



Creating Change



*A Bearface Theatre CIC programme for Hampshire & Isle of Wight
Community Rehabilitation Company*

Evaluation Report 2019/20

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Programme funded & supported by:



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“Everyone is so different - they're not people I'd normally be around. They all seem like lovely people. I had a moment when I opened up and talked about my problems. I've done things in this group that I wouldn't think I'd do. Everyone does things together and it feels right, and we all communicated and did the same thing.

Getting us to do activities and then sitting down and working out what it means to us and how it relates to our lives - it makes you think about how changing certain things could change your life. I find that really interesting. I've found something different in me. It feels like counselling - it makes me think. Getting up and playing things out helps you picture your day to day life choices”

(Individual)

1.Executive summary

Terms used to refer to: *Individuals and Probation Practitioners are the terms used to refer to research informants that took part in the Creating Change programme. Both Individuals and Probation Practitioners participated as equals during every session.*

Although desistance was not one of the key measures of success for *Creating Change*, the programme still offered Individuals a skill set that appeared to have a significantly positive impact on their sense of identity and decision-making processes. Testimonies given by Individuals during the delivery of the programme indicate profound shifts in attitudes, thinking and behaviour. This report argues that the personal growth and development that Individuals showed should be considered a vital stepping stone towards helping them to meet their human needs. Therefore, the programme should not exist in a vacuum, instead it should be used in conjunction with a wider holistic package of care and support (support with employment, education, community engagement, housing, economic security, childcare, drugs misuse etc.). Only then will Individuals have a realistic chance of moving forward to desist from crime and live meaningful and purposeful lives. The additional care and support needs mentioned above are discussed further within the wider report.

It was often cited in 1:1 Unstructured Interviews that Individuals found the use of the word *‘theatre’* intimidating and *‘put people off’* wanting to join the group. In the context of *Creating Change*, the word *‘theatre’* pertains to a process that encourages Individuals to tell their stories and perform as themselves in real world and imaginative scenarios – without scripts or predetermined agendas. Once a programme begins, many Individuals state that the programme, *‘isn’t acting, it’s just being yourself and learning through fun’* (Individual).

The previous run of programmes in 2018/19, often referred to the use of applied theatre methods. Due to additional key findings from the 2019/20 programmes, this report acknowledges the importance of accessible and jargon free language when describing *Creating Change* to Individuals. Therefore, this report proposes the use of

more concise and accessible language to describe *Creating Change*, suggesting that **creative action for social change** better encapsulates the methods and ethos of the programme.

The *Creating Change* process is designed around to be bottom up, co-produced, bespoke, collective, active, creative, forward looking, strength-based and pro social. The following points provide a broader understanding of the research, programme and key findings:

Overview

- Individuals need to be able to articulate a desire to make a positive change in their lives to achieve any of the revised stages of the Theory of Change model (see chapter 8). Initial findings indicate that **some attributes of the new model yield greater impact than others - based on the testimonies of Individuals. However, a lack of testimonies for certain attributes does not necessarily mean Individuals did not experience or achieve them (please see Group Observations in appendix for further examples of attributes displayed by Individuals that align to the Theory of Change model).**
- Beyond the Theory of Change model, the programme also provides
- transferable life skills that are needed to enable Individuals to move forward and live meaningful and purposeful lives.
- Individuals are encouraged to drop previously constructed façades (i.e. de-mask) to enable them to show genuine and authentic versions of themselves before engaging in critical self-analysis.
- The programme establishes a shame free learning environment that de labels and re-humanises, supporting groups to begin to develop a higher awareness of the complex process of deconstructing identities and reimagining new ones.
- The programme positions Individuals, Probation Practitioners, and facilitators as equals working collectively and equally alongside each other.
- **Facilitators build a warm, informal, humorous, and supportive rapport** with Individuals and Probation Practitioners. This appears to rapidly build high levels of trust, safety, and respect within groups, allowing Individuals to show vulnerability in front of others and challenge some of their entrenched attitudes, thinking and behaviour (including decision-making processes).
- **“The facilitators are amazing, full of energy; I really like both of them. They are open and easy to talk to, fun and not judgemental” (Individual).**
- The programme methodology presents a philosophy of working that promotes the universal benefits of building collective trust, empathy, social bonds, compassion etc. when working with highly vulnerable populations. This philosophy of working in criminal justice settings appears to deliver the same levels of effectiveness across gender, setting and intervention (see chapter 11).

Delivery, Sample size & Attendance

- *Creating Change* was delivered across five Women's Centres (Aldershot, Cosham, Basingstoke, Southampton and Isle of Wight) during 2019/20.
- 8 two-hour weekly sessions per programme.

- Sample size varies across all five settings due to high levels of sporadic attendance and the complex life circumstances of Individuals. A major factor when trying to understand attendance patterns is the often complex, unpredictable, and chaotic life circumstances of Individuals, and the subsequent trauma generated from negative lived experiences. This can significantly impact sustained attendance and compromise Individuals' ability to commit to enough sessions (4/8) to gain meaningful benefit from the programme.
- Individuals and Probation Practitioners commented that any absences over the duration of the programme were often due to circumstances out of their control (i.e. childcare, health appointments, drugs misuse, job commitments).
- **65 Individuals impacted in total** (10 Aldershot, 14 Cosham, 16 Basingstoke, 9 Southampton and 16 Isle of Wight).
- 37/40 group sessions delivered in total.
- ***Sessions delivered:** Aldershot 8/8 Cosham 8/8 Basingstoke 8/8 Southampton 7/8 Isle of Wight 6/8.
- ***Due to Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown measures** implemented by the Government, Southampton and Isle of Wight had fewer sessions.
- Between 50% - 75% of Individuals attended 4-8 sessions.

Research Aims & Methods

- This report is shaped and informed by the authentic and genuine voices of participating Individuals and Probation Practitioners (research informants).
- This report is interdisciplinary in nature, informed by the relational qualities of Applied Theatre, Applied Criminology, Psychology and Sociology.
- Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted by the Lead Researcher (across all five settings) and interpreted into key findings based on the aims of the research and framed by the Theory of Change model (chapter 8).
- **The Theory of Change model was designed using a combination of primary testimonial evidence given by Individuals from the 2018/19 and 2019/20 programmes**, as well as from group observations made by the Lead Researcher during programme delivery. **Each programme appears to produce a different yield - meaning that some attributes detailed in the Theory of Change model are more obvious in some groups than others.** It is determined by the unique dynamics of groups and their individual/collective needs.
- The research is a mixed methods approach to analyse the personal growth and development of informants during programme delivery.
- **Mixed methods:** 1:1 Unstructured Interviews, self-scoring questionnaires (pre and post programme), questionnaire comments, group observations, group discussions, case studies, and personal statements.
- Informed by the 7 pathways to prevent re-offending, with specific focus on the impact of the programme on attitudes, thinking and behaviour of Individuals.

Questionnaire Scores (pre & post programme)

- All Individuals and Probation Practitioners were asked to complete a self-scoring questionnaire pre and post programme (the same questions, although questions differed between Individuals and Probation Practitioner). Helping to ascertain whether the programme achieved any positive impact relating to the Theory of Change model and transferable life skills.
- All questions were formulated based on the research aims (chapter 7), and each question had a possible score of between 1 -10 points. The scores from the 1st and 2nd questionnaires were used to produce an Individual score for everyone, providing a point of comparison, as well as an average score across all five programmes (please see chapter 11).
- **The highest increase for an individual score was 129%.**
- 34% average increase in Individual self-scoring questionnaires (pre and post programme). **No self-scoring questionnaires (Individuals and Probation Practitioners) showed a decrease in scores across the 2019/20 programme.**
- Interestingly, the first run of *Creating Change* was a six session model and did show some decreased scores between the 1st and 2nd questionnaires for some Individuals. **Perhaps indicating the benefits of a longer term programme** (i.e. 2019/20 was an 8 session model, as opposed to six).
- The significant rise in self-scoring questionnaires of Individuals and Probation Practitioners (across all five CRC Women's Centres) suggests a high increase in personal growth and development during delivery.
- Questions that showed the greatest increase in Individuals self-scoring include: ***positive impact on self and identity, feeling part of a safe and supportive community, increased confidence and self-esteem, empathy for others, a new awareness of the importance of self-care, communication skills, and agency to make a positive change in their lives.***
- Self scoring questionnaires from the three fully delivered programmes recorded the following increases: **Aldershot 46%, Cosham 21% and Basingstoke 45%.**
- The questionnaires provided the only evidence base of quantitative data in terms of evidencing personal growth and development. The recommendations chapter (13) proposes a 3-6 month post programme questionnaire to be completed by Probation Practitioners in consultation with Individuals that have completed at least 4/8 sessions of the programme.

Group Observations

- Individuals stated it was important to have a female only learning environment, describing feeling supported and safe.
- The group discussed how they felt equal, ***“good to just come as you are and not to be judged, just interact as women”*** (Individual). Groups commented that it was positive that CRC staff also got involved as, ***‘one of us’*** and there was no sense of hierarchy in groups. ***High levels of team camaraderie within groups*** -comments about how sad it is to be ending the programme.
- ***A CRC staff member stated that she will continue to use some of the Creating Change activities in other sessions.***
- Individuals commented on the benefits of using active and creative methods in conjunction with deconstruction segments. These allowed groups to

discuss the abstract nature of activities, as well as the relevance they had to their own lived experiences.

- Individuals often commented on the length of *Creating Change* – suggesting that it should run for 12 weeks like other Probation groups.
- The facilitators **build a trusting and informal rapport** with groups, which helps to establish relational connections, belonging and create a safe space to share and process forward looking strategies in preparation to live meaningful and purposeful lives, *“I want to find the person I used to be again”* (Individual).

Probation Practitioners

- Majority of Individuals cited the positive impact of having Probation Practitioners participating alongside them on the programme as equals.
- The three planned staff training days 24/4/20, 15/5/20, 5/6/20, have been postponed until further notice due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- 16 staff members from the 5 HIOW CRC teams signed up for and remain on the list for the postponed training days.

Impact: key findings

- **A significant number of informants articulated a desire and willingness to make a positive change in their lives by the start/end of the programme.**
- Informants cited significant increases in confidence and self-esteem. They also described experiencing profound shifts in personal growth and development throughout the duration of the programme.
- Individuals stated that the use of active, participatory, and creative methods made the programme fun and the learning experience more memorable.
- **No aggressive or violent attitudes, thinking or behaviour was displayed by any Individuals during programme sessions.**
- Individuals commented that they were developing a better understanding of their motivations and triggers, as well as learning to positively address and reimagine their sense of self and identity.
- All participating Probation Practitioners stated that they had enjoyed taking part in *Creating Change*. **Many commented that they believed the experience had improved their working relationships with Individuals, both within the programme and beyond.**
- **Probation Practitioners have requested that advocacy and training should be provided for more Probation Practitioners**, including those that are yet to participate in a *Creating Change* programme.
- The aims and philosophy of the *Creating Change* programme can be found in the three progressive stages of the Theory of Change model – achieving one or all of the three stages has shown to have a profoundly positive impact on highly vulnerable Individuals. However, it is **important to note that not all Individuals progress to stages two and three of the model. In fact, Individuals often appear to move forward and backwards through the three stages, and thus it is not always a linear process of progression.**

- Individuals often appeared to struggle with finding the words to articulate positive shifts in their attitudes, thinking and behaviour. Individuals would often state 'increased confidence' to describe their experiences of the programme. Individuals often commented on this anomaly during 1:1 Unstructured Interviews – appearing frustrated at times due to a lack in vocabulary when trying to communicate their depth of feeling regarding the significant impact they believed the programme had made on their sense of self and identity.
- Chapter 11 presents each of the three stages of the Theory of Change model with direct testimonies appropriately distributed under the correlating attributes. Individual testimonies offer a range of thoughts and experiences over the duration of a programme.
- The profoundly valuable attributes stated in the three-stage model are often something that non offenders take for granted. However, they can have a significant positive impact on self and of identity for Individuals, especially for those that have been traumatised and criminalised.
- This research only provides an insight into any positive shifts within the learning environment (at least for the 2018/19 & 2019/20 programmes) due to the lack of data post programme. Data collected 3-6 months post programme would help to ascertain whether Individuals were able to sustain an upwards trajectory of progress within their daily lives.
- Reduction in attendance is often accompanied by an Individual articulating that they do not feel ready to make a positive change in their lives. However, it can still be a profound and meaningful experience of personal growth and development for those Individuals that attend 1-3 sessions and just stay at Stage One.
- The Lead Researcher was able to speak to between 5-6 Individuals once per programme – due to high levels of sporadic attendance and limited time for research during delivery.
- Covid-19 lockdown cut the Southampton and Isle of Wight programmes short. Thus, all additional testimonies provided using mixed methods ensured this report could still provide a holistic view of Individuals thoughts and experiences on these two programmes. Individuals' testimonies have been granted anonymity in all aspects of this report to protect their vulnerable status and avoid any identifiable content once this report is made public (excluding location of programme). Please check Appendix for locations of 1:1 Unstructured Interviews.

"I can see the benefit of this. I first heard this was going to be acting and I really didn't want to do it, but you don't even realise you're doing it! The facilitators make you feel at ease. Doing this in a group generally makes people feel more at ease. It's making people come out of their shells and bond with people they wouldn't normally bond with. Knowing people from different backgrounds opens your eyes to different things, new opportunities, things you wouldn't have thought of. Those people you wouldn't have thought would be your best friend end up being the best person for you.

Lots of people have a lack of understanding of emotions and how to deal with them but this is making you think about your daily lives and how your actions affect your life and how you can stop bad actions in your life. It's going to help me understand my son a bit more too. I think this is going to make me be a bit calmer by understanding emotions better"

(Individual)

1. Introduction

Key Words: *Vulnerability, Co-production, Bottom up, Non-targeted, Shame free, Non-judgemental, Responsive, Bespoke, Social Bonds & Connection, Belonging, Being believed in, Being treated as human, Active, Creative, Memorable learning through collective fun and play, Resilience, Self and identity deconstruction, Strength Based, Pro social & Forward Looking, Equality of learning (i.e. Individuals participating alongside Facilitators and Probation Practitioners), Training and Advocacy for Probation Practitioners.*

How did it all start?

The partnership between Hampshire Cultural Trust (HCT), Hampshire & Isle of Wight Community Rehabilitation Company (HIOW CRC) and BearFace Theatre CIC (BFT) has been developing and strengthening over several years, delivering the *Creating Change* programme. In 2017/18 HCT & BFT delivered a 3-session programme in six Women's Centres funded by HIOW CRC through a Purple Futures Innovation grant.

This subsequently led to an application to the Office of the Hampshire Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to extend the offer in 2018/19 as a 6-session programme to the revised five Women's Centres. Based on a positive impact study, HCT secured further funds from Hampshire OPCC to develop *Creating Change* into an 8 session programme in 2019/20 for the existing five HIOW CRC Women's Centres.

Hampshire Cultural Trust

Hampshire Cultural Trust was established as an independent charity in 2014 to promote Hampshire as a county that offers outstanding cultural experiences to both its residents and visitors.

From museums to galleries to arts centres, we manage and support 23 attractions across the county that were previously operated by Hampshire County Council and Winchester City Council.

We run a huge variety of workshops, classes, events and projects for both young and old, in schools and in communities, with particular emphasis on reaching people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged and would not normally be able to access arts and culture. In addition, we care for 2.5 million objects that relate to Hampshire's rich and internationally important cultural heritage.

Our vision

To create inspirational cultural experiences in Hampshire that enrich and transform lives

Our mission

*Our **mission** is to provide great arts, heritage, museums and creative programming, working closely with local and national partners, and placing communities, our collections and their stories at the heart of everything we do.*

Our goals

- To provide high-quality programmes and venues that engage diverse audiences and inspire local pride*
- To improve wellbeing, health and happiness through cultural experiences*
- To deliver a sustainable future for culture in Hampshire, contributing to the local economy and building stronger communities*
- To create fulfilling employment and volunteering opportunities through culture*

BearFace Theatre CIC

BearFace Theatre CIC (BFT) invites genuine voice, personal exploration and the co-production of contemporary reactive work in a variety of settings. BFT design and deliver tailor made participatory programmes using a range of creative and active methods to lift the voices of those who feel unheard. Sharing message through inclusive high-quality performance, storytelling and bespoke applied theatre projects, we strive to affect positive social change for people who are often living on the margins of society.

BFT aims to establish a platform to open a dialogue, creating further opportunities for debate, conversation and connection. Taking a strengths-based and trauma informed approach, we believe in joyful, vibrant communication that is grounded by mutual respect, genuineness, empathy and positive regard for one another.

