PROMOTING POSITIVE CHANGE:

ASSESSING THE LONG-TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL EFFECTS OF THE GOOD VIBRATIONS GAMELAN IN PRISONS PROJECT

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Executive Summary Introduction Background Methodology Research findings Conclusions and recommendations

"I've been in prison eight years, and I was sort of a bit lost in here. [The project] was the start of me finding who I am...it's given me focus and I've left a lot of my old habits behind."

Good Vibrations Gamelan in Prisons Project participant, June 2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The project has definitely made me more confident in the way I deal with people...and even in my own ability...I've been more open to learning other things, because I am capable of learning"

Good Vibrations Gamelan in Prisons Project participant, June 2008

There is growing awareness amongst policy makers and those working in the Criminal Justice System of the contribution that can be made by the arts in prisons, in particular by more innovative projects that are often provided by charities and voluntary organisations. Numerous research studies have suggested that projects – such as music and art programmes – that offer participants a creative outlet have a positive impact on offenders, not least by encouraging them to engage with further learning and education. The need to consider fully the long-term impact of such 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.

This study has aimed to do this by looking at the long-term effects of the Good Vibrations Gamelan in Prisons Project on project participants, during the remainder of their sentence. Good Vibrations is part of a music charity - the Firebird Trust - which aims to 'inspire and empower people through creative involvement in music making.' Good Vibrations uses gamelan percussion music from Indonesia, and provides intensive, usually week-long courses. Previous research has shown that participating in the project has a number of positive effects on prisoners, but whether these effects are sustained longer-term has never previously been investigated.

To assess the longer-term effects of taking part in Good Vibrations projects, prisoners who had participated in Good Vibrations projects at HMP Grendon and HMP Dovegate were interviewed six to nine months after the projects' completion. Participants were assessed for any possible changes in emotions and behaviour, based on an emotional scale developed by the research team.

The key findings from this research suggest that six months after completing a Good Vibrations project participants experienced:

- Greater levels of engagement and an increased openness to wider learning;
- Improved listening and communication skills;
- Improved social skills and increased social interaction;
- Improved relationships with prison staff; and
- Decreased levels of self-reported anger and a greater sense of calmness.

In short, the study concludes that participating in a Good Vibrations project has a sustained and positive emotional and psychological impact on participants, leading to positive behavioural change. This suggests that expanded support for innovative projects like Good Vibrations would have significant benefits for prisons and the prison system as a whole.

Some of the benefits to Good Vibrations participants appear to be specific to participation in gamelan music. But it should be noted that some important beneficial aspects of the Good Vibrations approach are likely to be replicable in other projects. These include: the style of facilitation (including the ability for participants to shape the learning experience to a large extent); the performance of the music to an audience; and the opportunity to share their achievement with family and friends (in this case a CD of the performance). We therefore recommend support for the development of projects that share these characteristics.

The study's results are contextualised both within research about Good Vibrations that has been undertaken in a number of other prisons, and within a growing literature related to the arts in prison and penal education provision. Given this, the authors suggest the results here can be applied more broadly and, while the conclusions have been built upon a small numeric sample, this is entirely in keeping with the qualitative tradition within criminology.

We make recommendations as to further work that should be undertaken. Specifically, to further assess any sustained impact of the project by following the HMP Grendon Good Vibrations participants as they progress through the penal system, and then after they are released back into the community, and also to further broaden this work out to compare the effects of taking part in Good Vibrations projects on participants in other prisons. Finally, we recommend that the emotional scale developed for this research is a suitable tool to be incorporated into any further evaluations undertaken about the impact of Good Vibrations.

INTRODUCTION

There is growing awareness amongst policy makers and those working in the Criminal Justice System of the contribution that can be made by the arts in prisons, in particular by more innovative projects that are often provided by charities and voluntary organisations. Numerous research studies have suggested that projects – such as music and art programmes – that offer participants a creative outlet have a positive impact on offenders, not least by encouraging them to engage with further learning and education. The need to consider fully the long-term impact of such 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.

