



Continuing Positive Change in Prison and the Community

An analysis of the long-term and wider impact of the Good Vibrations Project

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Executive Summary

Arts based projects have a long and successful history in working with offenders. However, until very recently robust evidence of the effectiveness of such projects was virtually non-existent. Recent research on the arts in criminal justice has begun to provide an evidence base, suggesting arts projects can and do have a positive impact on offenders – on their emotional and psychological well-being, on their anger and aggression, on their engagement with further education and training and potentially on reducing their risk of reoffending. Given the emerging evidence of the positive impact of arts based programmes, now seems the time for a serious consideration of how these programmes can work together to best target offenders' need and risk. However, there still remains a paucity of high-quality research and in particular few studies have investigated the long-term impact of arts programmes on offenders.

Previous research has demonstrated the positive impact on offenders of participating in a Good Vibrations project in the short- and medium-term. Good Vibrations is a charity that runs music projects with offenders in prison and on probation using gamelan percussion music from Indonesia. It has been identified as suitable for community or group settings, has an informal and inclusive approach, and includes a variety of instruments that can be played without any prior musical training or knowledge of musical notation.

Against the background of some official concerns about the “public acceptability” of some arts in prisons projects, and taking into account that effective research into the arts should track participants over time, this study aimed to explore the long-term impact of taking part in a Good Vibrations project on participants while still in prison, and on participants now released from prison. The definition of “long-term” used here refers to having completed the Good Vibrations project at least 12 months ago. It is also important to test the findings of previous research on a larger scale, by involving a new cohort of project participants in the research process in order to increase the validity of any findings. Furthermore, research on female offenders' experiences of the arts in prison is extremely limited and it is essential to assess the impact of the project on this group given their very different needs.

This report presents findings from twenty-six men and women in prison and in the community who had taken part in a Good Vibrations project in prison. To assess the long-term institutional impact of taking part in Good Vibrations projects, previous research participants from HMP Grendon were tracked through the prison system. To measure whether any long-term impact is sustained as offenders leave prison, a sample of participants in the community, who had previously taken part in a Good Vibrations project in prison, were contacted. A new cohort of participants at HMP Grendon was assessed in order to test the claims of previous research. Finally, the effects of Good Vibrations on adult female offenders was reviewed. Participants' attitudes, emotions, and behaviours were measured through interviews, adjudication reports and OASys records, and interviews with prison staff. An emotion scale developed by the research team and piloted in a previous study proved to be a useful tool for assessing emotional and psychological change over time in project participants. Comparing this data against observed behavioural change proved particularly beneficial and so this was used with participants in this current study.

The key findings from this research suggest that Good Vibrations:

- Acts as a catalyst for change in the lives of offenders, and that this positive change is sustained as offenders move through the prison system and out into the community.
- Has a significant impact on male and female offenders in the general prison population and in therapeutic communities.
- Has a significant impact upon offenders over and above participation in a therapeutic regime.
- Significantly improves confidence, listening and communication skills, tolerance, levels of self-expression, and ability to cope with stress and prison life. For many participants these changes are sustained in the long-term.
- Enhances participants' levels of engagement with further education and training.
- Has a significant positive impact upon the emotional well-being of female offenders.
- Is responsive to the differing needs of men and women in prison.

Overall, what this report tells us is that participating in Good Vibrations can provide the starting-block for positive change in offenders. Many project participants are able to leverage the impetus from the project and use this to go on to achieve, both personally and practically. Participants experience sustained positive, emotional, psychological, and behavioural improvements. However, what is also clear is that offenders involved in a therapeutic regime are more able to build upon the positive benefits experienced through Good Vibrations, and thus thought needs to be given in the general prison system as to how positive changes can be sustained and further developed. The findings suggest the results of our previous research can be applied more generally, but this is the first time these effects have been identified as being sustained long-term both institutionally and in the community.

The report highlights the potential for arts-based programmes - such as Good Vibrations - and more traditional programmes in prison to complement one another. Supporting programmes like Good Vibrations helps give the widest number of offenders a chance to cope with prison, tackle their needs, and hopefully go on to become non-offenders in the future.

Given the importance of ensuring programmes are engaging and responsive to offenders' needs, the authors make recommendations to assess the impact of Good Vibrations on women after project completion and longer term, and to broaden this work out to compare the effects of Good Vibrations on individuals in contact with the probation service. Finally, the authors highlight the need for the prison service to adequately plan for the completion of projects, particularly when vulnerable individuals are involved.

Many project participants are able to leverage the impetus from the project and use this to go on to achieve, both personally and practically. Participants experience sustained positive, emotional, psychological, and behavioural improvements.

Introduction

Anecdotal evidence suggests that arts in prison programmes can have a significant effect on offenders – on their emotional and psychological well-being, self-esteem, behaviour, and engagement with further learning. Recently research has begun to focus on the impact of the arts in criminal justice. However, there still remains a paucity of high-quality research and in particular few studies have investigated the longer-term impact of arts programmes on offenders after the completion of participating in a project.

Additionally, there has been some disruption to the prison arts sector following the publication of Prison Service guidance to prison staff to consider the ‘public perception’ of programmes offered in prisons. In late 2008 media attention focused on certain arts in prisons projects, suggesting they were unsuitable for offenders serving prison sentences. Concerns about acceptability need to be responded to with robust evidence about the effectiveness of projects, which is now beginning to emerge.

Previous research on the Good Vibrations project has highlighted the short- and medium-term value of the project with male offenders. Given the need to consider fully the long-term impact of arts-based projects, this research investigates the long-term impact of this particular arts-based programme on offenders in prison and ex-offenders in the community. Here it should be noted our working definition of “long term” means having completed the Good Vibrations project at least 12 months ago. Furthermore, for projects to maximise their impact it is vital to ensure that they are able to engage offenders, by matching the style of programme delivery to participants’ needs, and being sensitive to offenders’ gender. In light of these issues, this report also presents findings on the effects of the project upon women in prison. It is vital for the Prison Service and funders to be able to make informed decisions in order to provide appropriate interventions for offenders. This study aims to inform these decisions through the following objectives:

- To track previous research participants from HMP Grendon through the prison system to assess the long-term institutional impact of participating in a Good Vibrations project.
- To follow a sample of participants in the community - who previously took part in a Good Vibrations project in prison - to assess the long-term impact of participating in a Good Vibrations project.
- To assess the impact of Good Vibrations on a new cohort of participants at HMP Grendon, in order to test the claims of previous research.
- To review the effects of participating in a Good Vibrations project on adult female offenders.
- To assess any changes in participants’ attitudes, emotions and behaviour, via self-report, assessment, and official documentation.
- To compile data on participants’ engagement with further learning, education and self-development.

The Arts in Criminal Justice

Arts based projects have a long and successful history in working with offenders, however, until very recently robust evidence of the effectiveness of such projects was virtually non-existent. Recent research on the arts in criminal justice has begun to provide an evidence base, suggesting arts projects can and do have a positive impact on offenders – on their emotional and psychological well-being (Wilson et al., 2008), on their anger and aggression (Blacker et al., 2008), on their engagement with further education and training (Wilson et al., 2009) and potentially on reducing their risk of reoffending (Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2008).

Traditional programmes in prison are targeted at reducing reoffending – and rightly so. They have been shown to be effective with some prisoners in some circumstances (Falshaw et al., 2003), but the varying needs of those in prison means that a range of inputs is likely to be required to address this variety effectively. Voluntary groups in particular are praised for their ability to be flexible and responsive to the needs of individual offenders (Ministry of Justice, 2008) and arts based programmes are typically run by such voluntary organisations, whom the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) aims to make use of in providing a range of correctional services for offenders. Often, for example, prisoners with low literacy levels can be reluctant to engage with the ‘basic skills’ programmes offered in prisons. These kinds of formalised educational courses can, for many, seem like a replica of what turned them off education in the first place. For these individuals, arts-based programmes that show them they can achieve often act as the first step towards further, more formal, education and training (Wilson & Caulfield, 2009). Given that 50% of male and 75% of female adult prisoners have no qualifications at all (Allen, Shaw and Hall 2004) this is particularly significant as poor educational background is statistically associated with risk of re-offending. Furthermore, a recent document produced by the Arts Alliance¹ outlines how arts-based programmes can be used to engage and deliver across the seven pathways identified by NOMS in reducing reoffending. Calls for a wider rehabilitation agenda than that provided by offending behaviour programmes (Homes Affairs Select Committee, 2004) implies an acknowledgment of the importance of alternative activities in relation to work with offenders. Given the emerging evidence of the positive impact of arts based programmes, now seems the time for a serious consideration of how these programmes can work together with traditional programmes to best target offenders’ need and risk.