We learn to nurture these values as a group, leading us to produce creative work that refracts entrenched perceptions and thinking, developing personal, social and cultural shifts in perspective. We understand the intricacies and challenges of multi-agency working and we strongly believe in creating sustainable support networks – including advocacy and training with supporting staff. The foundation of our work is primarily based on connection and we continue to develop ‘through the gate’ initiatives that promote the strengthening of community ties. Working with a whole system approach we can learn from and therefore complement each another.

Programme details

*Creating Change 2019/20 consisted of 8 consecutive weekly (2 hour) sessions at each of the 5 CRC Women's Centres in Hampshire. Number of Individuals that participated in the *Creating Change* programme: **10 Aldershot, 14 Cosham, 16 Basingstoke, 9 Southampton and 16 Isle of Wight.***

Programmes in 2019/20 were delivered at the following CRC Women's Centres:

1. **Aldershot:** 23.04.19 – 18.06.19
2. **Cosham:** 04.09.19 – 23.09.19
3. **Basingstoke:** 09.09.19 – 04.11.19
4. **Southampton:** 23.01.20 – 19.03.20*
5. **Isle of Wight:** 05.02.20 – 01.04.20*

Due to **Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown measures implemented by the Government, Southampton and Isle of Wight had fewer sessions.*

This report aims to use jargon free and accessible language to present the compelling, powerful, authentic and genuine voices of Individuals and Probation Practitioners. It will assert that *Creating Change* should be contextualised as more

than just a singular contained programme, designed to achieve desistance within a given population. Instead, it will propose that the methods employed by *Creating Change* should be considered as a philosophy of working that has universal potential to be effectively applied to any intervention, across gender and setting, within criminal justice settings and beyond. It aims to provide an objective and rigorous methodological framework to evidence any positive impact that *Creating Change* had on the attitudes, thinking and behaviour of research informants.

This report aims to assess the validity of the stated aims and outcomes of the *Creating Change* programme (desistance is not one of the key measures for this report). A mixed method approach will centre on first-hand testimonies from Individuals and Probation Practitioners. The research is interdisciplinary in nature and is informed by numerous fields of theory and best practice, specifically drawing on the [relational qualities of Applied Theatre, Applied Criminology, Sociology and Psychology](#). These fields aim to provide useful lenses for the research to help interpret the aims of the programme and present the key findings.

Journey towards desistance: *(more than just not committing crime)*

The current evidence base asserts that dehumanising ‘criminals’ increases the likelihood that they will adopt the identity of criminal and behave accordingly to that stereotype. The question is an old one, what does society want from the criminal justice system? Punishment or rehabilitation? This report views desistance within the context of rehabilitation and examines the active and creative methods used by the *Creating Change* programme to help desisters reimagine their offending identities to support them to move away from crime and live purposeful and meaningful lives.

It is important to acknowledge that desistance is not a linear process. Desisters are often already dealing with the various challenges presented by chaotic life circumstances, and require various levels of support (belonging, love, compassion, self-esteem, self-actualisation, secure housing, economic security, aspirations for employment/education, and access to regular healthy food etc.). The *Creating Change* programme sits within this wider holistic support model, and offers a vital step forwards for desisters to meaningfully engage in primary desistance (Individuals who have stopped offending) on a longer journey towards secondary desistance (continuing a non-offending lifestyle).

Therefore, the *Creating Change* programme should be perceived as one level of additional support that aims to provide personal growth and development. In this sense, the aims of *Creating Change* are as vital a step as any of those previously mentioned above. In addition, a lack of access to post programme data on Individuals has prevented any analysis of recidivism rates for the 2019/20 programmes. One of the key indicators for ‘success’ from the previous run of

Creating Change (2018/19) was Individuals' willingness and commitment to make a positive change in their lives.

Ministry of Justice White Paper, Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending (2013) reinforces the assertion that interaction and the interpersonal are central features of a desisters journey. It offers a common-sense framework for encouraging desisters to become more consciously in control of their own roles and their behaviour to others. The paper states that people who feel and show concern and empathy for others are more likely to desist from crime (Bottoms et al. 2010). The paper also identifies that it is important for desisters to have someone believe in them (Rex, 1999) and asserts that desistance can be supported by interactions with others who communicate a belief that they can and will change, that they are good people, and that they have something to offer society and other people (McNeill, 2005).

Desistance was avoided as primary programme aim, due to the absence of post programme data. The importance of post programme evidence to analyse desistance and recidivism rates is further addressed in the Recommendations chapter (13) of this report. Instead, evidence gained during programme delivery was used to measure key programme and research aims.

Sample size

- **65 Individuals impacted in total:** 10 from Aldershot, 14 from Cosham, 16 from Basingstoke, 9 from Southampton and 16 from Isle of Wight.
- **37/40 group sessions delivered in total***
- **Sessions completed:** Aldershot 8/8 Cosham 8/8 Basingstoke 8/8 Southampton 7/8 Isle of Wight 6/8.
- Sample size varies across all five settings due to high levels of sporadic attendance of Individuals.
- ***Due to Covid-19** and the subsequent lockdown measures implemented by the Government, Southampton and Isle of Wight had fewer sessions.

"I really like the various metaphors they [Creating Change] use to look at trigger areas/strengths and who your support networks are. It helps Individuals build confidence, communication skills and self-awareness"
(Probation Practitioner, Cosham)

Applied Theatre: a historical context

Professor James Thompson, states that Applied Theatre refers to a therapeutic theatre practice in non-theatrical spaces, with participants who do not consider themselves to be artists. It is an established practice that engages with areas of public health, social welfare, education, criminal justice, humanitarian crisis, and war. In the context of *Creating Change*, the word theatre pertains to the active, creative, and participatory methods used within the programme (1998).

The use of active, creative and collaborative methods of storytelling to educate, challenge individual and societal preconceptions of self and identity, and critically reflect on entrenched attitudes, thinking and behaviour, has its modern roots in collaborative, community-based art that is political and driven by social change, “*I didn't want to be treated like a criminal. The way you treated me made my nerves disappear. It feels homely*” (Individual).

Welfare State International is a strong example of historical community arts-based practice that successfully challenged disadvantage, alienation, and division across the UK in the 1980s and into the early 1990s. Much of the methods, values and belief systems of this movement, as well as its socio/political framework, was built upon the seminal works of both Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970) and Augusto Boal (*Theater of the Oppressed*, 1979).

Creating Change is an extension of the ethos of this early community arts movement, and could be considered a form of cultural democracy, as it is based on the same belief that everyone has a right to creative and cultural expression. Community arts drama is now more commonly known as Applied Theatre, but it is still defined by its capacity to galvanise communities to creatively address and actively communicate shared issues and challenges to a range of audiences in closed and open settings.

Thompson, states that applied theatre provides a transformative quality for marginalised, isolated and disadvantaged groups within society, asserting that, “*by participating and performing a person can reflect upon their lives, their environment, their community and society and in so doing contribute to a process of positive personal, institutional and social change*” (1998).

The ‘theatre’ aspect to *Creating Change* pertains to Individuals ‘performing’ genuine and authentic versions of themselves, sometimes new versions but always as themselves. “*To say this was outside my comfort zone is an understatement! I'm very reserved. Give me a couple of Vodkas and I'll be dancing on the tables but performing is much harder for me, even though I'm still actually being myself*” (Individual). Groups are required to take emotional risks and become vulnerable in

front of others. Vulnerability and resilience are key components of the *Creating Change* process. The programme allows Individuals to drop their bravado and de mask to enable them to investigate the performances they give in their daily lives, and to uncover complex themes around 'self and identity', as well as critically reflecting and challenging entrenched attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

"It helps you loosen up. We normally just sit around and talk about things in other [Probation] groups.

This is quite light hearted but it has the meaning behind it so you get more involved and it holds your interest more and helps you get a lot out of it.

Doing an activity and then talking about it makes you more engaged. I like the way in makes you look at things differently – getting up and doing stuff makes it more memorable. I suffer from mental health, but this group helps me think about things in a new way and it is a fun way. I think it is good for the staff to take part – it brings everyone together. It helps you want to approach them and speak with them. It is a good way to bring people together and change the way you think. The facilitators have good energy and they're really nice"

(Individual)

***Creating Change*: progressive practice & theory**

It could be argued that *Creating Change* is a progressive form of applied theatre practice, underpinned by current applied theatre theory. It is a philosophy of working that is perhaps better understood as **creative action for social change**.

The philosophy and methods employed by *Creating Change* has the potential to be delivered through a range of interventions, as well as across genders and settings. The programme is non-targeted (looking at specific offences), neither does it focus on specific anti-social behavioural traits. Groups are not presented with prewritten scripts for a play, or given predetermined agendas to explore. Instead, the *Creating Change* process uses games and activities as a spur to encourage Individuals to use both their physicality and cognitive abilities to collectively visualise and verbally deconstruct entrenched thinking, attitudes and behaviour.

The aim is to use the active and creative methods to help Individuals better understand themselves and their motivations and triggers, through spontaneous thought and improvised action. Theatre pertains to Individuals performing versions of themselves, sometimes new versions but always as themselves. The performances that are given are those of Individuals 'acting' as themselves, navigating and problem solving a range of relevant and challenging concepts, themes and scenarios generated through the collective lived experiences of the group. The facilitators state no expectation on groups to produce work to share or perform. This is only introduced as a suggestion in week 5 or 6 of the 8 session model. This allows full attention to be placed upon the process but gives enough time to generate quality material if the group democratically decide to do so nearing the end of the programme.

Performance and deconstruction (through group discussion) form the foundation of *Creating Change*, it is the group that grapple with possible solutions to positive changes in behaviour and decision making. Solutions are never presented by the facilitators, exemplifying the bottom up and co-produced approach of the programme. Groups learn how to become critically reflective in relation to their individual and collective stories and the narratives that support them. It is the group that sets the agenda. It is an exploration of self-discovery, explored as a collective group, focusing on themes surrounding self and identity, decision making practices and relationships, and how the choices we make can lead to positive shifts in offending behaviour.

Key concepts of 'performance' and the presentation of self is addressed by the seminal work of Sociologist, Erving Goffman in the Methodology chapter (6) of this report. Including the importance of the relational qualities of Applied Theatre, Applied Criminology, Psychology and Sociology within the context of the aims and impact of *Creating Change*.

“Seeing the Individuals engage and enjoy in the programme so much has helped me realise the value that a creative, fun and active programme can bring and the progress it can allow the women to make. For the future I now feel that I have skills and activities I can use in future sessions to make it more effective for Individuals”

(Probation Practitioner, Southampton)

3. Context

This empirical research is positioned to make a unique and important contribution to emerging knowledge of transformative learning environments within HMPP Service. This report is politically relevant and builds on the findings of the Coates (2016) review of learning that asserts the potential of education to, *“transform individuals lives and contribute to building safer communities and reducing the significant financial and social costs from reoffending (UK annual estimate £9.5-£13 billion)”* (2016).

Coates (2016) states that, *“if education is the engine of social mobility, it is also the engineer of rehabilitation”* and recommends the, *“provision of arts”* and *“behaviour programmes”* within criminal justice settings. The Government’s new *Transforming Rehabilitation Strategy* and ongoing austerity has meant swift and complex changes across the Criminal Justice System. Restructuring the Probation Service and moving to a culture of payment by results has also caused major challenges within a system already in crisis.

Creating Change aims to offer a voice to those Individuals who are usually silenced by the label of ‘criminal’. The research aimed to ethically gather the direct views and opinions of Individuals and Probation Practitioners during the programme in terms of impact – **with the aim to shape and form future considerations of policy and increase the current evidence base of the key factors required to deliver effective learning interventions within HMPPS**. The *Transforming Rehabilitation* agenda makes reference to offenders’ complex backgrounds and highlights the importance of offering meaningful development of offenders’ vocational skills to increase the likelihood of future employability, as well as delivering transformational learning opportunities that address responsiveness and diversity issues (NOMS, 2012; MoJ, 2013).

National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance (NCJAA) was established to provide a collective network of support and shared learning for disparate arts practitioners, researchers and organisations working within criminal justice settings. **NCJAA** recognises the vital importance of research and evaluation, combining current theory and best practice across interconnecting disciplines (i.e. arts and criminology). **NCJAA** provides a growing evidence library, presenting collaborations between academic institutions and arts organisations working across the secure estate and beyond to evidence impact and inform current policy.

NCJAA states:

“Our vision is to ensure the arts are used within the criminal justice system as a springboard for positive change. We provide a network to promote, develop and support high quality arts practice in criminal justice settings, influencing and informing government, commissioners and the public”

“Arts and creativity in criminal justice settings can support improved wellbeing, awaken an interest in learning and can help people build new positive identities. Engaging in the arts can also lead to new skills and employment opportunities, as well as equipping participants with a desire to actively engage in their community and culture”

The current landscape of arts within the criminal justice system is underpinned and informed by a long and varied history of arts practice and theory in the UK and internationally. Historically, arts projects have produced short term and limited evidence bases on the impact of work in closed and open settings. There are many examples of anecdotal evidence that assert the transformational power of the arts, as well as the valuable contribution the arts makes to the living and learning environments in closed and open settings. However, these assertions have often lacked the robust and rigorous evidence required to convince policy makers to make meaningful reforms, or publicly endorse the use of the arts as a credible form of rehabilitation within the criminal justice system. The resistance of policy makers needs to be contextualised within the power of popular public opinion that is often influenced by negative media coverage of ‘criminals’, obsessed with punishment and perpetuating stereotypes and caricatures.

“We provide a collective voice at policy level and develop evidence to make the case for arts in prison, probation and community settings, raising the profile and quality of the arts in criminal justice settings” (NCJAA)

The **NCJAA** recognises the need for further robust impact studies to help evidence the impact of the arts on individuals, both in terms of personal growth and development, as well as longer term studies on desistance and recidivism. The **NCJAA** evidence library is a progressive and welcome addition to developing best practice tools and theoretical understanding of the role of the arts, but this currently only consists of just over 100 reports. It could be argued that this is not

representative of the volume of work currently being delivered across the UK. However, each additional report will offer greater insights into how the arts can enrich and humanise our understanding of the complexities associated with recidivism and the long journey towards desistance.

Creating Change is designed for female Individuals - to be forward looking and responsive to their specific needs of Individuals in a group learning environment, creating a safe space to discuss and practice the essential life skills required to make healthier life choices. **Clinks is an organisation that, ‘supports the voluntary sector working in the criminal justice system’.** Clinks states that,

“Voluntary organisations provide wrap-around services to enable and support individuals to undertake and complete their sentence and go on to live fulfilling lives. This support includes help with education, as well as projects or services specifically for particular cohorts such as women” (2020)

Individuals from previous *Creating Change* programmes cited the value and importance of programmes being a learning environment that only consists of females. However, it is of interest to note that the same programme model has also shown similar impact and rates of success with men in custodial settings, again suggesting the universal benefits of the programme methods and philosophy of working across genders in criminal justice settings and beyond.

“It can make you feel childish playing games – makes me feel a bit weird. It can make me feel uncomfortable. It is a programme to build up confidence and make friends. Going from my flat to the shop or speaking on the phone is something I couldn’t do but the confidence I’ve gained here has helped. I prefer this programme to just sitting around a flip chart – you have a voice here – they listen to what you have to say. I don’t want my confidence to go back down when this finishes. The facilitators are beautiful, energetic, and lively. They treat us all fairly. I’m going to miss this group”

(Individual)

4.HMPPS Targets

On March 3rd, 2020, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) published a target operating model for probation. Clinks have provided an update on their website (2020) on the latest developments in the design of the future probation model which is anticipated to be fully operational from 2022. The following was taken from Clinks update on target operating model for probation:

“A lack of grant funding has been one of the key reasons why involvement of the voluntary sector, particularly smaller ones, has been so limited in the current probation model, so it's really important in the new system that this is addressed (Clinks, 2020)”

“There is insufficient detail about how the new probation model will meet the specific needs of women in the criminal justice system and which aspects of the strategy it will support”

“Commissioners will be given Dynamic Framework procurement documentation that has criteria to support them in determining whether grants or contracts are the most appropriate approach”

“We are keen to support HMPPS to further develop the detail of this commitment in order for grants to be better utilised in the future of probation and to support greater involvement of small voluntary organisations”

“HMPSS has made a progressive decision to update the language we use to refer to people on Probation orders and the professionals that support them on the road to desistance. This will help reshape the narrative within the criminal justice system and building more productive relationships and learning environments that resist labelling and stigmatising people as ‘offenders’”

“It has a clear and dedicated focus on reforming offenders and protecting the public while ensuring best value for money from public resources. It works to do this by strengthening the frontline, empowering those who work closely with the men, women and young people in custody and the community to focus on delivering better outcomes and by having clear lines for accountability for delivery”

(HM Prison and Probation Service framework document, 2017)

5. Ethical grounding

Due to the highly vulnerable nature of Individuals, ethical considerations underpinned every aspect of the research to ensure all Individuals were protected from harm. Those subject to Probation Orders are an inherently vulnerable population for several complex reasons (discussed in later chapters).

