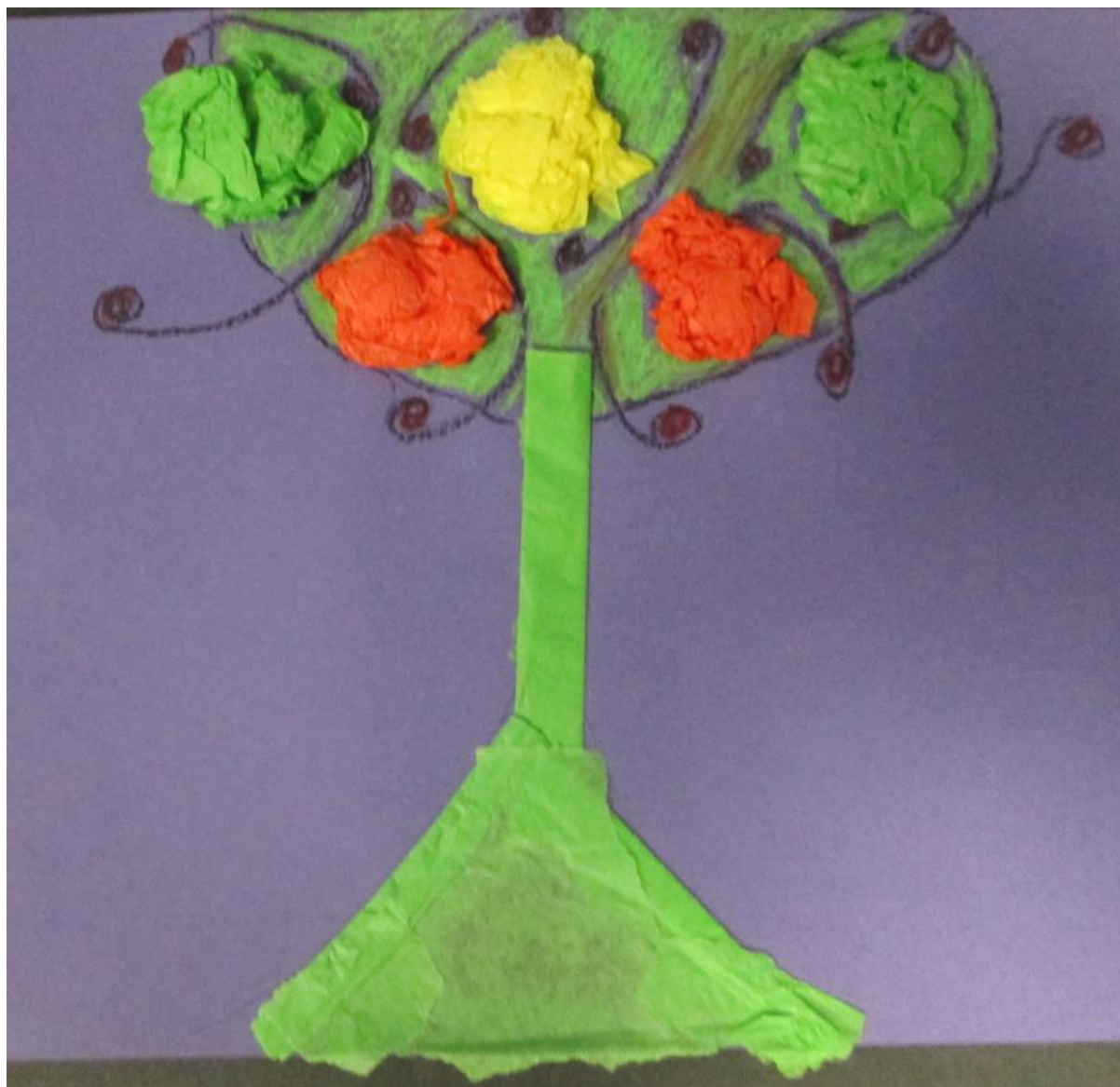


Evaluation of the Belong London PLAN A Programme at HMP/YOI Isis



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The artwork that is included throughout this report appears with the permission of the young men who created each piece during the Art Therapy groups within the prison.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Prison Life and New Achievements (PLAN A) programme

Belong London is a registered charity that works with individuals who have offended and those who have been victims of crime in order to reduce crime and the harm that it causes (for a fuller description of the organisation, see Appendix 2). Funded with a grant of £93,750 from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) as part of their commitment to the commissioning of interventions targeting the perpetrators of offences related to membership of or affiliation to gangs, the Prison Life and New Achievements (PLAN A) programme is a Belong London initiative that has been delivered in HMP/YOI Isis during 2014-15. It is a 3-strand intervention specifically targeting those convicted of gang-affiliated offences and comprises: 1:1 mentoring support, art therapy (AT) sessions, and a restorative justice/victim awareness (RJ/VA) component.

Belong London formulated the PLAN A programme on the basis that research has indicated that:

- Art-based therapeutic approaches are a recognised form of offender rehabilitation intervention, shown to be effective in helping offenders work through their emotions and with the potential to provide an insight into the reasons behind their criminal behaviour (Smeijsters & Cleven, 2006);
- Direct or indirect restorative justice interventions have been effective in reducing reoffending through encouraging offenders to assist in repairing the harm they have caused to their victims (Shapland et al., 2008);
- Mentoring services have shown potential in reducing reoffending (Joliffe & Farrington, 2007).



Participants, selection and recruitment

The PLAN A programme is a unique intervention in seeking to facilitate change through the delivery of three concurrent elements (art therapy, restorative justice/victim awareness and mentoring). It specifically targets young adult males who have been identified with convictions of one or more gang-related violent offence(s). In defining the inclusion criteria for a gang-affiliated offender, according to Belong London this was: *an individual convicted of an offence(s) who is either known to be affiliated to a known group/gang and this is corroborated by two or more sources, or who has been convicted of an offence(s) that was committed with other individuals, or whose offending is known to be influenced by one or more other individuals and this is corroborated by two or more sources.* In terms of the criteria for a violent offence, Belong London characterised this as applying to an individual who: *has been convicted of one or more violent offence that took place in the community or has been shown by prison intelligence to have been a perpetrator of violence during two or more incidents in custody.*

Potential participants whose offending background met the above criteria/definition and who were due for release on or after the 31st March 2015 were identified via three routes:

- Their presence on the trident police teams gangs matrix
- Referral from their Offender Supervisor in custody
- Self-referral by directly approaching Belong staff (only where the self-referral was subsequently supported by the individual's Offender Supervisor)

Participation in the programme was entirely voluntary. Prior to being invited to join the programme, all identified potential participants underwent a risk assessment process and risk continued to be monitored throughout the programme. Prisoners were assessed on perceived levels of risk to other individuals in custody, to other participants during the programme, to themselves during the programme, and to Belong's staff and volunteers. Those who were considered to pose a high risk on any of these risk categories were only selected onto the programme if adequate risk management processes could be put in place. For example, risks to known adults in custody were dealt with by ensuring that the individual did not encounter those known adults during the programme. Similarly, one individual was deemed to pose a high risk of harm to female Belong staff/volunteers and so this individual was allocated to male practitioners only.



Table 1: Total number of prisoners participating in the PLAN A programme at HMP/YOI Isis

| | |
|---|--------|
| Number of prisoners recruited on to the PLAN A programme | 47 |
| Number of prisoners transferred to another establishment during the programme | 8 |
| Number of prisoners who withdrew from the programme | 3 |
| Number of prisoners who were removed from the programme | 2 |
| Number of prisoners released from custody before the programme ended (15 th June 2015) | 5 |
| Number of prisoners who completed the programme | 29 |
| Average cost per participant who completed the programme (grant awarded / 29)* | £3,233 |

*Reflecting the costs associated with engaging with non-completers but not reflecting operational costs absorbed by the establishment

Age

Prisoners recruited on to the programme were aged 19-28 years (mean age = 22 years, SD = 1.96).

Offence type

Data was available for 42 of the 47 prisoners recruited on to the PLAN A programme regarding their index offence(s). Eighteen of these individuals were charged with an additional offence, two of whom were also charged with a third offence. Table 2 indicates the offence types within this sample and the frequency of prisoners who were charged with this offence.

Table 2: Prisoners' index offence types

| <u>Offence Type</u> | 1st Index offence (n=42) | 2nd Index offence (n=18) | 3rd Index Offence (n = 2) |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Drugs related | 6 (12.8%) | 1 (2.1%) | - |
| Robbery | 14 (29.8%) | 2 (4.3%) | 1 (2.1%) |
| Burglary | 6 (12.8%) | - | - |
| Assault* | 8 (17.0%) | 10 (21.3%) | - |
| Firearm | 6 (12.8%) | 2 (4.3%) | - |
| Kidnap | 2 (4.3%) | - | - |
| Possession of an offensive weapon | - | 2 (4.3%) | 1 (2.1%) |
| Blackmail | - | 1 (2.1%) | - |
| Not applicable | - | 24 (51.1%) | 40 (85.1%) |
| TOTAL | 42 (89.4%)** | 42 (89.4%)** | 42 (89.4%)** |

*Including malicious wounding and GBH

** Data was missing from five prisoners in the sample



Ethnicity

Data was available for 41 of the 47 prisoners recruited on to the PLAN A programme regarding their ethnicity (see table 3)

Table 3: Prisoner ethnicity

| <u>Ethnicity</u> | <u>Frequency of prisoners</u> |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 13 (27.7%) |
| Black or Black British – African | 11 (23.4%) |
| Black or Black British – Any other black background | 4 (8.5%) |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 3 (6.4%) |
| White – British/English/Welsh/Scottish | 3 (6.4%) |
| White – Irish | 1 (2.1%) |
| White – Any other White background | 3 (6.4%) |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani | 2 (4.3%) |
| Chinese or other ethnic group | 1 (2.1) |
| TOTAL | 41 (87.2%)* |

*Data was missing from six prisoners in the sample

Of the 47 prisoners who were originally recruited on to the PLAN A programme, the length of their sentences ranged from 30-114 months (mean = 66.38 months, SD = 24.07).

Five individuals were released from custody 4-8 weeks before the programme completed. Twenty-nine prisoners in total completed the programme, two of whom were released from custody immediately after their completion. Of the 27 prisoners who were to remain in custody following their completion, the length of time left on their sentence ranged between 2-35 months (mean = 9.59 months, SD = 8.17).



Programme design and delivery

The PLAN A programme was designed by Belong London in an effort to reduce gang-affiliated violent reoffending through the combined delivery of mentoring, restorative justice/victim awareness and art therapy. Based on the needs of the specific population of offenders it sought to engage with, the organisation identified five objectives that delivery staff and mentors would seek to address and support:

1. Barriers to resettlement
To address barriers to resettlement for individual service users, for example problems with employability skills, lack of financial independence
2. Psychological wellbeing
To improve service users' psychological well-being. This includes offering a safe, supportive environment in which service users can begin to process trauma that is linked to their offending behaviour
3. Emotional resilience
To enable participants to develop emotional resilience, including self-esteem and skills in managing difficult thoughts and emotions
4. Prosocial attitudes
To encourage the development of pro-social attitudes for service users. This includes addressing problems with impulsivity (with and without aggression), exploring beliefs about using aggressive behaviour, and addressing problems in conflict resolution including lack of compromise, mistaken beliefs about self and others
5. Negative attitudes to reoffending
To help service users address negative attitudes towards re-offending. This includes working to achieve progress in relation to service users' anticipation of reoffending, level of empathy with victim(s), justification of offending and evaluation of crime as worthwhile

In targeting these five areas, six intermediate outcomes were subsequently identified and articulated:

- An increase in empathy with others
- An increase in motivation to contribute positively to society
- Recovery from impact of childhood/adolescent trauma on ability to articulate emotional experiences
- The development of conflict resolution and employability skills
- The develop of a stronger positive identity
- The development of non-violence modes of achieving financial independence, respect a sense of belonging, and friendships.



The PLAN A programme was intended to run for between three and six months for each participant, over the nine month period when PLAN A was operating within HMP/YOI Isis. The programme was designed so that participants would receive weekly art therapy sessions (generally run in a group setting, but later offered on a 1:1 basis where considered necessary) and 1:1 mentoring would be delivered on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

Restorative justice/victim awareness was originally planned to be delivered with either one or two facilitators delivering 8-12 individual sessions. If victim contact had been possible (and where both victims and offenders were willing to communicate and it was safe for communication to take place) it was intended that direct communication between offenders and victims would take place via a face-to-face/video link conference, shuttle mediation, or letter writing. Although in practice no direct or indirect contact with victims was made, in five cases sessions constituted in-depth preparatory in anticipation of direct face-to-face communication. Restorative justice conferences in the three cases where victims reported a willing to participate are scheduled for July 2015 (after the programme's formal completion date). In all other cases the restorative justice strand constituted facilitator led victim awareness sessions. It is noteworthy that in all but four of the cases the NPS Victim Liaison Team¹ wasn't able to provide contact details for victims since they had asked at the time of reporting the offence for their contact details to be withheld from victim support agencies. In cases where victims had consented at the time of reporting the offence for their contact details to be shared with victim support agencies, contact had then been attempted by the victim liaison service but in three cases the victim did not respond.

As is typical in the prison estate at present, the delivery of the programme was restricted to during association times (which at HMP/YOI Isis currently consists of five 1-1.5 hour periods of time per week when prisoners are unlocked from their cells and not undertaking work or education). Delivering programmes during association times comes with the challenge of potentially competing with other activities, including attending the gym, making telephone calls, and socialising with other prisoners.

In practice, the first cohort (n = 15) were recruited on to the PLAN A programme in September 2014 (when they began their mentoring sessions) and the first art therapy session commenced in November 2014 but had to be suspended, due to unforeseen circumstances, for two weeks towards the end of the programme. At this point the Development Manager and Project Officer met with each participant individually to inform them of the art therapy group's suspension, listen to their responses and to discuss with them the options in terms of the art therapy, which were: a) continue the art therapy groups with a new therapist for the

¹ The NPS Victim Liaison Team is statutorily required to undertake victim liaison with the victims of offenders convicted of violent and/or sexual offences only, and all offenders referred to the programme whose cases were potentially suitable for RJ fell within this group.



remaining 3 weeks of the programme; b) involve the Development Manager with whom service users were already familiar in the delivery of art and discussion based workshops; or c) bring the groups to an early end. Having consulted with the participants, the decision was made at a senior management level to continue with option (b).

The restorative justice/victim awareness sessions commenced in December 2014 and it was anticipated that while most participants would commence the art therapy sessions together, the commencement of the mentoring and restorative justice/victim awareness sessions would be staggered. Recruitment on to the programme was ongoing until March 2015 (new participants were accepted on to the programme after it had commenced, on the condition that there was at least three months remaining of the programme at their joining date) and while the programme formally ended on the 15th June 2015, participants were subsequently given the opportunity to self-refer themselves to one of Belong's generic prison-based mentoring and restorative justice programmes and continue to take part in either or both of these programmes for up to 18 months after PLAN A concluded. For the duration of the PLAN A programme, Belong submitted bimonthly individual progress reports to each participant's offender supervisor/manager (see Appendix 3 for a template of the bimonthly progress report utilised by delivery staff).

Voluntary and paid staff

The 'Core Work Force' of the PLAN A programme was comprised of:

- Development Manager (n = 1)
 - Also involved in undertaking mentoring and restorative justice/victim awareness work with some individuals identified as presenting with especially complex/sensitive issues.
- Delivery staff
 - Project Officer (n = 1)
 - Having had previous experience of working as a mentor for Belong London, the Project Officer's duties included co-ordinating the general running and organisation of the programme, co-ordinating the volunteers, supporting the volunteers in their training, recruiting prisoners on to the programme, conducting risk assessments, and writing the prisoners bi-monthly reports. The Project Officer also acted as one of the restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators and a mentor to some of the prisoners.
 - Art Therapists (n = 2)
 - The primary art therapist appointed to the project holds a Masters in Art Psychotherapy from Goldsmith's University, having had previous



experience working in learning disability and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and working with young offenders, sex offenders, and individuals with borderline personality disorder.

- An additional qualified art therapist was recruited to offer a number of 1:1 sessions. He has been an Art Therapist since 1997 with experience of adult psychiatry.
- Restorative Justice/Victim Awareness (RJ/VA) facilitators (n = 8 volunteer and 1 paid RJ/VA facilitators)
 - The programme started off with 12 RJ/VA facilitators, although three of these withdrew or were transferred to another project.
- Mentors (n = 18; volunteers)
 - The programme commenced with 24 mentors, although five of these subsequently withdrew from the programme and one was transferred to another project.

Some of the backgrounds of the RJ/VA facilitators and mentors that were recruited on the programme included having studied for an undergraduate degree in a relevant area (psychology, sociology, counselling and/or criminology), having worked for youth offending teams or having previously been a mentor and/or RJ/VA facilitator. The motivations given for wanting to become involved in the PLAN A programme as a RJ/VA facilitator or mentor ranged from wanting to work with disadvantaged groups, seeking a new challenge or the experience of working within a prison environment, or an interest in pursuing a career in RJ and/or the criminal justice system.

All restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators (except for the development manager who has experience in RJ/VA practice) received a total of 4.5 days of training and started delivering their sessions 3-4 months after the training. The aim of the training was to:

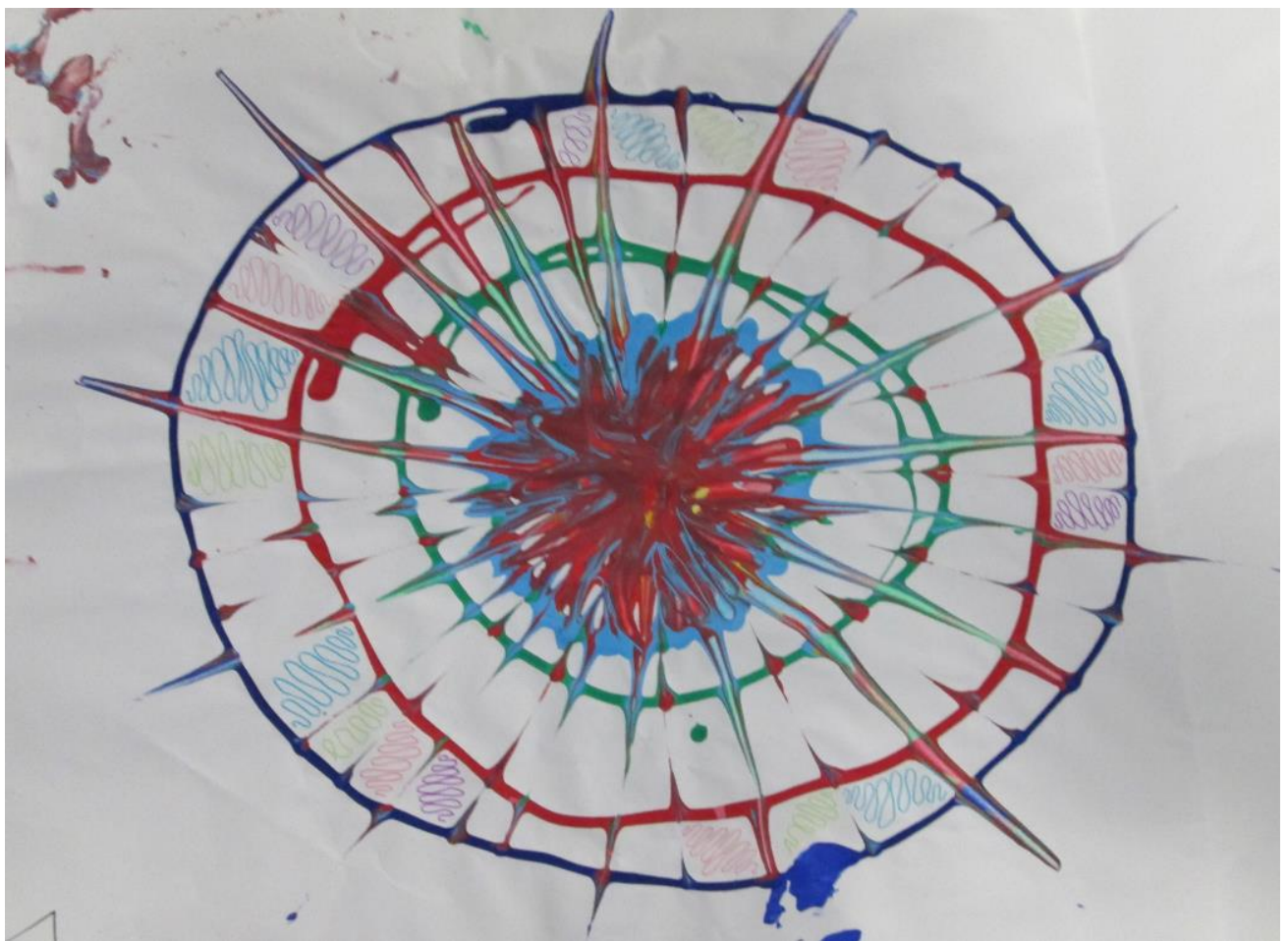
- Help individuals gain an insight into the perspectives of victims of crime and offenders in the context of RJ
- To reflect on their own attitudes to these situations
- To understand how RJ can help victims and offenders
- Gain beginner skills in facilitating RJ conferences

Mentors received 12 hours of training and started delivering their mentoring sessions 1-3 months after they received the training. The aim of the training was to provide individuals with insight into:

- Gangs and group offending
- The prison and probation systems
- Offender rehabilitation



- Desistance, resistance, and the cycle of change
- Anger and aggression
- Substance misuse
- Finances, employment and housing
- Tools that promote development, choice, and self-awareness
- Sexual offending
- Managing risks: confidentiality, safeguarding, risk assessments and records
- Practising interventions
- Commitment, overcoming obstacles and dealing with 'failure'



Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides an introduction to the academic literature surrounding the key components of the PLAN A programme, focusing on mentoring, gang-related offending, art therapy and restorative justice.

Mentoring

Mentoring programmes for young offenders aim to provide a supportive relationship with an adult role model figure to help foster emotional and psychological growth (Eby et al., 2008), and were first formally developed for youth justice in response to social exclusion and social welfare problems in the USA, with one of the earliest mentoring programmes being ‘Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America’ established in 1904². Within the UK, with youth projects such as the Dalston Youth Project (launched in 1994) and CHANCE (launched in 1996) utilised mentoring to increase employability prospects and build positive identities in efforts to reduce offending (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007). Within the last decade, mentoring has become more widely used at all stages of the criminal justice process (Colley, 2003; Hucklesby & Wincup, 2014), and is considered one of the most frequently-used interventions that aims to prevent those that are, or thought to be at risk of, engaging in delinquent behaviour, aggression, or other antisocial behaviour (Tolan, Henry, Schoeny & Bass, 2008). Additionally, it is used to help increase positive life outcomes, including increasing levels of education, training and employment (Newburn & Shiner, 2006). The appeal of mentoring lies in the fact that it is simplistic and typically low-cost delinquency, taking advantage of the resources of local communities and caring volunteers (Fletcher & Batty, 2012; Miller, Barnes, Miller & McKinnon, 2014). Mentors are usually persons in the community who volunteer in a positive and supportive role to help individuals work towards personal objectives and to help link them with local services that they may have failed to access (Jolliffe & Farrington 2008; Newburn & Shiner, 2006).

The definition of mentoring varies, making it difficult to determine in terms of set actions and outcomes (DuBois & Karcher, 2005), and the blurring of boundaries between mentoring and other interventions has led to certain approaches being incorrectly labelled as mentoring (Clinks & MBF, 2012). Nevertheless, there is a general consensus surrounding some common elements: mentoring involves an interaction between two individuals, with the mentor placed in a position of a positive role model, over an extended period of time; there is an inequality of experience, knowledge and power between the mentor and mentee; and the mentee is able to

² Big Brothers Big Sisters:

http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.9iILI3NGKhK6F/b.5960955/k.E56C/Starting_something_since_1904.htm



imitate and benefit from the knowledge, skills and experience of the mentor (Tolan et al., 2008). Identification with a mentor is believed to motivate the recipient to adopt a more conventional way of life, help them manage social, educational, legal, family and peer challenges, and offer them emotional support to promote self-efficacy and confidence (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002). It is still a distinct form of intervention for offenders as it encompasses a strength-based principle and tends to focus on an individual's well-being rather than solely reducing reoffending. The basis is that the provision of assistance and support to deal with offenders' needs promotes healthy development (Tolan et al. 2008). Furthermore, desistance literature suggests that desistance from crime involves the building up of both human capital (skills and knowledge) and social capital (social networks and relationships) (Farrall, 2004) and that mentoring can help support the enhancement of these and strengthen links between an individual and their community (Brown & Ross, 2010a).

Due to mentoring's seemingly increasing popularity, it is important to have evidence to enable an understanding of its promise. Previous literature has highlighted that the frequency and duration of mentor meetings have an important bearing on outcomes, and close, regular contact is considered necessary in order for a programme to be successful in reducing reoffending (Joliffe & Farrington, 2008; St James-Roberts, Greenlaw, Simon & Hurry, 2005). Additionally, it has been suggested that the closer the programme comes to matching its original design (programme integrity), the greater the chance of a positive impact (St James-Roberts et al., 2005), with the formal training of mentors also being indicative of programme success (Miller et al., 2013). Nevertheless, mentoring's rapid growth that has been driven by claims of success within and outside the criminal justice system has caused some to perceive it to be an 'intervention of the moment' (Newburn & Shiner, 2006).

In a review of community-based mentoring programmes with young people, it was found that one-third of those involved entered or re-entered education or training. Other gains included improvements in attendance and behaviour at school, increases in literacy and numeracy skills, improvements in accommodation and family relations, and increased involvement in community activities (St James-Roberts et al., 2005). These findings are mirrored by Newburn and Shiner's (2006) research, suggesting that mentoring programmes were successful in increasing involvement in education training, and work. Furthermore, positive attitudinal and emotional change have been associated with mentoring (Bazron, Brock, Read & Segal, 2006), increasing confidence, positive outlooks, and self-image (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn & Valentine, 2011). Interpersonal skills and relations with family and peers are perceived to have been enhanced through the use of mentoring programmes (Thompson & Zand, 2010). Whilst this research would suggest that there are some gains to using mentoring programmes with young people, it has been suggested that any improvements may not be sustained for the longer term (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008) and that any benefits are limited to the period during which mentoring has taken place (DuBois et al., 2002; Joliffe & Farrington, 2007).



It is typical that mentoring occurs as part of a multi-component programme involving other activities, which although tends to be an advantage in terms of developing rapport and engagement (Meek, 2014) raises the challenge of identifying the specific impact of the mentoring component (Aos, Lieb, Mayfield, Miller & Pennucci, 2004). This is further compounded by the fact that mentoring studies are often limited in describing the specific intervention, its components, or a description of the key features and basic organisation of the programme (Hucklesby & Wincup, 2014; Tolan et al., 2008). For example, the programmes that were included in Newburn and Shiner's (2006) evaluation were reported to be under-theorised and did not provide an explicit model of how and why change was to occur. These factors leave open the question of whether any of these positive effects can be attributed to mentoring, specifically.

The success of mentoring outcomes in relation to reoffending behaviour is varied. Whilst there were reductions in reoffending behaviour demonstrated in Newburn and Shiner's (2006) evaluation, these could not be attributed to the programme with confidence as there were similar reductions in non-participants. Similarly, the 4-10% reduction in offending in Joliffe and Farrington's (2008) review of mentoring programme evaluations was only found in studies of lower methodological quality, with high quality evaluations not yielding any beneficial effects on reoffending (St James-Roberts et al., 2005). Methodological limitations are often reported in the mentoring literature (not just specific to mentoring with young people) and there is often variation in effects among well-designed and methodologically stronger studies, with positive effects on reoffending being yielded by studies of lower methodological quality only. In a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) conducted by Joliffe and Farrington (2007) that examined the impact of mentoring on later life, 7 out of 18 studies showed that mentoring had an impact on re-offending (a reduction of 4-11%). Nonetheless, none of the stronger methodological studies yielded significant results and a number of evaluations included within this REA were based on a limited research design, which subsequently meant that the ability to estimate the impact of mentoring on reoffending is limited. As such, "the quality of the research design affects the interpretations that can be made from the results; the lower the quality of research design the greater the uncertainty about the validity of the interpretations (and in turn any decisions) that can be made from them" (Chitty 2005, p80). Moreover, it has been suggested that any beneficial effects on reoffending may be limited to the time period in which the mentoring is taking place (St James-Roberts et al., 2005).

The majority of the literature presented here has been conducted on mentoring programmes that occur within the community. Mentoring is a widely used intervention at all stages of the criminal justice process (Colley, 2003) and in terms of mentoring within prison settings, there is evidence to suggest that establishing a mentoring relationship whilst the offender is still in custody could lead to more positive outcomes (Lewis et al., 2003). An example of such an intervention is 'Trailblazers'. Trailblazers is an organisation that offers 'through the gate'



mentoring to young offenders for up to 6 months prior to their release and up to 9 months following their release, meaning that the programme covers the transition from custody to the community. Their approach to mentoring relationships is structured through six accredited 'tool sets' that cover all aspects of resettlement, including developing better relationships, sorting out housing and securing a job post release, and how to manage finances. These 'tool sets' were designed in-house and piloted with the mentors and young men involved in the programme, demonstrating positive outcomes in terms of increasing self-awareness, and changes in thinking patterns, attitudes and behaviour. The premise is that relationships with the mentors lead to increased self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence, which will thus reduce the risk of reoffending. In 2012, only 11% of the young people involved in the programme returned to custody, with 51% securing employment or entering education on release from prison (the national average statistics for these are 73.8% and 36%, respectively)³. Further research conducted by Hucklesby and Wincup (2014) examined three empirical research studies, two of which were programmes that aimed to assist offenders through the transition from prison to the community. Within these studies, mentoring was part of a package of interventions. The results were such that this approach, at best, was promising. Using mentoring alongside other interventions was beneficial for a small number of offenders, with the suggestion that establishing a mentor-mentee relationships whilst the offender is still in custody is a constructive way to increase the success of mentor-mentee relationships (Brown & Ross, 2010b). Whilst it is difficult to assess the true impact that mentoring can have, the small positive outcomes that were evident were due to the fact that it was used in combination with other programmes. As such, it has been suggested that mentoring should not be used in isolation but in combination with other interventions for the most successful outcomes (Bouffard & Bergseth, 2008; Joliffe & Farrington, 2007; Joliffe & Farrington 2008).

³ Mentoring young offenders to reduce re-offending, <http://www.trailblazersmentoring.org.uk/our-impact>



Box 1: Mentoring

What is it?

An individual in the community (usually) volunteers to be a positive and supportive role model to help individuals (directly and indirectly) work towards personal objectives and help them link with local services (Newburn & Shiner, 2006) and to help them foster emotional and psychological growth (Ebay et al., 2008).

The principles

Involves an interaction between two individuals over an extended period of time; there is an inequality of experience, knowledge and power between the mentor and mentee; and the mentee is able to imitate and benefit from the knowledge, skill, ability and experience of the mentor.

Encompasses a strength-based principle and focusses on the offender's well-being rather than solely reducing reoffending, where the provision of assistance and support to offenders to deal with their needs promotes healthy and positive development.

Builds up both human capital (skills and knowledge) and social capital (social networks and relationships).

Prevents those that are, or thought to be, at risk of engaging in delinquent behaviour, aggression, or antisocial behaviour.

Increases positive life outcomes, including levels of education, training, and employment.

Important features for successful outcomes:

- Weekly meetings for several hours

- Programme integrity

- Formal training for mentors

In practice with offender populations: in the community

Improvements in attendance and behaviour at school, increases in literacy and numeracy skills, improvements in accommodation and family relations, and increased involvement in community activities (St James-Roberts et al., 2005).

Positive attitudinal, social, and emotional changes (Bazron et al., 2006).

Enhanced interpersonal skills and relations with family and peers (Thompson & Zand, 2010).

Uncertain if there is an impact on recidivism (Joliffe and Farrington, 2008; Newburn and Shiner, 2006).

In practice with offender populations in prison

Promising results when assisting offenders through the transition from prison to the community, suggesting that establishing a mentor-mentee relationship whilst the offender is still in custody is an effective way to increase offender readiness for mentoring (Hucklesby & Wincup, 2014).

Mentoring is often part of a package of interventions so difficult to assess the impact that mentoring alone has on individuals.



Gangs and gang-related offending

The government's definition of a street gang, as set out in the Centre for Social Justice's (2009) report, is: "a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who, 1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group; 2) engage in criminal activity and violence; 3) lay claim over territory (not necessarily geographical but can include an illegal economy territory); 4) have some form of identifying structural feature; and 5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs". Academic research that has investigated gangs and gang culture has focussed on the motivational, risk and protective factors surrounding gang affiliation, violence and criminal activities.

Three competing models have been proposed to explain the gang-crime relationship (Krohn & Thornberry, 2008; Thornberry et al., 2003): the *selection model* (where gangs attract a particular 'type' of individual and recruit members on the basis that an individual has a high propensity for delinquency who engages in criminal behaviour regardless of whether they are affiliated with a gang), the *facilitation model* (gangs are a group that promote delinquency, and so members are not intrinsically more delinquent than non-members) and the *enhancement model* (combining the selection and facilitation models, whereby gangs will select members that have a higher propensity for deviant behaviour and the group dynamic of gangs will enhance any involvement in delinquent activity).

Criminological and sociological research has identified five broad ecological domains that are predictors of gang membership (Klein & Maxson, 2006): the individual, the family, peers, the school, and the community. In turn, psychological research, although limited, has identified self-esteem, impulsivity, risk-seeking and peer pressure as predictive factors that could be related to risk for gang membership (Donnellan et al., 2005; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). In addition, gang members are considered to hold more anti-authority attitudes and value status than non-gang members (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). Coping strategies, such as neutralisation (Esbensen, Peterson, Taylor & Freng, 2009), and moral disengagement strategies, such as attrition of blame (Alleyne & Wood, 2010) are also considered as factors relating to the validation of behaviour.