Aside from the clear potential of the arts in reducing reoffending, it is important to also recognise the humanising effect on individuals taking part in arts programmes. The prison service does not simply aim to incarcerate offenders, but aims to rehabilitate and provide purposeful activity (HMIP, 2008). Increasing offenders’ self-esteem, communication skills, and self-worth are vital in their own right and arts programmes have been shown time and time again to tackle these areas (Allen et al., 2004; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; Miles & Clarke, 2006; Wilson & Caulfield, 2009; Wilson et al., 2008).

¹ ‘The Arts Alliance is a national body whose purpose is to improve communication and broker relationships between artists and organisations working with the Criminal Justice Sector, offenders and ex-offenders, prison and probation staff, and relevant government personnel.’

Unfortunately, there continues to be concern over the suitability of some arts based projects with offenders. As discussed above, the publication in January 2009 by NOMS of the Prison Service Instruction 50/2008 – dubbed ‘the public acceptability test’ – may have given many prison service governors and staff the impression that arts based programmes are unsuitable for inclusion in prison regimes. This concern needs to be addressed with clear, robust evidence of the effectiveness of arts in prisons. Confirmation of the impact is emerging, and continuing to evaluate the impact of the arts on offenders in the longer term will provide the Ministry of Justice with a greater evidence base upon which to make decisions around which projects are likely to be successful with offenders. The collection of this evidence also has the added benefit of providing the arts community with clear information on good practice within their programmes.

The Good Vibrations Gamelan Project

The Good Vibrations Gamelan Project

Good Vibrations is a charity that runs music projects with offenders in prison and on probation. Good Vibrations uses gamelan percussion music from Indonesia that has been identified as suitable for community or group settings; it has an informal and inclusive approach; and includes a variety of instruments that can be played without any prior musical training or knowledge of musical notation (Eastburn, 2003). Gamelan is the term for a collection of Indonesian bronze percussion instruments, consisting of a variety of metallophones, gongs, chimes and drums. It is a particularly communal form of music-making where participants are compelled to work together.

Good Vibrations projects typically run over one week for around fifteen-to-twenty offenders on average. They run in the prison and probation services and are available to any offender in contact with these services (or, in some prisons, to targeted groups e.g. the unemployed, the very low-skilled, people in touch with mental health teams, self-harmers), do not require any musical training prior to participation and for many prisoners will be their first experience of education in the prison setting. As well as learning how to play traditional pieces of gamelan music, participants create their own compositions as a group. They also learn about Indonesian culture and associated art-forms (e.g. shadow puppetry, Javanese dance). At the end of the week, offenders perform a concert to which staff, peers, family members and others are invited.

In an early evaluation of Good Vibrations, Cathy Eastburn (the project’s founder) found that, although there were some initial difficulties with its implementation, many staff were willing to co-operate and that staff as well as prisoners reported positive feedback. This study also highlighted the move towards staff in prisons recognising the contribution of the arts in educating prisoners and engaging them in further opportunities (Eastburn, 2003). A later study (Digard et al., 2007) revealed significant positive impacts on those who participated in a Good Vibrations project, including increased insight and reflection in individual prisoners and also stronger cohesion in groups of prisoners. Prisoners expressed a desire to continue with the project, reporting that they found the teaching in the Good Vibrations project empowering, more like exploration than education. Participants were given greater responsibility and freedom as the course progressed, sharing ideas on how to improve the music and

building their confidence. Taking part in sessions also enabled discussion on wider issues such as drug use and acted as a diversion for some prisoners, giving them the space and freedom to let go of their worries.

Digard et al. (2007) also found that along with the therapeutic qualities of the music itself, the process of learning a new skill in an informal, group setting was empowering for prisoners. They were constantly consulted about which direction the course should take and for their suggestions on the actual composition of the music, leading to a collective performance of an improvised piece. Participants reported having a sense of achievement because of the high level of input they had throughout the process. Participants and staff also reported improved social skills as the prisoners interacted with each other and also the development of self-regulation, which was important to achieve a range of goals each day. This was not always immediate but was a clear indication of the adjustment prisoners had to make in order to fully engage in the project. Digard et al (2007) concluded that the potential therapeutic effects of Good Vibrations were impressive, especially for more vulnerable prisoners, including opportunities for self-reflection, analysis, developing a sense of achievement and empowerment, developing social skills and a realisation that they can work with others.

Previous research by Wilson and Logan (2006) has revealed that taking part in the gamelan sessions and successfully completing the whole week empowered prisoners to seek further education and training opportunities. This was attributed to the 'uniqueness' of Good Vibrations and the inclusive approach of the tutors which enabled prisoners to develop social skills to work together and also discuss wider issues during the sessions. Good Vibrations projects removed the barrier of intimidation towards engaging in education for many prisoners. It is also important to note that this study found that prisoners additionally benefited from Good Vibrations: taking part helped them cope with the day-to-day stresses of prison life. Indeed, for many the project created a new social group to interact with, so they felt less isolated. For others, stress was relieved to such a degree, that they stopped self-harming. Prisoners' self-esteem and confidence were also increased, to the extent that many talked of not just wanting to change but also feeling they had the capacity and ability to do so (Wilson & Logan, 2006).

Most recently, research was conducted to review the effects of participating in a Good Vibrations project six months after project completion. Prisoners who had participated in Good Vibrations projects were interviewed and assessed for any changes in emotions and behaviour, based on an emotional scale developed by the research team. The research concluded that participating in a Good Vibrations project has a sustained and positive emotional and psychological impact on participants, leading to positive behavioural change (Wilson, Caulfield, & Atherton, 2008; Wilson, Caulfield, & Atherton, 2009). However, this research focused primarily on one group of prisoners over a limited time-period.

The findings highlighted above demonstrate the short- and medium-term impact of Good vibrations projects on specific groups, but also draw attention to the need for further research to investigate how far these findings are sustained in the lives of offenders. The need to consider fully the long-term impact of arts-based projects has been highlighted in reports commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Education and Skills, and the Arts Council England, which further suggest that research that tracks participants over time is the most appropriate way to assess the real impact of projects in prison.

Methodology

In light of recommendations that effective research into the arts should track participants over time, and against the background of previous research, this study aimed to explore the long-term impact of taking part in a Good Vibrations project on participants while still in prison, and on participants now released from prison. It is also important to test the findings of previous research on a larger scale, by involving a new cohort of project participants in the research process in order to increase the validity of any findings. In addition, research on female offenders' experiences of the arts in prison is extremely limited and it is essential to assess the impact of the project on this group given their very different needs. Given this, two prisons running Good Vibrations projects agreed to take part in this research: HMPs Grendon and Eastwood Park.

HMP Grendon

HMP Grendon opened in 1962 and started out as an “experimental” psychiatric prison to provide treatment for prisoners with antisocial personality disorders. In recent years, it has adopted an approach more in line with the rest of the prison estate, whilst keeping its unique regime of therapeutic care for offenders. As part of this regime it regularly utilises a range of projects to engage prisoners with the arts while undergoing therapy. HMP Grendon is a Category B prison, housing 235 prisoners in six autonomous therapeutic communities on separate wings of the prison (for a general introduction to the work of HMP Grendon see Genders and Player, 1995; Wilson and McCabe, 2002). Not only do the research team have good relations with staff working at HMP Grendon, but also the culture of the prison itself is one that welcomes and supports independent research.

HMP Eastwood Park

Eastwood Park is a female closed local prison, typically housing around 350 women. Opened as a womens' prison in 1996, Eastwood Park holds a relatively high number of foreign nationals and women on remand, therefore stays at the prison are rarely longer than six months. It is one of only five prisons that receives women directly from court and consequently holds a large number of vulnerable women. The most recent report published by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (HCMIP, 2008) recognises the challenges faced by HMP Eastwood Park in dealing with disparate groups of women, many of whom are a significant distance from home, and highlights the progress made by the prison in all four key areas of its provision: safety, respect, purposeful activity, and resettlement. Both the availability of activities and time out of cell was reported to be good at the prison, however many courses have a high drop-out rate. HCMIP recommend the prison needs to encourage and motivate women to attend courses, and to assess whether current provision meets the needs of the women. Nonetheless, the report is generally positive and highlights that Eastwood Park carries out some innovative and supportive work.

Research objectives

- To track previous research participants from HMP Grendon through the prison system.
- To assess the impact of Good Vibrations on a new cohort of participants at HMP Grendon, in order to test the claims of previous research.
- To follow a sample of male participants from a variety of prisons as they move out into the community.