Written informed consent was gained from every research informant, and anonymity was provided throughout the entirety of this report as part of a safeguarding framework. All personal information that might have inadvertently identified an Individual, such as specific offence information, is also absent from this report. Pseudonyms are used to speak about specific case studies and all hard copies of documents and audio files were stored within a secure location. This information will be destroyed on publication of this report.

The Lead Researcher introduced herself to groups at the start of the first session for all five programmes. She used accessible and jargon free language to clearly explain every aspect of the research and how it would be disseminated. All research documentation (i.e. questionnaires, informed consent forms, 1:1 Unstructured Interviews and personal reflective statements) were explained and read aloud at the beginning of the first session in case of any literacy or learning challenges. Every aspect of the research was also re explained at the start of each session to offer clarity. The main reason Individuals and Probation Practitioners gave for wanting to participate in the research was to help ensure funding was continued so that other women had the opportunity to gain from the *Creating Change* programme.

The Lead Researcher participated in the 'check in' activity at the start of every session she attended. This helped to build rapport and promote an ethical research environment based on trust and safety. The 'check in' was an opportunity for the

whole group to openly discuss individual and collective goals, as well as shared lived experiences and the importance of self-care.

As well as tailoring the research to take account of the vulnerability and needs of Individuals, all research informants were clearly informed at the beginning of the first session by the Lead Researcher that they had the right to 'opt out' of taking part in any or all aspects of the research by speaking with their Probation Practitioner. It was explained to all Individuals and Probation Practitioners that they had up to one-month post programme to request the removal of their contribution. Confidentiality was only guaranteed if Individuals and Probation Practitioners were not in immediate physical or emotion danger.

All methods used to collect data were specifically chosen to acknowledge the vulnerability of Individuals (detailed later in this report). All 1:1 Unstructured Interviews were unstructured and led by Individuals, this allowed for greater focus on what they believed to be most relevant to their own experiences of the *Creating Change* programme.

As one of the main stakeholders in the delivery of *Creating Change*, HCT produced a Risk Assessment, in conjunction with HIOW CRC, to mitigate emotional and physical risk to all taking part in the research (including the Lead Researcher and facilitators). The Lead Researcher was provided with regular supervision with an allocated member of HCT staff and communicated any safeguarding concerns weekly to relevant Probation Practitioners.

There was also a 20-minute debriefing session held post session between the Lead Researcher and the *Creating Change* facilitators. This was another safeguarding measure to promote open and transparent dialogue to ensure any safeguarding issues or concerns were flagged and addressed at the earliest possible time post session.

Signposting Individuals to accessible and appropriate forms of on-going support within HMPP Service and the local community was provided through consultation with BFT and HCT. Senior management at HMPP Service were given access to the final report to allow for feedback and gain permission before seeking any form of external publication of key findings.

“The programme has been a wonderful part of my working week when workloads are high and the job is stressful. I’ve been given the opportunity to laugh, share and explore things about myself and the other group members. This programme is the way forward to working with Service Users and has unlimited benefits for staff too! Thank you so much!”

(Probation Practitioner, Isle of Wight)

6. Methodology

The research methodology utilises a mixed methods design to produce the value-base of the programme, critically analysing data, which is insightful, manageable, and reliable and centres on the genuine and authentic voices of informants. The research is contextualised as a significant contributing factor within a wider holistic package of care and support required for Individuals to desist from crime and go on to live meaningful and purposeful lives. This report also aims to examine the current limitations and challenges of the *Creating Change* programme within an ethically sound framework.

The methodologies have been designed based on the criminological assertion that all evidence based theories about rehabilitation teach us that offender management programmes must be, *“ forward looking, they must focus on the potential of the offender, and what useful contribution to the community, he or she can do in the future, and not on what harm he or she has done in the past”* (Baim et al, 2002).

The research is interdisciplinary in nature and is informed by numerous relational disciplines, specifically drawing on the [relational qualities of Applied Theatre, Applied Criminology, Sociology and Psychology](#). This chapter aims to present examples of a shared philosophy of effective evidence-based practice within criminal justice settings. Asserting that *Creating Change* and the Theory of Change model share significant philosophical traits with both arts and non-arts based practice and theory of transformational learning environments, and in most cases, the aims are the same, even if the methods employed to achieve them differ. The following provides examples of theorists and practice that offer a similar or shared philosophy of effective working within criminal justice settings:

- Professor James McGuire (*Criminologist, What Works?*)
- Paulo Freire (educator and philosopher, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*)
- Sir Ken Robinson (international advisor on education in the arts to government, non-profits, education and arts bodies)
- Augusto Boal (Applied Theatre specialist and author of *Theater of the Oppressed*)
- Learning Together (Criminology, University of Cambridge)
- Erving Goffman (Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Sociology Theorist)
- Professor James Thompson (applied theatre specialist)
- Tony Ward (Good Lives Model, Criminology)
- Abraham Maslow (Psychology - hierarchy of needs' theory in psychology, 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in Psychological Review)

It is the combination of the relational qualities of Applied Theatre, Applied Criminology, Sociology and Psychology, stated above, along with the methods of **creative action for social change**, that enables *Creating Change* to achieve exceptionally rapid rates of engagement and personal growth and development with Individuals, as well as Probation Practitioners working alongside them as equals. Testimonies from all research informants clearly attribute collective play, creativity, co-production and the active nature of the programme, matched with verbal deconstruction, for the positive impact the programme has on shifting attitudes, thinking and behaviour. Many Individuals begin to display increased ability to conceptualise, physicalise and deconstruct themes of self and identity, developing new pro social and strength-based narratives within the first four sessions of the programme.

(Stage One, Theory of Change model)

Creating Change is not just an arts practice, its strength and impact are rooted in the rich and varied body of knowledge and practice of what makes effective programme design. The four key components to the programme are as follows:

1. Individuals articulating a desire and willingness to make a positive change in their lives.
2. Exceptional skills of facilitators to engage Individuals and Probation Practitioners.
3. A safe learning environment that builds high levels of trust, safety and equality.
4. Interdisciplinary evidence-based practice, drawing on the relational qualities and current best practice and theory of what factors are essential when working with Individuals on their journey towards desistance.

This report is framed by *What Works?* (McGuire, 2004) evidence-based approach to transformational learning environments within criminal justice settings. The *What Works?* argument asserts that learning **styles of offenders require active, participatory methods of working and behavioural role playing, interpersonal problem solving and modelling, role reversal exercises and guided group discussion to show meaningful levels of success** (McGuire, 2004). The most successful programmes, while behavioural in nature, include a cognitive component to focus on the *'attitudes, values and beliefs that support anti-social behaviour'* (Andrews et al. 1990).

In his seminal work, *'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'*, acclaimed Sociologist, Erving Goffman, asserted that there is no true self – just the roles we perform. Goffman suggested people, ***"act' as themselves and play a range of different parts, determined by their environment, and adapt their behaviour depending on their audience"*** (1990). Goffman stated that we all display a series of different masks to others – in-acting roles – controlling and staging how we appear – ever concerned with how we are coming across, trying to set ourselves in the best light (1990). The premise being that we are always performing, rehearsing and acting out behaviours. In other words, men and women are nothing but players. **We exist only in so far as we play.**

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players, they have the exits and their entrances and one man in his time plays many parts"
(As You Like It, William Shakespeare)

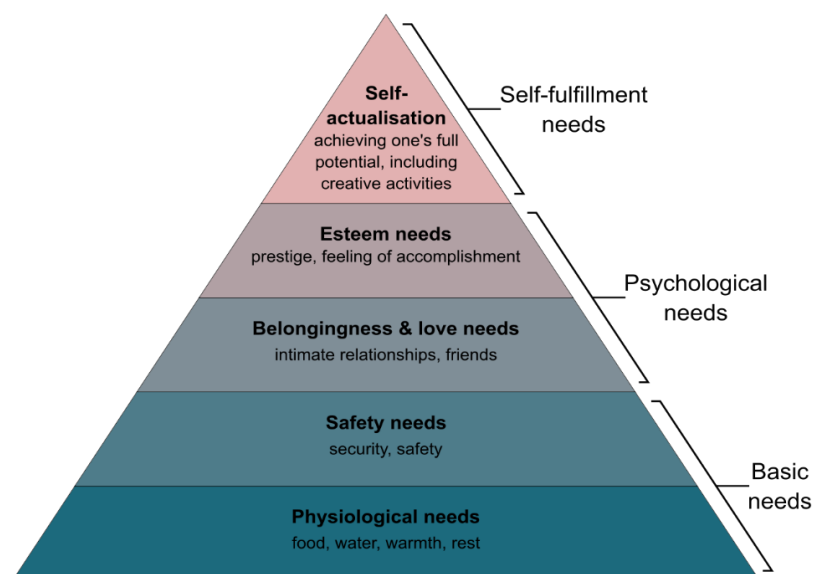
Erving's theory of 'self and identity' argues that our 'front stage' is not an improvisation, rather a carefully crafted representation of the self to others. It is a manipulation of the audience by the actor. In contrast, the ***"backstage' is where we go to practice the techniques of 'impression management; the actor relaxes here, and the mask is dropped"*** (1990). *Creating Change* uses this theory to support groups to explore their 'front stage' and 'backstage' performances in a safe learning

environment. Individuals perform as themselves in a range of 'real world' scenes and narratives, mostly in collective activities but some Individuals that achieve stage three (Theory of Change of model, chapter 8), begin to develop and perform their own internal monologues on the programme.

The deconstruction discussions that follow the active and creative aspects of the programme are an essential opportunity for Individuals to collectively discuss their 'back stage' thoughts, trigger and motivations. This encourages deep learning and develops Individuals' capacity to critically analyse concepts of 'self and identity' and consider the numerous masks we wear and how they have formed through lived experience.

In his seminal 1943 paper, "*A Theory of Human Motivation*" in *Psychological Review*, **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** helps to develop our understanding of the complex needs of desisters, as well as highlighting the additional required care and support needed to achieve desistance and begin to perceive of hope and a brighter future. The *Creating Change* Theory of Change model aligns with the top tiers of Maslow's model, asserting that the basic human needs for shelter, economic security, food, healthy relationship etc. are the essential foundations upon which the *Creating Change* model is built. This report proposes that only once the foundation tiers of Maslow's model are achieved, can interventions like *Creating Change* achieve their full impact on positive shifts in identity. Allowing Individuals to hope for brighter futures and move forward to live purposeful lives and desist from crime.

Therefore, the potential for personal and collective growth and development stated in the aims of the *Creating Change* programme also requires Individuals to be provided with an extensive, unilateral, and holistic package of care as stated by the basic human needs tier in Maslow's model below:



(image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs)

When arts practice and research work collaboratively within criminal justice settings, across fields of relational quality (i.e. Applied Theatre , Applied Criminology and Sociology and Psychology - amongst others), an effective universal philosophy of working can be developed and applied within any given setting and intervention. The significance of developing and defining a universally shared philosophy of working has the potential to deliver best practice and inform theory across the entire criminal justice system. The application of an effective philosophy of working, could inspire profound shifts in attitudes, thinking and behaviour, whether it is used within the context of Drama, Music, Dance, History or English etc. Fundamentally, this research has found that once an Individual is able to articulate a readiness to make a positive change in their lives, there are key human needs that must be met to enable Individuals to move forward and thrive. These needs are the same for offender and non-offender alike, although non-offenders often take these needs for granted. For those experiencing the stigma associated with an offending identity, achieving the stages in the Theory of Change model (see chapter 8) can have a profoundly positive impact on their sense of self and identity.

Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984) theory has also been employed to interpret the effectiveness of the active and creative methods used on the *Creating Change* programme. The internationally renowned educationist, Paulo Freire treats the learner as a 'co-creator' of knowledge and places the 'student' at the heart of the learning and creative process. *Creating Change* appears to be closely aligned to Freire and aims to create spaces that enable the participants voices to be heard. Augusto Boal's pedagogy asserts that theatre can establish these transformational learning experiences. He argues that, "*theatre is the art of looking at ourselves and unlocking social mobility*". Applied Theatre can set the stage for personal, political and social agency to promote communities of shared learning and experience.

Philip Taylor suggests that, Applied Theatre has the power to, "*raise awareness, pose alternatives, heal psychological wounds or barriers, challenge contemporary discourses and voice the views of the silent and marginalised. Opposing dominant ideologies and at least gestures to possibilities beyond them*" (Taylor, 2003).

The methodologies used within this report also consider the application of the Good Lives Model (GLM, 2004). Empirical research supports this theory of socially integrated interventions that offer a distinct alternative to current services which are, "*ultimately punitive, controlling, stigmatising and harmful*" (Haines and Case, 2015:13). Points of interest from Ward's lecture (Ward, 2016) suggest that offenders need to participate in pro social activities and mix with 'non offenders' to reduce offending behaviours.

The GLM asserts that offenders need to live more socially integrated lives to reduce offending behaviour (Ward & Brown, 2004). Arguing that offenders need to be matched with positive role models to combat the malign influence of anti-social

behaviour. BFT facilitators and Probation Practitioners fulfil this positive role modelling on the *Creating Change* programme. Individuals in later sessions sometimes begin to display positive role modelling to their peers within groups.

GLM (2004) argues that the best way to create a safer society is to assist offenders to adopt more fulfilling and socially integrated lifestyles. GLM also offers a framework that supports the development and implementation of future community based *Creating Change* programmes provided for alumni, which could potentially also include other women from the local community – including those with previous experience of probation orders (see Recommendations, chapter 13).

Learning Together (University of Cambridge) uses the philosophy of '*education as a practice for freedom*' (2017). It pioneers transformative learning environments in prisons. Dr Ruth Armstrong co designed the programme with Dr Amy Ludlow, she explains that, "*students at University and students under criminal justice supervision have the opportunity to learn with and from each other and study together as equals - pioneering transformative learning environments to enable people to move away from crime and build meaningful and good lives*" (Armstrong, 2018).

Learning Together is also underpinned by best practice and current theory, informed by numerous relational disciplines. Learning Together states, '*it all happens in the interaction and the power of the interpersonal ...*' and reflects part of an emergent practice that asserts prisons are part of our communities and thinking otherwise is to society's detriment.

Creating Change shares a similar philosophy of learning as the Learning Together programme. In the same context, *Creating Change* centres on the power of relationships and the interpersonal. Individuals serving Probation Orders are also part of our communities, and helping them to meaningfully, compassionately, and humanely find ways to connect and belong is also to the benefit of society.

In addition, the 7 pathways to prevent re-offending have also informed the context and aims of both *Creating Change* and the research, specifically in terms of investigating the impact of *Creating Change* on the attitudes, thinking and behaviour of informants.

"I think it was absolutely brilliant today. I do suffer from anxiety, social anxiety, but coming to the groups here, helps it. And having fun is good! I've found it absolutely brilliant. I've got about three different personalities! I suffer with borderline personality disorder; it's like spinning the wheel! So one minute I'm alright and then the next minute I'll exclude myself. Coming to this group gets me out. My RAR days are finished but I asked to come to a group, so they signed me up. I'm here in my own time...I don't want to leave!"

(Individual)

Art for arts sake?

It could be argued that the use of the arts within criminal justice settings has often been viewed as a 'soft touch' by policy makers and public opinion, within the context of rehabilitative interventions. Policy makers have always been highly conscious of, and influenced by, public opinion, which is often informed by popular media coverage of crime and punishment, that supports ever greater punitive responses to offences and offenders. This report aims to make a significant contribution to a growing body of evidence that suggests the arts and creativity can have a profoundly positive and meaningful impact on the attitudes, thinking and behaviour of participating Individuals and Probation Practitioners.

The *Creating Change* programme is positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum to the 'arts for arts' sake argument, a popular belief that asserts art should be judged apart from any themes which it might touch on, such as morality, religion, history, or politics. Instead, within the context of criminal justice settings and beyond, *Creating Change* exemplifies how the arts can be a profoundly effective tool for individual and social change, creating transformational learning environments that are inherently political and touch on life's most profound themes. The arts can actively engage Individuals who might otherwise struggle to believe that it is possible to change their mindsets and ultimately their behaviour. The essential component to these assertions is the need for robust evidence-based practice to win hearts and minds.

“I’ve absolutely loved it - I felt pretty uncomfortable when I got here but now, I feel quite uplifted and it’s been nice to be able to come, it just draws me back to myself a little bit every week. It takes me away from just being a mum - sometimes you do need to be reminded that you are still you. I’ve learnt that I need time for myself - I think it is important. Because when you forget who you are, you can drift off. Then you’re no good to anyone”

(Individual)

7. Research Methods & Aims

Research informants: *Individuals and Probation Practitioners*

The research and programme aims were not measured by the development of performance skills, as **Creating Change is not a ‘performing arts’ programme**. This research used a mixed method and framework to present key findings from the *Creating Change* programme, 2019/20. Demonstrating the impact of arts in criminal justice settings often demands a mixed methods approach when evaluating medium to long term programmes.

