them in restoring relationships with their family and friends through inspiring, fun and accessible arts activities.

In their ten year strategic framework *Great Art and Culture for Everyone*,³⁶ Arts Council England sets out a vision for the arts and includes commitment to extend the reach of the arts to previously disengaged groups. The framework highlights an intention to form partnerships that will help more people access arts and culture.

This commitment is reinforced in the recent Culture White Paper, which outlines plans to put in place measures to increase participation in culture, especially among those who are currently excluded from the opportunities that culture has to offer. These commitments present an opportunity to establish

stronger links between the arts and criminal justice sectors in order to engage and inspire offenders in prison, or former offenders in the community.

There are already excellent examples of partnerships involving local prisons, businesses, charitable trusts and arts organisations that are providing offenders with opportunities to change how they see themselves and how they are seen by the wider community. Supported by a range of partners, *Lumiere Durham festival* has supported artists' work in prisons, engaging offenders over several months to create beautiful, large-scale artworks, which were shown to thousands of people at the festival.



Strengthening family relationships: Safe Ground

Safe Ground's Family Man programme is a seven-week full time family relationships programme for groups of 14-20 male prisoners. The programme was developed in response to increasing numbers of prisoners losing contact with their families and being unable to sustain a job or relationships.

Research publications have suggested these are key factors in reoffending. In line with desistance theory, the programme aims to help prevent institutionalisation and reoffending by providing basic social and life skills to help prisoners understand the benefits of being part of a family and a community and of the importance of maintaining family relationships from prison. The programme utilises drama, fiction, group discussion, games and written activity to change prisoners' attitudes. Since 2011, the programme has been funded by the Family Intervention Unit at HMP Parc.

The programme has been mapped to a variety of National Open College Network (NOCN) and City and Guild units, including Family Relationships (Level 1), Developing Personal Development Skills (Level 1) and Developing Group and Teamwork Communication Skills (Level 1).

An evaluation of the longer-term effectiveness of Safe Ground's Revised Family Relationships Programme on prisoner graduates, their supporters and families³⁷ found that:

- 74% reported continuing higher levels of confidence
- 90% reported learning how to problem-solve from their group experiences
- 78% reported implementing the goals in their Family Man Action Plan
- 84% reported improved relationships with their children/families.

“ I kept coming back to prison. Even though my partner loved me, she was about to call it a day. But Family Man challenged me, gave me the skills to understand her and the children, to learn to listen, and for her to understand me too. We have to keep working at it, but I've been out nine months now, I have a job, and our family life has never been happier.”

Project participant

The evaluation concluded that, for the vast majority of these respondents, Family Man had been a significant learning experience which, through drama, its confidence-building and resettlement focus had changed prisoners' attitudes and helped them gradually build upon and implement these changes as they moved towards and beyond release. There can be little doubt of the enduring impact this programme had made on these men and their families or of its consequent potential to strengthen the social bonds, which could contribute to subsequent desistance from crime.

“ There isn't another programme that does what the Safe Ground programmes do. The way it works with the men, and involves their partners, and children, the manner in which it creates confidence, motivation, and self-efficacy is unique. For me, the work we are doing here necessitates having the Safe Ground programmes at the very heart of our mechanism for change. Without them, the landscape and future of children and families work in prisons would look very different.”

Head of the prison's family interventions programme, HMP Parc

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL NEED AND IMPROVING OUTCOMES



York St John University Prison Partnership Project

Photo courtesy of York St John University

Arts provision in prisons and the community can help to engage some of the hardest to reach offenders, fostering a learning culture which provides a stepping stone to formal learning, personal development and employment.

Evidence from work in custodial and community settings shows that arts interventions are associated with reductions in re-offending and rule-breaking and improving relationships in prison. The arts can support the prison education system, changing attitudes to offending, building human and social capital and enhancing the effectiveness of offending behaviour programmes.³⁸

Women in the Criminal Justice System

Several artists and arts organisations work specifically with women in prison to facilitate their engagement in a range of support services. Women at the HeArt,³⁹ for

example, was a Thames Valley Partnership project, funded by Arts Council England, The Monument Trust and Thames Valley Probation, which aimed to creatively empower vulnerable women to better access a broad range of support services for themselves and their families.