The Good Vibrations Gamelan in Prisons Project presents an example of a charity providing a service beyond the remit of 'traditional' education and training providers, using a unique form of music training and group work. Currently, Good Vibrations projects are run within several prisons in England & Wales, and a number of evaluations have been carried out to assess prisoners' views of Good Vibrations and the potential impact on their lives (Eastburn, 2003; Wilson & Logan, 2006; Digard et al., 2007).

This study aims to look at the long-term impact of participating in a Good Vibrations project on prisoners' lives during the remainder of their sentence. It was also hoped to look at the impact on prisoners lives after release but for a number of reasons — which are discussed below — this proved impractical. Thus, using interviews with prisoners and staff and having the prisoners complete a specially designed emotional scale, this study aims to explore the following:

- To what extent participation in a Good Vibrations project helped prisoners cope with life in prison on completion of the project.
- To assess whether participation in a Good Vibrations project enabled prisoners to engage with additional training and education opportunities.
- To assess and quantify any emotional, psychological and behavioural changes experienced during a Good Vibrations project and whether these changes were sustained six months after participation.
- To review whether there is anything that is "special or different" about Good Vibrations.

The findings are presented in the context of current challenges to the successful rehabilitation of offenders within the prison system, and in the context of previous studies of innovative arts-based educational programmes in prisons, which we believe helps to develop conclusions regarding the specific impact of Good Vibrations projects. In this way it is hoped that this report will contribute to the development of more innovative ways to engage prisoners in education and improve the opportunities for prisoners so as to reduce the risks of their re-offending.

BACKGROUND

This section discusses some of the challenges currently faced within the prison system, describes some of the difficulties of conducting research within the penal estate, and presents an overview of previous research studies evaluating and assessing the impact of arts in prisons projects similar to the Good Vibrations projects.

In January 2008 the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, described the prison system as being 'at a crossroads', in that it is facing increasing pressures from overcrowding while at the same time the Prison Service's budget is being cut in real terms. Such pressures have the potential to undermine the progress that has been made with regards to prisoners' health, rehabilitation, general management, education and skills training. Anne Owers (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2008) summarised her concerns as:

"the risk is that we will move towards large-scale penal containment, spending more to accomplish less, losing hard-won gains and stifling innovation."

While it is important to acknowledge that the latest figures from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) show a reduction of 6.9% in reoffending rates against the predicted rate (Home Office, 2007), meaning that NOMS have met their targets, issues such as overcrowding in the prison system have, in recent times, necessitated a series of short-term and expensive emergency measures to deal with this pressure. As a result security and organisational concerns have been pushed to the forefront of offender management. This focus would appear to contradict the findings from the Corston Report, which made recommendations to address the needs of vulnerable prisoners and which would involve using more innovative and creative solutions to reduce re-offending and to deal with underlying problems

by making better use of mental healthcare services, social services and voluntary service providers (Corston, 2007).

Indeed, NOMS aims to manage and rehabilitate offenders using the expertise of voluntary and community based groups, in what they described as a 'market for correctional services.' This implies an acknowledgement of the contribution which can be made by such groups, and thus a willingness to look beyond statutory agency provision. However, in reality there has been limited opportunity for such groups to work with prisons and the process of bidding for contracts to manage offenders has tended to exclude those groups who do not have the resources to compete with established statutory providers. In recognition of this, Anne Owers cites the need for a Royal Commission or public inquiry to develop a more sustainable prison system and penal policy approach, drawing on expertise from a range of organisations.

The arts in prisons

A report into the success of arts activity in prisons (Allen et al, 2004) found that it was important to provide opportunities for prisoners to access creative outlets as these provide a range of benefits. These benefits can be direct - such as improved writing skills - or indirect, through improved social skills, working as part of a team and increased self-esteem. Raising awareness of the existence, need and impact of arts projects in prisons among prisoners, staff and the wider public was found to be important if such innovative ideas are to be supported and properly implemented. Inviting local residents, journalists and other criminal justice and allied professionals, for example, to observe arts projects in prisons was seen as beneficial so as to challenge negative perceptions of such schemes. In addition, it was suggested that more research is required into the longer term impact of arts in prisons, which would require the full co-operation of the prison service and staff working in prisons.