- To review the effects of participating in a Good Vibrations project on adult female offenders.
- To assess any changes in participants' attitudes, emotions and behaviour, via self-report, assessment, and official documentation.
- To compile data on participants' engagement with further learning, education and self-development.

The research was conducted in four concurrent stages: stage one considered the potential long-term impact of the Good Vibrations project to offenders who had taken part in previous research as they progressed through the prison system; stage two involved evaluating the impact of Good Vibrations on a new cohort of project participants, in order to increase the validity of the findings of previous research. Stage three reviewed the effects of the project on participants from a variety of prisons as they moved out into the community; and stage four evaluated the work of the project with female offenders. The research used a variety of methods to evaluate the impact of Good Vibrations, as described below.

Stage One – Following up previous research participants

Stage one included interviewing participants and prison staff, assessing emotional and behavioural change, and analysis of disciplinary and other relevant prison records. A key focus of the research was to collect evidence regarding any emotional and behavioural changes experienced by participants and witnessed by prison staff and others. This stage of the research also investigated any further training, education, and personal development activities undertaken by the participants post-Good Vibrations since taking part in the research twelve months ago and assessed this against past engagement in programmes and activities. Poor educational background is a known criminogenic need - informing the Offender Assessment System (OASys)² used in the Criminal Justice System to classify offenders' level of need and risk. Therefore, it is important to assess how far projects may act as a stepping-stone to further education, and consequently impact upon prisoners' level of need and risk of reoffending. Good relations exist between the research team and HMP Grendon – and especially with the men who form the original "Grendon sample". Following this group has provided much richer and deeper evidence about the impact that Good Vibrations has on participants long-term.

The research was conducted in the following stages:

- The research team worked with staff at HMP Grendon to contact those offenders who took part in previous Good Vibrations evaluations. All previous participants who were interviewed twelve months ago were still resident at Grendon.
- Interviews were conducted with participants about their general attitude, experiences, and behaviour.
- Prison staff were interviewed in order to validate reports from prisoners and to comment on participants' general attitude and behaviour, and any changes in these that they may have observed.
- Adjudication reports and relevant sections of the OASys were reviewed, with the consent of each participant and research co-ordinator. This data was collected to monitor any behavioural change by participants, and for collection of demographic and risk-level data.

² The Offender Assessment System (OASys) was developed by the National Probation Service and Prison Service in England and Wales as a standardised measure to provide a consistent and in-depth assessment measure. Implemented throughout England and Wales, the OASys consists of thirteen sections which assess offenders' criminogenic needs, risk of harm, and likelihood of reconviction based on areas covered in the LSI-R. The OASys provides background demographic data about individual offenders and information on any specific needs they may have.

Stage Two - Recent Good Vibrations participants at HMP Grendon

As above, Stage Two included interviewing participants and prison staff, assessing emotional and behavioural change, and analysis of disciplinary and other relevant prison records. The research was conducted in the following stages:

- The research team worked with staff at HMP Grendon to contact those offenders who had taken part in the most recent Good Vibrations project.
- Interviews were conducted with participants about their general attitude and behaviour.
- Participants were asked to complete an emotions scale (see below) to quantify any changes associated with the Good Vibrations project.
- Prison staff were interviewed in order to validate reports from prisoners and to comment on participants' general attitudes and behaviour, and any changes in this that they may have observed.
- Relevant sections of the OASys were reviewed, with the consent of each participant and research co-ordinator. This data was collected to cross-check reports from prisoners, and for collection of demographic and risk-level data.

Stage Three – Ex-offenders in the community

- Using details provided by Good Vibrations on all previous project participants, the research team identified male offenders who had previously taken part in a Good Vibrations project and had indicated they would have been released by this time.
- The research team conducted interviews either face-to-face or telephone interviews with those participants in the community to discuss their experiences of taking part in the project and any impact their participation had upon them.
- The participants interviewed here had recently been released from a range of men's prisons in England and had taken part in a Good Vibrations project within the last eighteen months.

Stage Four – Women at HMP Eastwood Park

Previous research has suggested that female offenders are particularly affected by arts programmes (Miles, 2005) and so this stage of the research investigated the impact upon this group. This combined with data from adult male participants allows for some comparison of data across the groups. It is also vital to ensure that programmes targeted at offenders are able to engage offenders, by matching the style of programme delivery to the participants – this concept is termed 'responsivity' (Antonowicz & Ross, 1994). "To maximise responsivity, the design of services should be sensitive, for example, to the offender's gender and culture. Increasing responsivity will minimise attrition from the programme and maximise the potential of the programme to impact on offending" (Hedderman et al., 2008, p.7). Reviewing Good Vibrations across different offender populations enables an assessment of the level of responsivity of the project across each group to be made.

The research was conducted in the following stages:

- The research team worked with staff at HMP Eastwood Park to contact those offenders who had taken part in the most recent Good Vibrations project.
- Interviews were conducted with participants about their general attitude and behaviour.

- Participants were asked to complete an emotions scale (see below) to quantify any changes associated with the Good Vibrations project.
- Prison staff were interviewed in order to validate reports from prisoners and to comment participants' general attitudes and behaviour, and any changes in this that they may have observed.
- Relevant sections of the OASys were reviewed, with the consent of each participant and the research co-ordinator. This data was collected to cross-check reports from participants, and for collection of demographic and risk-level data.

Interviews and the emotions scale

Participants at HMP Eastwood Park were interviewed at length and were asked: to describe their experiences of the project; what they gained from it; and specifically to focus on their experiences and behaviour after the project (see Appendix A). The interview schedules were based on those used in previous research (Wilson et al., 2008) and amended for use at the different stages of this research.

As discussed above, it is vital to collect evidence regarding any emotional and behavioural changes in participants. The emotion scale developed by the research team and piloted in a previous research study (Wilson et al., 2008) proved to be a useful tool for assessing emotional and psychological change over time in project participants. Comparing this data against observed behavioural change proved particularly beneficial. The scale considers twelve different emotions on a five point Likert scale: anger; anxiety; boredom; calmness; contentment; feelings of depression; happiness; loneliness; moodiness; sadness; shyness; and stress. For example:

This week I feel:

Calm

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

In order to circumvent any problems with participants' literacy, the emotion scales were completed verbally with the researcher.

All data was collated and analysed in light of previous research, to provide robust evidence on the long-term effects of participating in a Good Vibrations project.

Ethical Issues

The research was conducted by a team of highly trained researchers who are highly experienced in conducting research in prisons and with vulnerable populations.

This research was based on Birmingham City University's ethical framework, which states that:

The University expects that staff will behave professionally and ethically in all its activities. This implies that staff and students who are engaged in research and other activities are aware of the ethical implications of such activities and are committed to discharging their responsibilities to the University, to clients and to research participants in an ethical manner, conforming to the highest professional standards of conduct.

BCU Principles for the Consideration of Ethical Issues

- Staff and students shall be made aware of their responsibilities and obligations to consider ethical issues arising from their research at or on behalf of the University.
- The dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants must be the primary consideration in any research study.
- Informed consent is at the heart of ethical research.
- The ethical implications of research shall be assessed through a consideration of, for example:
 - the sensitivity of any data that may be collected, with particular regard to matters such as age, colour, race/ethnicity, nationality, disablement, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, personal medical records and political beliefs;
 - the transparency to junior research staff and participants as to the purpose and possible uses of the research;
 - the research methods and any risks involved;
 - the confidentiality of information provided by research participants;
 - the security and well-being of participants and data collected;
 - arrangements for the publication of research results, including issues of co-authorship and acknowledgement;
 - the ethical issues/guidelines of any third party involved in the University's activities, such as professional bodies or providers of research funding.

The research also adhered to the standards expected by the social research profession, including the British Society of Criminology's Code of Ethics for Researchers in the Field of Criminology (<http://www.britsoccrim.org/ethical.htm>) and the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics (www.bps.org.uk/the-society/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct_home.cfm).

Findings

The findings presented below have been divided into two main sections: male participants and female participants. This is in recognition of the significant differences between men and women in prison – in terms of their offending behaviour, personal needs, and previous life experiences – and of the striking differences revealed by the research in the way these two groups responded to the Good Vibrations project.

Male Participants

The participants in stages One and Two of this research were all adult males, who had taken part in the Good Vibrations project whilst undergoing treatment as part of the therapeutic regime at HMP Grendon. Good Vibrations clearly embodies much of the therapeutic ethos of HMP Grendon, but it is also important to note that, as found in previous research, all participants highlighted the impact the project had made upon them, over and above the other therapeutic activities within Grendon. Previous research by Wilson et al. (2008) reported that participants did not see the Good Vibrations project simply as an extension of the regime at Grendon, but as a different and beneficial experience that they were keen to discuss in vivid detail. This point was also emphasised by participants in this current research.