Clean Break is a theatre company with more than 30 years of experience delivering interventions in women's prisons. In 2014, this included work with women with complex mental health needs on the Psychologically Informed Planned Environment (PIPE) units at HMP Low Newton and HMP Send, as well as bespoke residencies at HMP Askham Grange, HMP Styal and HMP New Hall.

The Forgiveness Project has been running a prison programme in England and Wales since 2007. This work has been consolidated into RESTORE, which aim is to reduce the number of victims of crime through the rehabilitation of

offenders. It is an intensive, group based intervention that encourages prisoners to explore concepts of forgiveness and reparation in a framework that fosters greater accountability and responsibility.

Over the past four years, The Forgiveness Project has been exploring and adapting programmes specifically for women at HMP Eastwood Park and now embeds creative writing and visual arts throughout its whole programme.

Vulnerable prisoners

Arts organisations are working with some of the most vulnerable offender groups in the Criminal Justice System. Evidence from a range of interventions demonstrate the value of arts activities in encouraging and supporting offenders to engage in non-arts treatment programmes.

Using arts with vulnerable prisoners: Good Vibrations

Good Vibrations has run nine, week long courses at HMP Whatton – with 127 men convicted of sexual offences – since 2014. An experienced facilitator has enabled groups of up to 20 to learn to play the Gamelan – an Indonesian tuned-percussion orchestra – from scratch. Participants have learned traditional pieces, made their own music, conducted, put on a concert and been given a professionally-produced CD of their music.

“ I’ll remember this for a very long time.”

Project participant

83% of participants have completed the courses. 51 men gained nationally recognised Level 1 or 2 Team-working or Music Ensemble Skills qualifications from Open College Network. The courses were funded by the prison, Arts Council England, Big Lottery Fund, Youth Music, Evan Cornish Foundation and Henry Smith Charity.

“ Before I came to this group I never really mixed or talked to anyone ... Just being in this room with others made me feel sick ... but being here and the encouragement I have received from the other band members has helped me with some of my anxieties. At the start of this week I would never have been able or had the courage to stand here before you and talk, so for me this is a small step to something that I can build on for the future.”

Project participant

Nottingham Trent University investigated the influence of the Gamelan courses at the prison to see if there were impacts on participants in relation

to readiness to change offending behaviours, or motivation to engage with psychological treatment.⁴⁰ Findings were that as a result of the courses:

- Participants had an increased desire to change their offending behaviour and engage in offence-specific treatment⁴¹
- Participants’ emotional regulation and release, ability to de-stress and feel more relaxed was positively affected during the course and until the start of the treatment programme
- Participants felt more confident about working in a group
- Participants’ social skills improved, they became more open with staff, got better at listening and starting taking more responsibility for themselves
- Participants experienced playing music as a coping mechanism for anger, allowing them to replace anger with different emotions and constructive behaviours.

Good Vibrations and HMP Whatton continue to work in close partnership. Spoken word and Gamelan pieces created on Whatton Prison courses are being shared with the public through audio exhibitions.

“ I’ve found the experience immensely interesting, not only the instruments but the culture. To me what has developed throughout the week is a sense of discipline. At the start of the week everyone was chaotic; very rapidly everyone started to realise that they needed to listen and respect others’ part in the group, so self-discipline really grew.”

Project participant



Arts supporting diverse voices

The arts can support prisons to demonstrate a clear and coordinated approach to eliminating discrimination, promoting equitable outcomes and fostering good relations.⁴² This can include increasing cultural awareness and ensuring that diverse voices are supported.

The introduction of Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity and the need for new government-led reviews – such as the **Lammy Review**,⁴³ the **Laming Review**⁴⁴ and a review into the care and management of transgender offenders – highlight the need and the current opportunity to look more closely and critically at how diversity in the Criminal Justice System can be promoted through the arts.



Photo courtesy of Good Vibrations

Good Vibrations Gamelan course. Please note this photo is not from the work with men convicted of sexual offences referred to in the case study on page 22.