Of the few studies that exist, it has been suggested that protective factors for avoiding gang membership include:

- Increased parental monitoring and youth coping strategies (McDaniel, 2012);
- Social skills, interactions with prosocial peers, and beliefs in moral order (Katz & Fox, 2010);
- Commitment to school, attachment to teachers and parents' expectations for school (Thornberry, 2001);
- Strong parental involvement and family cohesiveness (Li et al., 2002).



Research suggests that decisions to join a gang are influenced by ‘pushes’ (external forces compelling membership, including the need for protection or following in the footsteps of family and/or friends) and ‘pulls’ (internal forces attracting members to gangs, including a desire for money, status, identity and companionship): Decker and Van Winkle (1996). Rather than identifying a single decisive factor in the pursuit of gang membership, the motivation to join a gang is based on a multitude of factors (Decker & Curry, 2000) and likewise, desistance from gang membership involves a process of disengagement and severing ties (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Pyrooz, Decker & Webb, 2010) which can either occur abruptly or through gradual departure. Motivations for leaving a gang may range from maturation and ageing (Hasting, Dunbar and Bania, 2011) to witnessing traumatic events (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002).

Interventions targeting gang-affiliated individuals

Identifying risk and protective factors for gang membership is critical to the development of effective gang intervention strategies, and the characteristics, dynamics, and motivation to engage in gangs should therefore be taken into account in the design of any gang prevention and intervention programme. O’Brien, Daffern, Chu and Thomas (2013) have identified that core members are particularly antisocial and aggressive and so interventions should focus on cognitions and behaviours if they are to be effective. They also suggest that interventions should be multimodal, address risk factors in multiple domains, consider the role of protective factors, and draw on strength-based approaches in offender rehabilitation (O’Brien et al., 2013).

The Ministry of Justice (2011) highlights a number of issues relevant to the assessment and intervention with gang-affiliated offenders:

- Placing importance on exploring an offender’s own sense of their involvement in collective offending and avoiding labelling and simplistic assumptions about gangs
- Assessments should include a full range of domains linked with gang affiliation
- Personal motivations for affiliation may be closely linked to gang member’s use of violence. Exploring these links may help to inform intervention
- There may be some differences in the criteria (and information) used across agencies to prioritise offenders, which reinforces the importance of information sharing and collaboration in assessment and management of risk
- There can be significant rivalry and conflict both between and within gangs. This has implications for allocation of offenders to intervention groups
- There can be considerable variation between different participants’ experiences and sense of gang affiliation. Exploring and understanding these differences may help to inform and refine decisions about appropriate allocation



- Motivation for the use of violence by gang-affiliated offenders overlaps considerably with patterns of thinking linked with the use of violence in other violent offenders. This suggests that many gang members could benefit from the same interventions as those designed for generally violent offenders, which focus on underlying values, beliefs, and expectations about violence
- Interventions focusing solely on facilitating exit from gangs are unlikely to reduce violence risk in all gang-affiliated offenders. They should also explore (and address) the full range of other factors linked with the offender's use of violence
- Offenders' treatment needs and patterns of engagement might vary at different developmental points, which should be considered in treatment planning
- Exploring personal motivations for joining and staying with street gangs might help to identify ways of engaging offenders in intervention, and motivating them towards prosocial change
- Becoming a father and disillusionment with gang life may be significant events that support the process of exiting gangs and desisting from offending
- Some offenders expressed a strong need for control over change, a mistrustful or anti-authority stance, and sensitivity to being labelled, stereotyped and/or judged. It is important that facilitators and management of interventions find ways of constructively working with these issues
- Potential barriers to successful resettlement include the absence of concrete and realistic future plans, and an over-reliance on leaving the 'home' area as a strategy for overcoming barriers to resettlement.



Box 2: Programme examples

The St Giles Trust SOS Gangs project

What is it?

Originally involved working those coming towards the end of their sentence in YOI Rochester, and subsequently expanded.

“Trains and employs reformed ex-offenders as caseworkers, who provide practical and psychological support to their clients – primarily other ex-offenders, but also those at risk of offending – to help them to avoid offending and reintegrate themselves into society” (The Social Innovation Partnership, 2013, p.3)

Does it work?

“87% of client interviewees said that engaging with the SOS Project had changed their attitude to offending. 73% said that it was important that their caseworkers were ex-offenders themselves, as they could relate to them and felt inspired that they too could turn their lives around.

When client interviewees were asked what the worst thing about the SOS Project was, most said ‘nothing’ (and most other responses related to issues out of SOS’ control, e.g. long waits for housing)” (The Social Innovation Partnership, 2013, p.8).

The RESTORE Forgiveness project at YOI Ashfield

What is it?

RESTORE is a victim empathy, preparatory restorative justice programme developed by the Forgiveness Project for prisons and non-custodial settings. Between 2008 and 2013, 125 workshop programmes were delivered in 11 prisons in England and Wales. It is a group based intervention that encourages the sharing of experiences within a framework influenced by restorative justice principles. The course is intended to explore the role of forgiveness in the lives of prisoners and to enhance their victim awareness by looking at the consequences of actions on others and what can be done to repair the harm.” (Straub, 2013, p.4).

Does it work?

Independent evaluation established positive changes to a number of dimensions, including:

1. Offending behaviour, desistance and victim awareness
2. Relationships with peers and family (inside and upon release)
3. Building and sustaining a stable and crime-free future on the outside
4. Translating forgiveness into community relationships, challenging gang-related values and behaviour, e.g. retaliation, pride, blame, anger, revenge
5. Staff prisoner relationships (Straub, 2013, p.41).

“On the one hand, it inspired, motivated and encouraged real change inside prison (with offenders and staff). On the other hand it offered alternative ways to communities and families on the outside to communicate and deal with gang-related violence and its roots” (Straub, 2013, p.42).



Art therapy in prison

Art therapy refers to the use of art-making activities to enhance well-being and to assist individuals in overcoming difficulties and challenges (Vick, 2003) and its potential role in bringing about positive psychological outcomes is becoming increasingly well documented (Kapitan, 2012; Maujean, Pepping & Kendall, 2014). There are claims that it can be effective in helping offenders work through suppressed emotions and provide greater insight into the reasoning behind criminal behaviour (Smeijsters & Cleven, 2006; Wilson, Caulfield & Atherton, 2008) and arts-based approaches are increasingly recognised as a “low cost, high touch, non-threatening intervention” (Cleveland, 2003, cited in Hughes 2005, p.37) that enables prisoners to develop and express themselves (Ministry of Justice, 2004) and improves self-esteem, coping mechanisms, social competencies, insight into thoughts, feelings and actions triggering their offence, alternative behaviours and empathy for their victim(s) (Bennink, Gussak & Skorán, 2003).

Arts-based projects in prison have been found to contribute to empowerment and building confidence (Ruskin, 2006), and can improve mental health and well-being (Nugent & Loucks, 2011) and reduce levels of depression (Baillargeon et al., 2002; Bell & Robins, 2007; Boothby & Durham, 1999; Gussak, 2004), with the art-making process helping to alleviate symptoms and instilling self-worth and identity. Moreover Gussak (2004) found that there were improvements in the participants’ attitudes and acceptance of one another, which subsequently resulted in increased interaction and improvements to their environment. The results from Gussak’s (2004) pilot study suggest that art therapy is beneficial to adult male inmates, but the study did not include a comparison control group to ascertain whether these changes were significant. This prompted a follow-up study, examining whether art therapy had an effect on decreasing depression and improving socialisation skills in adult male inmates using the same measures as the pilot study (Gussak, 2006). Comparisons between the experimental group (n=27; only two were not taking medication for mental illnesses) and the control group (n=17; seventy-seven percent were taking medication for mental illnesses), revealed positive changes in mood and socialisation, suggesting that art therapy was beneficial to this population. These findings were reflected in Allen, Shaw and Hall’s (2004) study, who demonstrated that art therapy improved the social skills of male inmates and also helped to improve their self-esteem (Cheliotis & Tankebe, 2008).

Locus of Control (LoC) refers to the degree of control that someone feels they have over their environment, with external LoC indicating a tendency to believe that outside forces are in control of one’s behaviour, and internal control indicating that one has control of one’s own behaviour (Bayse, Allgood & van Wyke, 1992). An internal LoC is believed to be a deterrent to criminal behaviour and indicates an acceptance of responsibility for one’s actions, and there



is a direct relationship between LoC and depression, where the more internal LoC an inmate has, the less depressed they are (Retizel & Harju, 2000). Gussak's (2009) findings revealed that adult male inmates who participated in art therapy sessions demonstrated a significant change in scores from external to internal LoC. It was suggested that the reason for this effect was because the participants learnt to manipulate the art material to achieve their desired effect and so learned about cause and effect and subsequently internalised this knowledge.

There are claims that arts-based therapies are most innovative and effective where individuals present with a lack of impulse control and empathy, and problems with grief, aggression and dealing with anger (Blacker, Watson & Beech, 2008; Smijisters & Cleven, 2006). The artistic expression of emotions, instead of acting out aggressively, can serve as a coping mechanism for the individual, helping them to prevent their levels of increasing emotional tension from getting out of control (Haeyen, 2004). In their qualitative inquiry into whether art therapy was effective in reducing aggression in a forensic psychiatric population, Smeijsters and Cleven (2006) found that art materials and techniques can evoke, release and explore aggression, and that the use of art materials made it possible for the individual to be in contact with their cognitions, feelings and behaviours. Participants were able to recognise and influence their thoughts, feelings and behavioural signals that were linked to their offence, and explore and develop new thoughts, feelings and actions, subsequently strengthening their self-expression, self-esteem, and empathy. Whilst these findings would support the use of art therapy with aggressive offenders, these effects were not experimentally researched. Upon considering the literature into art therapy and aggression, Breiner et al. (2012) created the Art Therapy Anger Management Protocol (ATAM), incorporating art therapy into a manualised cognitive-behavioural therapy based anger management treatment programme that was offered to adult prisoners with a history of anger problems or interpersonal violence. It was found that the art therapy techniques helped participants to engage in the therapy process by helping them to access emotions that were difficult or uncomfortable to express, and/or by calming those who were nervous or distressed about being in the group or who were experiencing unrelated stressors. Furthermore, the art process promoted relaxation and provided a safe outlet for uncomfortable and negative emotions.

Using art as a tool for expression can build human and social capital, and help offenders begin to see how they could improve their future, an important factor in promoting desistance from crime (Maruna, 2005). By taking part in art therapy, inmates are given the opportunity to interact with others (Whyte & McNeill, 2007) and learn different ways to develop and express themselves (Nugent & Loucks, 2011). Furthermore, the increase in self-esteem and a sense of achievement can improve the likelihood of moving into education (Cheliotis & Tankebe, 2008; Ministry of Justice, 2004). There is currently limited empirical data that demonstrates the long-term impact that art therapy within a prison setting has on changing behaviour and desistance from crime, but nevertheless, the current literature does indicate that there are wide ranging



benefits in using art therapy with prisoner populations, particularly in terms of improving mood, socialisation skills, self-expression and self-esteem.

Box 3: Art therapy

What is it?

The use of art-making activities to overcome various difficulties and challenges to enhance wellbeing (Vick, 2003)

The principles

Teaches individuals about cause and effect and how to achieve a desired effect, subsequently causing internalisation of knowledge and generalisation to everyday situations.

Helps work through suppressed emotions and provides greater insight into the reasoning behind criminal behaviour.

Targets mental health and well-being, coping mechanisms, social competencies, self-esteem, openness to the offense, insights into thoughts, feelings and actions that triggered an offense, and empathy for victim(s).

Assists with building confidence, and enhances the individual's feeling of empowerment.

Functions as a coping mechanism for the individual, helping them to prevent emotional tension from getting out of control.

In practice with offender populations in prison

Positive effects on levels of depression and improvements in attitudes and acceptance of other individuals, which subsequently increased interaction and improvements to the prison environment (Gussak, 2004; Gussak 2006; Gussak 2009).

Improvements to self-esteem (Cheliotis & Tankebe, 2008) and in Locus of Control, where individuals learn to accept responsibility for their actions (internal) as opposed to believing that outside forces control behaviour (Gussak, 2009).



Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice (RJ) procedures involve a range of justice practices with common core values (Braithwaite, 2002) and broadly refers to “a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future” (Marshall, 1999), with the premise being that crime is a violation of people and relationships, as opposed to a violation of law (Zehr, 1990). This definition encompasses direct mediation (where the offender and victim meet face-to-face), indirect mediation (where information is passed between the offender and victim, and possibly other parties, and work is done by the offender for the community, but there is no fact-to-face meetings) and conferencing (where one or more supporters of the victim and the offenders are also involved in the face-to-face meeting between the victim and offender) (Shapland et al., 2006). Victims can communicate to their offender the impact that their crime had on them, ask for an explanation and an apology, and be involved in agreeing reparatory activity that the offender will undertake to enable their possible reintegration back into the community. Offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and face the consequences their actions have had on others. Furthermore, through the process of restoring relationships between the offender and their victim, and the reintegration of offenders and victims, the community also has the opportunity to heal (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999).

Research has suggested that RJ practices in the community are effective in improving victim satisfaction and reducing reoffending, supporting those affected by crime and building public confidence (Youth Justice Board, 2006). There is substantial data indicating the positive outcomes of RJ interventions and randomised controlled trials examining RJ practice have revealed high victim satisfaction and a reduction in reoffending (Sherman & Strang, 2007). Similarly, a large-scale evaluation of three RJ schemes within the UK reported that the both victims’ and offenders’ responses to the RJ process (victim-offender conferencing) were positive; at least half of the victims described the process as providing them with closure, with 85% stating that they were satisfied with the experience, and the offenders were found to reoffend less frequently than those who did not receive RJ (Shapland et al., 2007). Overall, each of the three schemes demonstrated a positive impact on the frequency of reoffending. Additionally, it was found that the most effective form of RJ was face-to-face meetings between the victim and offender (Shapland et al., 2008) and that RJ conferencing represented value for money (Dhami & Joy, 2007; Victim Support, 2010).

Latimer, Dowden and Muise (2005) conducted a meta-analysis examining 22 studies that explored the effectiveness of 35 RJ programmes in Canada. When compared with non-restorative approaches, RJ was successful in achieving victim satisfaction (those who participated in RJ process were significantly more satisfied than those who did not), in achieving offender satisfaction (RJ programmes had a moderate-to-weak positive impact), in



ensuring offender compliance with restitution agreements, and in reducing recidivism. Whilst there are inherent limitations with using the meta-analytic technique, particularly with regards to the sample-selection bias (RJ is a voluntary process and so those who chose to participate may be more motivated than those who did not, and it is thus not possible to randomly assign participants to treatment and control conditions), these results, along with the findings from the other studies identified (Sherman & Strang, 2007; Shapland et al., 2007; Shalpan et al., 2008; Dhimi & Joy, 2007) do provide robust evidence for the effectiveness of RJ programmes within community settings.

A RJ programme may be initiated at any point in the Criminal Justice System (Latimer, Dowden, and Muise, 2005) however, it has not to date had a large-scale impact within prison settings in the UK. The reason for this may be due to the fact that historically contradictions or tensions have existed between imprisonment and RJ. Imprisonment is perceived to be primarily offender and crime focussed, detaching the offender from their victims and communities, reducing a prisoner's sense of autonomy, control, and responsibility, is regimented, and is stigmatizing. RJ, on the other hand, is perceived to be primarily victim focused involving offenders, victims and communities, requiring voluntary participation, focussing on individuality, and emphasising respect (Dhimi, Mantle & Fox, 2009). Nonetheless, it has been suggested that prisoners' experiences of imprisonment would improve through the implementation of RJ practices, and thus increase a prisoners' utility regarding their efforts to reduce reoffending (Van Ness, 2007) or establish a rehabilitative culture. Mantle, Fox and Dhimi (2005) have argued that RJ and imprisonment are compatible when the goal of both is to rehabilitate, and with that comes potential benefits for prisoners, victims, communities, the prison, and prison staff. For example, prisoners may be given the opportunity to take responsibility for their crime(s) and gain a better understanding of them (Feasey, Williams & Clarke, 2005), in addition to being given the opportunity to make amends and obtaining employment skills through community service work (Coyle, 2002), which could subsequently improve their self-esteem and prosocial skills. Victims may gain a better understanding of their victimisation, encouraging their emotional healing, reducing their fears of victimisation, and teaching them to separate the offence from the offender. Prisons could develop links with the communities, promoting prosocial values and increasing the chance of successful reintegration of prisoners, subsequently providing the community with the benefits of community service work and reducing the fears and perceptions of crime and offenders.

To date, there have been few RJ programmes operating within the UK prison system. These programmes tend to focus on teaching skills including alternatives to violence (AVP workshops), victim-awareness (e.g. 'The Sycamore Tree Project'), and community service work (through organisations such as 'The Inside Outside Trust'). However, successful small-scale initiatives drawing on RJ principles include the work of the St Giles Trust at YOI Rochester (The Social Innovation Partnership, 2013) and the RESTORE Forgiveness project



at YOI Ashfield (Straub, 2013). International examples of RJ being utilised within prison settings include the victim-offender mediation programmes operating in over 20 states in the USA (Liebmann, 2007), as well as in Belgium (e.g. the 'Restorative Justice' pilot study; Rogers & Peters, 2002) and Canada (e.g. the 'Grande Cache Institution' which is a RJ living unit; Petrellis, 2007).