Stage One – Following up previous research participants

All of the participants who had taken part in a previous evaluation of Good Vibrations (see Wilson et al., 2008) were still resident at HMP Grendon and willing to take part in this current research. Seven men were interviewed – two of whom it transpired had taken part in a second Good Vibrations project the previous week. All of these men had been at Grendon for at least eighteen months and felt settled in this environment and comfortable with the therapeutic regime. The men were aged between twenty-six and fifty years old. In line with what we would expect given the nature of the offence history of men who are given places at Grendon, five of the participants were classed as high-risk of re-offending according to the (OASys) and two were classed as medium risk. All of them men were on long- or life-sentences and had a significant amount of time left to serve.

The research team was granted access to each participant's OASys data and adjudication reports. The prison research co-ordinator and each individual participant agreed to this. The OASys data was collected to provide background and risk-level data on participants. Any breaking of prison rules is typically dealt with by issuing adjudications in prison, therefore adjudication data was collected to monitor numbers of adjudications before and after taking part in a Good Vibrations project.

Although this group of participants had been interviewed by the same researcher before about their participation in Good Vibrations, this was over twelve months ago, and so in line with the previous research participants were asked to first discuss their experiences of taking part in the project. This allowed participants some time to think about the project and aid their memories of taking part. The information given by participants was every bit as positive as it had been previously, but given that only two of these men had taken part in a second project it was important to investigate the reasons behind this.

Taking part in a second project

Both of the men who took part in this second project had gained significantly from their initial participation. One man described how before the first project he was very shy and struggling to engage with the regime at Grendon. He describes how the first project increased his confidence both in the project group and on the wing. He chose to take part again as he wanted to experience the enjoyment of the project a second time, to experience the calming effect of taking part, and to give himself a further confidence boost. It seems that the second project did not disappoint. This time he felt he was able to take on something of a guiding role – while perhaps not formally, he had the sense that the new participants looked to him for ‘guidance and reassurance that they were doing things right’. This was particularly significant for this individual who was clearly not a natural leader but had been able to use these experiences to take a much more active role in his community at Grendon. He states that the first project was the beginning of him finding his confidence to speak out and that with the support of his community he had continued this.

The second man who had taken part previously talked at length about how the first project had affected him, and more importantly, how these effects had been built upon and sustained up until the present time. His reasons for taking part in the first project concerned a need to work on seeing people for themselves ‘and not just what they’ve done.’ While his main desire for taking part in the second project was simply to ‘enjoy the music’, he explained in detail how he had been able to build on the positive outcomes of the first project. The first project challenged his refusal to engage in conversation with certain types of offenders in prison – primarily sex offenders. Through therapy, his group had highlighted that he needed to work on his tolerance and openness to different kinds of people. As he knew that taking part in the Good Vibrations project would involve spending a week with men from all different wings in the prison he decided this would be an opportunity to work on this. Due in part to his own life experiences he felt a great deal of anger and resentment towards some of these groups of men who he previously would not have associated with. The project enabled him to see these people as individuals, giving him the impetus for change. He has continued to work on this and has developed friendships from the project. Perhaps most interestingly, this participant described how he had always had issues with relationships and had never been able to trust men. In line with this he went in to the project with a suspicious attitude towards the group and the tutor, but now states that:

‘Only good has come from it. I didn’t realise how open I’d become until I walked into that second project and was immediately able to trust the tutors and the rest of the group. I’ve never experienced that before.’

Five of the men who were interviewed did not take part in the project the second time and gave a range of reasons for this. Three cited work commitments and two wanted to ensure that others had the opportunity to take part. Even so, all five were keen to point how much they had enjoyed taking part in Good Vibrations and that in theory they would take part again.

Continued positive change

The experiences outlined above of the two men who took part in a second project are representative of the majority of the men who were interviewed for this research. All participants talked positively about

their experiences of the project and overall it seems that for all but one of the participants (see below) they were able to use this experience as the building blocks for further personal development. Those men who were relatively new to Grendon experienced the project as a confidence booster and report that this set them on the road to being able to talk openly in group meetings without feeling nervous. One man had gone on to take on a wing representative role, despite presenting as relatively under-confident during the previous research. The change in this man was clear to see. Several of the men had maintained and developed close friendships with others from the group, and through this developed new friendships with other men from their friends wings. Some of these men had stated that before the project they would not have even spoken to some of those that they now held close friendships with. In terms of tolerance and openness, we could not wish for better findings.

One of the most significant findings of the previous research with this group was that the Good Vibrations project acted as 'a stepping-stone to other education'. This 'stepping-stone' had in effect snowballed for three of the men who had previously been reluctant to engage with education but were now on the path to gaining recognised qualifications. The reasons behind this change are primarily twofold: increased personal confidence allowed the men to push their boundaries even further; and the sense of achievement gained through the Good Vibrations project was something new and highlighted that 'achieving' was something they could do and wanted to continue doing.

Personal factors

Perhaps unexpectedly, given that the researcher had spoken to all of these men previously, two of the participants were rather harder to engage in discussion around the project than the others. While they were polite, fairly informative, and positive about their participation in Good Vibrations, they seemed reluctant to engage in any detailed discussion about the potential sustained impact of the project. One of these men was open about the fact that he didn't always like talking, but it did transpire that the project was really the first time he had ever felt like he had achieved anything. Since taking part in the project he had gone on to gain qualifications and now saw that he clearly was capable of achieving a good deal more than he had ever thought possible in the past. The second participant had no real recollection of taking part in the research before, but spoke very highly of the Good Vibrations project. However, this individual described no changes – emotionally or behaviourally – that could realistically be attributed to participation in the Good Vibrations project. What seems relevant here is that this man had been in prison, and at Grendon, longer than any other participant in this research and so had spent a good deal of time working through personal issues and development needs through his wing community. So, at its most basic level, Good Vibrations gave this man what he sought at the time – an interesting diversion during a therapy break and the chance to learn something new. Also of note is that of all the participants interviewed at Grendon, these two men had the most significant histories of personal traumas and negative life experiences.

Official data and staff reports

Only two of the participants here had received any adjudications while at Grendon, for both of these this was over two years before participating in a Good Vibrations project. Neither had since received any adjudication reports. HMP Grendon deals with 'offences' in prison differently to most prisons in England and Wales. Indeed, Grendon has one of the lowest rates of prison offending as measured by adjudication (Cullen, 1994) and

unlike most prisons in England and Wales, Grendon has no segregation unit. 'Offences' within Grendon tend to be dealt with in group meetings on individual wings. Given this, reports from prison staff are likely to give a more robust picture of the behaviour of men at Grendon.

In order to avoid any bias from prison staff who had been involved in one of the Good Vibrations projects, staff were initially asked to think generally about participants attitudes and behaviour over the past eighteen months, and not in the context of Good Vibrations. Staff had generally very positive things to say about all of these men, and in particular their improvements over the last eighteen months. They discussed how the communication skills of most participants had improved, be that more confidence, less abruptness and greater listening skills, or more openness to communicating with other people. They confirmed the educational courses being taken by participants.

Stage Two - Recent Good Vibrations participants at HMP Grendon

Eight men completed the most recent Good Vibrations course at Grendon. As discussed above, two of these had taken part in a project previously and were included in Stage One of this research. Four of the 'new' Good Vibrations participants were interviewed. Two men could not take part in the research as they were busy elsewhere with job commitments. The participants were aged between thirty-one and sixty-two years old. Two men had medium OASys risk scores and two had high risk scores. Interestingly, only the two men with medium risk scores had a history of adjudications at Grendon, both having been found guilty of three adjudications each during 2006 and 2007. Receiving this number of adjudications in a less than twelve month period is relatively unusual at Grendon and suggests that these two men had a history of trouble-making within the prison. Indeed, during interview both of these participants were open about their history of bad behaviour, and their tendency towards anger and getting involved in conflict situations.

The findings presented below add support to previous research on the impact of Good Vibrations and suggest that the findings from our previous research can be applied more generally. All participants found the experience hugely enjoyable and beneficial and reported wanting to do the course again. They were extremely positive about the Good Vibrations staff and as with other participants, described the week in a vivid amount of detail. There are a number of areas where the effects of the project were felt deeply. These follow the themes of previous research and are discussed below.

Anger reduction and improved relaxation

Anger and aggression were over-riding issues for two of the men interviewed here. Both report that they expected to become involved in at least some form of conflict with either group members and/or Good Vibrations staff throughout the week as this would be usual for them. However, this did not happen and this surprised these men.