It is argued by Clements (2004) that using education as a means to rehabilitate prisoners and support their re-integration into the community requires 'an educational discourse and methodology that is embedded in concepts of emancipation and empowerment, where creativity and heuristic learning enable personal transformation'. Similarly, Owers (2008), Wilson (2001) and Reuss (1999), argue that more creative and innovative ideas are needed in order to help prisoners benefit from the wider impact of education and also to engage them in such processes in the first instance, given that many prisoners are "failed learners".

However, successive government policies have favoured a focus on 'basic skills' at the expense of funding projects that provide prisoners with the opportunity to engage with the arts. Such an approach may have limited opportunities for prisoners to become fully engaged with learning. It may be that innovative, creative approaches can enhance engagement in learning and education, resulting in a more significant reduction in re-offending than can be offered by the 'basic skills' approach. As such the value in assessing the wider impacts of projects such as the Good Vibrations can be clearly seen.

Engaging with the arts in prison environments is described by Allen et al. (2004) as a "humanising experience", which enables prisoners to acquire educational achievements and also improves self-confidence, social skills and personal development. All of this can contribute to a change in behaviour and reduce the risk of re-offending. This change can come directly from taking part in creative activities such as drama workshops providing prisoners with specific skills and also from the by-products of such activities including improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence, communication and social skills. Here it is important to remember that educational achievement among prisoners is a central issue to address, not least because of the lack of skills identified among this group, in terms of both literacy and numeracy. Currently around 60% of prisoners lack the necessary literacy skills and 75% the necessary numeracy skills to apply for 96% of jobs on release from prison (Allen et al., 2004). This deficit of skills along with the prejudices many prisoners face once back in their community and attempting to resettle raises concerns regarding the likelihood of such groups resorting to re-offending (Allen, 2004).

McCoy and Ruding (2002) suggest the role of arts in educating prisoners forms an important part of the 'healthy prisons' agenda, which aims to recognise prisoners' human rights, promotes individual responsibility and healthcare along with addressing risks which lead of offending behaviour. Furthermore, McCoy and Ruding note that arts initiatives often focus on improving prisoners' social skills and may also encourage prisoners to increase contact with their families in a bid to improve the chances of successful resettlement.

A review by the Unit for the Arts and Offenders of the impact on prisoners of participating in arts projects revealed both short-term and long-term positive effects on behaviour, as well as the development of artistic skills. This review also noted that prison staff observed changes in prisoners' behaviour and the majority of staff (88%) recognised the benefits of arts projects in prisons, and for the prisoners themselves. Furthermore, 100% of staff felt there was a benefit to the prison as a whole (Unit for the Arts and Offenders, 2000).

One of the issues facing the promotion of arts in prison education programmes is the lack of awareness of such projects and their potential impact. Prisons are by their nature closed environments, where the services for prisoners and their own positive achievements are not well publicised, whereas negative incidents such as riots and suicides are. In addition, issues surrounding security and confidentiality impede publicising such initiatives (Allen et al, 2004). The lack of publicity surrounding positive achievements in prisons is exacerbated by the difficulties faced by researchers attempting to conduct independent research in prisons. Evaluations of programmes can be impeded by the way prisons are managed, and by a lack of time on the part of prison staff who have to assist researchers. These issues were faced by the researchers attempting to complete this piece of research. In one sense this can be seen as "passive" obstruction, but impeding research can also be more active, for reasons which are not always clear. Wilson (2003), for example, described how HM Prison Service was "adept and active in attempting to prevent [his]research from taking place" when he tried to conduct interviews with young black prisoners on behalf of The Children's Society. He also described how "telephone calls or messages were rarely answered or returned and the number of days that were allowed for field research at one establishment was cut from five to two."