This research aims to meaningfully capture the authentic and genuine voices of informants to shape and conduct an impact study on the programme, specifically investigating positive shifts in attitudes, thinking and behaviour (**7 pathways to prevent re-offending**) of Individuals during programme delivery. Sample sizes varied across all settings due to high levels of sporadic attendance, reasons for which are addressed in this report. The need for longer term post programme data is addressed in Recommendations, chapter 13.

Key findings have been thematically analysed through the framework of a newly refined Theory of Change model (developed during the previous run of *Creating Change* programmes in 2018/19), used to measure the three interconnecting and progressive stages of the programme (chapter 8). Key measures for success are focused on the personal growth and development of Individuals. It is relevant to highlight that Individuals and Probation Practitioners experiences can only be recounted in interviews and primary documentation sources. You cannot get inside people’s heads to explore their interpretations and understandings. You can only access what the informants reveal to you using these methods. In this sense, all research is subject to what informants are prepared to share and may not be completely aligned to their internal thought processes.

This report aims to draw upon the relational qualities of Applied Theatre, Applied Criminology, Psychology and Sociology. Both the programme and report are underpinned by current best practice and theoretical assertions made within these fields, to help evidence the key components of what constitutes an effective intervention with Individuals serving Probation Orders. Additionally, another BFT programme that has been running at HMP/YOI Winchester since 2018, applies the same methods and philosophy of working as the *Creating Change* programme. *Creating Change* presents significantly similar levels of impact on male prisoners/offenders in custodial settings, as with females in open settings. Considering these comparisons, this report will attempt to present the *Creating Change* model as a universal philosophy of effective working in criminal justice settings.

Using prolonged ethnographic fieldwork, the following methods were used at strategic stages of the *Creating Change* programme to deliver an exceptionally comprehensive and robust analysis of the programme aims, as agreed by all stakeholders (HCT, BFT and HMPP Service):

Ethnographic fieldwork

- Group observations
- Group discussions
- 1:1 Unstructured Interviews

Documentary research (primary documentation)

- Self-scoring questionnaires / comments (pre and post programme)
- Personal reflective statements (post programme)
- **Self-scoring questionnaires / comments (pre and post programme):** Informants completed two self-scoring questionnaires, one at the beginning of the first session, and one at the end of the last session. The same questions are used on both questionnaires to offer a point of comparison, and the questions are designed around the aims of the programme and research. The pre and post questionnaires were analysed for movement along the self-scoring scales (1-10). Questionnaires provided a quantitative element to an otherwise heavily qualitative evidence base.
- **Personal reflective statements:** Completed by all informants at the end of *Creating Change*, allowing informants the opportunity to reflect on their own personal journeys through the programme.
- **Group observations:** These aimed to avoid being intrusive in any capacity. The Lead Researcher took part in the 'check in' at the start of each session to build rapport with Individuals and develop levels of trust. Her participation appeared to help Individuals feel more comfortable and willing to share their experiences of *Creating Change*. She attended alternate sessions to observe

any shifts in the attitudes, thinking and behaviour of informants. These notes were subsequently analysed through thematic frameworks, including the Theory of Change model.

- **1:1 Unstructured Interviews:** Conducted at various points during sessions attended by the Lead Researcher. Unstructured interviews aim to capture the impact of the *Creating Change* programme on individual informants, citing their own specific experiences and insights. Interviews only took place once with each Individual that was interviewed, this was due to time constraints and sporadic attendance of Individuals. Interviews were informal in nature, conducted confidentially and predominately led by the interviewee. They explored any perceived impact of *Creating Change* on the attitudes, thinking and behaviours of informants. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analysed through the same thematic framework as the group observation notes.
- **Case studies:** Offering a detailed overview of specific life circumstances and experiences of Individuals throughout the duration of a programme.

The main research aim was as follows (some of the key measures are already included within the Theory of Change model):

Using prolonged ethnographic fieldwork, this report aims to provide: -

1. An impact study of a shame free 'transformational' learning environment. To inform the discourse on rehabilitation and reducing recidivism, by establishing the value in the combined relational qualities of Applied Theatre, Applied Criminology, Sociology and Psychology. Offering a unique and important contribution to emerging knowledge of a universal philosophy of effective working within the criminal justice system.

The following seven sub aims were used to investigate within the context of the programme:

1. Agency
2. Empathy (*informed by The Ministry of Justice White Paper, Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending (2014), which states that, "people who feel and show concern and empathy for others are more likely to desist from crime"*)
3. Being believed in ("research with desisters has identified that having someone believe in them is important and that desistance can be supported by interactions with others who communicate a belief that they can and will change, that they are good people, and that they have something to offer society or other people" (2014).

4. Self-esteem and identity (this will be informed by theories of personal and social identity construction to gain a better sense of ‘self’ (Burke and Stets, 2009).
5. Social bonds (to explore ‘authentic relationships’ within groups, by analysing relational match quality (DuBois and Karcher, 2013:44).
6. Using the key performance indicators from the Grant Agreement (specifically point 5.1) to examine impact on Individual and group personal growth and development during all five *Creating Change* programmes.
7. Analyse attendance and retention rates to discover any correlation between stages of progression (based on the theory of change) and the number of sessions attended.

“My partner did a similar programme with BearFace Theatre CIC at HMP/YOI Winchester, so he used to tell me on the phone about it – try to explain it all – then I actually attended their sharing event. He told me that the girls [facilitators] were friendly and full of energy. Sometimes people can make you feel uncomfortable, but they don’t, this group is very welcoming. Jen and Kate [facilitators] and Probation Practitioners take part in the activities and behave silly, which makes me do silly things and come out of my shell more. We’re always laughing as a group. I’m coming out of it feeling really positive and energetic”

(Individual)

8. Theory of Change model (Alexandra Russell, copyright, 2020)

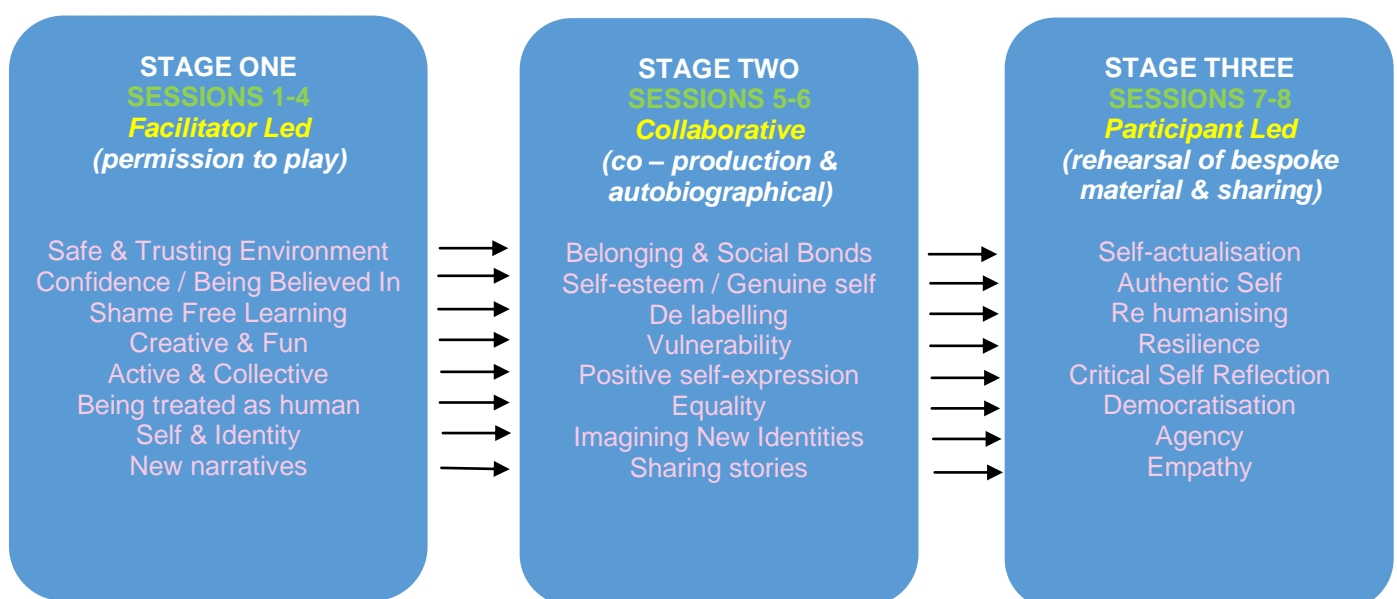
This report aims to use the following Theory of Change model as a tool to measure the personal growth and development of Individuals during delivery of the *Creating Change* programme. It presents three stages that reflect the interconnecting and progressive aims of *Creating Change*. The model was first developed based on findings from the 2018/19 *Creating Change* report. This updated model offers a more refined and in-depth framework to analyse the impact of the programme on participating Individuals and Probation Practitioners.

Initial findings from 2019/20 indicate that most Individuals move through all three stages of progression but at varying points over the duration of a programme. For some Individuals, it is not always a linear process, with some moving back and forth between each stage of the 8 session model. Individuals appear to need to complete at least 4/8 sessions (preferably consecutively) to begin to show significant pro social and strength-based shifts in attitudes, thinking and behaviour, including signs of improved emotional and physical symptoms.

Stage One is generally only achieved once Individuals feel safe within a group learning environment. Current findings suggest that once a safe and trusting learning environment has been established, a growing sense of equality and positive social bonds are rapidly developed within a group. Once Individuals feel safe, and levels of trust are high within a group, Individuals can begin to show vulnerability in front of others and start the process of finding their voice. This allows Individuals to de-mask and unshackle themselves from their offending identity, to reveal genuine and authentic versions of themselves in preparation for critical self-analysis. *Creating Change* specifically uses co-production and bottom up methods, as these have previously been evidenced as highly effective at supporting Individuals to meaningfully address and challenge entrenched attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

Creating Change is a process that is achieved with two essential aspects to the programme 1) An Individuals' desire and willingness to make a positive change in their lives 2) permission to play within a 'shame free' learning environment (i.e. not targeted on offences), which helps Individuals and the collective become vulnerable enough to de-mask. Ultimately, it is the group that decides on the agenda of sessions and the themes explored, enabling them to generate their own bespoke and responsive content. Groups are positioned as the experts of their own lived experience and trauma. *Creating Change* encourages groups to use the safety of the learning environment to develop strategies for personal growth relevant to their needs and future lives.

Central to the effectiveness of the below model is the use of applied theatre techniques, newly referred to as **creative action for social change**, that use creative, active, and participatory visualisation and verbal deconstruction to create fun and memorable learning experiences. This approach has the potential to continue to positively inform the life choices of Individuals post programme once back within their communities, although a longer-term study would be required to evidence this.



"I have to come to these sessions as part of my probation order, but I actually enjoy coming here to this group. It is normally flip chart, clip chart for everything in other groups! The fact the programme is physical and active brings me out of myself. This helps you get your feelings out but laughing and joking at the same time.

I think this course should go on for longer. Today was quite hard and emotional as we were sat down more and being asked about how we see ourselves. I'm worried about what comes next after the programme finishes"

(Individual)

9. Creating Change: programme aims

Transferable life skills

The main aims of the *Creating Change* programme are mostly encapsulated within the three stages of the Theory of Change model (chapter 8). However, in addition to the three interconnecting and progressive stages of the model, the programme also aims to provide Individuals and Probation Practitioners with some of the following 15 transferable skills:

1. Leadership & teamwork
2. Collective & creative problem solving
3. Interpersonal skills
4. Negotiation & compromise
5. Positive & honest self-expression
6. Positive risk taking (*in relation to participating in activities that might initially appear scary and unfamiliar*)
7. Rediscovering the innate human ability to imagine/re-imagine (*in relation to self and identity*)
8. Building healthy relationships
9. Having fun whilst learning in a substance free / supportive / shame free environment
10. Forward looking: the capacity to perceive of a better future
11. Recognising triggers and motivations relating to recidivism
12. Practice self-care and healthier life choices
13. Tolerance of difference
14. Learning responsibility and consequence of actions
15. Discovering triggers and motivations behind anti-social behaviour

Programme Introduction

This chapter will set out the aims, objectives and outcomes of *Creating Change*, using the previously mentioned relational qualities of other disciplines as lenses to convey key components of the programme. The late, Sir Ken Robinson, an international advisor on education in the arts to government stated that, “*creativity is as important now in education as literacy and we should treat it with the same status*” (TED, 2006). *Creating Change* is underpinned by his assertion and employs methods that are creative, active, co-produced, participatory, fun and responsive. The programme aims to grant permission to play for Individuals that have had their creativity and ability to play eradicated, often due to trauma and the oppressive experiences of formal education, as well as from the expectations of adulthood and the behaviour that precedes it.

Creating Change aims to build on the premise that, “*most offenders and non-offenders alike are capable of personal change when motivated, given the chance to express themselves differently and the opportunity to try out new ways of relating to other people*” (Baim et al. 2002). The facilitators were aware of the high likelihood that a significant number of Individuals are living with the trauma of Adverse Childhood Experiences. Therefore, the programme is trauma informed and evidence based, drawing on current best practice and theory from the interconnecting and relational disciplines of Applied Theatre, Applied Criminology, Sociology and Psychology. Thus, constructing a robust anthropological lens to better understand the motivations and complexities surrounding shifting identities, desistance and recidivism.

“The women within the group are complex to manage but I think they’ll develop lots of skills from the programme”
(Probation Practitioner, IOW)

Creating Change acknowledges the complex lives of many Individuals, often involving all or some of the following challenges:

- substance misuse
- mental health issues
- break down of the family unit
- toxic relationships
- domestic violence
- irregular employment
- unemployment
- poor housing environments
- Sole childcare responsibilities / removal of children
- Individuals often describe feeling emotionally worn down and distressed from living with the stigma of a criminal identity

"I'm not the only mum in the world, I'm not the only alcoholic in the world, I'm not the only person who has made mistakes in the world, but my situation is unique to me, this here is about working on them things... I was watching David Attenborough the other day on Planet Earth or whatever it was... you see the octopus and it glides and it leaves everything behind...and that's how I feel when I'm here. I have nothing that I have to think about apart from concentrating on what I'm doing when I'm here"

(Individual)

Creating Change requires the collective levelling of an often-uneven hierarchical structure between facilitators, Individuals and Practitioners. As previously mentioned, an important aspect of the programme is the inclusion of Probation Practitioners who work equally alongside Individuals and facilitators in every session, both in a pastoral capacity and as a bona fide member of the group. Their participation appears to further develop positive working relationships with Individuals on the programme, as well as back within their role as Probation Practitioner. Probation Practitioners have cited that this unique interaction provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of their clients, and in turn enables them to offer better tailored support to Individuals on their journey towards desistance.

Every session begins with a group 'check in', which is an opportunity for the whole group to share something they have done for themselves in the past week. As well as sharing any insights regarding their personal growth and development. The end of each session also offers an opportunity for a group to reflect on what they have enjoyed and learnt in the session, including praising others for their specific contributions.

Creating Change guides groups through a democratic process to decide on the themes explored in a programme. This is done in collaboration as a collective group, and this makes each programme bespoke, shaped by the specific areas of personal development of each group. The programme has been positioned as a form of rehabilitation within various settings, in the sense that it aims to support Individuals gain essential skills required to lead meaningful and purposeful lives and desist from crime.

The individual and collective challenges experienced by groups are often associated with the demands of developing skills of critical self-analysis. This can be an exposing and painful process and is something that most non-offenders take for granted or indeed have not attempted within their own lives. The building of resilience is necessary to be able to commit to this journey of transformation and requires a collective effort on behalf of those participating within the learning environment.

Individuals initially describe feelings of generalised anxiety about 'looking silly' in front of others when first participating in games and activities, but generally once they progress past stage one of the programme they become more willing to risk being perceived as 'silly'. Their inhibitions begin to drop, while levels of confidence & self-esteem begin to increase. Groups build resilience every time they take the courageous step to participate in games and activities in front of others, often strangers. This process not only supports Individuals to develop the essential life skill of resilience, but it also contributes to their wider personal growth and development.

The following provides an example of the important role resilience plays within *Creating Change*, as well as the progression of groups and how it is developed:

New Zealand's Institute of Well-being and Resilience:

- Developing resilience is a collective, not an individual task
- “Not seeing yourself represented positively within society, any form of prejudice when you feel you do not belong, you are not heard and you are not seen is hurtful and reductive when it comes to resilience”
- Research shows that resilience requires ordinary magic, it is not an allusive trait that is only available to a few. We can teach people to be more resilient.
- Being resilient is also being able to accept your vulnerabilities, knowing when to reach out and get help
- Studies have shown that having strong, supportive relationships is probably the most important thing we can do to build resilience, especially when navigating trauma and adversity. Essentially, 'Other People Matter'
 - Understanding that suffering is part of life (tough things happen to us all – helping us to not feel singled out)
 - Tune into the good (learning to counterbalance the negative aspects of our lives by choosing to focus our attention on some of the good stuff)
 - Ask yourself, 'is this helping or harming me?'