'I would recommend the project, especially for people with emotional issues. Not just for anger, you've got self-harmers too. I was going through a bad patch, where I was getting those angry thoughts and self-harm thoughts, and for that week I just didn't get none of it. I was just...it was chilled.'

Furthermore, even those men with no reported anger or aggression problems explained how relaxing the project was and how this sense of calm helped them deal with prison life during that week but also in the

days that followed.

'It had a bigger impact initially, and then I've had to incorporate that impact into daily life on the wing...It's definitely had an impact on daily life, on how I try to chill. Like now I try to take an hour a day a to relax...'

Participants stated that they hadn't expected to experience any positive mood changes, but they did and these were significant. Two men reported that it allowed them to channel calm feelings instead of angry ones. All of the men described how they have continued to listen to the CD they were given and they use this to relax :

'My Gamelan CD has had more use than any other CD in my cell. And it's not really my sort of thing, but if you're stressed you just sort of chill.'

Communication and social skills

As with other research, one of the most significant findings here was the increase in communication and social skills reported by participants. The project enhanced their listening skills, allowed the more introverted participants the space to find their voice in the group, and also brought the men together as a group. Overall the participants felt the group had worked well together and bonded. One participant commented that he would be able to apply these group-work skills to life outside prison in dealing with people he might otherwise not get on with – 'you put your differences aside to get the job done.' The men felt the praise they were given after the concert and the huge sense of pride and achievement increased their confidence and self-esteem a great deal.

Interestingly, it was one of the men who had previously taken part in this research and who had some one of the most difficult life histories of anyone we spoke to that expressed how Good Vibrations had helped him learn to trust people. This was echoed here by another participant with a difficult history. Given the way this participant reports actively trying to keep the lessons he learnt from the project alive, we would hope his trust in people will continue to develop.

Level of impact

All four participants explained the sense of freedom the project had given them – 'like being normal again'. For three of the four men here, the project highlighted the positive benefits of using their time constructively and doing something meaningful. For one of the men here, and one of the men interviewed at Stage One, the project appeared to have had little effect beyond that of a week's calming distraction from prison life and a relatively fulfilling experience. However, these men had been resident at Grendon for a considerable time and reported having already developed the skills others have gained from the project. Despite this both saw that the project can impact on other people in a much more significant way. That the project was a good experience for these men is a positive finding, however for others the project can be the start of far-reaching and long-lasting positive changes. As one participant put it 'I've gained so much from this, but now it's on me to build on these skills'.

Staff reports

Staff in general said similar things about the men that they themselves had reported. The two men with anger and aggression issues were described as such by staff, but staff also noted that during the project

these men had been much calmer and less argumentative. The least confident of the participants was reported to typically have problems taking praise or criticism, but was dealing with this much better.

In general staff discussed the project in terms of the positive impact it has on participants at the time and of how much enjoyment they got out of it, but they did not report feeling it had any longer-term impact on participants. When probed some staff saw that for a few of the men who have taken part previously it helped with their confidence issues, but as part of the wider remit of the therapeutic community. Nonetheless, staff did report observing positive improvements.

Recruiting participants

It was also clear from participants that the project fitted in very well with the regime as part of the therapeutic programme and the benefits from the project complemented the aims of a therapeutic community. However, while the project has clearly proved to be enjoyable and beneficial to those that take part, the uptake at Grendon was lower than the prison and Good Vibrations staff could accommodate. Prior to the most recent project twenty-four men expressed an initial interest. Fifteen men actually started the project, but only eight took part and completed the full week-long course. This is unusual for Good Vibrations who typically have a around sixteen or seventeen participants complete each project. Given this, participants were briefly asked during the interviews to comment on the low project uptake, but in general seemed unaware that the project had recruited less than optimal numbers. Good Vibrations staff report that there may be a number of reasons for this, but it seems that further investigation of this within the prison may be needed to ensure that inmates do not miss out on the chance to take part in this positive project. Reports from participants here suggest that one of the primary reasons they took part in the project was due to the positive accounts they had heard from previous participants, so it may be that capitalising more on these peer recommendations may increase take-up for future projects.

Stage Three – Ex-offenders in the community

While previous research suggests that participation in a Good Vibrations project has a sustained positive impact upon offenders, what is unknown is whether any of this impact continues in the long-term when offenders have been released from prison. In order to address this question the research presented here sought to follow a sample of previous Good Vibrations participants who had previously taken part in a project whilst in prison and have now been released.

Good Vibrations staff collect contact information from participants at the end of every project. Participants do not have to provide this information, but many do and agree that they are happy for Good Vibrations to contact them on the outside by, for example, sending the project CD to their home address. Good Vibrations staff worked with the research team to collate as much contact information as possible for adult males who had completed a Good Vibrations project whilst in prison. For the purposes of this research, females, young males, and those who had been patients in secure units were not contacted as the aim at this stage was to build upon the existing evidence on the impact of the project with men in prison. Collecting data from adult male ex-offenders allows a picture of the effects of the project on this group to be built. In all, collecting data on male participants in this way demonstrates on a broader scale the effects of participating in a Good Vibrations project on male offenders, and it is therefore possible to suggest that any impact of the project on these ex-offenders may also in the future be experienced by the current offenders

who have taken part in this research.

The research team were aware from the start that contacting ex-offenders is notoriously fraught with difficulties (Jupp et al., 2006). However, with the assistance of Good Vibrations a database of thirty-three men who fit the project criteria (the project criteria being that they were male, would now be living in the community, had taken part in a Good Vibrations project whilst in prison, and had been in prison at the time of the project as opposed to a secure unit or YOI) was compiled. Of these thirty-three, we were able to contact seven men. Many of the phone numbers and email addresses were incorrect, a few of the men had not been released as early as they had hoped and so were still in prison, and despite weeks of trying, we could not get an answer from some of the numbers. The seven men whom we were able to gain contact with were very helpful and appeared eager to be involved in the research. That we were able to contact this many men is a good result given the often hectic lives of those recently released from prison. Face-to-face interviews were arranged with five of the men, and two men agreed to phone interviews. Four of the face-to-face interviews and one telephone interview were conducted. Unfortunately, despite speaking to one of the men by phone an hour before the interview was due to take place, he did not show-up and could not be contacted by phone. One participant became difficult to contact and so the telephone interview did not take place. It should be noted that the findings below are based on self-report and it has not been possible to corroborate the facts, other than the information from Good Vibrations confirms the prison they were in at the time of taking part in a project.

At the time of interview, four of these participants had taken part in a Good Vibrations project between thirteen and eighteen months ago. One of the men had taken part in the project only seven months ago. Despite falling outside of our definition of 'long-term' it was clearly important and relevant to include this participant as his experiences of moving from prison into the community are the main focus of this section of the research. Four of the men had taken part in Good Vibrations in a category B prison, and one participant had been in a category A prison at the time of the project. The men interviewed presented a range of different personality types and experiences of prison life. Two men came across as particularly confident and their brief description of their experiences of prison life adds weight to this. Both of these men discussed how they had at times been a source of trouble for prison staff and presented what can be best described as a 'hard-man' persona within prison. Of the other three men, two openly discussed their general levels of introversion and shyness while one man suggested he was relatively confident but did not present as particularly confident throughout the interview.

In order to help enhance each participant's memory of the Good Vibrations project, the researcher asked them to talk through the week explaining why they took part, how they found the course, the involvement of staff in the course and so on. The project had a clear impact on each of these individuals as they were able to describe the entire project in depth. The discussions with all participants here almost exactly mirror the findings presented from research with men at HMP Grendon, thus highlighting that the project has a significant impact on male offenders outside of a therapeutic environment. Naturally there were differences in the way the men spoke about the project, as men at Grendon are actively involved in therapy that requires them to talk about their feelings and experiences and so typically they have become very good at this, but the content of the discussions was almost identical. The most significant findings related to the long-term impact of the project are discussed in detail below.

Confidence, communication, and social skills

The more introverted of these participants explained how well they bonded with the others in their group during the project and the confidence the course gave them in dealing with prison life in general. Two of the men remarked that shy people in prison can often be reluctant to do any kind of course in prison and would rather 'sit and watch TV', so taking part in a Good Vibrations project in itself was a big step for them. For these men, this seems to have been a first step towards improving their self-confidence. Undoubtedly taking part in one course is unlikely to turn introverts in extroverts, but the men here found their voice in a Good Vibrations group and were able in some small way to continue to build upon this in the future. One participant explained how it is important to be confident in prison, and the course helped him find this confidence. For another man his increased confidence had translated into enrolling on vocational courses outside of prison – something which he had felt he didn't have the confidence to do in the past.