The Good Vibrations Gamelan in Prisons Project

Good Vibrations is part of a music charity - the Firebird Trust - which aims to 'inspire and empower people through creative involvement in music making.' Good Vibrations uses gamelan percussion music from Indonesia, and provides intensive, usually week-long courses. Gamelan music has been identified as suitable for community or group settings; it has an informal and inclusive approach; and includes a variety of instruments which can be played without any prior musical training or knowledge of musical notation (Eastburn, 2003).

Good Vibrations projects typically run over one week for around fifteen-to-twenty prisoners on average. They are available to any prisoner (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, prisoners perform a concert to which staff, peers, family members and others are invited. Over the last five years Good Vibrations has worked in twenty-four secure

institutions across the UK, including Category A, B and C prisons, young offenders institutions and secure hospitals.

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 report 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 by researchers at the University of Cambridge 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).

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).

METHODOLOGY

Against the background of this previous research, this study aimed to explore the impact of taking part in a Good Vibrations project on participants in the longer-term while still in prison, adopting a qualitative approach, from the perspective of prisoners who took part and also of the staff who worked with the project. Three prisons were chosen: HMPs, Dovegate, Grendon and Peterborough.

HMP Dovegate is a male Category B training prison, and a privately run prison, operated by Serco. It is a relative newcomer to Good Vibrations, with three projects having been run there to date. 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 Wilson and McCabe, 2002). HMP Peterborough is a local category B prison, privately operated by Kalyx under a 25 year contract to the Home Office. It opened in March 2005 and is the only prison in England & Wales accommodating adult men and women (in separate wings) and also has a 12 place Mother and Baby Unit. HMP Peterborough has invited Good Vibrations to run projects regularly since 2006, and has invested in its own set of gamelan instruments. The prison

continues to be very supportive of Good Vibrations' work and the positive impact it has on prisoners' lives.

These three prisons were chosen so as to present different environments in which to evaluate the impact of Good Vibrations projects on prisoners' lives in the long-term. Prisoners who had participated in a Good Vibrations project were interviewed, along with staff who were involved in facilitating the Good Vibrations team coming to the prison. Interviews were also conducted with staff who knew the participants and could therefore provide further insight into any changes that might have been made.

Attempts were also made to visit an adult female prison and a young offenders' institution at which Good Vibrations projects have been run. However, these attempts – for a variety of reasons - were not successful. The research team also intended to conduct telephone interviews with ex-prisoners in the community, but again this proved impossible, thus underscoring the difficulty of conducting this type of research in penal settings. Indeed, field work for the study was subsequently reduced to two jails: HMPs Grendon and Dovegate. In the end, despite expressing its willingness to be part of the study, pressures on staff time at Peterborough meant that it was not possible to conduct the research visits there.

Given all of this - and remembering that the particular focus of the research was to assess long-term effects on Good Vibrations participants while they were still in prison - field research was undertaken at, firstly, HMP Grendon, some six months after a Good Vibrations project had been run there. Not only did 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. Participants there 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 research team interviewed seven participants in total, and spoke with several members of staff. Interviews were then conducted at HMP Dovegate so as to triangulate the results from HMP Grendon.

Given the focus of the research was to assess and quantify any potential emotional and psychological changes experienced during the project and whether these changes were sustained six months after participation, an emotion scale was developed by the research team (see Appendix B) using a representative sample of words derived from commonly-used emotion taxonomies (Lisetti, 2002; Hobbs & Gordon, 2008). Participants were then

asked to complete the emotion scale at three points during the interview, considering 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 generally feel:

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

Participants completed the scale when discussing events before, immediately after, and six months after the Good Vibrations project. The interview schedule was developed in such a way that participants were required to discuss the project in a logical time sequence - before, during and after - to enhance memory recall of emotions at each specific time point. For example, participants were asked to describe the first day of the project in detail to encourage accurate memories of how they felt at that time. In order to circumvent any problems with participants' literacy, the emotion scales were completed verbally with the researcher.