There are numerous examples of arts organisations working in prisons to promote equality and diversity by fostering a greater understanding and support for people who may be vulnerable to discrimination. For example, arts organisations have already begun to demonstrate their effectiveness in engaging Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. In 2016 [Clean Break Theatre Company](#) found that 49% of women who accessed their services were from a BAME background, when they make up 28% of the female prison population.⁴⁵

In 2016, the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance held an event at Sadler's Wells in London exploring how the arts can be a driver for equality in criminal justice settings. Arts organisations working in criminal justice settings are leading the field in creating diverse, innovative art that pushes boundaries, explores complex issues and brings people together from different cultures and backgrounds.

The NCJAA has produced a separate resource for using the arts as a driver for equality in criminal justice settings. See: www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk

Promoting tolerance and inclusion: HMP YOI Parc

HMP/YOI Parc has used creative writing to develop an environment where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) prisoners felt safe to be themselves.

In 2013, despite having over 1,200 prisoners, there were only three openly gay prisoners and a culture persisted of most gay men feeling uncomfortable to be themselves and living in fear of being outed and attracting homophobic attention.

The arts have played a critical role in challenging and changing the prison environment with the prison LGBT Lead introducing an integrated approach to encourage a culture where diversity is promoted and discrimination is not tolerated.

Working with a commissioned storyteller, a two-day workshop was delivered to the LGBT group and other supporters on the theme of being gay in prison. The output from the workshop included a series of coming out stories that highlighted the sense of fear, loneliness and self-loathing felt by participants.

The project was extended to include prison staff known to be LGBT. A combination of stories from prisoners and prison staff was collated and published in a book entitled *Inside and Out: LGBT Writings from Parc*, published



in print and online with participant's names changed to protect their anonymity.

In total, 12 prisoners and seven staff took part in writing the book. The change of environment has encouraged and inspired more prisoners to express their sexuality openly within HMP/YOI Parc.

"Phil has set up a thriving LGBT community in a place that many considered impossible. He supports prisoners both individually and in groups, with one saying that before talking to Phil, he contemplated suicide."

Janet Wallsgrove Director HMP/YOI Parc

Long-term prisoners

A range of arts activities are specifically focused on engaging and supporting prisoners serving life terms. **Oxford Concert Party** is Europe's only Baroque and Tango Orchestra and has developed a unique approach to working with people serving life sentences. Their prison projects can play a key role in the rehabilitation process, offering a unique opportunity for prisoners to participate in music workshops culminating in a performance for other prison inmates.

This process does much more for the participants than simply develop their musical skills. It provides a safe space for them to step back from their habitual lives and selves, to develop teamwork and explore and express a range of emotion and thought often repressed in the prison environment. They have recently delivered inspiring work in HMP Wayland and HMP Bedford.

“I’ve never given this sort of music a chance, but now I like it. I learnt a lot, and it engaged me.”

Project participant

Working with young people at risk

The Ministry of Justice’s interim report on the youth justice system in England and Wales⁴⁶ highlights considerable successes in reducing the number of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time. The number of children in custody is now at its lowest recorded level. However, the children who remain in the system are those who have the greatest problems, challenging behaviour and complex needs. While the number of young offenders has fallen, the overall reoffending rate has risen.

There is growing evidence from across the arts and health field that suggests that participatory arts programmes can contribute to health improvement, emotional resilience and social reintegration among vulnerable and excluded groups including young people.

Participatory arts activities provide opportunities for those most at risk to engage with conventional education and training programmes and to learn alternative skills and competencies that are more suited to their needs and abilities.

Arts provide a medium that enable young people to engage with their life experiences in creative ways, to positively identify with different art forms, to draw on knowledge and experiences and to engage with their peer group.⁴⁷