Interestingly, the participants who suggested they already had a good deal of self-confidence were keen to highlight the increases in confidence in other participants that they had witnessed during the project. When probed a little further it became clear that they themselves had also found the project beneficial in terms of communication and social skills, but in different ways. One explained that it was nice to be able to show his soft side - he talked about the shock he saw on the faces of prison staff when they came to observe the project and believes they saw a different side to him:

'It showed a different side of me and it let officers see that side. Officers came up and said they didn't know that side of me existed.'

He went on to explain that officers began to see him as a person, and not just as a trouble-maker.

Both confident participants also talked about how the project:

'...opens people up. The music, the project, and the people working together. Everybody is listened to, everybody is heard. It's about respect.'

On a personal level they said it had opened their minds to people as individuals. One participant openly discussed how he had only ever mixed with five or six people in prison and made a point of avoiding sex offenders, but that through the course he had to communicate with other people and consequently became more tolerant:

'The course was very intense. All day everyday for a week. But it was extremely purposeful because of the concert and I even came to see the sex-offenders as individuals.'

These greater levels of tolerance and openness, he explained, continued both in prison and on the outside.

Skills development, training and education

The participant discussed above who had recently enrolled on vocational courses outside of prison was someone with no real qualifications or positive experience of education. He explained that in prison he only attended education classes where it was compulsory for him to do so, but was now training as a plasterer for his own benefit and actively seeking employment. Two other participants were also in education at the time

of interview, however both report that they had planned this some time before taking part in Good Vibrations as they had been taking part in lots of courses in prison. Nonetheless, both did appreciate the course as a break from more formal education and one highlighted the importance of having that break to give him some thinking space away from 'boring prison education'. The remaining two participants reported a solid history of educational involvement in their lives before prison and had continued this in prison. Both of these men were in work at the time of interview and for them the Good Vibrations project was an extension of their general involvement in different projects, although both noted that they had never done anything like this before or since.

Emotional and psychological impacts

Emotionally, the men talked about the 'humanising' experience of the project and the freedom it made them feel despite being in prison:

'Little things like being able to get coffee when I wanted, to smoke when I wanted, really made me feel normal.'

There was a relative lack of discussion of the emotional impact of the project by these men – and this is not surprising – but clearly spending a week feeling 'like we weren't in prison' has firmly imprinted itself on the mind of these men.

Summary of the findings with male offenders and ex-offenders

Given the results discussed above, perhaps the right question to ask is not 'how far are the positive impacts of taking part in a Good Vibrations project sustained long-term' but 'how far have individuals been able to build-upon this positive impact'. The results here clearly identify that for many participants taking part in a Good Vibrations project acted as a catalyst for change. Those men resident in a therapeutic environment at the time of the project often took part with the aim of working on something specific to them that had perhaps been identified as an issue by others in their community during group therapy. Whether this had been to improve confidence, learn listening skills, or develop tolerance for other people, the project is able to address all these needs. However, we should also not lose sight of the fact that for the majority of people the decision to take part is at least in part because they want to do something to occupy their time and try something different. In male prisons in particular, doing something as different as learning to play the Gamelan can be a big step, driven by a number of motivations. Aside from all other positive factors, Good Vibrations provides participants with a stimulating week that stays vivid in their mind, where they are able to explore something of themselves, the music and the group. The feelings of freedom and being 'normal again' engendered by the project appear to give some offenders the 'head-space' to begin making a positive change in their lives. The continuation of these changes are, this research suggests, easier for participants in a therapeutic environment where high levels of support are available. For those men who had recently taken part in their first Good Vibrations project - all of whom had a positive experience of this and thus this adds support to the findings of our previous research – we expect that their experience will be similar. However, even where project participants return to 'normal prison life' after the project, they clearly take something of the project with them and for some this acts as the beginnings of positive change which they are able to gradually build upon. This group in particular may benefit from taking part in subsequent Good Vibrations projects to allow them the space and time to move forward with their positive changes.

Female Participants

Stage Four – Women at HMP Eastwood Park

The needs of women in prison are often wide-ranging and deep-set. From educational, work and financial needs, to emotional and mental health issues and problems with childcare, many women have a multitude of significant needs that are clearly related to their offending behaviour. Educational achievement and women's emotional well-being have been highlighted in the literature as particularly significant issues for women in prison.

Academic underachievement and lack of school attendance have been cited as significant factors contributing to risk of re-offending in both male and female offenders. Indeed, in 2001 only thirty-nine percent of women in prison had some form of qualification, compared with fifty-one percent of male offenders and eighty-two percent of the general population (Home Office, 2001). In addition to low levels of education, much greater proportions of offenders are likely to be unemployed, and for longer periods of time, compared with the general population (Home Office, 2003). While fifty percent of male offenders in the UK have been in some form of employment before custody, this figure is only twenty-nine percent for female offenders. Education and employment history have been identified as statistically related to risk of reoffending for female offenders.

A number of needs fall within the realm of emotional and personal problems, including 'Self-concept, cognitive problems, impulsivity, problem solving, empathy, behavioral problems (hostility, assertion, neuroticism), mental ability and mental health' (Blanchette, 2002, p. 34). A survey of psychiatric morbidity among prisoners in England and Wales conducted by the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 1998) showed that forty percent of female offenders had sought help or treatment for either a mental or emotional problem in the twelve months prior to entering prison, compared with around twenty percent of male offenders. Official figures here are inherently problematic as many individuals who are not aware of their condition, or have never received treatment, are overlooked; thus figures may not represent actual prevalence rates. Indeed research has reported that around fifty percent of incarcerated females indicate the co-occurrence of substance misuse and mental health problems (Singer, Bussey, Song, and Lunghofer, 1995). The mental health problems experienced by women in the prison system are different from those experienced by men (Shearer, 2003). Young (1998) suggests that this may be in part due to the high percentage of incarcerated women who report physical and sexual victimisation, potentially leading to mental, emotional and physical health problems. The mental health of women offenders is typically characterised by high levels of depression and anxiety, substance abuse, personality disorders, and considerable amounts of self-harming behaviour (Gorsuch, 1998), and incarcerated women are more likely than incarcerated men to be diagnosed with severe mental illness (Teplin, Abram, & McClelland, 1996). Research also suggests clear links between histories of abuse and victimisation and mental health problems; and while researchers and practitioners are aware of these links, Fillmore & Dell (2000) report that a number of women also link their abuse experiences to their self-harming behaviour. It has also been hypothesised that the stress of the confines of the prison environment, particularly on substance abusing women, may exacerbate the incidence and severity of mental health problems (Staton, Leukefeld, & Webster, 2003). Indeed, in the absence of adequate mental health services within prison settings, there is evidence to suggest that women's mental health

problems do not subside, but may in fact increase in severity during periods of incarceration (Byrne & Howells, 2002). Research highlights that the relationships between women's background, criminal history, and mental health are complex and that too often their mental health problems are unrecognised, misdiagnosed, and inadequately treated.

Findings

The overarching aim of this section of the research was to review the effects of participating in a Good Vibrations project on adult female offenders and to identify any aspects of the project that work well with this group, and where appropriate make recommendations for change. The aim was to assess any changes in participants' attitudes, emotions and behaviour, via self-report, assessment, and official documentation. Participants were asked to discuss their involvement in the Good Vibrations project; why they took part, and their experience of the project. Participants were also asked to talk about their attitudes, emotions, and behaviour before the and after the project. Fifteen women completed the project at HMP Eastwood Park. In total we were able to complete this research with ten of these women – one woman declined to take part in the research and one woman was released from prison before the interviews took place. We were not able to ascertain why the remaining three participants did not take part in the research. Nine of the women were based across three different wings, and one woman had recently had a baby so was resident in the mother and baby unit. Eight of the women were also involved in formal education courses in the prison. This is significant to note as levels of participation in prison education are typically much lower than this amongst offenders and therefore also in groups of Good Vibrations participants. Given that previous research has found that one of the most significant outcomes of participating in a Good Vibrations project is the way that it can act as a 'stepping-stone' to further education, it is interesting to assess how far this project was able to impact upon this specific group of female offenders who were for the most part already engaged in educational provision.

One of the researchers met with the participants the week before the Good Vibrations project to discuss the purpose of the research and complete the emotion scale with each willing participant. At the end of the project the same researcher attended the final concert, where participants played a mix of traditional Javanese and self-composed music on the Gamelan. The concert was recorded to allow each participant to receive a CD of the performance and a room-full of friends, staff, and a number of outside observers attended. The week following the project the researcher returned to the prison to interview participants and prison staff.