During interview, participants were also asked to explain various aspects of their behaviour, attitudes, and activities in the six months since completing the project. In order to assess the quality of this information, and provide a modest form of internal data triangulation, prison officers who had taken part in the project were interviewed about their experiences. Additionally prison officers and psychology staff who regularly work with the prisoners who had taken part in the project were asked to comment on the general attitudes, behaviour, and activities of the participants in the past six months. This information was used in conjunction with the emotion scale to assess whether emotional and psychological changes experienced by participants correlated with actual behavioural change as witnessed by prison staff.

Data collected from the interviews and emotion scales work together to build a clearer picture of the effect of the project on participants. Therefore, data from both sources will be discussed simultaneously in the research findings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from each of the prisons visited, as reported by Good Vibrations participants and prison staff about the various aspects of the Good Vibrations project and the impact that it might have made on participants. It relies heavily on field work undertaken at HMP Grendon as, owing to a lack of availability of staff and participants, only a small amount of data could be collected at HMP Dovegate. Even so, the research findings discussed below can be contextualised within research about Good Vibrations which has been undertaken in a number of other prisons, and while the conclusions presented here are based on a small numeric sample, this is entirely in keeping with the qualitative tradition within criminology.

HMP GRENDON

The participants at Grendon were all adult males, who had taken part in the Good Vibrations project whilst undergoing treatment as part of the therapeutic regime of the prison. The majority had at least two more years to serve, with a number on longer term or life sentences. Most research participants felt settled in their environment having gone through the induction phase of the Grendon regime, although many remarked how different it was compared to other prison regimes. It was also clear from participants that the Good Vibrations 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. Indeed HMP Grendon, which was set up in 1962, has an "experimental regime" aimed specifically at helping prisoners with anti-social personality disorders.

Clearly Good Vibrations embodies much of the ethos of HMP Grendon, but it is also important to note that all participants who were interviewed highlighted the impact the project had made upon them, over and above the other therapeutic activities within Grendon. 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.

Participants' experiences of the project

- Before the project: prisoners' expectations

The participants were informed about the Good Vibrations project during a visit by one of the tutors and many reported they were interested when it was made clear that attendance was open to all, regardless of educational level or prior music training. This was cited as particularly important by one participant:

'One of the lads who came in with us, he can't read or write so he was worried about that side of things so when he got told that he didn't need to read or write, that was better.'

The project was also promoted through other prisoners who had taken part in Good Vibrations projects elsewhere and given extremely positive feedback about the project itself and its impact. Generally speaking, participants expected the project to be very different to anything they had ever done before, were attracted to the idea of playing musical instruments and also learning more about a different culture and country.

Some expressed having more confidence than others about picking up new skills especially regarding having to perform at a concert after just five days of training. However, most recognised the benefits of art-based programmes more widely:

'Seen how beneficial things like this could be [from another project], it brings people together who you would never ever talk to...brought everyone together, we had mutual ground.'

For many, taking part in an arts-based project was seen as 'going against the grain' but for some this presented a good reason to try it as the therapeutic regime encouraged prisoners to go outside their comfort zone. For some, the project was seen as just a 'bit of fun' and were consequently very surprised at how well everyone got on and the other benefits they experienced.

- During the project: the first day

Some initially felt apprehensive about the idea of performing a concert, seeing it as a form of exam and assessment, especially so quickly after the start of the project. For others, the thought of performing was the driving force behind them wanting to take part, along with learning a completely new skill. Aside

from anxiety about performing, many also expressed they did not feel five days was long enough to learn an instrument. However, they were happy to learn that they would receive a CD and photos of the concert, which they could send to their family.

The initial apprehension for many participants on the first day was fairly quickly dissipated as they were given the chance to experiment with the different instruments, and also as the tutor encouraged everyone to talk about their situation before starting the music training itself. This meant the project began with a very relaxed and calm atmosphere. Having to stay on the prison wing where the project took place for the whole of each day of the project was important - especially as the project only lasted a week – as it made it very intense and during breaks participants would interact and communicate. This was an important element of getting participants to 'gel together' in order that they could perform, and several participants spoke of how well they got to know one-another during these break times on the wing.