Evaluations that have examined the effectiveness of RJ programmes within the prison context have produced mixed responses. Miller and Shuford (2005) found that 14% of prisoners in Delaware who completed an AVP programme before their release committed new crimes within three years of their release (6% of which were for violence), although recidivism was half the rate of the control group (prisoners who had not completed an AVP workshop). Feasey et al (2005) found significant pre- and post- improvements in those who completed the victim awareness 'Sycamore Tree Project' across 42 prisons, with improvements in empathy with victims, attitudes towards offending, and perceptions of re-offending. Coyle's (2002) investigation into the effects of community service work (The Inside Out Trust) revealed that within 15 prisons, community work was considered constructive as prisoners could pay back for their wrongdoings, and they considered it helpful for their future; fifty-one percent of participants believed that they had learnt a new skill, and both staff and prisoners noticed a positive impact on the environment and relationships within the prison environment. In terms of victim-offender mediation across the USA, Umbreit, Vos, Coates, and Brown (2003) found that it contributed towards the personal growth and healing for 60% of victims and families, and 82% of the offenders that took part felt that it contributed to their rehabilitation, their personal growth and healing, and their understanding of how their crime had affected others. Whilst these evaluations have yielded positive findings for the utility of RJ within the prison setting, Petrellis's (2007) evaluation of the Grande Cache Institution (when compared with another institution with a RJ programme but no special living unit, and another institution with a special living unit but no RJ programme) found that whilst 89% of the prisoners reported increases in their understanding of their crime(s), only half reported that it increased their sense of remorse, with even less than this reporting a desire to make amends for their crime(s). Staff reported that whilst the prisoners' attitudes had improved, they were unsure as to whether there would be behavioural changes. Overall, Grande Cache was no more successful than the comparison institutions. In Belgium, it was found that victim awareness was successful in the development of empathy, but this was not the case for all prison populations (Devroey, 2003). Similarly, Bastiansen and Vercruyssen (2002) reported that a change of focus to victims led to the prison staff and prisoners feeling resentful, and an increase in workloads for psychologists and social workers.

The mixed findings from evaluations into the effectiveness of RJ within prison settings makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about its utility. Furthermore, Dhimi et al. (2005) highlight that most of the evaluations that currently exist are lacking in scientific rigor,



including problems with selection-bias, a lack of comparison or control group, and small sample sizes. For example, Miller and Shuford (2005) used a very small sample, using control group that may not have been wholly comparable and Feasey et al.'s (2005) findings were not positive for some of the prisons within their sample, particularly for low-security prisons. It is clear that there is a need for more research into how RJ can best be applied to the prison setting and to different prison populations, but in the meantime what can be argued is that RJ does not cause any poorer outcomes than imprisonment alone.

Box 4: Restorative Justice

What is it?

“All the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future” (Marshall, 1999).

Restorative justice can be direct (face-to-face meeting between the offender and the victim, which could also involve one or more supporters of the victim and the offenders – known as conferencing), or indirect (without a face-to-face meeting, where work is done by the offender for the community).

The principles

A crime is a violation of people and relationships, as opposed to a violation of the law.

Restorative justice enables:

Victims to clarify the impact the crime had on them, ask for an explanation and an apology, and be involved in reparatory activity the offender will undertake to enable their possible reintegration back into the community;
The encouragement of offenders to take responsibility for their actions and face the consequences their actions have had on others;

The community to have an opportunity to heal through the process of restoring relationships between the offender and their victim, and the reintegration of offenders and victims to society.

In practice with offender populations

Most effective form of restorative justice is face-to-face meetings between victim and offender (Shapland et al., 2008).

Alternative to violence workshops, as part of restorative justice programme, reduced recidivism by half when compared to those who did not take part in the programme (Miller and Shuford, 2005).

Victim-offender mediation contributed to rehabilitation, personal growth and healing, and understanding how their crime had affected others (Umbreit, Vos, Coates, & Brown, 2003).

Victim-awareness work demonstrated improvements in empathy with victims, attitudes towards offending, and perceptions of offending (Feasey et al., 2005).

Community service work enabled the learning of new skills and improved relationships within the prison environment (Coyle, 2002).

May not work for all prison populations (Devroey, 2003; Petrellis, 2007).



Chapter 3

Evaluation methodology

Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation aimed to assess the perceived impact of Belong London's PLAN A programme on reoffending amongst those identified as gang-affiliated, violent young offenders and in turn to contribute to a growing evidence base of 'what works' in reducing gang related violence and recidivism amongst the young offender prison population. PLAN A is unique in its proposal of implementing a three-strand programme of rehabilitation, incorporating restorative justice/victim awareness interventions alongside art therapy sessions and one-to-one mentoring. Specifically, the evaluation process attempts to provide empirical evidence of the impact of the programme on changing attitudes to crime, improved wellbeing and the formation of pro-social behaviour for young offenders, together with the an exploration of the perceived impact of running all three strands of the initiative simultaneously.

Evaluation design

The evaluation was carried out by a team of researchers at Royal Holloway, University of London, led by Professor Rosie Meek. The study used a mixed-method approach to data collection, with data primarily generated through qualitative interviews with service users, volunteers and staff who delivered the programme, and supplemented with quantitative questionnaires administered to prisoners once the programme was completed. Due to commissioning arrangements, the PLAN A programme concluded June 15th 2015, and the evaluation report was expected for submission later that same month, on June 30th 2015. An additional challenge encountered by the evaluation team was the period of time it took to receive confirmation of approval by the National Research Committee of NOMS, by which time the programme had commenced so there was no opportunity to gather baseline data. Consequently, data was collected at one time-point whilst offenders were still in custody and there was no matched comparison group of individuals that had not participated in the programme. No baseline data was collected and there was not scope within the evaluation timeline to carry out post-release assessments. These challenges, together with the relatively small sample size and the modest evaluation budget, determined the parameters of the evaluation research.



Qualitative data

Individual and small group interviews were used to collect in-depth, detailed accounts of the perceptions and personal experiences of service-users and delivery staff. Interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed verbatim. Using the programme's initial aims and objectives as a guideline, key themes were identified from the data. These findings have been illustrated in this evaluation through the use of anonymised illustrative quotes taken from the interview transcripts.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with a total of 31 adult male prisoners, comprising:

- 23 of the 29 who completed the programme,
- All five who were due for release before the end of the programme,
- Both participants who withdrew from the programme
- One of the two participants that were removed from the programme by staff in line with their risk management processes

All prisoners that were involved in the PLAN A programme were informed by the Development Manager and/or the Project Officer that the external researchers would like to speak with them about their experiences of the PLAN A programme.

Delivery staff and mentors

In supplementing the data gathered from prisoner participants, a total of 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with two staff members (the project officer and art therapist), nine volunteer mentors and four restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators.

All staff and mentors that were involved in the delivery of the PLAN A programme were informed from the outset that the researchers carrying out the evaluation would like to speak to them about their experiences of the PLAN A programme. Individuals who had given their consent for their contact details to be passed on to the Research Team were contacted and invited to attend either a face-to-face or telephone interview.

Victims

At the time of programme completion (June 15th) and evaluation conclusion (June 30th) no restorative justice conferences had yet taken place, although it is understood that three RJ conferences have been planned for July 2015. Preparation work with victims and offenders for these conferences started in December 2014.



Quantitative measures

Quantitative data was collected from those completing the programme in the form of a validated measure, Crime-Pics II, which is an established tool designed to assess an individual's attitudes towards offending (Frude, Honess & Maguire, 2009). The Crime-Pics II psychometric measures are widely used in the evaluation of offender interventions, including Restorative Justice programmes (Feasey & Williams, 2009), and have the benefit of producing scaled responses that allow comparisons with a 'typical' offender population, especially valuable in instances such as this where the collection of baseline data prior to the programme commencing was not possible.

The 35 item structured Crime-Pics II questionnaire was designed to measure individuals' attitudes towards offending, where participants rate their level of agreement with a total of 35 statements, which are then numerically coded and combined on five distinct scales:

1. General attitude to offending scale

A measure of an individual's general attitude towards offending, with a low score indicating that an individual believes that an offending lifestyle is not desirable.

2. Anticipation of reoffending scale

A measure of an individual's anticipation of reoffending, with a low score indicating that the individual does not anticipate reoffending.

3. Victim hurt denial scale

A measure of an individual's attitude towards his/her victims, such as whether they believed they caused harm, with a low score indicating that the individual recognises that their actions impact on the victim.

4. Evaluation of crime as worthwhile scale

A measure of an individual's evaluation of crime being worthwhile, with a low score indicating that the individual perceives the cost of crime as being greater than the rewards.

5. Problem inventory

Participants indicate the extent to which they perceive something to be a problem for them, ranging from a big problem to no problem at all. The measure is directly associated with resettlement needs, encompassing money, relationships, employment, controlling temper, sensation seeking, family, health, boredom, housing, substance use, gambling, depression, self-esteem, confidence and anxiety. The higher the score the greater the number and gravity of problems.



Procedure

Prior to conducting the interviews, participants were informed about the evaluation process, both verbally and with a typed information sheet. Participants also gave their written permission to be involved in the interview with a consent form administrated at the start of each interview. For those members of staff who were interviewed by telephone, the information sheet and consent form were emailed to them a few days prior to their arranged interview, requesting that they send back the completed consent form before the interview went ahead). All interviews were recorded where participants gave their consent. If consent was not given, detailed interview notes were taken. Once each interview was completed, verbatim transcripts were created and the recorded interview was destroyed.

All prisoner interviews were held at HMP/YOI Isis. For prisoners who had completed the programme, interviews were held between 8th - 18th June 2015. For those who were released before the end of the programme, interviews were held approximately one week before their release date. For those who withdrew or were removed from the programme, interviews were held during May-June 2015.

The interview schedule for the prisoners covered questions relating to:

- Their initial expectations of the PLAN A programme
- The support that was offered by the programme (practical, emotional and psychological)
- Their perception of how each part of the programme was conducted and the delivery/organisation of the programme in general
- The relationships they had with their mentor/art therapist/RJ/VA facilitator(s)
- The perceived impact of participating in the programme, and any changes they experienced since commencing the programme

Interviews with prisoners were either conducted individually or as a focus group discussion (ranging from 2-5 participants per group) and interview duration ranged between 25-45 minutes. The majority of prisoner interviews were conducted with one researcher, although six of the focus group discussions were conducted with two researchers, in line with Belong's risk management processes that required that two researchers were present for the focus groups containing more than three prisoners). Once the prisoner interviews were completed, individuals were given a short break and given the opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns about the interview before being asked to complete the Crime-Pics III questionnaire (only those who had completed the programme completed this questionnaire). All individuals who were interviewed were thanked for their participation and reminded that they could contact the Belong Project Team or the Royal Holloway Research Team if they were concerned about the interview content and process or subsequently wished to withdraw from the research.



Interviews with delivery staff and mentors were conducted during March - April 2015. Two out of nine interviews with mentors were conducted face-to-face and one of the four interviews with RJ/VA facilitators was conducted face-to-face. Interviews with the Project Officer and Art Therapist were conducted face-to-face.

The interview schedule for delivery staff members and mentors covered questions relating to:

- Their understanding of their role within the programme
- Details about the procedures they followed for their sessions, including duration, training, location, session activities, barriers to treatment, the organisation
- Details about the relationship they had with the service users, including how these relationships were established, the impact of these relationships, and maintaining boundaries
- How the interventions they conducted were used alongside the other interventions of the programme
- Any changes they noticed in the prisoners since commencing the programme.

All interviews with delivery staff and mentors were conducted individually with one researcher. The interview duration ranged between 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Analysis

Following data collection, a thematic analysis was used to locate and examine the key findings and data trends in order to develop prominent themes and sub-themes. This method of analysis can allow for a description of the data as well as an exploration of the different features of the research area (Boyatzis, 1998). Belong London's original aims for PLAN A were used as a guideline when organising the significant impacts of the programme, these involved: the formation of pro-social attitudes, emotional resilience, and enhanced wellbeing, changing attitudes to crime and influencing barriers to resettlement. Thematic analysis was regarded as the most relevant analysis technique due to the study's attempt to capture personal experiences and perceptions of the benefits and limitations of PLAN A.

Ethics

The research process was designed in order to ensure participants gave informed consent and were aware of how their data would be used should they agree to participate. Participants were given verbal and written confirmation on how their data would be used, and reminded that any data obtained during the interviews would be collected and stored securely at Royal Holloway, University of London. Participants were also informed that all names, places or distinguishing characteristics would be anonymised in the evaluation process in order to uphold confidentiality and anonymity. As well as receiving ethical approval from Royal Holloway University of London, prior to gaining access to HMP/YOI Isis approval was sought and obtained from the National Offender Management Service National Research Committee.



Chapter 4

Evaluation Findings: Prisoner Perspectives

Mentoring

“I’ve got someone encouraging me to be more positive”

As part of the programme, all prisoners were matched with a mentor (most of whom were volunteers, but some paid) to conduct regular, one-to-one mentoring sessions. The mentoring aspect was used in order to provide the prisoners with practical and emotional support tailored to the individual. During the interview prisoners were asked what they understood of mentoring, with the majority having a positive perception of how mentoring provided them with guidance and support:

“Someone that is like a role model that is encouraging you to do positive things”

“Not telling you what to do but guiding you... Being able to talk about how you feel about certain situations and the way you act in certain situations to understand yourself better”

“I feel like the mentoring was the most helpful part of the course... it’s more intimate...it becomes almost routine... end up opening up more and more and talking about certain things that you probably didn’t want to address before”

“To get you ready for resettlement back in the community”

Practical Support

A prominent theme from the interviews concerned the way in which a successful mentoring relationship would provide invaluable practical support and assistance with job applications, education and housing issues. Developing goals with the prisoners was another key objective in the mentoring part of the programme in order to help provide focus and help to form positive ambitions and for a number of prisoners this was seen as a crucial part of their preparation for release:

“We’ll go over what I want to do when I come out, what I’m looking to do. She helped me write a CV... I’ve got someone encouraging me to be more positive”



“It was helpful because it was the first time I had actually sat down and thought about my finances... I’d never actually thought about money or problems”

“He’ll give me a task to do, action plans, so ‘what is your five year action plan?’ and ‘what are you going to do to achieve this goal or that goal?’ He’s pushing me”

Prosocial Attitudes and Behaviours

During the interviews, prisoners were asked what kind of impact their mentoring sessions had had and how they considered it constructive or supportive. One of the key objectives of Belong’s programme was to encourage the development of pro-social attitudes, such as learning how to deal with aggression and anger and developing coping skills to manage these problems. A number of prisoners commented on how mentoring had been successful in helping them to deal with issues of patience and anger:

“I think I’m a lot more patient now.... I think chatting to my mentor helped... Before I was just angry or I’d just fight, but now I think I’ve grown up a bit through the course and just through myself”

“There’s times I still get angry with certain things, but I try...try to just ignore it whereas before it could be the smallest thing that set me off... you get to talk about it with your mentor and it gets vented out so it won’t happen. When you go back you won’t be as pissed as when you came”

“If I was angry about something she [his mentor] just calmed me down... by talking to me. Just talking and being there and chilling, just calmed me down”

For the majority of the prisoners interviewed, just having someone outside of the prison to talk through their thoughts or emotions with was helpful:

“Having someone else to talk to... just being able to speak about what I’m looking forward to when I leave, what I missed out on”

“It’s nice to have someone come and see you every other week and just talk about things you don’t talk about normally”

Prisoners also commented on mentors being able to provide a different perspective on their situations as well as being a positive influence:

“I’ve got someone encouraging me to be more positive. Before I had the mentor my mind was still the same and whatnot... but I’ve got her encouraging me”



Art Therapy

“I couldn’t use words so I had to use art”

Art therapy groups were also run alongside the mentoring and restorative justice/victim awareness programmes, with prisoners attending the sessions once a week. Sessions with the art therapist concluded five weeks earlier than planned and so were replaced with arts and discussion based workshops led by members of Belong staff. With permission from the individuals involved, a selection of artwork created during these groups is included throughout this report.