In order to collect demographic data on participants and to validate prisoners report, the research team requested access to the OASys documents of each research participant. This was agreed by the prison's research lead and also by each participant. However, post-interview, when the prison research lead sought access to the OASys files, these only existed for two of the ten women. The remaining eight women either did not have one at that point, were still on remand, or were illegal immigrants and therefore would not have one. Clearly this was disappointing as the OASys data would no doubt have added further depth to the data discussed below, but the combination of the research interviews with project participants and prison staff has resulted in robust and important new findings.

All of the women who took part in the project reported how much they enjoyed it and how much they felt they got out of it. One of the group had

taken part in a Good Vibrations project at Eastwood Park the previous year and stated how much she had gained from her participation on both occasions. Interestingly, she noted that both experiences had been different for her, but that her second project had built upon and solidified the positive impacts of her previous participation.

As the Good Vibrations project runs at Eastwood Park through the Education Department, there is a clear link in the minds of participants between this project and other education programmes they have been involved with. One of the women here was not currently involved in education as she refused to go, stating they had nothing to offer her. Similarly, two other women discussed their frustration with some of the courses on offer given their relatively high-level of previous education and qualifications. Leading on from this, all three of these women explained what a welcome change the Good Vibrations project had been from the 'boring' programmes they had done previously:

'The project was engaging and relaxing, it felt like being on the outside.'

Indeed, when probed all of the women expressed how different and engaging the project was and many of the women actively talked of how taking part made them feel 'normal' again and not like they were in prison at all. They attributed this to the calming and absorbing nature of the music, but also to the way the project facilitator treated them – this 'humanising' aspect of arts in prisons programmes has been highlighted in previous literature as fundamental to the success of such projects, and this is something that Good Vibrations appears to achieve very well. This notion of 'respite' from the prison regime links neatly with the results present below.

In many areas the findings from the female sample add support to the findings from the male sample here and in previous research, and this will be discussed in the context of the findings presented below. However, the main area of impact highlighted by this research relates to the area of mental health and emotional issues, and suggests that Good Vibrations works in a different way with women than men.

Self-expression

The attitude of many prisoners is one of self-defence, 'keeping yourself to yourself' and avoiding confrontation. Participating in the Good Vibrations project challenged these attitudes in a subtle way by providing participants with a supportive environment within which to express themselves. This finding supports previous discussions of the potential of Good Vibrations to aid participants' anger management (Wilson et al., 2008) as tension is often able to be dissipated during the project through dialogue and supportive constructive criticism.

Communication and coping

Previous research on the use of Good Vibrations with vulnerable female offenders suggested that the project provides an environment where communication is welcomed and that this is psychologically beneficial for participants (Digard et al., 2007). Findings from this current research support this, showing that the project week created a forum for balanced communication. For example, at the beginning of the week it was evident that there were some very dominant, extroverted characters in the group and other less-confident individuals. Participants reported that this created the potential for friction, but that the process of exploring the Gamelan music – having to listen to each instrument – and the calming

personality of the group facilitator, enabled all of the group members to feel that they were able to find a voice within the group. As found with men who take part in Good Vibrations projects, the development of social skills is a key factor in the positive impact of the project with women.

Almost all of the women who took part in the research talked about how taking part in Good Vibrations had helped them cope with prison life. The way the women talked about these 'coping strategies' can be classified into two themes: the first, highlighted by most of the women, involved the absorbing qualities of the music and learning process where the women felt like they 'lost' themselves in the music; secondly, four of the women reported that the creative process acted as an outlet for them, allowing them to express themselves through the instruments. Both of these themes appear not solely to relate to the time spent in the project, but the women still felt focused on the music every evening after the project and over the weekend before the research interviews took place. Given that several of the men who were interviewed over twelve months after taking part in a Good Vibrations project reported continuing to use the calming techniques they learnt through the project, it seems likely that for at least some of the women this too would be the case.

Emotional needs and mental health

Arts initiatives have been identified as helpful to recovery for mental health patients (Spandler et al., 2007). From increasing motivation, purpose and meaning in life, to developing new coping strategies – arts initiatives seem to tackle emotional and mental health problems from a number of angles. It therefore seems logical that arts projects will also help improve the mental health and emotional problems of non-mental health patients who participate in these projects. Given that emotional and mental health problems have been identified as statistically related to increased risk of reoffending and that this is one of the largest areas of need for women in prison, any intervention that addresses this area is to be welcomed.

One of the participants reported recent episodes of self-harming behaviour - which the prison service were aware of - and perhaps one of the most potentially significant findings of this report is that this woman stopped self-harming during the project. Self-harm is a considerable issue in prison, particularly in the women's prison estate. While self-harm is often viewed as separate from suicidal tendencies, there is increasing evidence to suggest that a large proportion of self-harm incidents may be motivated by suicidal thoughts (Dear et al, 2000) and prison can be a particularly risky time for those with a history of self-harm - and indeed for some individuals self-harming behaviours can begin in prison - in part due to the lack of something tangible to focus difficult thoughts and feelings onto. Research into the arts in prisons (Spandler et al., 2007) has found that arts projects give participants this focus, giving them a way to deal with emotional distress. It seems that Good Vibrations projects provide this focus, but also something more. Participants described how 'engrossing' and 'hypnotising' the music was, and that they could think of little else all week. The development of group-processes throughout the week also had an impact. In the self-harm case discussed here, the participant came across as under-confident and shy. She described herself in this way and others also described her thus. However, at the end of the week she had clearly become an important part of the group and other participants commented that she had 'blossomed'. She had been someone who was used to coming second to more dominant individuals, and the sense of self-fulfilment she gained from seeing how important she had become to the group was cited as very powerful for her.

Coping

In sharp contrast to the findings of previous research by Digard et al. (2007) the results here show that women who participated in the project felt less-angry and were experiencing lower levels of stress than they had been before the project. As Digard et al. report, their findings that women who had participated in the Good Vibrations project appeared to be in a worse state in regards to anger, stress, and tension a few days after participation 'may have been related to the weekend's events' (Digard et al., 2007, p. 12). Many of the women in that research had experienced a particularly difficult weekend in prison due to the attempted suicide of another offender and it is likely that this had affected their emotional state, particularly so given that the participants in Digard et al.'s research were all identified as vulnerable prisoners. For the majority of participants in the current research the weekend had been much the same as any other weekend in prison. However, two of the participants had received difficult news concerning their sentencing in the few days after completing the project. While they talked about this openly, they also stated that they were able to channel the relaxation techniques they had absorbed³ throughout the project and so stay calm despite their news:

³ 'Learnt' would not be the right word here, as the techniques are not actively taught, but come from being absorbed in the music.

'I've had a really high-stress week, but I've taken the feeling of relaxation away and have seen there are bigger factors than what's happening for me this week.'

While this demonstrates the calming nature of the project, and all of the women in this current research had experienced improvements in their emotional state, they did report a lowering of mood from the elation of mood experienced on the Friday afternoon after performing the concert. This is normal and to be expected, but does highlight the need for the prison service to adequately plan for the completion of projects, particularly when vulnerable individuals are involved. For this sample the process appears to have worked well as all of them were involved in education classes of some form and so had this distraction to return to the following week.

Feedback from prison staff

Interviews with prison staff were used here to cross-check some of the data provided by the participants at interview. While longer-term follow-up interviews would aim to collect information on any changes in participant's emotional state and/or behaviour since completing a Good Vibrations project, the extent to which any changes could have been observed by prison staff during this research was limited by the short interval between project completion and the research interviews. This is also in part due to the shift nature of prison work meaning that prison staff had not always had a great deal of interaction with all of the participants since the Good Vibrations project.

Overall, reports from prison staff on the nature and character of the participants broadly matched the picture that the participants themselves portrayed to the researcher. The majority of the women who participated in the project were described as sensible and well-behaved. However, it is interesting to note that though none of the women reported that they themselves had ever been the cause of any disruption or trouble either in prison or during the project, at interview three women did report that one or two other participants had misbehaved at the start of the project. These reports are reflected in the information provided by prison staff that one of the women in particular was a regular source of trouble on the wing and often difficult to deal with, and that two other women had some history of

significant clashes with other inmates or prison staff.

With regard to the women's participation in the Good Vibrations project, staff observed that several of the women had seemed noticeably 'more upbeat since the project began' and two of the women who had been reported to be particularly quiet characters were seen to have begun to 'come out of their shell'. One of the women who was known to suffer some emotional problems and occasional erratic outbursts had apparently been much calmer and happier since the beginning of the project and in the days that followed.