It is hard for anyone to look in the mirror and allow themselves to be vulnerable – exposing a genuine and authentic version of oneself and feeling strong enough to share a critical account of what they see. It takes courage and insight. It is hard to meaningfully deconstruct and understand your motivations, triggers, fears and embrace hope again and imagine a better tomorrow, especially when all your yesterdays have been full of trauma.

A simplified example of the process Individuals are guided through on the *Creating Change* programme:

	Attitudes	Thinking	Behaviour
1st session	Everyone is out to get me —————→	I am scared and alone —————→	I stay in my house and do not communicate with, or see other people —————→
8th session	I am not alone; I know people that I can turn to for help —————→	I am safe and in control —————→	I am developing healthier relationships and starting to discover new interests —————→

Creating Change encourages Individuals, “to build confidence, teamwork, self-esteem, creative thinking and self-reflection skills”
(Probation Practitioner, Basingstoke, 2019)

Creating Change aims to be responsive to people and their environments, supporting them to take control of telling their stories within a bottom up process that generates original material based on individual/collective life experiences. The programme uses methods that support Individuals and groups to critically reflect upon their life choices, the motivations behind them, as well as learning transferable skills of positive self-expression that help develop forward looking strategies on a longer journey towards desistance.

Creating Change offers a philosophy of working that positions Individuals, Probation Practitioners and facilitators as equals and experts of their own trauma, while acknowledging that they may not necessarily know what they need to overcome it. The programme’s philosophy asserts that it is possible for a willing and supported Individual to challenge and change their beliefs and values systems, but it also acknowledges that it is a hard and demanding process to positively shift entrenched attitudes, thinking and behaviour. Applied Theatre techniques are used as tools to achieve creative action for social change within the programme, thus enacting previously cited philosophies of effective working, specifically with vulnerable populations (i.e. aligned with agreed key measures of success set out by HCT and associated funding bodies discussed in later chapters of this report).

Therefore, it is helpful when an Individual volunteers to take part in a programme, as it is often more likely that they are ready and willing to make a positive change in their lives. Otherwise, it makes it less probable that an Individual will be ready to embark on a demanding process that deconstructs and examines entrenched negative attitudes, thinking and behaviour. Facilitators purposely create a warm, respectful, encouraging and informal rapport with groups to build a tangible sense of trust within the learning environment. Establishing a safe platform for Individuals to explore individual and collective needs actively and creatively as a collective process to achieve personal growth and development.

The aims, objectives, and outcomes of the programme centres on the capacity of the whole group to feel safe and show vulnerability in front of others, and trust that they will be supported while sharing challenging narratives, allowing space for everyone to be heard and their contribution valued. Many Individuals first present as being closed emotionally, which can be attributed to various factors including past/current lived abuse and trauma, as well as being unfamiliar with their voices being heard, being believed in and valued. Current evidence and data (MoJ White Paper, 2014) suggests that for Individuals to learn new pro social and strength-based skills, it is essential that they feel believed in and that their contribution is valued within a programme.

Creating Change resists the temptation of making the programme offence targeted with a pre-determined agenda, thus minimising some of the barriers to participation, specifically those associated with crime and criminal identities (i.e. stigma and labelling). As well as ensuring the concepts, ideas and themes explored in the programme are generated by the lived experiences and individual/collective needs of a group and not from a pre-written script or narrative.

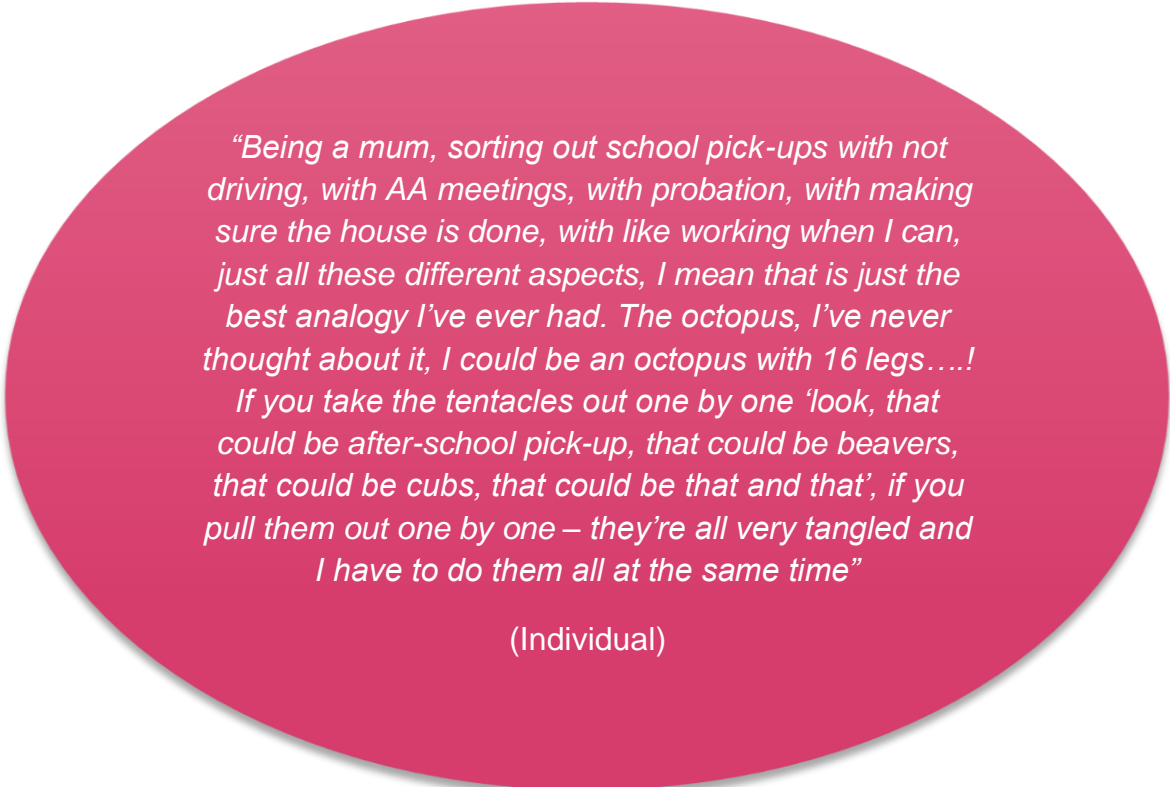
The foundations of *Creating Change* are rooted in the complex task of establishing a shame free, safe and trusting learning environment that allows Individuals to show vulnerability in front of others. However, Individuals are never silenced from sharing their offence history or the life circumstances surrounding their offending behaviour. A shame free learning environment also needs to allow space for accountability and critical self-reflection, with regards to previous anti-social decision-making. This is almost always done through private introspection, as most Individuals choose not to share their offending history within group sessions. Occasionally, Individuals would bring up a lived experience attached to their offending history but this often appeared as relevant within the context of their narrative, and an effective way of building social bonds with the group.

As stated, *Creating Change* can be extremely challenging for some Individuals, and at times, a painful process of critical self-analysis and self-transformation. For a significant number of Individuals, this can be the first time they have engaged in a process that effectively builds high levels of trust and safety and treats them as equal human beings. It is a process that promotes compassion and empathy towards themselves and to others. *Creating Change* aims re-humanise Individuals by de labelling them in a shame free environment that encourages displays of vulnerability within the context of the programme. This challenges the 'soft touch' perspective of

the arts in criminal justice settings. Introspective exploration is hard work for anyone; it is something that most non offenders may have never attempted, take for granted and rarely think about.

It can be extremely damaging and counterproductive for a person's crime to be allowed to wholly define their identity, as it can potentially become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This assertion is eloquently described by, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's, one of Germany's greatest literacy figures of the modern era, who stated that, *"If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be"* (1824).

A shame free learning environment allows facilitators to be responsive to the unique demographic of each group. Individuals are invited to leave the stigma associated with their offence at the door. They are encouraged to disassociate themselves from their offending identity and reimagine and rehearse more pro social and strength-based identities.



"Being a mum, sorting out school pick-ups with not driving, with AA meetings, with probation, with making sure the house is done, with like working when I can, just all these different aspects, I mean that is just the best analogy I've ever had. The octopus, I've never thought about it, I could be an octopus with 16 legs....! If you take the tentacles out one by one 'look, that could be after-school pick-up, that could be beavers, that could be cubs, that could be that and that', if you pull them out one by one – they're all very tangled and I have to do them all at the same time"

(Individual)

The aim of *Creating Change* is to act as a mirror that enables Individuals to look at themselves (and through the eyes of others, using group visualisation activities and deconstruction discussions) and explore their sense of self and identity in relation to the world. The process aims to help groups collectively reflect upon and deconstruct the origins and purpose of their self-constructed identities, which often begin as a

form of self- protection and defence against harm from others. Hence the initial bravado most Individuals present during the first session.

The programme facilitators expertly play the roles of jesters and compassionate guides for each group. They also display a multitude of remarkable skills that encourage, nurture, and inspire groups to relax, almost immediately within the first session. It demonstrates that offender management programmes (i.e. Good Lives Model) must be pro social, strength based, forward looking, enjoyable and engaging, focusing on the potential of the Individual, and the contribution to the community he/she can make in the future, and not just fixated on what harm they have done in the past.

The facilitators never present solutions to problems shared by a group. Instead, they guide and encourage groups to collectively problem solve using co-produced and experiential learning methods. Every group collectively devises bespoke strategies to make better life choices. This often provides powerful insights into the collective trials and tribulations of a group, to address negative attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

The programme presents a significantly similar positive impact as the Winchester prison programme (refer to Winchester prison programme in the Recruitment, chapter 10). However, Applied Theatre techniques appear to be especially effective at actively engaging groups to safely explore vulnerability and develop critical self-analysis skills. Many Individuals have stated that they prefer collective learning techniques that are active, creative, fun and participatory, as opposed to more passive and traditional desk-based learning styles and environments.

*“This programme actually **takes me back to feeling like me.** You’re doing stuff that you wouldn’t usually be doing. I’ve got an awful lot of stuff going on with me, but I can come here and I know that I can completely switch off and I don’t have to worry about anything else. **It doesn’t matter how much pain I’m in, whatever I’m doing...I know I can come here and it’s like refreshing part of my brain”***

(Individual)

Our minds and bodies hold onto unprocessed emotional trauma; it can lodge in the mind and body and prevent Individuals from exploring negative attitudes, thinking and behaviour. Not being able to positively express negative emotions can be a huge problem for many Individuals, hindering their ability to take responsibility for their offences, as well as blocking their ability to imagine a new 'non offender' identity. A group learning environment working with others can show Individuals that they are not alone in their pain and this can have a profound positive impact on their sense of self-respect and identity.

This is not the case for every Individual; in each group it is likely that one or more will not be willing to make a positive change in their lives. These are the Individuals that tend to quit a group early. This highlights the important relationship between Individuals being ready and willing to make a positive change in their lives and those that can complete at least 4/8 sessions.

The key to sustained participation for Individuals is not lucidity or honesty, it is being ready to make a positive change in their lives. Daring to reach out for something you fear might expose you and make you feel vulnerable is difficult for anyone, especially when participating in a process that requires profound critical self-analysis. *Creating Change* invites Individuals to explore their sense of self, identity, beliefs and values systems. It takes courage and a genuine willingness to participate before an Individual can engage in a process of self-discovery and potential transformation.

"I'd like a home. I've been homeless for eight years. If I moved away from my family I would fail abysmally, but if I live with my mum it would be alright, but my mum has got senile dementia and they won't let me look after her. I'm not able to, no, she wants to live with me and I want to live with her but the social services won't allow it. I'm staying with my sister on her sofa. I used to live in the woods, I lived in the woods for six years, in a tent"

(Individual)

“The facilitators are amazing, full of energy; I really like both of them. They are open and easy to talk to, fun and not judgemental. I hope to become more confident. I’m able to bring myself out of myself quickly in this group. I hope to become more assertive after this programme. It is ok to have help, to ask for it. The programme is very subtle through play we do an activity and after there is a discussion and it makes sense. Being active and interaction with the group is much more memorable for me. I’m going to complete this programme for sure! I can feel fearful, but I feel safe here because you are part of something. I just love the play idea; I am an inner child and the best medicine is laughter. I like the check in at the start of every session and hearing how other women are looking after themselves”

(Individual)

10. Recruitment

Most Individuals on *Creating Change* were obliged to participate in the programme as part of their Probation Order. Interestingly, the majority of Individuals that had to attend as part of their order stated that they would have volunteered to take part in *Creating Change* due to the positive impact the programme had on their personal growth and development (i.e. problem solving, confidence, self-worth, agency).

There are also examples of Individuals attending *Creating Change* in a voluntary capacity, after previously participating in the programme in 2018/19. They overwhelmingly cited that their motivation to re-join a group was based on the essential life skills they had developed during their first run of *Creating Change* programme. Due to the non-targeted nature of *Creating Change*, Individuals are recruited from a variety of demographics and offending histories. A similar programme has been delivered at HMP/YOI Winchester for the past three years (also designed and facilitated by BearFace Theatre CIC). The main recruitment criteria for the prison programme requests only offenders/prisoners that can articulate a willingness to make a positive change in their lives should apply. All offenders/prisoners and supporting prison staff are expected to volunteer/self-refer to be considered for a place on the programme (after security vetting).

Current key findings from both the prison programme (men in a closed setting) and *Creating Change* (women in open settings) indicates that there is minimal to no negative impact on attendance between those who volunteer and those obliged to attend. Both programmes offer compelling evidence to suggest that the methods employed by *Creating Change* have a universally positive impact across gender and setting.

“This programme is excellent; it is an incredibly good programme. All the girls agree, it is the best group we’ve done on Probation because of the interaction and we can relate to each other as we’re in the same boat and to be able to be open and honest – the truth sets you free! It is drama, drama life, life is drama. Just the way that they [facilitators] interact. Normally when you go to a group like this it is us and them. I have learned to listen more and to say less. I think this programme would benefit other women – it is what is needed. I was surprised that this was only for 8 weeks as most programmes go on for 12. I’ve learnt a lot by fun, like children learn by playing”

(Individual)

11. Creating Change: Impact

Note: *Due to Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown measures implemented by the Government, both the Isle of Wight and Southampton programmes were cut short.*

This chapter aims to offer the most insightful and compelling presentation of evidence from across all five settings, with a significant proportion formed by the authentic and genuine voices of research informants (a full and extended collection of impact data can be found in the appendix of this report). This chapter contains the following examples from the mixed methods discussed in the Research Methods chapter of this report:

- Overview
- Theory of Change stages: voices of informants
- Case studies
- Personal reflective statements
- Group observations
- 1:1 Unstructured Interviews
- Group discussions
- Self-scoring questionnaires (comparison of pre and post questionnaires)
- 2nd Questionnaire comments (Individuals)
- 2nd Questionnaire comments (Probation Practitioners)

Overview

The three stages of the Theory of Change model have been refined and updated using key findings from the previous Creating Change programme which ran in 2018/19 as a framework for informants voices, evidencing the personal progression of Individuals and Probation Practitioners throughout the programme.

Probation Practitioners overwhelmingly stated the on-going benefits of participating as equals alongside Individuals on the programme. They cited their own positive personal growth, as well as learning new creative, active, and engaging methods from the programme to use with their clients. Creating Change also supports participation, training, and advocacy specifically for Probation Practitioners.

Individuals showed no aggressive or violent attitudes, thinking and behaviour during any of the programme sessions. They always appeared happy and motivated during the active and creative segments of the programme, prompting lots of laughter and displays of strong social bonds within the group. The deconstruction segments (circle discussion) always took place as a collective. Individuals are generally more focused and the mood of the group changes to become serious as they discuss the abstract activities they have taken part in and how they could be related to their own lives, as well as what lessons could be learned for the future.

A significant proportion of Individuals attend the first session displaying bravado and a persona that is either overly assertive or highly introverted. Individuals often described feeling emotionally worn down and distressed due to the stigma associated with their criminal identity. Groups across all settings showed signs of entrenched attitudes, thinking and behaviours. During the latter sessions of Creating Change, Individuals describe this initial presentation of self as a learned defence mechanism to protect themselves from harm (i.e. making themselves invisible through lack of engagement prevents them being noticed and intimidating behaviour discourages attack).

As a bottom up and co-produced process, Individuals critiqued each other's contributions and comments. This also included praising each other through spontaneous applause, making the learning environment feel safe and supportive. Older Individuals appeared to display increased surface confidence, opposed to the younger members of the group who often start off being quiet and reserved but generally learn by example and open up with the support and encouragement of older Individuals in the group.