The objective of the art therapy groups was to have the prisoners draw or paint any feelings or thoughts they had in order to motivate them to become willing to discuss these feelings:

“We had subjects we were speaking about, like what does money mean to you, or what does violence mean to you... you draw about what those things mean to you and at the same time you take from the drawings. I think subconsciously you voice them while drawing”

“We painted pictures of our background and what we did in our crime and things like what we would prevent us from coming back to jail”

“I couldn’t use words so I had to use art... it was like a relief from your baggage”

Attitudes to Crime

The majority of prisoners interviewed commented on how art therapy had helped them express themselves more openly, which in turn helped them to make sense of past decisions and reflect on their thoughts about criminal behaviour:

“We just talk about all different things, reflecting on what we’ve done and what we do, and how we can change things”

“It’s helping us, basically, to understand why we do things and what triggers us and past experiences. And it’s also about what we want to be in the future, or where we want to be”

As with mentoring, prisoners also commented on the significance of art therapy groups in relation to dealing with feelings of anger or violent behaviour and how the sessions had helped them to re-evaluate their behaviour and how to remain calm during moments of conflict:



“When we go to art therapy, we have to write things at the beginning, like what makes you angry... I’ve found why sometimes I feel angry”

“I reckon I’m less hyped up and before I wouldn’t really care about things. Now, I think about things before they even happen. ‘Cause I’m much calmer... I know how to go a different way round things, like speak in a different way than how I used to before. I’m just calm”

“It made me aware of signs... and ways to address and ways to vent and ways to talk... it helps to think before you act and to be aware of the signs of what causes you to act”

Changing Perspectives

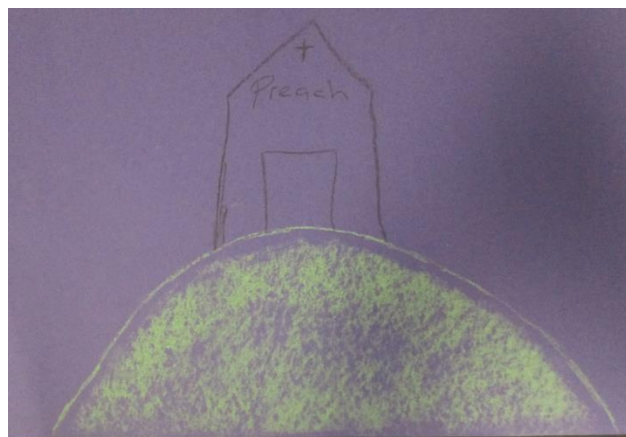
A lot of the prisoners interviewed about art therapy discussed how the group setting had allowed them to interact better with other prisoners whilst also providing them with new perceptions about their behaviour or attitudes. The sessions were seen as being able to foster positive peer support which some of the prisoners found particularly helpful:

“When you’re in a group and you’re having discussions and debates you see different points of views and you learn things... I think [being] in a group and having discussions it is better because everyone can learn something and it makes you think more”

“I felt better that it was in a group because it’s with my peers from my wing... we would all help each other and support each other”

“You can see different people’s views on what they’re going through and you can compare it to what you’re going through”

“Within the group we got comfortable with each other and it helped”



Restorative Justice/Victim Awareness

“Before I didn’t care about the victims, I just cared about me”

The third strand of PLAN A was a restorative justice/victim awareness model, directed by a facilitator (all but one of whom were unpaid volunteers). Restorative justice/victim awareness programmes are seen to be beneficial to both victims and offenders, offering closure for the victim and providing the offender with a greater understanding of the impact of crime in an attempt to reduced recidivism. Although originally anticipated to include direct work with victims and/or surrogate victims, establishing contact with victims was only possible in five cases (offenders and victims in these cases subsequently went through preparatory work for restorative justice conferences planned for July 2015 after the formal completion of the programme). In two of these cases, prisoners went through preparatory work to meet their direct victims but the victims subsequently decided they would prefer indirect communication. In cases where victim contact was not possible or where victims were unwilling to participate, sessions instead focused on issues surrounding victim awareness.

In interviews, prisoners demonstrated a good understanding of what this element of the programme would involve:

“Talking about the ripple effect and that sort of thing. You learn how my decisions don’t just affect me”

“The restorative justice is about understanding how your victims feel”

Understanding the Impact of Crime

Despite the initial aims of the restorative justice/victim awareness programme, no participants met with any victims during the course of the 9-month programme, which ended in June 2015. Instead sessions primarily consisted of individual meetings with a restorative justice/victim awareness facilitator to discuss criminal behaviour and the impact it had on others, and was consequently more aligned with a victim awareness initiative than a traditional form of restorative justice. Nonetheless, participants did refer to some successes with this element of the programme in terms of understanding the wider impact of their criminal behaviour for their families and the victims of crime:

“You learn how my decisions don’t affect just me. With me coming to jail, my family have come to jail with me... me coming in here has ruined a lot of relationships”



“It’s helpful because before I would just think about not doing robbery because I could go to prison... but now, when I started the restorative justice, there’s more than just that because you’re actually hurting people as well”

“It made me see it from the victim’s view. Like what kind of impact I was causing. Before I didn’t really think about the victims, I just cared about me. When I started the course, I started seeing it from a whole different view”

“Before I started the course I felt no remorse for the victim... I feel like, in a way, he saved me from doing something else. I’ve realised that I’ve affected him a lot and I wanted to say sorry for causing stress on his family as well”

“You’re seeing someone every week that drills it into you, “you’re in there because you didn’t think about someone else” ... it brings it all to the forefront of your mind”



Observed Improvements from PLAN A: Prisoner Perspectives

Developing Self-Esteem and a Positive Attitude

One of the key objectives of the PLAN A programme was to help enable prisoners to develop a positive attitude and improved self-esteem, as well as a changing perspective on criminal behaviour and its consequences. On an individual level, prisoners reported that undertaking PLAN A had helped them formulate positive goals and develop an optimistic outlook for their future:

“I just think I’ve got more of a positive attitude... It’s got me positive. Hopefully I go home feeling positive”

“I think talking to my mentor and the art therapy group, they show you that there’s another way... You can get the skills and go out there and do something, even though you’ve been to prison. I think my head is screwed on more. I’m more focused now”

“My mind set has changed because of the mentoring, because I’m getting pushed by someone to do better things, like concentrate on better things. I’ve just got more encouragement from the right people”

“With this course, it’s helped me to see there’s a lot of opportunities out there and you can be who you want to be but you have to stick to it. A bit of focus in life and going the right way”

“All three make an impact on each different thing. They are all good in a way... having all three of them keeps me all at one level and there’s all different things and areas that have got to be covered”

Interviewees described feeling a greater sense of self-worth and growing self-esteem after participating in PLAN A:

“It’s made me believe in myself more. I had confidence before, but it’s boosted it a bit more”

“It feels good that I’ve realised what I’ve done is wrong... finding out a lot about myself. That I’m not a bad person, I just made a mistake”



“It’s made me want to do better in life... since talking about it [his previous career] with someone it made me think about life and the future, and to live the life you want to live”

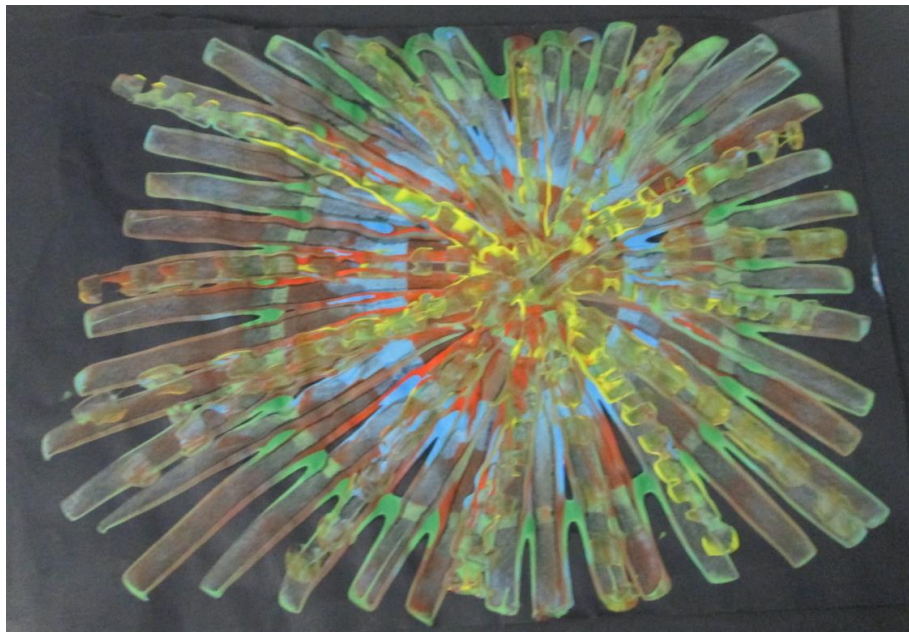
The participants also discussed how they had previously struggled to manage difficult thoughts or emotions and were unable to express themselves, which could often escalate to situations of conflict or violence. When asked about how they could deal with these difficult feelings, many of them spoke about how the programme had facilitated coping strategies to help manage and control their emotions more effectively:

“Understanding them [difficult emotions] is managing them, for me. Being able to speak and talk about them, and vent and letting the emotions out, rather than holding them in”

“I’ll talk, even when I find it hard, I’ll try and put something that’s positive out there in the open”

“It’s supported me really well... sometimes I write what things make me angry. Sometimes I express it on paper... my mentor helped me with ways to express myself”

“[The course helped] to make me a better decision maker. I didn’t expect it to happen to me... I’ll be getting out of here with a better mind set”



Improved Mental Health and Wellbeing

For a number of the prisoners interviewed, positive changes to mental health were one of the most effective aspects of the programme. The project aimed to improve psychological wellbeing through the provision of a supportive environment in which they could express themselves more openly and through programmes that could develop self-confidence and a more optimistic mind frame. This is reflected in the following interview extracts:

“For me, it was being able to relax, vent your thoughts and feelings onto the paper and being able to speak about them freely... speaking without hesitation... and thinking more clearly”

“When I started engaging in conversation with people from the outside who started coming in, you can have a bit of a conversation... I was engaging in things so it made me feel a bit better in myself. I came out of my shell a little bit”

“It [art therapy] was more expressing yourself without having to talk about it... it meant a lot”

“It was nice to get a few bits and pieces off your chest. It was nice to offload a little. I felt a bit more at peace. I could sleep a bit better”

Escape from Prison Life

It was evident that involvement in the programme also offered a reprieve from their usual daily routine, alleviating boredom and giving them some time away from their cell:

“It’s time consuming, better than staying on the wing”

“It’s made the time before association fly. You know, when you’re waiting in your cell for hours”

“At first I was just looking forward to time out my cell, but the more you do the course, the more you build up the trust and friendship and you enjoy it”



Challenging Barriers to Resettlement

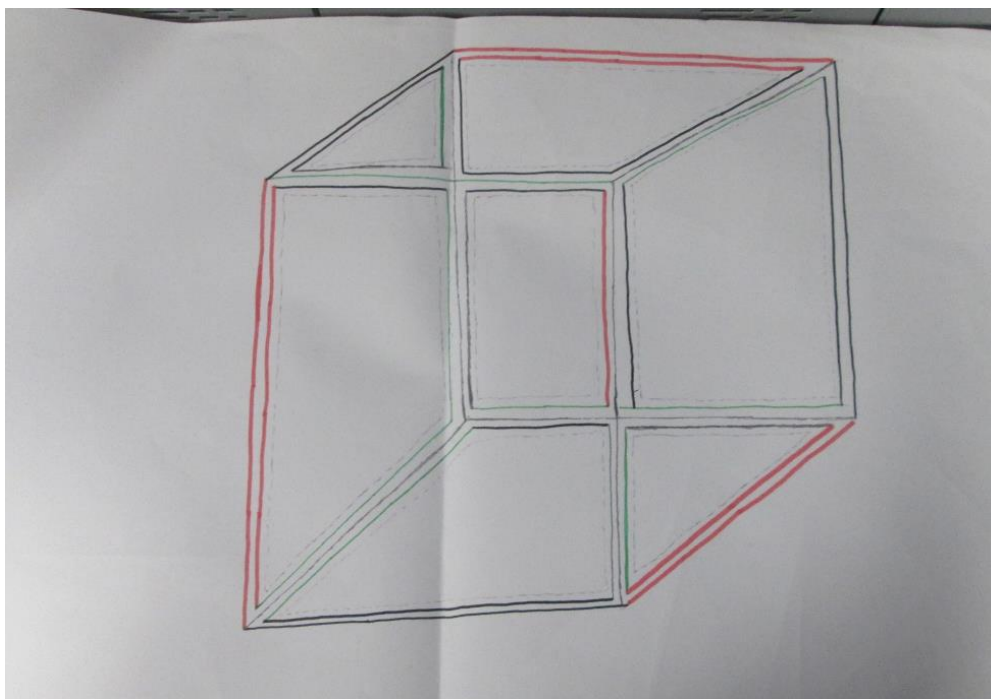
Another key aim of the PLAN A was to address barriers to resettlement for individuals on the programme, such as difficulties with employment opportunities, housing issues and financial problems. Prisoners talked about how different parts of the programme motivated them to form positive goals to focus on, as well helping them prepare for release:

“Working with the art therapy and my mentor has pushed me a little further into looking for a job... it’s just made me focus on more of the things that I really need to be doing... it’s helped me towards what I should be doing to stay focused”

“It made me start thinking about different things, like what I want out of my life, what I want to do with myself”

“I think that I’m more prepared for the release. I think if I didn’t do this, I wouldn’t have been thinking about trying to get a job”

“It takes time to get where you want to get. You’re not going to just wake up tomorrow and get there. Both [RJ/VA facilitator] and the mentor instilled that in me”



Participant criticisms of the programme

Mentoring

The perspectives from prisoners of PLAN A were highly positive overall, with many citing how constructive the different sessions had been. The criticisms that they had were mainly surrounding a perceived lack of organisation in running the three aspects of the programme, with regards to changes in mentors and restorative justice/victim awareness co-ordinators and the times the sessions were run. A number of participants were clearly frustrated about having to sacrifice time in the gym or phone calls and showers usually taken during association to attend the mentoring and restorative justice/victim awareness sessions:

“A lot of people didn’t want to come to the class because of gym. I don’t blame them in a way. We’re locked up most of the day and that’s a way of them releasing some stress”

For the mentoring sessions, prisoners commented on a lack of connection or understanding with their allocated mentor and thus felt unable to develop any kind of relationship, which subsequently limited the effectiveness of the programme:

“I had some lady before but I weren’t feeling her... I don’t think she understood where I was coming from. I only saw her twice”

“I feel like they don’t really understand what really goes on out there... it’s a different life out there for us”

Art therapy

A key issue that many prisoners raised was the sudden and unexpected conclusion of the art therapy sessions three weeks earlier than planned, and the resulting replacement of these sessions with arts and discussion based workshops led by Belong management staff. From the interviews it was evident that the original art therapist had been highly regarded by the participants and a lot of the programme’s success could be attributed to the relationship she had formed with the men and the positive environment created during the sessions. Many of the prisoners interviewed made comments about feeling disappointed by the Belong programme staff taking over the art therapy sessions and they reported that the dynamic had changed amongst the group and that the groups were no longer as helpful, with a number deciding not to attend any longer:

“The AT was actually going well with [art therapist], but that had to stop for whatever reason... if someone else came into the class that people don’t like or they don’t feel like he understands where they’re coming from then people won’t come”



“When you’re talking to the staff that actually work within the prison, they’re probably just talking business with the other staff”

“It just felt a bit too... the balance was slightly off. It felt like I was speaking to like a police officer...or my probation officer... it’s difficult to speak freely when speaking to someone like that”

Restorative justice/victim awareness

The restorative justice/victim awareness model was regarded by most of the prisoners interviewed as the least successful element of PLAN A. A key issue raised by the participants was the fact that no prisoners were able to meet with their victims. This potential problem was considered prior to the implementation of the programme and the use of ‘surrogate victims’ had been discussed in order to limit this issue, however this was not carried out with any of the participants and the focus instead was on wider victim awareness issues.

A theme arising from the interviews was a sense of unease about participating in this element of PLAN A as some participants clearly did not feel ready to discuss their criminal behaviour, whilst others stated they felt ‘judged’ when having to undertake the restorative justice/victim awareness sessions with more than one person present:

“I weren’t feeling it. I told them next time there has to be one of you. I’m not doing it... you feel judged”

“It was my least favourite because I don’t like talking about what happened... everything is behind me... I’ve been punished for it and I’ve realised what I need to do in my life... no one likes revisiting the past”

As with the art therapy sessions, a number of the prisoners raised the issue of a perceived lack of organisation with regard to how the restorative justice/victim awareness sessions ran and at having their facilitator change during the course of the programme. They reported having struggled to build a trusting relationship with one facilitator only to have another one replace them and attempt to continue the one-to-one sessions:

“For us to be telling you what we’ve actually done is a big deal so for them to just come and expect me to tell them what I’ve done and then the next two days they’re not here... and then another woman comes in and she expects us to just spill everything we’ve done, it don’t make no sense”



Quantitative data

Although typically used to compare responses at two or more time points, the Crime-Pics II data collected at programme completion was processed in order to create scaled data that could be used to generate a better understanding of the participants' attitudes to offending. Raw scores are translated into scaled scores on a 0-9 scale, so that each conforms to a broadly comparable metric, whereby the lowest scoring range (i.e. containing the 10% of offenders who had scored lowest) was assigned a scaled score of 0 and so on, with the highest score range assigned a score of 9. In a standard offender population (derived from a sample of 422 offenders scored by Frude, Hones & Maguire, 2009), approximately 50% of the offenders obtained transformed scores in the 0-4 range and the other 50% obtained transformed scores in the 5-9 range. All scales are scored in such a way that a high score is undesirable.

Scaled scores were calculated for the cohort of 27 participants who completed the quantitative measure at programme completion. The results for the five sub-scales are presented in table 4, demonstrating the lowest (most favourable) result being in relation to the victim hurt denial scale, a measure of an individual's attitude towards his/her victims (such as whether they believed they caused harm), where lower scores indicate that the individual recognises that their actions impact on the victim. Statistically significant improvements on this same measure of victim hurt denial have previously been observed in a much larger (over 5000 participants prison-based Restorative Justice initiative, the Sycamore Tree programme (Feasey & Williams, 2009).