Summary of the findings with female offenders

It is significant to note that nine of the ten female participants who took part in this research were already actively engaged in some form of formal education with the prison. This demonstrates that this group differed in no small way from typical Good Vibrations groups where levels of participation in prison education are typically much lower. Given that previous research has found that one of the most significant outcomes of participating in a Good Vibrations project is the way that – for many offenders – it acts as a 'stepping-stone' to further education, there was a potential risk here that the project would be of limited use to this group of participants. Happily, this was not the case. The project had a significant and potentially far reaching impact on these women. The project significantly improved participants' communications skills, levels of self-expression, and ability to cope with stress and prison life. Furthermore, the findings suggest the project may have a positive impact upon women's levels of self-harming behaviour, but given the limited numbers of participants in this research with a history of self-harming behaviour, this requires more investigation.

The results from prison staff clearly map on to the reports from participants. In addition, these results add support to the positive findings identified with male participants in this and previous research. As this research took place only days after the participants had taken part in a Good Vibrations project prison staff had somewhat limited ability to comment on any changes in these inmates, but positive changes in demeanour and behaviour were observed.

Conclusions

The results presented throughout this report suggest some common themes in the way different groups and individuals experience taking part in a Good Vibrations project. This research in particular builds upon the findings of previous evaluations of Good Vibrations and furthermore, the findings from all samples to a large extent complement and extend one another. This demonstrates the positive impact of participating in a Good Vibrations for a range of offenders and shows that for many participants this impact may be sustained long-term. Perhaps most significant is the finding that the initial positive changes observed in individuals seem to prompt continued positive change. Indeed, of those men whom we were able to make contact with in the community after their release from prison - most of whom had completed the Good Vibrations project at least twelve months beforehand - were still reporting positive attitudinal changes that were prompted by their initial participation in the project. It may of course be that participants have on some level already decided to make positive changes in their behaviour, but the results from this research point towards the positive emotional, psychological and personal changes associated with the Good Vibrations project as being a catalyst for future behavioural change. Participating in the project gives many people the skills to go on and make a positive change, be that learning how to cope with prison life, or going on to take part in formal education programmes. Clearly every individual is different, and changes will not happen for all, but the potential of this project in influencing the lives of offenders is clear.

For those with a history of active engagement in education and training within prison, the project can impact on a number of factors personal to each individual. Typically this impact is upon the development of social and coping skills that enable individuals to deal with prison more effectively. In support of the findings from previous research, for those with little or no history of education or training, the project has all of the benefits mentioned above, but also appears to act as a stepping-stone into further education. Many offenders with poor educational backgrounds are very reluctant to engage with formal education in prison. This may in part be due to feelings of dislike of the education system, but is often also due to feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure. Taking part in a Good Vibrations project shows people that they can achieve – and for some participants this may be the first time they have ever really achieved anything.

For the group of female participants, the reports from prison staff clearly map on to the reports from participants in terms of the positive impact of the project suggesting that the women became better at coping with prison life during and directly after the project. Furthermore, research with this group adds support to the positive findings identified with male participants in this and previous research. However, as this research took place only days after the participants had taken part in a Good Vibrations project prison staff had somewhat limited ability to comment on any changes in these inmates. Nonetheless, positive changes in demeanour and behaviour were observed by staff and reported by participants, particularly with reference to emotional issues. Given these early positive findings and taking into account the long-term impact of the project on male participants, we are able to suggest that the project is likely to have a sustained impact upon female offenders. However, given the differing needs of men and women in prison, and the clear differences in the way they respond to taking part in a Good Vibrations project – particularly with reference to the significant emotional impact of the project on women – it is important to assess whether any impact is sustained.

Overall, what this report tells us is that Good Vibrations can provide the starting-block for positive change in offenders. Many project participants are able to leverage the impetus from the project and use this to go on to achieve, both personally and practically. This is not the case for all participants, as each individual is different, but for a clear majority significant change is apparent.

It is important to highlight the potential for arts-based programmes - such as Good Vibrations – and more traditional programmes in prison to complement one another. The research literature tells us that traditional offending behaviour programmes do not work for everyone, and neither would we expect the project discussed here to be a panacea for offending behaviour. What must be remembered is that every person is different and therefore different things will work for different people. Providing programmes like Good Vibrations helps give the widest number of offenders a chance to cope with prison, tackle their needs, and hopefully go on to become non-offenders in the future.

Research Limitations

As with most research, the authors acknowledge some potential limitations to this research. As discussed previously, it is conceivable that individuals who chose to take part in a Good Vibrations project have already made a decision to change. This may be the reason they initially embarked on the project and may explain their positive outcomes. However, many of the participants here discussed their decision to take part in a Good Vibrations project as being borne out of a sense of boredom with other courses in the prison or for those under a therapeutic regime, boredom during therapy breaks. Most hoped the project would be suitably distracting, but did not anticipate the impact the project would have upon them. It could also be argued that the individuals who participated in the research may not be representative of Good Vibrations participants more broadly. What we can say is that all of the Good Vibrations participants from HMP Grendon took part in the research, and the majority of participants at HMP Eastwood Park. However, the sample of Good Vibrations participants in the community is small and therefore unlikely to be entirely representative of every individual who has taken part in one of these projects. Despite this, the participants come from a range of prisons and have a range of different experiences that mirror many of the experiences of ex-offenders in the community.

So too there are potential issues with the research methodology. The randomised control trial (RCT) has typically been regarded as the 'gold-standard' in evidence based approaches to criminological research and advocates of this method suggest this can provide definitive evidence of 'what works'. Individuals are typically allocated at random to either a treatment or control condition and it is argued that this allows treatment effects to be measured between groups. However, with much research in the criminal justice system, such an approach is neither feasible nor, many would argue, desirable. The issues surrounding the use of the RCT in prisons are many (for an overview see Wilcox et al., 2005), being frequently dogged by methodological problems, and in practice this solely quantitative approach has typically failed to provide robust evidence of treatment effect. Due to these issues the RCT remains relatively rare and researchers have looked for other methods of obtaining evidence of the effectiveness of programmes in criminal justice. Researchers must also contend with the many practical constraints of conducting research in the criminal justice system. Here, seeking a control group would not be feasible. However, this does not distract from the quality of the evidence obtained. It is perfectly acceptable to measure individual participants' attitudes and behaviour change against their own history. Clearly it must be acknowledged that there are potential issues with self-report data as collected here, but the inclusion of reports from prison staff and the reviewing of OASys data and adjudication reports provides a strong form of data triangulation. It is still true that participants may to some extent report what they feel the researchers may want to hear, but where attitudinal and behavioural change has also been observed by prison staff this can be taken as a strong indicator that the change is real.

Recommendations

There is a need for the prison service to adequately plan for the completion of projects, particularly when vulnerable individuals are involved. The findings here show that in therapeutic settings adequate support exists for even those particularly vulnerable participants, and that in other circumstances, where participants have other educational commitments to return to, this is sufficient. However, we recommend that the prison service give particular thought to managing the conclusion of projects and the following few days where obvious support may not exist for participants – otherwise, the return to ‘normal’ prison life risks undermining the positive work done by projects such as Good Vibrations.

The findings here demonstrate the positive long-term impact of Good Vibrations on men in prison and also show that the project has an immediate positive impact on women in prison. Taking into account the need to ensure that vulnerable participants cope when projects end – and that female offenders often fall into this category- we recommend further research to assess the impact of Good Vibrations on women after project completion and longer term.

Additionally, it is vital to ensure that programmes targeted at offenders are able to engage them, by matching the style of programme delivery to the participants’ needs. The research presented thus far suggests that for women and men in prison Good Vibrations does exactly this. However, Good Vibrations now runs projects with offenders on probation and this is likely to present a different set of issues for the project, in terms of the needs of participants and practicalities of running the project. Given this, we also recommend broadening this work out to compare the effects of Good Vibrations on individuals in contact with the probation service. Indeed, the need for evidence-based practice cannot be disputed; evidence-based practice ensures that service users receive appropriate, high-quality inputs that are suited to their needs. Additionally, while the interviews with previous Good Vibrations participants now in the community – who had participated in a project while in prison – produced a good deal of interesting and useful information, where relevant and possible it would be useful to discuss participants’ general attitudes and behaviour with probation staff (subject to participants’ prior agreement), in order to validate self-report data from participants. It may be possible to combine these two areas of evaluation.

Lastly, we suggest that thought be given to providing offenders with the opportunity to take part in follow-up Good Vibrations projects. Although the numbers in this research who had taken part in more than one Good Vibrations project were small, the interviews with them have established that for these people taking part in a second project greatly enhanced the life-skills they had initially learnt in the first project. While some offenders do have the opportunity to take part in another project, perhaps a more advanced level project for previous Good Vibrations graduates may be something to give thought to in the future. There are clearly numerous institutional issues to take account of when planning any input for offenders, but the evidence here suggests that if feasible, this could be of immense value.

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