In terms of impact, most Individuals showed almost no difference between those obligated to participate (as part of their Probation Order) and others that had chosen to join the programme. The overwhelming majority of Individuals spoke and wrote about the benefits Creating Change was having on their lives, most notably on increased confidence and self-esteem. A few Individuals had requested to join the

programme again after having participated in the Creating Change programme in the previous year.

Within the learning environment, Individuals were granted autonomy during delivery to take breaks when needed, get a hot drink, go to use the toilet and sit out of any games and activities they felt unable to participate in. Interestingly, no Individuals took advantage of these freedoms and chose to stay engaged throughout deliver (still taking a full break in the middle of the session).

*The theatre aspect of the programme is best understood outside of the generally perceived context of traditional theatre settings and output, this is explored further in *Creating Change: programme aims* (chapter 9). Creating Change use of the word theatre better describes the active, creative and participatory methods used on the programme – perhaps a more concise description would be creative action for social change. It is a process governed by Kolb's theories of experimental learning, which asserts learning by doing can be more memorable and meaningful for learners than a physically static learning environment.

Creating Change grants permission for groups to become storytellers of their own lives and perform as themselves, encouraging Individuals to develop unique and profound insight into their self and identity. This approach is supported by the eminent theorist, Erving Goffman, who asserts that there is no true self – we are all performers, acting different pre rehearsed roles, influenced by the audience we are performing for, ever concerned with how we are coming across, trying to set ourselves in the best light. The premise being that we are always performing, rehearsing and acting out behaviours.

**Examples of the games and activities used within the Creating Change programme can be found in the appendix (No. 10).*

"We all seem to work as a team. I do put on a front - a second face - we don't want people to know how we're feeling. I am not really a confident person. I've seen people open up since they first came here. People have really come out of their shell. It helps you build confidence. This allows you to be yourself. Normally you don't allow time for yourself. You're doing a fantastic job"

(Individual)

1:1 Unstructured Interviews

Note: *The following comments have been anonymised to protect the identity of participating Individuals and Probation Practitioners:*

The Lead Researcher gained informed consent from all Individuals to conduct 1:1 unstructured interviews. These took place during the break or after a session had ended. The method of unstructured interviews was used to create a safe and informal space for Individuals to openly discuss *Creating Change*, providing an opportunity for them to share their experiences of the programme. This unstructured approach to generating dialogue often helped Individuals feel more relaxed and able to offer honest and genuine accounts of their experiences. **All unstructured interviews were conducted once with each informant due to sporadic attendance rates.**

The Lead Researcher aimed to use a calming tone during all interviews. She was compassionate and responsive to the bespoke needs of Individuals. The main aim was to mitigate the risk of further exacerbating previous trauma during the interviews.

Individuals and Probation Practitioners are arguably the experts in relation to the impact of the programme, and thus were encouraged to take the lead and direct conversations based on their own unique insights. Examples of 1:1 Unstructured Interviews can be found in the below chapter, **Theory of Change stage: voices of informants** (chapter 11).

Common challenges that arose from interviews with Individuals were as follows:

- Re-living trauma: Individuals sometimes became tearful when talking about their life issues (childcare - being a primary carer for a loved one, drugs misuse, toxic relationships, struggles to find employment and issues with housing etc).
- A lack of literacy skills (including the written and spoken word), self-awareness and poor emotional intelligence often prevented Individuals from

clearly articulating positive changes in relation to the programme and any perceived shifts in thinking, attitudes and behaviour. Members of Probation staff and the Lead Researcher offered one to one support to those Individuals that appeared to struggle with some/all of the research tasks.

Common benefit from unstructured interviews with Individuals is as follows:

- **Individuals appeared to view the 1:1 unstructured interviews as a valued and rare opportunity to reflect and process their experiences during *Creating Change*.** The informal nature of unstructured interviews allowed for a relaxed conversation, led by Individuals with respect to what they perceived to be most important in relation to their progress on the programme.

Some of the most **common words and descriptions** used by Individuals to communicate their experience of the *Creating Change* programme were as follows:

Increased confidence & self-esteem / Joy / Happiness /
Family / Connection (social bonds) / Belonging /
Permission to play and have fun while learning / Active
learning is more memorable / A clearer sense of who
they want to be in the future / Warmth and
encouragement of facilitators / Trust / Women only /
Discovering new identities / Believing they have the
power to positively change their lives / Importance of
Probation Practitioners participating and the sense of
equality that this promoted within all groups.

Interestingly, **all five groups commented on 'feeling lucky' to have such a strong and supportive group.** Perhaps it is not down to luck, instead it could be indicative of the methods and philosophy of the programme that generated an intense sense of belonging and togetherness (replicated in every HMP/YOI Winchester programme).

Theory of change stages: *voices of informants*

For this section, the Theory of Change model will be used as a thematic framework to present and interpret the voices of all Individuals across all five settings (see appendix for further examples) The aims and philosophy of the *Creating Change* programme can be found within these three progressive stages of the model – achieving any or all of the three stages has shown to have profoundly positive effects on highly vulnerable Individuals but it is **important to note that not all Individuals progress to stage three of the theory of change model. In fact, Individuals often appear to move forward and backwards through the three stages, and thus it is not always a linear process of progression.**

Each of the three stages of the model have been broken down into their individual attributes, with direct testimonies appropriately distributed under the correlating points. Individual testimonies offer a range of thoughts and experiences over the duration of a programme. The sources include rich mixed data from 1:1 Unstructured Interviews, personal reflective statements, group discussions and the 2nd questionnaire comments that are completed at the end of the last session.

The profoundly positive attributes stated in the three-stage model are often something that non offenders take for granted. However, they can have a profoundly positive impact on Individuals sense of identity, especially on those that have been traumatised and criminalised. Current key findings from 2019/20 suggest that Individuals need to be able to articulate a desire to make a positive change in their lives before they are able to achieve stages 2 & 3 of the Theory of Change model (see chapter 8).

However, this data only provides an insight into any positive shifts within the learning environment (at least for the 2019/20 programmes) due to the lack of data 3-6 months post programme to see whether Individuals were able to sustain an upwards trajectory of progress within their daily lives.

One of the main barriers to progression is when an Individual (often due to unavoidable and complex life circumstances) is only able to attend 4 or less sessions. Reduced attendance is often accompanied by an Individual articulating that they do not feel ready to make a positive change in their lives. However, it can still be a profound and meaningful experience of personal growth and development for those Individuals that only achieve stage one.

The Lead Researcher was able to speak to between 5-6 Individuals once per programme – due to high levels of sporadic attendance (caused by the complex and chaotic lives of Individuals), limited time for research during delivery and the Covid-19 lockdown that cut the Southampton and Isle of Wight programmes short. Thus, all additional testimonies provided by Individuals using mixed methods ensured this

report could provide a holistic view of Individuals thoughts and experiences of the programme. Individuals' testimonies have been granted anonymity in all aspects of this report to protect their vulnerable status and avoid any identifiable content once this report is made public (excluding location of programme).

Initial key findings indicate that some attributes of the revised Theory of Change model yield greater impact than others (based on the testimonies of Individuals).

However, a lack of testimonies for certain attributes does not necessarily mean Individuals did not experience or achieve them (please see *Group Observations in appendix for further examples of attributes displayed by Individuals that align to the Theory of Change model*).

As mentioned earlier in this report, many Individuals appeared to struggle with finding the words to articulate positive shifts in their attitudes, thinking and behaviour. Individuals would often state 'increased confidence' to describe their experiences of the programme. Individuals often commented on this anomaly during 1:1 Unstructured Interviews – appearing frustrated at times due to a lack of vocabulary when trying to communicate their depth of feeling regarding the significant impact they believed the programme had made on their sense of self and identity.

The Theory of Change model was designed using a combination of primary testimonial evidence given by Individuals from the 2018/19 and 2019/20 programmes, as well as from group observations made by the Lead Researcher during programme delivery. Each programme appears to produce a different yield - meaning that some attributes presented in the Theory of Change model are more obvious in some groups than others. It is determined by the unique dynamics of groups and their individual/collective needs.

Depicted in Stage One of the Theory of Change model, *Permission to Play* is designed to create a fun learning environment that gives Individuals the opportunity to enjoy the learning process and make it more relevant to their lives, inclusive and memorable. This essential first stage supports groups to relearn how to play and use their imaginations – *Creating Change* uses active and creative games, physical activities and naturally occurring humour to encourage Individuals to let their guards down. This is the beginning of the process of becoming vulnerable in front of others, in preparation for critical self-reflection later in the programme. **Individuals appear to perform more genuine and authentic versions of themselves while playing.**

During the first session, most Individuals present with well-constructed identities formed for their own protection that can manifest as bravado. However, a rapid change in behaviour appears to occur in sessions 1-4, and the bravado is replaced with a willingness, even a desire, to play and lose inhibitions. Most Individuals state that they feel silly at first but gradually begin to enjoy the freedom play affords them as adults.



Safe & Trusting Environment / Confidence / Being believed in / Shame Free Learning / Creative & Fun / Active & Collective / Being treated as human / Self & Identity / New Narratives

1. *"This is massive. Massive. **Everyone trusts each other and that's what's most important. I think there are a lot of people that may feel like that, it's nice, the feeling of trust is massive. It's massive. The feeling of trust with the ladies that are in that room is paramount to my recovery. There are different people in different situations, we're all in here for different reasons, you know, however, the feeling of trust, for me, this is most important. This morning I didn't want to get up, I couldn't, I was in agony, however, I said to my husband, I went 'I need to be there today, I need to be with people I want to be with.'**"*
2. *"I really enjoy taking part within the creating change programme. **It helped me build up my confidence and helped me gain trust again"***
3. *"This programme has **helped me with my trust within the group and trust within myself. I can now see where I go wrong and have learnt things to help me if I'm in situations"***
4. *"I first heard this was going to be acting and I really didn't want to do it but you don't even realise you're doing it. **The facilitators make you feel at ease. Doing these types of activities in a group generally makes people feel more at ease"***
5. *"[The facilitators] have been brilliant. **I have trust issues – so for me it was nice to see things in a different way – and thinking about the people that are there for me. I'm doing this to build myself back up again – I've had a lot of***

life knocks. When I first came here, I didn't want to be here. I didn't feel I belonged here. I suffer massively with anxiety so for me being in groups is normally a massive no for me”

6. “The things we have done and learnt with these sessions have given me confidence and trust back, which I had lost with life. It has also taught me that I am likeable and that I can move on in my life in a positive way”
7. “I've loved every session – the girls are just so inspirational. They built trust that I didn't even think I had when I first started – confidence as well – I just feel like I did back when I was 16. Like I'm restarting everything again. Truly, that's just playing about and going back to being...feeling like I was at school again and not worrying about what people think, caring, but not worrying”

1. “I have gained a lot of confidence and I've started to believe in myself. I had no idea what this programme was before I turned up – I was overwhelmed and had no confidence. This is the only thing I come out of my house for. Being an all women group helps you feel safe and relate to other women's lives. Playing can make me feel overwhelmed as I'm almost 50! It can feel strange to play but it makes thing memorable”
2. “This programme builds confidence and friendships. I left a lot of the other groups because you just get talked at – here you have a voice and don't get laughed at. Jen and Kate are brilliant and energetic. The programme has built my confidence, but I'm worried about losing it all once the programme is over”
3. “I wasn't told anything about this programme. I started off feeling overwhelmed. This is the only thing I leave my house for. The ladies and atmosphere are helping me build my confidence up. It is helpful that all the women trust each other and can relate”
4. “I think it has helped me get more confident in the group. The facilitators have encouraged me to participate. Kate is very upbeat and persuasive and makes you want to get up and be involved. I've done other groups before – I've had more fun in this group. I've got more out of it than other groups, in a shorter period of time”
5. “This group has given me the confidence to speak out. It is making such a good difference for my prospects. I usually struggle with groups, but I do not know why I felt uncomfortable the first time with this one”
6. “Initially I did not like being in groups, especially with women. Now I'm so much more confident to be involved in a group. It has enabled me to be more active in the meetings I now go to outside out of sessions. This is exactly what I needed for where I'm at now and for my future. Thank you!

7. *"I could be very quiet before, when I first started coming to my groups, I was very quiet, I wouldn't speak, I wouldn't say anything. Now I am quite open and I speak about things"*
8. *"It's helped me to enjoy the groups more and feel more comfortable about being here. It has helped me to feel more confident in groups in the future"*
9. *"It can make you feel childish playing games – makes me feel a bit weird. It can make me feel uncomfortable. It is a programme to build up confidence and make friends. Going from my flat to the shop or speaking on the phone is something I couldn't do but the confidence I've gained here has helped. I prefer this programme to just sitting around a flip chart – you have a voice here – they listen to what you have to say. I don't want my confidence to go back down when this finishes. The facilitators are beautiful, energetic, and lively. They treat us all fairly. I'm going to miss this group"*
10. *"It is going to give me the confidence to stand up for myself and be there for other people – to gain my self-respect back that I lost when I got myself in trouble"*
11. *"I want to get the confidence back, to be able to talk to people. I don't like confrontation at all now, I would rather run away and hide, than confront somebody. So I'm totally aware in life we have to confront people sometimes. So yeah, a slow progression. I want to be the person I once was, with the kids and get back to being myself, rather than a shadow of who I once was"*
12. *"I hope to build confidence I think, I'm not sure, it's only the first session isn't it? So I don't know. I mean, I heard the word 'theatre' and I thought 'go for it...sort me out'! I heard the word 'theatre' and I thought 'sign me up'. I did all dance and drama at school, B-Tech in dance and drama, I went to South Downs, it was years ago. I want to do a play!"*
13. *"I can offer fun, cheekiness, don't know really, hopefully I can make other people come out of their shells, do you know what I mean? Make people more confident because I'm a bit of a clown. I just really enjoyed it, just...It should be longer, not shorter"*
14. *"I have gained the confidence to make change. I know what changes I need to make. I have energy and motivation to make differences. I value myself and my time"*
15. *"I'm more confident. I feel happy with myself. I've made friends. I've learnt a lot about myself. This group has reminded me that it is OK to be myself and laugh. It has been fun!"*

16. "Confident around others in groups. Knowing that people do listen to what I have to say. I look forward to these sessions and it will be sad if this doesn't continue. I now have knowledge that I am not alone in the way I am feeling"

1. "I didn't know anything about the programme. My initial thoughts were I would be given more 1:1 sessions with my Key Worker. I didn't think I'd got much out of course but now I realise I did. I now feel comfortable here because no one judges you. All the women here have experienced similar things. We've been told to come here but I would want to come to this group even if I wasn't on Probation"
2. "It is nice to come somewhere that you feel safe and know that no one will judge you"
3. "As adults, we already have perceived ideas about people, but as children you accept people as who they are, you don't care what they've been through, you don't care about their past, their future or anything, you accept who they are in the present. We all do silly games or whatever, we're all playing and as adults we forget to play"
4. "If I'd realised what this group was, I don't think I would have turned up for it. I came back because I needed something like this; I've learnt that it's ok to play and look stupid. I hide in my life, but I can't relax. I want to remember how to have fun. I don't know who I am. This group has helped me to be slightly better about talking about things. The facilitators are very approachable. I think they are really great people. I think these Probation groups have saved my life. They don't judge you in this group – we're all in the same boat. I've been able to stop feeling shame"
5. "Yeah, well, every single one of us, we're not really interested in what any of us have done but watching some of the girls come through this is just amazing. Last week we were asked who our inspiration is and I said my mum and dad but if I was asked this week, it would be the girls, because they have all come on in leaps and bounds. I didn't believe in any of this when I started, ever, I told you, I didn't think a group could change, I just thought it was all hippy hocus pocus stuff"

1. "Amazing! After the session I feel very uplifted because it's made me feel like being at a child's party, it has taken me back to being like a little girl, doing things you wouldn't normally do, sort of out of your comfort zone, being involved with other ladies and doing those activities, it's interesting and its comforting and the circle of people is an amazing unity, it's interesting to see how some other people might come out of their shell. I'm quite open with everything anyway, but when you see how it can make different people react in different ways, I find that quite intriguing"