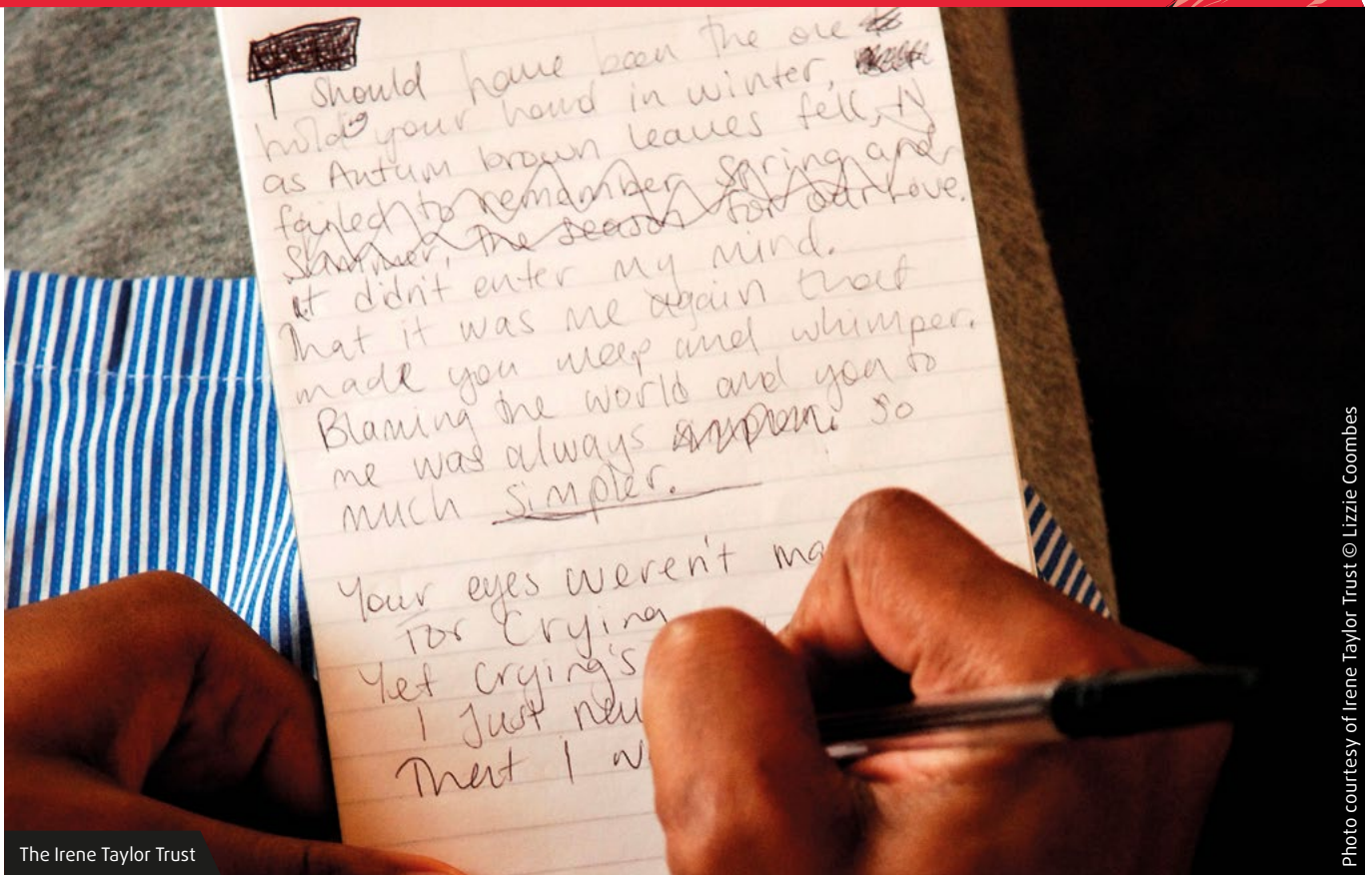
“In prevention contexts with young people, evaluation studies provide evidence that arts programmes can reduce offending behaviour and incidents of disruption, help disaffected young people re-engage with education, and sponsor personal and social development.”⁴⁸

“Drama can have a positive influence in developing emotional literacy, raising aspirations, building self-esteem and creating an effective bond between key workers and young people.”⁴⁹

Education is important for all children. For those involved in offending it can have a particularly unique and revitalising effect. Arts activities can be used to support improvements in literacy and numeracy, which in turn provide a gateway to engagement in a wider range of learning and personal development opportunities.