Table 4: Crime-Pics II data at programme completion (n = 27)

| Crime-Pics II sub scale | Mean score |
|---|-------------------|
| General attitude to offending scale | 3.78 |
| Anticipation of reoffending scale | 4.17 |
| Victim hurt denial scale | 2 |
| Evaluation of crime as worthwhile scale | 5.74 |
| Problem inventory | 2.65 |

Chapter 5

Evaluation Findings: Staff and Volunteer Perspectives

Staff and volunteer perceptions of the PLAN A programme

Throughout this chapter, findings from interviews with delivery staff and mentors are presented, summarising the successes and challenges of the programme from a staff and volunteer perspective. The findings also explore the views and experiences of all of those involved in the delivery of the programme, in terms of how they perceived each element of the programme was organised and delivered, and its resulting impact on the young men in HMP Isis.

Art Therapy

The role of the art therapist was to facilitate practical, art-based groups where the prisoners were encouraged to draw or paint their feelings about past and current situations, and future plans, in order to promote discussion within the group. The sessions were conducted using ‘mentalisation-based therapy’, which encourages individuals to stabilise their emotions and change how they make sense of themselves and others, with the ultimate aim of promoting feelings of empathy (Bateman and Fonagy, 2010). In her own words, the art therapist would guide prisoners by introducing themes for them to consider, for example:

“Emotions, think about family, think about love, think about how they feel about being in jail”

It was reported that art therapy provided the prisoners with a safe environment outside of the prison system which gave them the opportunity to release pent up emotions or feelings, subsequently helping them to get used to expressing themselves and encouraging them to open up to others:

“They have the vent of using creative means of communication so they don’t have to directly communicate through word, which often they won’t have”

“AT is a nice release and helps to open them up a little bit and get them to express themselves and get used to expressing themselves more through being creative”

It was felt that working in a group meant that prisoners could interact better with each another, offer one another support, and experience a relaxed setting that they may not be used to within the prison environment.



“They can sit and discuss everything together and they are actually resilient enough to offer their own opinion and to tell others that they agree or disagree”

“There’s a strength in people being in a group and being able to think about those things and being able to get other people’s perspective on it as well, and open up to other people and have a safe space to do that”

What is mentoring?

Prior to undertaking the mentoring sessions, all volunteers received training from Belong management staff. This provided mentors with background knowledge of how the criminal justice system works, detailed information about the prisoners they would be mentoring and how the mentoring programme would be aimed to address prisoner needs, in both a practical and emotional sense:

“They have a guidebook with all the scenarios and ways of using tools. There’s a triangle tool, which encourages them to think about the situation and think about how that would improve his life... about how to improve behaviour and how to deal with problems that come from their past and how that’s going to improve the situation... to budget and how to spend money wisely, how to find jobs, work in their future...”

Training was delivered through a variety of methods, including the use of role-play to help prepare volunteers for their role, as well as give them an idea of how it might feel to be mentored. This was regarded as one of the most useful elements of the training courses and on the whole, mentors reported being satisfied with the training they received:

“I found [the practical activities] really, really useful because it gave me an idea of what a session might be like and I think up to that point we had found it a bit, still a bit abstract in terms of what a session might look like, so I think that we found that really useful from the feedback both from if you were being a mentor and feedback from the mentee and from the observer”

Volunteers also commented on the importance of being trained and prepared for undertaking their role in a prison environment, as this was a setting only few had experienced or worked in before:



“The prison environment is not like any other type of environment, so it’s really important to receive the training... to understand exactly how it all comes together and how you interact and behave with service users”

Although the mentors felt equipped for the practical aspect of their role, some reported not feeling prepared mentally for the psychological impact of volunteering with a vulnerable population in a prison setting:

“It can prepare you in terms of what the programme is about and so on and so forth, but nothing can prepare you for the psychological experience of walking into a prison and speaking to someone who is there, because if you haven’t done that before it’s, the first one or two times can be a little bit intimidating”

However, mentors did discuss receiving on-going support and training which offered the opportunity to have advice and support from fellow mentors and programme delivery staff about issues that their mentees were facing and how to handle these problems:

“We talked about self-sabotage and self-harm, which was really interesting... I think the self-sabotage was quite relevant to one of my mentees as well, so that’s the sort of thing I will use in some of my sessions”

Mentors were also asked what they understood about their role and how mentoring would be used as a positive intervention for the prisoners:

“[Mentoring] focuses more on them, their future, their plans and their thoughts and feelings”,

“About giving them the ability to open up and be free and express themselves in a non-judgemental way”.

“I understood my role to be to listen as much as possible to what’s going on in their head”

Many of the mentors discussed how they saw their role as being to facilitate changing behaviour rather than enforcing change, through encouraging individuals to be responsible for their past actions and to make positive changes for their future:

“I’m there to listen and I’m there to help but I can’t change that person... they still are responsible for the choices that they make for their lives... You can help, but you must



never think that you can actually be the one to make the decision for the person or be responsible for the decisions that they make”

“I’m not here to give you advice, I’m not here to tell you what you to do. I’m here to support you to change in a way that you want to change, and I’m here to show you different ways in which you could do that and you can decide how to do it”

“Part of the mentoring is just trying to help them change their attitudes... It’s more about helping them change their attitudes”

“They bring to me anything they want to bring, whether it be anger, frustration, an issue they’ve got going on, their future, family problems, and they can get an unbiased, non-judgemental interaction with someone so that they can process it themselves with the support of someone else alongside”

The mentors also reported working together with their mentees to help formulate future goals and action plans for their life after release in order to aid their resettlement:

“Helping them to explore options in their life that they would like to take to not offend again because I think the aim is to prevent reoffending among the prisoners... encourage them to find out more information about what kind of stuff are available for them”

They were also aware of the need to take a strength-based approaching, in exploring positive uses for the skills that their mentees already held, and how these might be used, as well as encouraging them to participate in other prison-based programmes that could be beneficial in preparing for release:

“If the mentor can identify any skill and then play it back and find a positive use for that, that’s what mentoring is about, isn’t it? It’s labelling something and saying “you know what, you’ve got that skill there, so how can we use that in the outside world?”

“Just to maximise their time in prison and get the best out of the experience because if you can put a positive on a negative experience then it makes it worthwhile... if we can help you to do better as a result of this experience then everybody benefits. You benefit, society benefits, your family benefits”

During the start of the mentoring sessions prisoners would discuss what kind of support or advice they felt they needed. Mentors talked about how this support was tailored to individual



need and fell into four key categories: resettlement, psychological support, offending and negative behaviour, and promoting positive thinking and behaviour:

“We ran through what they want to get out of the sessions, what we, as mentors, hope to get out of the sessions...reiterating what it is they want out of the sessions and how to provide them best with help”

1. Resettlement

In terms of addressing resettlement issues, the mentors discussed encouraging prisoners to think about what their life might be like upon release and made positive plans about how to achieve what the prisoners wanted post-release, focusing on issues of employment and housing arrangements:

“We talk about future plans, how he plans to get there, what the plan is, where they’re going to live once they get out, accommodation, their affiliation with certain negative friendship groups, how it can be avoided, anger management”

“I’ve talked to him about his idea and his long-term future of where he wants to go, what he wants to do, and then tried to help him create a plan to think about what he can do now in order to achieve that. As a result of that, he’s put himself on a few courses, and he’s really fired up and positive about this wonderful, positive thing that he’s working towards”

Mentors felt it was also important to discuss what kind of challenges the men might face when leaving prison, such as avoiding negative peers or influences, and talking through coping strategies in order to assist with these possible difficulties:

“It’s about awareness of the triggers in their environment and in their own lives, and risks... so we can be really prepared so that these risks don’t surprise us... and then it’s really easy to fall into a pattern or into a situation where it’s really hard to get out of”

Mentoring sessions also addressed worries about leaving prison through optimistic discussions about positive developments that had already been made, as well as signposting education, training and employment opportunities:

“I’ve been telling them about organisations that are more inclined to offer work to people who have been in prison, so they know who to go to”



Practical support towards resettlement issues was also offered through advice with CV writing, housing issues and financial advice:

“Things to do with budgeting forms or CV writing. I’ve helped a few of them... CV, cover letter, data disclosure, maybe talk about it, discuss it and maybe write it down and help them with it”

2. Psychological support

The psychological support that mentoring can provide was perceived as one of the key benefits of this kind of intervention. The mentoring sessions were seen to offer participants the opportunity to talk through difficult thoughts or feelings while encouraging the prisoners to develop a more positive self-identity:

“Moving forward, not dwelling on the fact that they’ve done wrong and spending the rest of their lives beating themselves up, but actually moving forward and thinking”

“Encouraging individuals to accept themselves the way they are and trying to find solutions and different ways of moving on and having a more successful life”

3. Addressing offending/negative behaviour

Mentoring sessions were considered important in addressing thoughts behind offending behaviour, and in helping to facilitate changing attitudes to reoffending. Mentors also reported attempting to help prisoners take responsibility for their behaviour and actions:

“Encouraging them to come to terms with themselves emotionally, how they see themselves in society, how they see themselves—what they did, how they see the offence they did that they committed”

“Taking responsibility, once they get out of prison, and what sort of life they’re going to have... an activity I do for my aspirations course with my clients, so taking responsibility and understanding the term ‘responsibility’

4. Changing behaviour

One of the key aims of mentoring with prisoners is to assist changing behaviour and thoughts towards crime and deviance. During the interview, mentors talked about the ‘tools’ they were trained to use with prisoners to help them understand the thought process behind their actions as well as their feelings about their past behaviours:



“[Service-users are able to] evaluate where they’re going with their thoughts and their actions and whether it will be beneficial and the outcomes of certain actions and thought patterns”

The sessions were also thought to encourage prisoners to consider the importance of self-control in negative situations, by exploring how they could respond differently to situations they have encountered in the past,

“I said that we all get urges to say the wrong thing... but we’ve got to stop ourselves... that’s all about learning self-control and discipline, which is what he said he wanted to learn”

Mentors also encouraged prisoners to re-consider what they valued in life by providing a different perspective from their own ideas and opinions, for example in challenging a prisoner’s idea about the significance of money:

“I said to him... when you come out of prison and your mum sees you get a job... that will mean a lot more to her to have you pay the monthly bill than handing her a bag of money... because it’s stability, it’s what it represents.”

“I tried to change the mood by saying, “let’s stick to a positive attitude”, a positive objective and an ‘I can’ attitude, ‘If I think I can, I will’ and he’s done that”



Why does mentoring work? Mentors' perceptions

Developing ownership and empowerment

Mentors reported that the sessions were aimed to work towards providing the prisoners with a sense of ownership and empowerment with regard to the positive changes they have made. Mentors also discussed working towards building prisoners' confidence, both in themselves and in their ability to leave prison and lead a crime-free life:

"I always try and end the session reminding them that I have every confidence in their ability to change their lives, that they can do it and I praise them for a specific thing that they've done so that they feel more self-assured"

"I think that having that different perspective on your identity and on your potential is really, really valuable, and I think that is valuable for anybody that's in prison"

Caring relationships

Mentors clearly felt that the sessions could be helpful in showing their mentees that someone else cared for their wellbeing, emphasised by an awareness that many of the men lacked a positive, supportive influence in their lives:

"They appreciate there is someone who is actually going to come to prison to talk to them"

"They can rely on someone and someone cares for their development. I feel like that is extremely important"

One mentor discussed how volunteering with the men was their way of showing they could still be included in society, which could potentially instil a confidence about life after release:

"It's the opportunity that we give them to be part of society. That they're not left on their own... we're there to give them a hand and help them get back on their feet and find solutions... You have not been forgotten"



Talking to someone outside the justice system

Mentors believed that prisoners could struggle to express themselves with individuals involved in the prison environment who were perceived to be in a role of authority, and – in line with previous research (Meek, Mills & Gojkovic, 2013) that the mentoring sessions could therefore potentially give prisoners that outlet to express themselves to someone not associated with the criminal justice system which could in turn lead to a more trusting relationship:

“I think it helps them a little bit in prison to give them someone else to talk to, like if there’s any issues or anything...they said to me that they find talking to me helps them”

“It’s about giving them the ability to open up and be free and express themselves in a non-judgemental way... I think they look forward to the interaction”

Changing perspectives to crime and deviance

Throughout their sessions, mentors would offer their personal outlook on issues their mentor discussed during their sessions, which gave them the opportunity to consider alternative ways to think or behave in the future:

“It’s an opportunity to get a different insight and outlook on things from someone who you don’t necessarily know or who’s not your friend, not your family, not directly in the given situation”

“I have asked them for feedback and they said having a mentee is brilliant. It helps them to see things differently”



Restorative Justice/Victim Awareness

Training

The training that the facilitators received from Belong for the restorative justice/victim awareness element of the programme was considered helpful in learning about the restorative justice process, particularly as some of the individuals involved were not familiar with this initially. However, it was expressed by interviewees that there was too much of a focus on direct restorative justice as opposed to the indirect restorative justice or victim awareness that the programme solely utilised:

“I found them quite useful, especially because I wasn’t too clued up on restorative justice... I did not know anything that was remotely close to what I know now”

“It would have been useful to have a bit more training and understanding on what happens in a situation where it’s indirect”.

The role of the restorative justice/victim awareness facilitator

The facilitators’ understanding of what their role involved could be broadly summarised as:

“[Victim awareness is] working more intensely with the individuals on the programme around their offences and getting them to think about what brought them to make those decisions and what the impact had, particularly to think more about the impact it’s had on the victims”

Whilst the sessions were focussed on victim awareness, the facilitators often felt that including some indirect restorative justice work, such as letter writing to their victim and considering the impact of their crime could also be helpful:

“A really useful exercise I found to tie in with restorative justice and victim awareness together is what’s called the ripple effect of crime. In much of my sessions I’ve been able to use that to tie in restorative justice and the definition”

“Although direct victims can’t be contacted, how we could motivate them enough to feel as though they can write a letter”



Why does restorative justice/victim awareness work? Facilitators' perceptions

Understanding the impact of crime

Sessions involved restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators talking to, and challenging, prisoners about their offences and encouraging them to think about things from different perspectives. It was felt that this would improve their empathy by helping them to understand the wider impact of their criminal behaviour on others,

"I want to challenge them and I want them to open up and think about things from a different angle, and that's pretty much the idea of what we're doing here, to build the- building up the empathy and the awareness of the impact of what they've done"

"It can be effective from just reflecting on how an incident may have affected you or people-- not actual victims but maybe people around you, such as family members, communities"

Moving away from criminal behaviour

The restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators placed a lot of emphasis on discussing the impact of crime on victims, themselves and the wider community. By talking through these impacts, delivery staff aimed to help prisoners reflect on how they could make more positive changes, and potentially alter their attitude to future criminal behaviour and offending:

"He said before he didn't think about how any of his actions affect other people... it helps you think about what you did, so maybe next time you'll be less likely to do it 'cause you think more about how it affects other people"

"If you address it and you understand why you are in the position you are in, it could later on benefit you in terms of reoffending, so they wouldn't want to reoffend"



Challenges

It was evident that restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators were unclear about whether victims were contactable when they started the programme and so started off by focussing on discussing ‘direct restorative justice’, only to find out that this was not possible. This sometimes proved problematic in terms of managing the prisoners’ expectations of what they could achieve from the restorative justice/victim awareness sessions, an issue that was also raised in interviews with the prisoners.