2. *"My Probation Officer told me about this and said it would be beneficial for me. I don't have to come but I do cos I really enjoy it. This is more fun and active than other groups. Understanding things about yourself. It is creative drama and motivational. I think it's a really good practical way of understanding someone's emotions but through play. I can understand it a lot better as it is through play. Laughing and playing and forgetting about the everyday stress, worries, being sad, being fearful of something and coming here and just having fun and being a bit silly and childlike but still learning, learning about your own emotions but doing it through play but not having to deal with the upset of a sit down conversation"*
3. *"At the beginning I was thinking, 'oh I don't want to do these silly games' but then getting into the games and I just forgot what anyone thought of me and I've just played the games and just loved it and I've realised that I am me, she's still in here, I'm not this grown up miserable cow who has no fun"*
4. *"It is good to meet new people and have fun as well. If you bring the fun into something I think you enjoy it more. I mean, some of the other groups you're sitting there looking at the clock thinking 'Oh my God'. But I think groups like this, people enjoy it. People don't generally want to come back to groups, but this one they'll come back"*
5. *"I've learnt a lot by fun, like children learn by playing"*
6. *"It was fun. It's a fun way of learning. Its better than people sitting in front of you and going, "now if you could not reoffend at all...". Do you know what I mean? Whereas this is just a fun way of looking at something"*
7. *"Last week we were squeezing each other's' hands as part of an activity, and do you know what, it's a game that I would probably try and introduce to like, one of my Children's parties because it was fun. And I think when you get to the point when you stop having fun in your life, when I come here, the sessions they are, for me, they are actually fun and I'm with people that I actually want to spend time with. Not one of them people in that room are fake"*
8. *"The facilitators are very polite and courteous and don't make you feel pressured into doing something you don't want to do. They try to get you to join in by making it fun – fun individually and as group – if you're sat at the table doing a pie chart you fall asleep but being up and moving around gives me the incentive to move forward"*

1. *"We do it all as a group of women, it is done as a group, women in the same situation in one way or another and we give each other confidence and we grow as an individual and as a group. I will benefit a lot from completing this programme because it is fun!"*

2. *"When I first got told about the programme I thought it was going to be a drama group and I'm not into drama, but doing those little exercises it helps bring you out of your shell and be a team. As a team it helps you focus on other things. This isn't drama. They are helping us to believe in ourselves and achieve better than we have in the past. It is helping us to resolve things in our lives"*
3. *"This is like a form of P.E, joining in and communicating. The way we do this group is rewarding. If you're just sat down writing how you're feeling you might find it harder to express your opinion, but when you're in a group you can be open and have fun in doing it. Fun helps your recovery because it gives you the self-will to go on. The crime I done was all because of one person. It is helping me to overcome his abuse towards me, helping me take control of myself and not let him belittle me and control me"*
4. *We do everything as a group here and use our shared lived experiences to work with each other. The facilitators give you other ways to think about issues without you being aware they're doing it. It's fun! The last year of my life has been a disaster. The last six weeks of this group has taught me it is ok to feel sad but there are things you can do to make it better"*

1. *"I used to think doing Probation was all about discipline and hierarchy, but this is self-discipline, you're treated as a human being and respected I feel privileged to be able to do this. The drama part of this can be very scary for me – getting up and speaking – but it is fun to do so it takes the heat out of doing it. I think they're amazing. This programme helps break people's walls down. It has helped me realise there are other ways of living my life"*

1. *"I missed the first week not knowing what it was, it was just another women's group and I did not like it and it made me feel really uncomfortable. It has brought some good positive changes for me. I have started doing voluntary work and attending big meetings"*
2. *"These sessions, I feel that I'm intrigued because 1) it gives me an insight into other people instead of just AA groups, it's actually making me feel like me. I think that is one of the most important things. Like I say, our eldest son is nearly 11, so from the minute I had him, I've lost my identity. So all these different sessions I'm doing, it's drawing me back to me, and what sort of person I am and what I'm capable of doing"*
3. *"The programme puts things in perspective. This should be going for longer. I've got learning disabilities. This way is a bit more creative. I can see other women in the group getting more confidence and getting out of their bubble. It has changed my behaviour because I wanted to change"*

1. *“The group makes me feel good. After the group I always leave happy. It has made me think of life differently”*
2. *“It was very helpful indeed - assertiveness, thinking of other people, allowing time for myself that I didn't do before, but I do now. And getting negative people out of my life. Push me on, push me on more. Skills that I've already learned. None of us know why we're here, it's only ourselves, we just come in and meet friends, meet as ladies, have a coffee or a cup of tea”*
3. *“To make better choices, to stay motivated to continue improving my lifestyle”*
4. *“The programme has made me look at the past in a more positive way and want to make a positive change to the future. The activities made me learn empathy and to see things from other people's point of view, it also taught me how to work better as part of a team and that no one judges each other in our group”*

Stage Two

Sessions 5-8

Collaborative
(co-production &
autobiographical)

Belonging & Social Bonds / Self-esteem / Genuine self / De labelling / Vulnerability / Positive self-expression / Equality / Imagining New Identities / Sharing Stories

1. *"It's the people – we've connected more in this group than in others. In other groups we sat down and talked but here we get up and do things, it's a better environment because we enjoy ourselves doing it. I've gained really long-term friends who I know I can trust and that are good people. I've also gained confidence and starting to love myself again"*
2. *"None of us know why we're here, it's only ourselves, we just come in and make new friends, and learning about ourselves as ladies, have a coffee or a cup of tea"*
3. *"Everyone is really nice here; I feel safe here. More than I do when I'm out with my friends"*
4. *We've all done it together. As it goes on, I let down my guard and make friends"*
5. *"I have made new friends and got support at times when things were not good. I feel more positive and in control"*
6. *"Interesting, we're all different but all the same more or less"*
7. *The facilitators make you feel at ease. Doing this in a group generally makes people feel more at ease. Its making people come out of their shells and bond with people they wouldn't normally bond with. Knowing people from different backgrounds opens up your eyes to different things, new opportunities, things you wouldn't have thought of. Those people you wouldn't have thought would be your best friend end up being the best person for you"*

8. *"I think it's amazing and I think you should get more funding. Because for somebody who would never have come into a group and chatted, I mean, my first day coming here I thought 'oh god, it's going to be a bunch of women, all with their problems, this that and the other and it's not, it's the most amazing bunch of women who have had so much thrown at them and they are still doing it all. Just thank you so much"*
9. *"Yep - it's good, it's fun to be doing something a little bit different, it's obviously relatable to everybody, it's nice to bond you as a group a bit more. It's always hard to describe yourself...friendly, hard-working, fun-loving"*

1. *"In this group I can be my true self – without the pressures of everyday life. I can forget about my money issues out there. I had to grow up quickly. I was cooking roast dinners at the age of nine and caring for my mother due to her epilepsy. I'm finding myself in this group"*
2. *"We all seem to work as a team. I do put on a front - a second face - we don't want people to know how we're feeling. I'm not really a confident person. I've seen people open up since they first came here. People have really come out of their shell. It helps you build in confidence. This allows you to be yourself. Normally you don't allow time for yourself. You're doing a fantastic job"*
3. *"They are all honest, they are all open, for me that is actually very important. And I find, I just, like this morning, my little girl, she come in and had a cuddle with me in bed this morning, and I just said to her, I said, do you know what, I didn't even want to move because I was in too much pain, however, I said to my husband, I said to Dave, I need to go. I need to be in probation today because of the people I actually just think a lot of them"*

1. ***"I find them helpful I guess, when you're in a good headspace. When you're not and you know, you have to still come, it's not the best and I'm not the best at talking in a group of people, especially when you don't want to face up to what's been going on. Sometimes they're useful and sometimes you're thinking, 'what time is it? Get me out of here"***
2. ***"I mean, it's nice to reflect a bit, but I don't really like the groups when we're talking about things that aren't particularly relevant to me, and it makes me sad that other people have to go through that"***

1. *"If they treated us like probation officer and criminal, I think that's what they used to do and people couldn't be bothered. If you heard Kelly today, she is gutted that she missed two weeks of it. I mean, I've come every week, even though the train strike was on today, I didn't think I was going to make it, but I wanted to, to say thank you to you lot for everything and because I wouldn't have wanted to let any of you down. Before this, I wouldn't have bothered"*
2. *"There has been no negativity at all. There are no egos, because none of us actually care, we've all taken each other at face value...and you only do that when you're children"*

1. *"It's drawing it out of me, it's like having a syringe, actually drawing stuff out of me and you think, god, I can actually do this, you can. Obviously I am busy with three children and whatever, then it makes you realise that there is more that you can do, but you just need to fit the time in to do those things"*
2. *"Um, this is opening all different sorts of avenues for me, it's making me realise I'm not just a mum, it's making me realise I can do other stuff....I know I'm not ever going to be a professional painter, I'm not ever going to be a professional crochet-making flower person, it's not going to be like that, but it just makes you realise that there is more you can do..."*
3. *"I hope Creating Change pushes me on, pushes me on more. Build on skills that I've already learned. I hope to bring smiles, helpfulness and laughing"*
4. *"Lots of people have a lack of understanding of emotions and how to deal with them but this is making you think about your daily lives and how your actions effect your life and how you can stop actions effect their lives"*

1. *"My neighbour is a drug addict, he came to my house and I let him in. While I wasn't looking he stole my credit card – I'd only realised this once he had left the house. He stole money from my bank account to help feed his addiction. My normal response would be to confront him and punch him in the face, but I made a different choice to instead tell him I was disappointed and asked for my card back. Doing this [Creating Change] programme has given me the confidence to make better choices that don't end up with me getting into trouble. But my friends have started calling me soft"*
2. *"I know some of the girls, but not many. I don't know, it's always nice to hear other people's stories I guess. It makes you feel like you're not alone and it is people from all different walks of life and stuff. I mean, it's nice to reflect a bit, but I don't really like the groups when we're talking about things that aren't particularly relevant to me, and it makes me sad that other"*

people have to go through that. But as I said, it's nice to hear people's woes and know it is part of life. The groups are helpful sometimes, it just really does depend"

Stage Three

Session 7-8

Participant Led
(rehearsal of
bespoke material &
sharing event)

Self-actualisation / Authentic Self / Re humanising / Resilience / Critical Self Reflection / Democratisation / Agency / Empathy

1. "It's everything that I know I am actually capable of doing. It's drawing it out of me, it's like having a syringe, actually drawing stuff out of me and you think 'god, I can actually do this, you can'. Obviously I am busy with three children and whatever, then it makes you realise that there is more that you can do, but you just need to fit the time in to do those things"
2. "The programme provides support mechanisms and helps us to understand triggers that cause stress. It has helped to manage certain situations better, be kinder to myself and try and balance the guilty feelings"
3. "To explore different ways to understand situations. To build confidence and self-awareness"

1. "I feel that 1) without sounding like... right...I've had a lot of life experience, I've made a lot of stupid mistakes, I've never been a slag, and now, I'm nearly 44, I know I don't look it, so I feel, anything I contribute to the group, I mean I talk, isn't bullshit. It is as it is. It's from the heart and it's honest"
2. "Sharing how it is. Anything I ever share, it's no nonsense, no bullshit, it's as it is, there's no doily under it, it's as it is with me. And that's as simple as it is. It's like when they said about the ball [throwing spikey ball during sock game] and I said, 'well it's like dealing with a load of pricks' and it sounded quite harsh, but that's how it is with me"

1. *"It's given me a reason to keep going...and these girls need it. Because you don't need to feel like you're being talked down to all the time because you've done something wrong, you don't need to feel useless, because you've done something wrong"*

1. *"I have gone completely out of my comfort zone. It has been really hard for me. I may not have joined in as much as I have wanted to but I have tried, I have not felt pushed into. Thank you"*

1. *"It's a bit hard to explain what we do in these groups. It is a roundabout way to try and give us coping mechanisms. The activities help to make us think about all the things we have in our heads – trying to give us a different perspective and new ways of looking at things. It is helping us stop being so hard on ourselves sometimes"*
2. *"I have gained confidence within the group, learnt new ways to look at different situations that I can use in everyday life and situations. I also feel I have got to know everybody in the group a lot better and more personally"*
3. *"I had a moment where I opened up and talked about my problems. I've done things I wouldn't think I'd do. Everyone did it and it felt right and we all communicated and did the same thing. Getting us to do activities and then sitting down and working out what it means to us and how it relates to our lives - it makes you think on certain things you could change in your life. I find that really interesting. I've found something different in me. It feels like counselling - it makes me think. Getting up and playing things out helps you picture your day to day life"*

1. *"The programme has helped me think about things more than I usually would. It has made me feel like I want to go out and help people. I'm going to start doing a child and healthcare course"*
2. *"It was good, I enjoy this group. I'm a bit tired and unwell today. This is my one thing I get out of bed for every week – it gets me off the sofa. It gets me out of the house and gives me something to do. I enjoy the people – Kate and Jen are fun to be around and they make me laugh, they have lots of energy"*
3. *"I think saying the programme was beyond useful is not good enough words for it. It was this group that got me to go and see the doctor and get anti-*

depressants. It's given me a reason to keep going...and these girls need it. Because you don't need to feel like you're being talked down to all the time because you've done something wrong, you don't need to feel useless, because you've done something wrong"

4. "New experiences, the creativity, it's an awful lot, even with this group of ladies, even just playing those games, where you're just doing different things, it just gives you that little bit of aspiration to make you think you can do more. When I try to explain to my husband, when he gets home later on tonight, explaining to him today, he'd just think – you're mad – running around? It's hard, but the level of aspiration it's given me and the experience – not experience – enthusiasm it's given me, is getting higher and higher like the vase getting higher and higher, which is good and it's just a really refreshing place to come"

1. "By coming to the sessions, I have learnt empathy and that I want to make a positive change in my life"
2. "I like the check in at the start of every session and hearing how other women are looking after themselves"
3. "The programme has made me look at the past in a more positive way and want to make a positive change to the future. The activities made me learn empathy and to see things from other people's point of view, it also taught me how to work better as part of a team and that no one judges each other in our group"
4. "It was very helpful indeed - assertiveness, thinking of other people, allowing time for myself that I didn't do before, but I do now. And getting negative people out of my life. Push me on, push me on more. Skills that I've already learned"

Questionnaire scores: *Individuals & Probation Practitioners*

All Individuals and Probation Practitioners were asked to complete a self-scoring questionnaire pre and post programme (the same questions, although questions differed between Individuals and Probation Practitioner). The questions were formulated to offer a point of comparison, helping to ascertain whether the *Creating Change* programme achieved any positive impact relating to the Theory of Change model and transferable life skills (stated earlier in this report).

All questions relate to the aims of the research (chapter 7), and each question had a possible score of between 1 -10 points. The scores from the 1st and 2nd questionnaires were added together to produce an Individual score, as well as an average score across all five programmes (please see chapter 11).

- **The highest increase for a single Individual was 129%.**
- **34% average increase in Individual self-scoring questionnaires (pre and post programme). No self-scoring questionnaires showed a decreased in score in the 2019/20 programmes.** Interestingly, the first run of *Creating Change* was a six session model and did show some decreased scores between the 1st and 2nd questionnaires for some Individuals. Perhaps indicating the benefits of a longer term programme (i.e. 2019/20 was an 8 session model, as opposed to six).
- The significant rise in self-scoring of Individuals and Probation Practitioners across all five CRC Women's Centres suggests a high increase in personal growth and development (areas include making positive life changes, self-reflection, empathy, self-esteem, confidence, social bonds etc.).
- Individuals from the three delivered programmes recorded the following increases in self scoring questionnaires: **Aldershot 46%, Cosham 21% and Basingstoke 45%.**
- Questions that showed the greatest increase in Individuals self-scoring include: *positive impact on self and identity, feeling part of a safe and supportive community, increased confidence and self-esteem, empathy for others, a new awareness of the importance of self-care, communication skills, and agency to make a positive change in their lives.*
- The pre and post questionnaire scores are currently the only evidence base providing a quantitative point of comparison in terms of evidencing personal change. The recommendations chapter (13) proposes a 3-6 month post programme questionnaire to be completed by Probation Practitioners in consultation with Individuals that have completed at least 4/8 sessions of the programme.