Managed by the John Hansard Gallery and Southampton Youth Offending Service, the **RE/CREATIONS** programme aimed to bridge the gap between arts and cultural provision for young people identified as repeat offenders, aged 14-17, through the provision of a longer-term weekly Arts Award embedded programme. Through the programme, supported by arts and cultural organisations in Southampton and wider Solent region, young people were provided with an opportunity to develop their creativity and re-engage back into learning. Support for the programme was also provided by the Office of the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

PROVIDING BENEFITS TO INSTITUTIONS AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE WORKFORCE



Continuous Professional Development for staff

The delivery of arts activities within criminal justice settings can support the professional development of the workforce assisting in delivering the NOMS competency framework – skills, knowledge and behaviours:⁵⁰

- Collaboration and partnership working
- Building capability through ongoing learning
- Managing a quality service
- Achieving a safe, decent and secure environment
- Leading and communication
- Building positive and supportive relationships with offenders
- Developing self-awareness and reflective learning to improve engagement with offenders

- Responding positively to offenders and their families in difficult circumstances
- Developing and promoting a culture of care.

Prison officers often comment on the value of arts activities in improving the work environment and job satisfaction. Arts programmes can provide opportunities for staff to draw on and develop their own artistic interests and improve motivation, which can help in reducing staff turnover.

Supporting the prison inspectorate process

The delivery of arts activities can provide compelling evidence for the assessment of the treatment of prisoners and conditions in prisons.

Safety

- **Bullying and violence reduction** – arts projects can improve staff and prisoner relationships and help to foster a safe environment with open and confidential lines of communication
- **Self-harm and suicide prevention** – arts projects can contribute to improving mental wellbeing and supporting recovery and rehabilitation from mental health episodes
- **Substance misuse** – arts can support prisons putting in place effective interventions as part of a wider drug and alcohol strategy.

Respect

- **Equality and diversity** – arts organisations working in prisons can help to promote equality and diversity by fostering a greater understanding and support for protected characteristics.

Purposeful activity

- **Time out of cell** – arts enables prisoners to engage in activity that is likely to benefit them
- **Learning and skills** – engaging in arts projects has been shown to lead to greater participation in education and work-related activities.

Resettlement

- **Prisoners are encouraged to re-establish or maintain relationships with their children and families** – arts activities have been shown to help prisoners to maintain or improve relationships with family, peers, and community and as such contribute directly to successful resettlement.

Specifically arts activities have been found to contribute to improving personal development and behaviour and the assessment areas (see left).⁵¹

“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.”

Nick Hardwick, former HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

Arts activities can also support criminal justice settings to achieve the Royal College of Psychiatrists **Enabling Environments Award**,⁵² which is a quality mark given to those who can demonstrate they are achieving an outstanding level of best practice in creating and sustaining a positive and effective social environment.

PRACTICAL DETAILS FOR COMMISSIONING ARTS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SETTINGS



The greater freedom and autonomy for governors announced as part of the Prisons and Courts Reform Bill⁵³ presents an opportunity for more dialogue and discussion between criminal justice partners and arts organisations on how arts activities support a range of positive outcomes for offenders and ex-offenders.

This guide provides a taster of how arts organisations can work within a range of settings to meet specific priorities around reducing reoffending, improving mental health, addressing substance misuse and encouraging and enabling offenders to engage with appropriate learning and treatment programmes.

There is no one-size fits all approach and so the commissioning process should commence with an initial meeting to explore what art

interventions can be developed to address specific criminal justice priorities.

The NCJAA website provides further information and contact details for our [members](#). It can help commissioners identify partners to help discuss and plan arts projects. Details of members can be searched by art form, location and participant groups.

Commissioning a project

A commissioning process requires the commissioner to decide what activities or services are needed and their priority, and what resources are available to allocate to provide these services. In the context of criminal justice settings the arts activity may be commissioned to support a range of priorities (see page 29).

Commissioning priorities

- Facilitating engagement in education and work related activities
- Supporting participation in purposeful activities
- Improving health and wellbeing, in particular mental health
- Fostering increased self control and better problem solving skills
- Achieving greater compliance with criminal justice orders and regimes
- Supporting recovery to addiction to drugs and alcohol
- Aiding resettlement by helping offenders maintain or restore relationships with their family and friends
- Promoting equality and diversity by fostering a greater understanding and support for protected characteristics.