“They would prefer direct ‘cause they feel as though they can’t express themselves through a letter and that’s not enough”

“The one that was actually up for meeting his victim was a bit disappointed”

Restorative justice/victim awareness was also reported as meeting with resistance when the prisoners did not feel their crime had a direct victim, or if they did not want to address past behaviour. It was felt that these attitudes could impact on the success of the sessions:

“Some of the guys actually don’t want to address their offence. They see it as they’re doing their time already, so readdressing it and bringing restorative justice and victim awareness, which is kind of what it is... I find that they find it like a closed topic. They don’t want to reopen and relive it again”



Important characteristics required for working with prisoners: staff perceptions

When working with prisoners, one of the biggest challenges that delivery staff and mentors believed they faced was the prisoners not trusting them initially, impacting on their willingness to open up and work with them. Building a rapport with the prisoners and gaining their trust was considered essential in working with prisoners, and interviews revealed a set of characteristics that staff thought important to possess in order to help with this:

- Be non-judgemental and treat prisoners as equals
 - *“Don’t judge them, ‘cause I think that’s one thing they hate. I’ve had a discussion with them on that, and people judging them ‘cause they’ve been in prison. I think you should never judge them. Always treat them like everyone else”*
- Have a genuine interest and care
 - *“Have a genuine care for helping and wanting to help them because if you don’t care they’re going to sense it... they’re not going to open up to you, they’re not going to tell you certain things”*
- Be consistent and reliable
 - *“You’ve got to be a person of your word... the people that we’re mentoring have had a lot of let downs in life and are not used to consistency or people being responsible or reliable, and you’ve got to role model the kind of behaviour that you want from them”*
- Be a good listener
 - *“I wasn’t someone who was going to go away and ignore him. I’ve actually come back and I’ve managed to listen to what he’s said and he’s seen a positive action as a result of our interaction”*
- Be understanding and show empathy
 - *“Having that empathy, or having that understanding from where they might be coming from and how they might be thinking”*
- Be adaptable to the prisoners’ needs and style
 - *“Adapt to the different individual and to their different individual needs... creativity in a way, because you need to approach each case differently”*

Changes reported by delivery staff and mentors

A reduction in anger and frustration

Following the completion of the programme, staff noted some positive changes to the prisoners' attitudes, particularly with regard to their temper and anger management. Some delivery staff and mentors perceived these changes to be a result of building up a close, trusting relationship:

“He spent most of the session shouting, not at us but I think it was the venting of frustration... he’s calmed down a lot and started talking more openly about his offence and started being less challenging”

“He’s been warm enough to me and I feel that now we have a good enough relationship where we can work towards actually achieving something”

“I have seen a change in some of them, especially with their attitude towards me.. I think some of them do enjoy seeing me and they will crack a smile and I think it does put a spring in their step”

The art therapist in particular spoke about discussing the use of non-aggressive ways to deal with group disruptions:

“They can just understand there are ways of diverting things rather than reacting to them”

“They are just learning to assert themselves without any violence”

Understanding impact of crime and responsibility

Staff and mentors discussed working towards a changing attitude to crime in terms of the wider impact the programme had the impact to have. Working on this in a group setting (such as during the art therapy) was raised by the delivery staff as an effective way to stimulate discussion about different views on criminal behaviour and taking responsibility for their actions:

“Quite a few have commented, “I’ve not thought about it from that point of view” or “I hadn’t thought about that before”



Improved conduct

From undertaking the programme, staff and mentors commented that prisoners were perceived as being more tolerant and interacting more positively with other prison staff and fellow prisoners:

“Gradually they’ve gotten to the point where they can sit down and tolerate being around the table, start interacting with other people”

“They’ve listened, considered, wanted to understand someone else’s point of view... so I think-- it’s subtle, very subtle, but there’s been a lot of change”

As prisoners attended more of the PLAN A sessions, some mentors commented on an improved attitude to programme staff as well:

“After a while he started being more open to me and responding more to my questions and conversations we had... gradually he started to believe in the sessions and he’s changed his attitudes towards mentors now”.

Re-evaluating the use of aggression

Mentors reported that following the programme, some of the prisoners were able to recognise that the use of anger and intimidating behaviour was not an appropriate response to difficult or frustrating situations:

“I’ve seen a lot of changes in terms of his feelings. For example, with being impulsive, and this is something he spoke about today, that he now feels about to take a step back and observe a situation rather than just flaring up and reacting”

A positive attitude

One of the key objectives of the PLAN A programme was to help facilitate a changing, positive attitude and non-offending identity. During the interviews, mentors commented on the participants appearing and acting in a more positive manner following their sessions, particularly in relation to their release:

“[He appeared] more positive, more proactive, and more excited about coming out”



“They feel like it’s given them more hope that when they get out they can stay out, and maybe talking to someone helps them ‘cause they said to me that they find talking to me helps them”

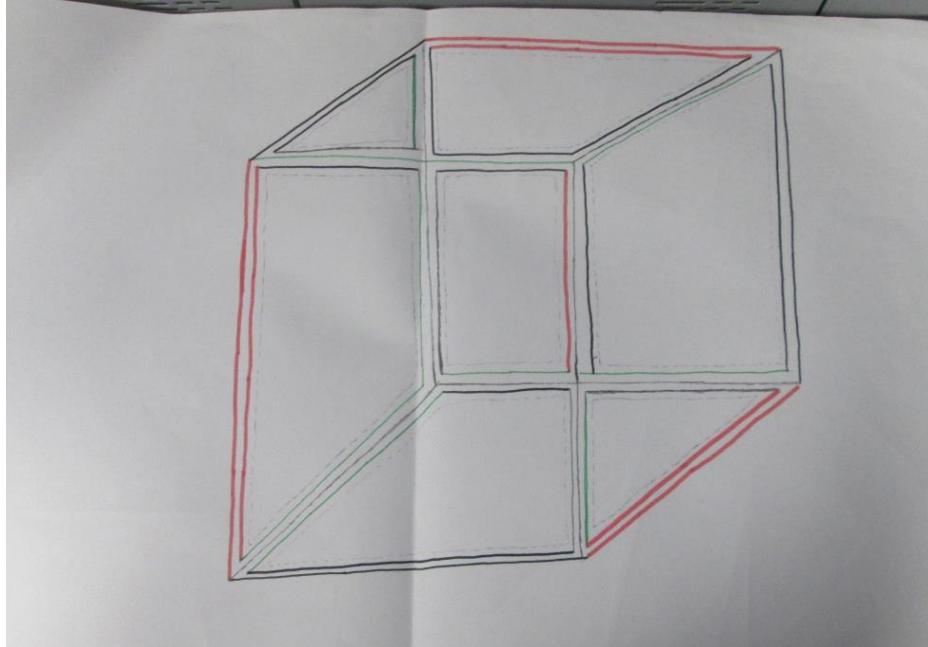
Some mentors even commented on their mentees trying to make more positive choices whilst still in prison, in preparation for their release, suggesting they were more focused and proactive:

“He’s put himself on a few courses as a result, and he’s really fired up and positive about this wonderful, positive thing that he’s working towards”

Improving self-expression

Mentoring and the art therapy sessions were also regarded by delivery staff as being successful in helping prisoners to express themselves more openly and talk through their emotions and feelings:

“He’s more open to talk about stuff than he was before. Before he was a bit more closed and he didn’t want to talk too much... after a while he started being more open to me and responding more to my questions and conversations we had”



Programme delivery: staff and mentor perspectives

Art therapy

Art therapy was conducted in a group setting, which was described as beneficial by many of the prisoners in facilitating them to open up. However, not all prisoners were able to tolerate the group environment and two subsequently received one-to-one sessions with a different art therapist as a result. The art therapist commented on the need to assess more carefully prior to starting the programme whether an individual was suitable for a group-based programme:

“If people are a little bit unsettled and not probably ready to be in a group situation are very overbearing or sort of shut people down, talk over them”

While recognising the potential and actual value of the programme, staff and mentor interviewees raised concerns about levels of disruption or upheaval in how the groups were organised and run, where some prisoners had been removed from the programme, and the fact that the original art therapy groups concluded five weeks earlier than expected (they were then replaced for the final three weeks with arts based discussion workshops delivered by programme management staff).

Mentoring

For prisoners who were not allocated a mentor in September 2014, allocation was staggered from November 2014 – March 2015 due to waiting for security clearance. Occasionally, mentors were allocated to prisoners before their security clearance had come through, and consequently the Belong project officer had to accompany them for three sessions before they were granted full clearance. Prisoners sometimes still had a considerable wait before they could see their mentors on a weekly or fortnightly basis after these 3 sessions and in some cases, clearance was delayed to such an extent that prisoners had to be matched with new mentors:

“The mentoring is as and when people are available, when people have got their clearance and key talks, which can be a massive gap because that can take a long time. Some people got that through in a few weeks but for some people it’s been months”

There were some practical issues when allocating a mentor to a prisoner as this was dependent on the mentor’s availability and the prisoner’s association time, and subsequently some service-users had two different mentors.

The mentors also reported some difficulties with how the mentoring sessions were organised. Sessions were run on a weekly or fortnightly basis for 25-90 minutes in a classroom on the



wing, however there was not always a classroom available, which could limit the time the mentor had with their mentee. The length of the session was determined by the prisoner's availability, as sessions could only be run during association time, leading to some frustration among the mentors:

"Sometimes you have to walk around and then find a classroom and none are free... You waste time looking for space"

Restorative justice/victim awareness

Co-ordinating the restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators presented a challenge in getting individuals to commit to the programme (i.e. needing to see prisoners on a fortnightly basis) and letting the project officer know their availability. As a result, prisoners sometimes had a lengthy wait to see their restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators. Some of the restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators reported that when they began the programme they were not aware of how flexible or committed they needed to be and that this should have been made more apparent to ensure they could fully commit to the programme:

"Restorative justice is so intense and it needs to be really regular once it starts... We'd like people to have at least 6-8 sessions... it's hard to say how many sessions people need if a direct conference is going to happen because that just depends on how long people take to prepare"

"When we first started out it was more paired up... our schedules were conflicting, so it wasn't working out..."

Initially the facilitators were paired up (one would facilitate and one would co-facilitate), although this proved to be problematic due to difficulties with managing conflicting schedules. It was subsequently agreed that a way to avoid conflicting time scales was to have one individual meet an individual prisoner on one week and the other to meet on the following week, but this sometimes proved problematic in terms of failing to share session notes, and facilitators not feeling comfortable running sessions without seeing these notes. Facilitators reported preferring to work on their own in terms of managing their time and connecting with their cases.

Running the programme during association times

Like many prison-based programmes offered outside of the core day of the prison, the programme had to work around the prison regime and prisoners' association time. It was sometimes the case that prisoners would have conflicting activities that interfered with the



programme's delivery, resulting in staff or mentors waiting for prisoners or being unable to see them. Delivery staff and mentors reported occasionally feeling that their sessions were rushed due to the need to ensure that prisoners were back from their association on time and having to see more than one individual during an association period. There was also an issue with programme delivery if prisoners were placed on violence management as they were segregated from the wing and denied association time, resulting in them being unable to leave their cell to attend a programme session:

“Getting in and managing to see them is quite difficult, being association time when they're out and that kind of thing... [There's difficulty with] the flexibility of the regime”

Mentors and delivery staff also commented on communication difficulties in terms of getting messages to prisoners if they wanted to see them on a particular day. There were also frustration with communication issues between prison staff and delivery staff or mentors in terms of being informed of changes in association times, incidents on the wings or location of prisoners. The members of staff based within the prison (such as the art therapist and project officer) felt they were able to work around the regime more flexibly.

Support for delivery staff

Delivery staff and mentors were offered supervision groups every 4-6 weeks, as well as one-to-one sessions, which gave them the opportunity to receive advice and share information with other staff, mentors and the project leaders. This support network was considered very helpful by all delivery staff and mentors:

“I've got [the project leader's] number. So if there were any issues I'd just talk to them...They're always quite helpful”

The delivery staff and mentors also had regular weekly or fortnightly email and phone contact with project management staff to monitor how they were handling the sessions and to answer any questions or concerns they had regarding the service-users. During the interviews, all staff and mentors commented that they felt they received sufficient support from project management staff if there were any issues or if they needed advice.



Communication between project leaders and participants

Interviews revealed that some staff and mentors reported that details of the programme were not always sufficiently explained to potential participants, particularly in terms of what the programme was about, when it was going to end (as funding was extended to June 2015) and the organisation of the programme's delivery (such as the programme strands starting at different times).

"I don't know if it's necessarily explained to them very well. A lot of them have come into this project saying 'I have no idea what this is'... No one on the programme was asked if they wanted to continue beyond April"

Delivery staff and mentors also commented on difficulties in planning their sessions; occasionally prisoners were not reminded to attend a session and were not expecting the delivery staff and mentors when they arrived. Similarly, there were difficulties relaying messages to the prisoners if a mentor or restorative justice/victim awareness facilitator was no longer able to see them for a session.

Communication between the three strands

Delivery staff and mentors were expected to complete meeting notes within 2-3 days of a session and send them to the project management. It was felt that this time limit needed to be adhered to so management could look over the notes to offer prisoners any additional support or advice if needed. Mentors received restorative justice session notes, but the restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators did not receive mentor session notes. Neither mentors nor restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators received the art therapy session notes. There was no clear reason for the disparity between information sharing, although it was felt that it would have been beneficial to have seen the service-user's notes from each of the three sessions to ensure they were no issues in any areas and to monitor progress.

"I'd send my [RJ/VA] notes and [the project leader] would send them on to the mentees. It didn't work like that the other way round so I wasn't particularly sure why that was"



The length and organisation of the programme

The majority of the delivery staff and mentors reported that that the length of the programme was sufficient, although some commented that it would have been better suited to prisoners towards the end of their sentence, as this was considered the time they required more assistance and support and would be focusing on life after release. It was also considered important that if a prisoner still had a lengthy sentence, sessions should continue until they were released so that any progress they made on the programme was maintained:

“I feel as if it will dilute with time going by, like six months of no mentoring and then the release. I feel like somehow it might get diluted”

Some delivery staff suggested that depending on the prisoner’s needs, the length of the programme was not long enough, particularly due to the time it takes to build up trust with an individual. Establishing a trusting relationship was regarded as a highly significant aspect of a successful session, but that this relationship forming was sometimes restricted by the length the project:

“He has taken quite a long time to drop his guard... It takes time. Sometimes it may take longer than six months”

It was also felt that the programme was not long enough to account for issues of ‘mismatched’ prisoner and delivery staff. With the restorative justice/victim awareness in particular, it was considered important to allow for more time in making contact with the victim and in assessing whether they were comfortable taking part in the restorative justice/victim awareness sessions. Extending the programme to a year was therefore considered beneficial in some cases.

The layout of the programme was such that each strand started at a different time. This was not considered to be a negative aspect, as it was felt that starting all three simultaneously could have been overwhelming for the prisoners:

“It’s too much to go from art therapy, which can evoke a lot of uncomfortable feelings albeit in a safe way, but they need time to process it... to jump straight in to mentoring is incredibly overwhelming”

In general, participants would see their art therapist, mentor and restorative justice/victim awareness facilitator on three separate days, however, there were a few instances where they had more than one session in one association period. It was suggested by the delivery staff and mentors that this should be monitored carefully, as it may be too much for the prisoners to cope with in one day, particularly if they were not used to discussing difficult emotions or feelings.



Due to time constraints, staff availability and prison logistics however, having two or three sessions in one day was sometimes unavoidable

A three strand approach

Although the strands of the Plan A programme are separate, it was reported by the delivery staff that having the three strands in one programme was beneficial. As each strand had different qualities and ways of working, it was thought to appeal to individuals on multiple levels as well as incorporating different techniques, and that having all three strands would make it more likely for the prisoners to find at least one beneficial:

“Some of them are more emotional, some are more intellectual, and some are more visceral art therapy is very different to restorative justice... Some people react to it, some people will say they just do it because it’s there. When you have this on top of the mentoring, on top of the restorative justice, then one of the three will hopefully get through to the person, so I think it’s definitely useful”

“It gives them an insight of different things... I suppose each one has something that can help them in some way”

Delivery staff and mentors clearly considered the art therapy component to be particularly impactful because they perceived it to be able to open individuals up to the benefits of mentoring and restorative justice/victim awareness sessions. Previous studies focusing on changing identity have discussed the significance of being ‘open’ to change as a crucial step towards developing a positive, pro-social identity.

“It opens people up and when you’re an open system then you’re much more willing to accept change and much for willing to accept a discussion and possible possibilities about the future and so on”

Delivery staff and mentors also felt that whilst the strands were separate, there were some links and similarities between them, which demonstrated cohesiveness to the prisoners and helped to reinforcing the same positive messages. Both art therapy and restorative justice/victim awareness were focussed on improving empathy and offered individuals the opportunity to express themselves using another medium other than words (drawing and practical activity in art therapy and letter writing in restorative justice/victim awareness sessions). Art therapy and mentoring encouraged individuals to express themselves in a group and on a one-to-one basis, and mentoring was perceived as helpful in preparing prisoners for, and supporting them through, the restorative justice/victim awareness process:



“Mentoring is a place for individuals to be able to express themselves in a different way...it encourages them to assess and think of things that were done in art therapy which enables them to get in contact with how they feel and their emotions, things that they want to do for the future”

“[mentoring is] getting them ready for the restorative justice part where they have to actually think about how are they going to move forward in relation to the victim... it prepares them for it and I think it also reinforces what they are learning in the restorative justice part of the programme”



Chapter 6

Summary of Qualitative Findings

Prisoner perspectives

The qualitative findings from interviews with the prisoners demonstrates the perceived strength of the PLAN A programme in helping to facilitate positive changes in prosocial behaviour and attitudes to criminality that could aid resettlement once released and potentially reduce reoffending behaviour.

From the interview data, a key success of the mentoring programme was the support it provided in both a practical and emotional sense. The one-to-one sessions allowed prisoners to express frustrations and many described being appreciative of having another opinion or perspective on the problems they were facing. Mentoring was also effective in a practical sense as the prisoners commented on the value of having assistance with CV writing, exploring employment opportunities, and resolving housing and financial problems.

The results from the study are consistent with other research findings in this field, which highlight the significance of a mentoring programmes having a positive, ‘strengths-based approach’, focusing on working towards optimistic goals and developing positive behaviour rather than focusing on negative factors that had led to prison (Brown and Ross, 2010a). As discussed previously, this can in turn facilitate increasing self-esteem and greater self-confidence (Tolan et al, 2008).