	Initial	Close	% of Initial
Aldershot			
Probation Practitioner	114	117	03%
1	52	82	58%
2	77	115	49%
3	74	95	28%
4	80	110	38%
5	54	114	111%
6	96	118	23%
Average Non-Staff	72	106	46%
Basingstoke			
Probation Practitioner	103	113	10%
1	72	110	53%
2	107	115	07%
3	41	94	129%
4	63	104	65%
5	47	105	123%
6	99	108	09%
7	90	116	29%
Average Non-Staff	74	107	45%
Cosham			
Probation Practitioner	105	120	14%
1	87	120	38%
2	77	109	42%
3	73	96	32%
4	84	96	14%
5	108	108	00%
6	91	120	32%
7	101	116	15%
8	106	120	13%
9	96	107	11%
Average Non-Staff	91	110	21%
Average Non-Staff all locations	81	108	34%

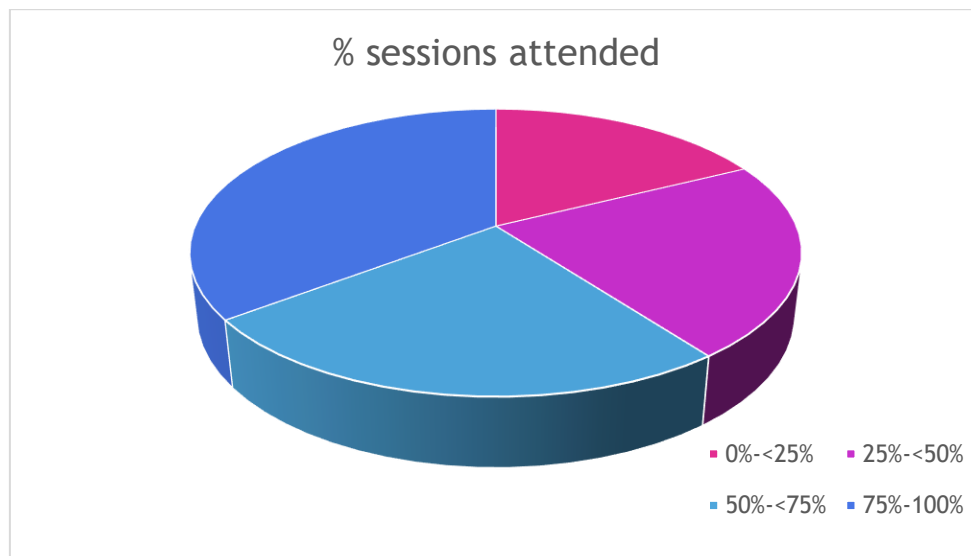
The five questions that showed the greatest increase between pre and post questionnaires for Individuals are as follows:

1. I feel ready to make a positive change in my life
2. I feel part of a community
3. I feel empathy for others having a rough time
4. I see my future as positive
5. I recognise my skills and strengths

The five questions that showed the greatest increase between pre and post questionnaires for Probation Practitioners are as follows:

1. I understand what the aims and objectives are for this programme
2. I am happy and willing to participate in this programme
3. I believe that this programme can help Individuals' lead more positive lives
4. I want to learn new skills and gain new perspectives from this programme
5. I think this programme would also be useful for staff training

Attendance



The graph above provides percentages relating to attendance of Individuals across all five settings (Aldershot, Basingstoke, Cosham, Southampton* and Isle of Wight*). It shows that most **Individuals attended between 50% - 75% of sessions** (please find individual graphs for all five settings in the appendix 7 of this report).

When attempting to interpret attendance patterns, it is important to consider the often chaotic, complex and unpredictable life circumstances of Individuals daily lives. The following are two major barriers that profoundly compromise an Individuals ability to fully commit to a full programme:

1. Unprocessed trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences.
2. Substance misuse, financial problems/debt, low confidence, low self-esteem, poor literacy skills, mental health issues, poor time keeping, toxic relationships, unstable housing and employment, family disputes and challenging childcare situations etc.

"I only come once every fortnight because I can't afford to come every week. I come every other week; I will not be here next week, but I'll be here the one after that. I'll come to 4/8 sessions. It's a 6 mile walk to the nearest train station, so I can't walk 6 miles. Yeah, so I have to get the bus every fortnight, we have sorted that out"

(Individual)

***Southampton and Isle of Wight programmes were cut short due to Covid-19 restrictions.**

“I have gone completely out of my comfort zone. It has been really hard for me. I may not have joined in as much as I have wanted to but I have tried, I have not felt pushed into anything. Thank you.”

(Individual)

12.Challenges & Limitations

This report has highlighted some of the aims, methods and key findings from the *Creating Change* programme, applying an interdisciplinary lens to better understand the key factors of working effectively with groups (i.e. Individuals, facilitators and Probation Practitioners). The following list of points aims to communicate some of the challenges and limitations of the current 8 session model – some of these will be addressed in the Recommendations chapter below:

1. Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown measures implemented by the Government in March 2020 resulted in the incompleteness of both the Southampton and Isle of Wight programmes.
2. Individuals need to be able to articulate being ready to make a positive change in their lives to be able to fully participate and benefit from the programme. Otherwise, they will most likely struggle to participate in the high levels of introspection involved later in the programme.
3. **Individuals struggle to articulate the deeper level emotional impact of the programme. This centres around a lack of vocabulary in many instances. It begs the question as to whether they will be able to fully articulate the deeper level impacts of stages 2 & 3 of the Theory of Change model.** It may be that a cohort is never able to reach the end of stage 3.
4. Contributing factors that hinder Individuals progression from stages one to three on the Theory of Change model include:
 - Sporadic attendance rates
 - Readiness to make meaningful and purposeful changes in their lives
 - Embracing the personal risk involved with agreeing to fully participate in a process of critical self-reflection
 - **Complex daily lives of Individuals, including mental health issues, substance misuse, irregular employment, debt, toxic relationships, breakdown of the family unit, domestic violence, poor housing environments and childcare responsibilities.**
5. Producing case studies on specific Individuals was restricted to evidence gathered during the programme, as backgrounds and offences were not made available to the researcher. Although one of the main aims of *Creating*

Change is to establish a shame free environment that resists asking Individuals to reveal and discuss their offence, even if they are not silenced from sharing this information.

6. There is a strong argument for the need to evidence the external parameters of the learning environment (i.e. back at home, work and in social settings) or once released back into society) to indicate longer term impact.
7. There was no monitoring and tracking of Individuals post programme, thus it was impossible to evidence whether there had been any positive impact on desistance and recidivism for those Individuals that participated in *Creating Change* programme.
 - This research was limited to the investigation of the short-term impact of *Creating Change*. The duration of the programme is potentially limiting when attempting to evidence any connection between the impact of *Creating Change* and desistance. It is hard to argue that 8 sessions, two hours per week, is sufficient to assert the benefits of the programme outside of the learning space for the longer term.
 - An 8 session model of delivery might provide the opportunity to develop skills of personal reflection and reimagining of self and identity, but it will probably always struggle to produce profound or long term change without a joined up holistic approach that meets all the needs of Individuals (see Maslow's Hierarchy of need (Methodology, chapter 6)).
8. The post programme questionnaire is a vital method of gathering data post programme. It was designed to be facilitated by Probation Practitioners during face to face meetings or over the phone with Individuals to provide specific information on their personal growth and development since completing *Creating Change*. Only Individuals who have attended at least 4/8 sessions should be targeted to complete a 3-6 month post programme questionnaire to help evidence impact on Individual personal growth and well-being.
9. Some of the learning spaces that were provided at the Women's Centres were inappropriate for the active and creative activities used during *Creating Change*. It is important that spaces are large enough for groups of at least 9 people to move around freely. Light is also a vital factor – it helps groups see clearly and a lack of it can negatively affect the mood of a group.
10. The Lead Researcher was afforded a relatively short period of time to explain the research and gather data from Individuals. This impacts the depth and quality of the evidence gathered.

“Trust within the group. More confidence in front of other people, I really enjoyed it and had lots of fun. I feel like I know the girls on a more personal and friendly level, and I trust them all. It has helped me identify my weaknesses and strengths”

“I have gained the confidence to make change. I know what changes I need to make. I have energy and motivation to make differences. I value myself and my time”

(Individual)

13. Recommendations

1. Essential to the efficacy of future research and evaluation is the gathering of data during and post programme, preferably 3-6 months, on previous informants to evidence any on-going impact outside of the learning environment on personal growth and development, as well as recidivism rates.
2. Introduction of a feasibility cluster randomised controlled trial (RCT) with a limited number of Individuals (up to 10) to assess both the feasibility of the research and effectiveness outcomes of taking part in *Creating Change*. A RCT is the most appropriate study methodology for an evaluation of the effectiveness of an intervention and cluster design is commonly used when contamination is likely. The intervention will be randomly allocated with the Probation settings being the unit of randomisation, and those not receiving the intervention acting as controls (this group will consist of Individuals that were potential candidates for the programme but were unable to take part due to limited places etc). The ethical limitations will be reflected on in relation to this group.
3. **The Justice Data Lab** could offer a possible opportunity to analyse offending trends of Individuals post programme (at least 3 – 6 months post programme).
4. Case notes on Individuals would offer useful contextualisation and help provide HMPSS and HCT with a more robust impact study.
5. This report has presented compelling evidence of the benefits to Probation Practitioners participating equally alongside Individuals. This is a progressive step for HMPSS and should be continued, given that it promotes productive and healthy relationships between Probation Practitioners and Individuals outside of the *Creating Change* programme.
6. Current findings suggest that the BFT methods and philosophy of working within the criminal justice system would have value being applied across genders, settings and interventions (i.e. Sports, Cooking, English, Maths). Therefore, serious consideration and discussion should also be given to running *Creating Change* with male groups serving Probation Orders.

7. Most Probation group programmes run for 12 sessions. Therefore, a longer study across 12 programmes would provide a significant increase in sample numbers and provide a more robust and rigorous evidence base to evaluate the impact of *Creating Change*.
8. All future requests for research are required to follow MoJ guidelines and to submit an application to HMPPS for approval before conducting any research and evaluation <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service/about/research>
9. Good Lives Model (Ward, 2017) asserts the benefits of socially mixed programmes. Socially mixed community programmes, bringing together *Creating Change* alumni and other women, to help create new positive social bonds through sharing of lived experience.
10. Community programmes could also offer continuity, on-going support and opportunities for positive creative expression. These programmes would also be shame free and non-targeted on offences of members of the group.
11. Research informants to be given the opportunity to assess their own progression during programme delivery. This could be achieved by Individuals journaling their progression and sharing valuable insights with their Probation Practitioner to help tailor on-going support strategies.
12. Future *Creating Change* research should consider using the Well-being Scale based on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS: Tennant et al., 2007). The WEMWBS is designed to monitor well-being in the general population and measures elements of positive affect, satisfying interpersonal relationships and positive functioning.
13. Staff training and advocacy days – using the same methods and philosophy of working as *Creating Change*.
14. Importance and impact of learning spaces: they need to be large, have access to open air and numerous light sources.
15. Additional time needs to be embedded into the programme to enable the researcher to produce more in-depth case studies on specific Individuals (i.e. obtaining more than one interview per Individual on every programme).
16. *Hope Street is a residential community services and a new, purpose-built environment, designed with women and children at its heart. This innovative and welcome new approach to supporting vulnerable women and their children to reintegrate back into society* (<https://onesmallthing.org.uk/hopastreet>). BFT are well positioned as a Community Interest Company to provide a variation of their *Creating Change* model within this safe and pastoral new setting.

“I have enjoyed every session and attended every session. This has helped me deal with everyday life issues. It has given me confidence and happiness. I can come to a session feeling down, unhappy, but finish and leave, without a care in the world. I’m more confident. I feel happy with myself. I’ve made friends. I’ve learnt a lot about myself. This group has reminded me that it is OK to be myself and laugh. It has been fun!

“Initially I did not like being in groups, especially with women. Now I’m so much more confident to be involved in a group. It has enabled me to be more active in the meetings I now go outside out of sessions. This is exactly what I needed for where I’m at now and for my future. Thank you!”

(Individual)

14. Conclusion

This report aimed to conduct a rigorous impact study of five *Creating Change* programmes, delivered across Hampshire in 2019/20. This is the third run of *Creating Change*, designed and delivered by BFT and commissioned on behalf of HIOW CRC for HCT. The evidence gathered from the genuine and authentic voices of all informants has shaped the structure of this report and provided key insights into the lived experiences of those that participated in the programme.

Although there may still be those that are cynical, or perhaps critical, about the use of *Creating Change* within the criminal justice system, this report asserts that the learning environment, methods and philosophy of working described in this report should not be interpreted as being soft on crime and punishment. *Creating Change* deals with complex life issues while supporting Individuals to deconstruct and reimagine their sense of self and identity in a transformative and memorable learning environment. Key findings from the research indicates that *Creating Change* potentially offers Individuals a more rigorous form of engagement and learning than is currently offered in most closed and open settings.

As previously stated earlier in this report, courage is required for self-honesty and self-discovery in front of a group of peers, as this can be a profoundly revealing, painful and challenging process for most Individuals. In this sense, the report findings are a cautionary tale to non-offenders, as it is dubious as to whether most people would have experienced (or be willing to participate in) such high levels of introspection that are required during the *Creating Change* programme. The

evidence presented in this report strongly indicates that Individuals must work incredibly hard to be able to critically reflect on their life choices and address entrenched patterns of anti-social/offending attitudes, thinking and behaviour. The voices of Individuals and Probation Practitioners are testament to the struggles and challenges faced throughout the programme, as well as the personal growth and development of all informants that were able to complete at least 4 sessions.

A multi-disciplinary and mixed methods approach provided an in-depth evidence base to interpret key findings. This offered unique insights into what makes an effective programme with Individuals, to enable them to move forward to live meaningful and purposeful lives. *Creating Change* appeared to provide some of the key stepping stones for Individuals journeys towards desistance. However, if Individuals are not provided with an holistic and individualised package of care and support to achieve regular employment, healthier relationships, safe accommodation, drug misuse rehabilitation etc, it is questionable whether the vital skills learned over the duration of an 8 week programme will be implemented by Individuals outside of the safety of the *Creating Change* learning environment in the long term.

Individuals cited the benefits of Probation Practitioners working alongside them as equals during the programme, they felt that their participation in all sessions promoted high levels of equality and enriched positive working relationships, helping build greater openness and trust between Individuals and Probation Practitioners. Many Individuals enquired about the opportunity to continue participating in additional *Creating Change* sessions in a community setting once their probation orders were completed. Further advocacy and training was also requested from Probation Practitioners, as they voiced the progress they had experienced by participating in the programme – many stating that other Probation Practitioners should be given the opportunity to be more involved, whether through programmes or intensive training sessions to learn the active, creative and participatory methods used on the *Creating Change* programme.

Desistance was avoided as the key indicator of success. Evidence of better life choices, building healthier relationships and the agency to gain employment and further education etc. were also measures of positive personal growth and development. These should be considered as important as desistance as they are the most likely factors that once achieved will contribute towards a longer journey to desistance.

The major question that still requires addressing is the need for a longer-term evidence base on the impact of *Creating Change* pre, during and post programme on Individuals and Probation Practitioners. It would also be worth considering increasing the sample size and introducing a randomised control group trial to help further ascertain the effectiveness of the programme. Post programme data is arguably the most important additional information in relation to whether positive

changes to behaviour that occur in the learning space provide a good indication of behaviour outside of the space. Do the transformative experiences of personal growth and development cited by all informants (refer to the transferable skills list and Theory of Change model found in chapters 8) translate back into their communities and ultimately reduce the likelihood of recidivism?

Although desistance was not one of the key measures of success for *Creating Change*, the programme still offered Individuals a skill set that appeared to have a significantly positive impact on their sense of identity and decision-making processes. Testimonies given by Individuals during the delivery of the programme indicate profound shifts in attitudes, thinking and behaviour. This report argues that the personal growth and development that Individuals showed should be considered a vital stepping stone towards helping them to meet their human needs. Therefore, the programme should not exist in a vacuum, instead it should be used in conjunction within a wider holistic package of care and support (support with employment, education, community engagement, housing, economic security, childcare, drugs misuse etc.). Only then will Individuals have a realistic chance of moving forward to desist from crime and live meaningful and purposeful lives.

“I loved the film we made. I thought it was brilliant, so powerful. Because any woman who is really down on her luck, on life, you can see on all our faces that we’ve been through something, it’s not easy, it’s not lovely cast done up and everything, we just are who we are”

(Individual)

15. Co-produced work by groups

The ‘sharing of work’ event is never a pre-determined outcome for any *Creating Change* programme, it depends on whether a group is willing/explicitly wants to develop work to share, although thus far 100% of groups have democratically chosen to develop work to share and perform as themselves.

The opportunity to devise work to share is generally only introduced on session 5 or 6 of the 8 session programme. It is the removal of any expectation at the outset of a programme on a group to be working towards devising and producing material to share that allows groups the space and safety to expose and explore genuine versions of their individual and collective constructed identities, decision making processes, as well as their values and belief systems, without worrying about an impending performance.

This approach sets an expectation for groups to determine the agenda of sessions and collectively decide on the themes and topics examined. The facilitators possess a diverse tool kit of creative, active and participatory exercises to support Individuals to safely imagine and play out different behaviours, while gaining a range of different perspectives from within the group. This evidences the co-produced and bottom up methods employed by *Creating Change*. The creative, active and participatory exercises facilitated are rarely, if ever, delivered in the same order for every programme, given the bespoke nature of each group, taking into account the unique lived experiences, mix of personalities and group dynamics at play.

Examples of visual art and written word (co-produced by groups) can be found in the appendix of this report.

“I was a bit apprehensive. I don’t like crowded spaces and I get anxious. Things run through my mind – how is it going to be? Am I going to end up crying? But it was ok.

When I first got told about the programme I thought it was going to be a drama group and I’m not into drama, but doing those little exercises it helps bring you out of your shell and be a team. As a team it helps you focus on other things. This isn’t drama - they are helping us to believe in ourselves and achieve better than we have in the past. It is helping us to resolve things in our lives”

(Individual)

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