Arts organisations can work with commissioners to contribute towards an analysis of needs. There are a range of different models of commissioning that can support the process of bringing high quality arts practice into criminal justice settings. These include:

- **Co-commissioning model** – involves a number of organisations coming together to commission an arts activity, e.g. prison governor, Arts Council England and an NHS Trust.
- **Single provider model** – involves commissioners entering into a contract with an arts and cultural organisation to meet their strategic objectives.
- **Sub-contracting model** – provides opportunities for artists/arts organisations to benefit from commissioning opportunities through being sub-contracted to a main provider. In the context of criminal justice settings this may include contracted healthcare, education or facilities management providers.

- **Consortia model** – arts organisations can work together in a variety of ways to meet the needs of commissioners within the Criminal Justice System. This can range from informal collaboration between arts organisations to more formal collaboration governed by contractual relations with other organisations.

Commissioners may consider bringing together existing service providers, e.g. learning or health, with a number of artists and arts organisations in order to discuss opportunities to incorporate arts activities within existing services.

In commissioning terms this is a process known as market shaping. There are a range of examples of arts activities being contracted by organisations delivering services within criminal justice settings. For example, service management company Sodexo Justice Services has contracted **Stretch** to deliver a digital arts project at HMP Peterborough. The project is equipping prisoners with skills in new media to create digital stories about their personal experiences of the Criminal Justice System.

In commissioning an arts activity or project it is essential to identify any training or support needs for staff members that will be involved in facilitating its delivery. Experience and learning from previous arts activities delivered in criminal justice settings has highlighted the importance of ensuring that artists and arts organisations are appropriately supported by staff working. Effective planning and co-design of the activity can help to ensure the quality of delivery and achievement of its intended outcomes.

How much does it cost?

The costs associated with designing and delivering an arts activity and/or intervention will be governed by a number of factors. These include the number of sessions, the planning and development time, the number of artists involved and their level of experience.

Rates of pay for artists will be governed by their professional experience and also whether they are commissioned on an hourly basis, for half day or full day sessions. The [Artists' Union England](#) has issued guidance which can assist you in estimating the costs associated with commissioning artists.⁵⁴ Commissioners should remember to include sufficient planning and review time within the fee provided to artists/arts organisations.

Artists and arts organisations may be able to secure funding to cover some of the costs of the arts activities, but this will require time and support from the commissioner. This may require the input of the commissioner in order to support an application process to relevant Trusts or Foundations and where eligible Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts funding programme.⁵⁵ Commissioners may also wish to discuss the potential to incorporate arts activities within existing learning and health service contracts with external providers.

What resources does it take?

In addition to the artist fees, it is important to factor sufficient time to develop and plan the intervention in partnership with an artist and/or arts organisation.

Costs associated with the use of equipment will need to be factored in to the delivery and it will also be necessary to make appropriate and suitable space available for the arts activity, which may require sufficient space to host exhibitions and performances. Dependent on the nature of the arts activity, it will also be important to confirm the supervision and/or support capacity required to enable the participation of offenders.

There may also be a need to provide training and guidance to prison staff in advance to ensure that they feel able to support the arts activity.

An assessment of staff training needs may form part of the initial discussion with the artist and/or arts organisation.

The [Arts Review](#) published by the Scottish Prison Service in 2015 provides a useful overview of a range of issues that should be considered when planning the delivery of arts activities in prisons.

You may also find [The Rehabilitative Prison: Good engagement with the voluntary sector](#) a useful document.

What to look for

Commissioners should seek references prior to commissioning an artist and/or arts organisation. Referees could include someone that has already commissioned them to deliver work within a criminal justice context. They should look for a collaborative approach and artist/arts organisations that have a clear understanding of criminal justice settings. Crucially, commissioners should also look for individuals or arts organisations that are able to bring quality, innovation and imaginative ideas on using arts activities to support criminal justice priorities.

The NCJAA website is a useful place to start to search for details of individual artists and arts organisations with experience and expertise in working with people in the Criminal Justice System. www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk/membership/our-members

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