A prominent theme emerging from the interview data was the notion of being able to ‘open up’ and discuss difficult thoughts or emotions more freely after completing the programme, particularly with regard to the art therapy sessions. A large number of the men described feeling calmer and more in control of their thoughts and feelings after attending art therapy. The art therapy facilitator was commented on frequently during the interviews, for her ability to create a relaxed environment and facilitate discussions well amongst the group members. Art therapy was therefore regarded as ‘enjoyable’ and ‘relaxing’, and subsequently the service-users engaged with the sessions more effectively. These findings are also in line with previous research which discusses the benefits of art based therapy in prisons for creating better coping strategies as well as improving mental wellbeing (Nugent and Loucks, 2011). The significance of the connection formed between the art therapist and mentors with service users has been commented on in previous literature around this area, and was also an important factor in the success of the PLAN A programme. Connections that are based on reliability and trust are able to provide more beneficial outcomes for service users (Brown and Ross, 2010). Equally, when participants commented on not feeling they could relate to delivery staff and volunteers or build a relationship, this was seen to be particularly damaging as it lowered engagement and interest in the programme.



During the interviews, it was made apparent that the success of the art therapy course had assisted to inform positive ideas amongst the men about undertaking the restorative justice/victim awareness programme. This point also emphasises the significance of implementing PLAN A as a three-strand programme as it could be assumed that each programme worked more effectively when in combination with each other. This was touched upon during interviews with the prisoners as they suggested that completing all three strands together made the initiative more ‘balanced’ as each one provided different support for different problems.

Staff and volunteer perspectives

From a staff and volunteer perspective, it was suggested that art therapy groups were beneficial in helping prisoners to express thoughts and emotions that they may not have considered, or been able to, before using a different medium, and provided them with a safe, supportive and non-judgemental environment to do this. This is in line with previous research confirming the effectiveness of art therapy in helping offenders to express themselves (MoJ, 2004) and work through their suppressed emotions (Smeijsters & Cleven, 2006). The fact that these sessions were run in a group setting and thus allowed participants to discuss their thoughts and feelings with other prisoners, while encouraging them to consider and experience the differing perspectives of others, was considered a strength, as was the fact that the approach was mentalisation-based helped to encourage empathy, which previous research has also found to be an outcome of using art therapy with offender populations (Bennick et al., 2003).

Staff interviews revealed that the mentoring sessions were perceived as allowing prisoners to develop a sense of empowerment by helping them to feel that they were responsible for any changes they made in order to adopt a more conventional way of life upon release (DuBois et al, 2002). The sessions instilled in them the sense that people cared for them and gave them hope for their future (Brown & Ross, 2010a) and were seen to offer prisoners the opportunity to speak to someone outside of the prison service in a non-judgemental manner, offering them a means to hear, and consider, alternative ways to think/behave in the future in addition to receiving more practical support and advice. Findings here are in line with previous research highlighting the importance of using a strength-based approach with a focus on working towards a positive and realistic future (Brown & Ross, 2010a). It was also suggested that restorative justice/victim awareness sessions helped prisoners to understand their criminal behaviour and recognise the impact that crime has on other individuals, which was thought to improve their empathy (Feasey et al., 2005). The sessions were also seen to give participants the opportunity to consider how they could move forward from their past behaviour.

One of the biggest challenges reported by delivery staff and mentors was that the prisoners did not initially trust them, and so building a rapport and gaining trust was considered essential in



order for the delivery of the programme to be successful in meeting the desired outcomes. Another challenge that was faced was restorative justice/victim awareness being met with resistance by some of the prisoners because they did not feel that they committed a crime or had a direct victim, or simply did not want to re-address their past. This highlights the fact that restorative justice/victim awareness may not be suitable for all individuals.

Delivery staff and mentors clearly felt that there were benefits to using three strands in combination. Whilst the strands were separate it was felt that there were some links between them, which demonstrates cohesiveness. For example, both the art therapy and restorative justice/victim awareness sessions were focussed on improving empathy, and both art therapy and mentoring encouraged individuals to express themselves in a group and on a 1:1 basis, while mentoring was considered helpful in preparing the prisoners for restorative justice/victim awareness. The art therapy component of the programme was considered to be particularly important because it was seen to prepare individuals for the mentoring and restorative justice/victim awareness sessions. It was also felt that through being more open, individuals would be more willing to accept change, accept the perspectives of other individuals, and be more open to the possibilities of a future away from a life of crime.

The fact that the three strands of the programme were largely offered in parallel was considered a strength in the way in which it was seen to provide a more powerful opportunity to engage with and challenge the young men than the individual strands in isolation might have the capacity to do. This was partly attributed to the fact that each strand was perceived to have a unique quality and distinct way of working with an individual, thus recognising that people may operate more effectively on different levels, such as on an emotional level or on an intellectual level.



Chapter 7

Recommendations

The findings presented in the previous chapters have generated a number of recommendations that are summarised here, both in terms of programme delivery (of use to Belong and other organisations considering developing such a programme) as well as ongoing research and evaluation.

A number of issues were highlighted in terms of the logistics of programme delivery, and a series of recommendations were generated from the research findings and are summarised below to enhance programme delivery and effectiveness if a similar programme was to run again:

1. Where possible, assess an individual's ability to tolerate a group environment before commencing the programme to avoid group disruptions
2. Ensure that administrative time and resource is sufficiently allocated so that staff vetting forms can be completed on time and that staff/mentor clearances have been completed before commencing the programme.
3. Consider having specific programme start and completion dates, rather than staggering participation, so that participants commence as a cohort.
4. Be clear with prisoners and staff as to when each strand of the programme will start and, where possible, ensure that the allocation of mentors to prisoners occurs at the same time for all those recruited on a programme. The same applies to the allocation of restorative justice/victim awareness facilitators.
5. Ensure there are sufficient staff/mentor-replacement protocols in place in the event of unexpected leave
6. Ensure that delivery staff/mentors are clear about what their commitments to the programme is expected to be before they are recruited
7. Consider using only paid staff for the restorative justice/victim awareness sessions to ensure commitment and consistency to its delivery
8. Ensure that delivery staff/mentors inform project leaders of when they are planning to visit the prisoners
9. Ensure that session notes are always completed and are sent to the project leaders within the given time-frame. These notes should be made available to everyone involved in the delivery of the programme for a specific prisoner
10. Ensure that there is clear communication between the individuals involved in delivering the three strands



11. Give further consideration to how and whether delivery staff/mentors can have communication with other services that their prisoners may be receiving, such as education services.
12. If a programme is to run during the prison's association time then there needs to be consideration as to when, where, and for how long sessions can run so as not to interfere with the other activities that prisoners need/want to do.
13. Ensure that there is clear communication between delivery staff/mentors and the prisoners as to when the prisoners can expect to be seen for their sessions or if a session needs to be cancelled.
14. Ensure that all delivery staff/mentors have a clear understanding of the PLAN A outcomes prior to beginning service delivery
15. Ensure that prisoners' expectations about the programme are managed effectively before and throughout the programme. Prisoners should be aware of how to direct any questions or concerns to the PLAN A project leaders when necessary
16. The length of a programme should take into account the amount of time it may take to establish rapport with the prisoners and whether the delivery staff/mentor is an appropriate match for the prisoner
17. The length and design of the programme should take into account the amount of time it may take to establish whether a victim can be contacted in order to determine whether direct restorative justice is possible
18. A prisoner's release date should be taken into consideration when deciding whether to recruit on to a programme, with a clear articulation of which part - if any - of the custodial sentence the programme is targeting.
19. Where possible, ensure that the delivery of each strand occurs on separate days. If this is not possible, ensure that participants know to expect that they will be having more than one session during a given association, and ensure they are given an adequate break in between each session.

The design of this evaluation was such that data was collected at one time-point; for prisoners who were released before the programme ended, data was collected approximately one week before their release date and for prisoners who completed the programme, data was collected at programme completion. In addition, no baseline data was collected and there was no matched comparison group of individuals that did not participate in the programme. This design poses limitations to the interpretation of findings because:

- The lack of baseline data to compare the findings against makes it difficult to assess the true / sustained impact of any improvements that were reported/observed
- The lack of a matched comparison group of individuals that did not participate makes it difficult to attribute any improvements that were reported/observed to the programme rather than, for example, any changes to the prison environment or other initiatives.

As is fairly typical of small scale evaluations of this kind, the commissioned timeframe for the evaluation means that prisoners will not be followed up after programme completion – either while they are in the community following release or whilst they are still in custody – which makes it impossible to determine whether any reported/observed improvements will be sustained in the medium or longer term. The findings of this report should thus be interpreted with caution.

A number of issues were also highlighted in terms of the logistics of programme evaluation, summarised below to enhance impact evaluation if a similar programme was to run again:

1. Baseline data should be collected before a programme commences; data collection will thus need to be done at two or more different time points depending on the nature of the evaluation
2. Where possible there should be a matched control or waiting list comparison group to help ascertain whether any changes can be attributed specifically to the intervention
3. Prisoners should be followed up once the programme has finished to ascertain whether any changes remain, particularly after the transition from custody to community
4. A larger sample of participants would facilitate a reconviction study (for example, utilising the Ministry of Justice Datalab initiative) as well as providing an opportunity to gather quantitative data with sufficient statistical power, in relation to each of the areas targeted by the programme.



Chapter 8

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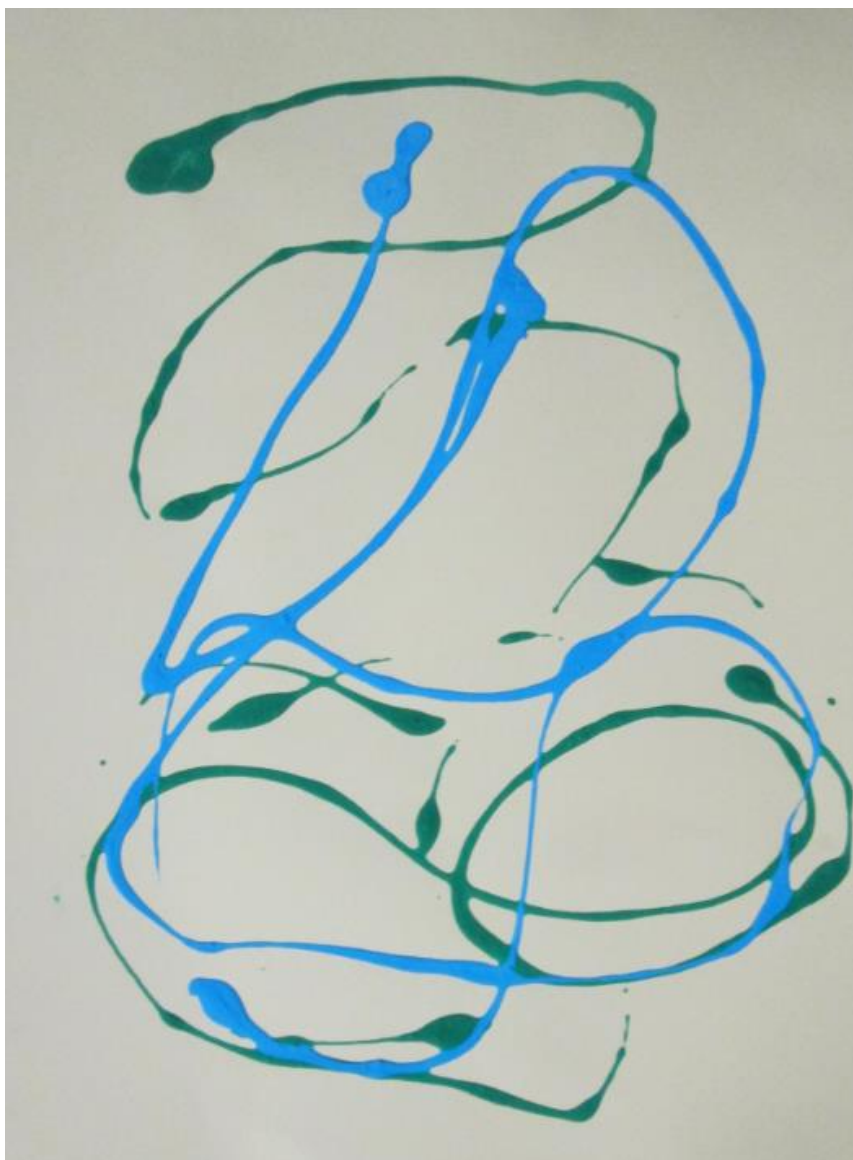


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Appendix 1

Promotional flier circulated within HMP/YOI Isis

THE PLAN AND ACHIEVEMENTS PROGRAMME

Belong is an independent charity working in the criminal justice sector. We work with children, young people and adults.

THERE ARE 3 PARTS TO THE PROGRAMME:

- 1 One to one support, every week, from a trained, caring volunteer
- 2 Weekly groups where you can express yourself creatively
- 3 Restorative justice or victim awareness sessions



TAKE PART AND ACHIEVE:

- Better relationships
- More financial independence
- Improved skills for employment
- Greater self confidence
- A certificate and reference letter at the end

THE PROGRAMME LASTS FOR 6 MONTHS.

Most of the sessions will be short sessions that take place on house blocks during association times.

The sessions are all about new achievements.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT DEBI, ESTHER OR KELLIE VIA BELONG, WHICH IS BASED AT THE OMU DEPARTMENT.

www.belonglondon.co.uk
registered charity number 1142931

Belong
Making justice happen



Appendix 2

Brief description of Belong London, submitted by the organisation

Belong was founded in 2010 to enable social inclusion, provide services for mediation and conciliation between victims of crime and offenders and promote equality and diversity. In achieving these objectives the charity specialises in enabling positive development, rehabilitation and recovery amongst those who have been victims of sexual offences or violence offences, perpetrators of sexual and/or violent offences, offenders with mental health problems and/or learning difficulties and offenders who are affiliated to or members of gangs.

Belong's services are directed by their Development Manager, a senior criminal justice practitioner with fifteen years of experience working with offenders and six years of service delivery and management experience. The Development Manager has gained an understanding of issues in criminal justice globally by working in a number of African prisons and has also provided extensive support to victims of crime. Other Belong staff members possess a wealth of experience of project, financial and staff management as well as working with disadvantaged adults, including offenders in custody and those with mental health problems. The team has robust knowledge and experience of risk management processes and share a genuine desire to help make positive change possible for people who have offended.

Alongside the Development Manager, Belong's board of trustees provide strategic oversight of Belong's projects, contributing to sustainability, strategic growth, financial controls and the management of risk. The members of the trustee board utilise their experience of working on major police investigations, working in Integrated Offender Management, managing multi-agency partnerships, undertaking senior leadership within the public and voluntary sectors, and working extensively with disadvantaged groups. Belong also has a proven ability to recruit and train committed, skilled volunteers to deliver services, and boasts very low overheads as an organisation.

Contact details:

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enquiries@belonglondon.com



Appendix 3: 'PLAN A programme service user progress report' template

| SERVICE USER BASIC DETAILS | |
|---|--|
| Name of Service User | |
| Date of Birth | |
| NOMIS number | |
| PNC number | |
| Service User Start date on PLAN A programme: | |
| Service User end date on PLAN A programme: | |
| Number of art therapy sessions participated in: | |
| Number of mentoring sessions participated in: | |
| Number of restorative justice sessions participated in: | |

Summary of PLAN A Programme and Aims

Each service user on the PLAN A programme takes part in mentoring, restorative justice and art therapy interventions over a period of up to six months, whilst in custody. The PLAN A programme aims to provide each service user with an opportunity to reduce violent, group offending behaviour. There are five related objectives for addressing this behaviour.

- 1) To help service users' address negative attitudes towards re-offending. This includes working to achieve progress in relation to service users' anticipation of reoffending, level of empathy with victim(s), justification of offending and evaluation of crime as worthwhile.
- 2) To enable participants to develop emotional resilience, including self-esteem and skills in managing difficult thoughts and emotions.
- 3) To encourage the development of pro-social attitudes for service users. This includes addressing problems with impulsivity (with and without aggression), exploring beliefs about using aggressive behaviour, and addressing problems in conflict resolution including lack of compromise, mistaken beliefs about self and others.
- 4) To improve service users' psychological well-being. This includes offering a safe, supportive environment in which service users can begin to process trauma that is linked to their offending behaviour.
- 5) To address barriers to resettlement for individual service users, for example problems with employability skills, lack of financial independence,



| SUMMARY OF SERVICE USERS' ENGAGEMENT WITH INTERVENTIONS, INCLUDING ELEMENTS OF EACH INTERVENTION THAT SERVICE USER HAS RESPONDED WELL TO, FOUND DIFFICULT. | |
|--|--|
| ART THERAPY | |
| RESTORATIVE JUSTICE | |
| MENTORING | |

| SPECIFIC PROGRESS AND ISSUES ARISING | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| | PROGRESS TO DATE, INCLUDING AREAS OF CONCERN | FUTURE ACTIONS/AREAS TO FOCUS ON IN INTERVENTIONS |
| ATTITUDES TOWARDS RE-OFFENDING | | |
| EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE | | |
| DEVELOPMENT OF PRO-SOCIAL ATTITUDES | | |
| PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING | | |
| BARRIERS TO RESETTLEMENT | | |

OTHER COMMENTS (IF APPLICABLE)



Appendix 4

The five components of the PLAN A programme with illustrative quotes from prisoner participants