The challenge presented by the Good Vibrations project was cited as not only to do with team work but also getting to do something so different:

'It was good overall....it was challenging...it was nerve-wracking as there were people there I knew and it's not the sort of thing I would find myself indulging in anyway.....it's not something you would do everyday.'

In addition, some participants initially worried that the group wouldn't be good enough in time for the concert, but all participants reported feeling very happy with the performance they gave at the end of the week:

'Everyone's playing all these things at once so it didn't sound like music....towards the end of it, it all came together. Everyone was getting in tune with each other and the very last one we done, I thought was excellent.'

- During the project: the Good Vibrations tutors

Participants cited the tutors as important in making everyone feel relaxed, getting everyone to choose what they wanted to play and trying each instrument. The tutor gave participants free rein, enabling them to make choices and encouraging them to make decisions after a very short time. It was noted that the tutors 'draw you straight in' with their enthusiasm:

'He was a very good motivator, by the end of the first session we were actually playing a tune....he had your confidence sky high....he had time for everyone...you could tell he loved it.'

All the participants had positive reports about the tutors, both those present from the beginning and also those who came in at the end to help with the concert. Participants particularly cited their patience in helping those in the group and also encouraging them to make decisions, listen to each other and finally compose music for the concert.

Participants experiences after completing the project

- Relationships with staff in the six months following completing the project

For security reasons prison staff were required to be present during the project. Having staff present was reported to be inhibiting at first, but eventually the staff also joined in and this was reported to remove much of the inhibition felt by participants. One participant reported that staff had even enjoyed participating so much that they came in on their day off, which was the last day of the project. Such incidences made staff seem less of a remote 'authority figure', which was important for those new to the Grendon regime.

The impact on prisoners' perceptions and relationships with staff was an important outcome of the Good Vibrations project as afterwards they felt they had something in common and it was important to see others get involved. This enabled a relationship of trust to develop between staff and prisoners, as prisoners began to see staff as 'human' rather than 'just a uniform':

Previously, I despised staff, see them as authority, never really got into talking to them but now am on first name basis, interacting a lot more because [during the project] I didn't just see them as staff I saw them as people. That was a big eye opener.'

Indeed, participants were surprised how well staff got involved in the gamelan sessions. This view was held across the participants and represented a change in the nature of how staff and prisoners interacted:

'This is hard for me to say you know....but the staff were brilliant, interacting, playing the music, getting involved and getting us there on time. To begin with they didn't want to get involved.....but towards the end they got involved and it is nice to see.'

Prisoners also reported that relationships with other staff who had not been involved in the project improved. Seemingly once prisoners begin to see past the uniform, they are able to judge all prison staff as individuals. At the time of interview – around six months after the project - both participants and staff reported that these improvements in relations had been sustained.

- Confidence, communication, and social skills in the six months following completing the project

Perhaps one of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is the general improvement in social skills reported by participants and observed by prison staff, even six months after the project. This in itself is not a new finding, as previous research by Digard, von Sponeck and Liebling (2007) found that graduates of Good Vibrations projects showed improvements in social skills. It does however confirm that these improvements are sustained, at least in the prison setting. Participants reported an increased empathy and bond with other participants and staff, which translated into a willingness to communicate with a wider variety of inmates. Allied to this, of those reporting any level of shyness on the emotion scale, all but one considered they felt less shy by the end of the project and that this feeling had – to some extent – continued up to the point of being interviewed for this research some six months later. For example, participants were asked to state how far they agreed with the following statements:

At the beginning of the interview: Prior to taking part in the Gamelan sessions I generally felt: 'shy' (before the Good Vibrations project).

During the interview: At the end of the Gamelan week I felt: 'shy' (During the Good Vibrations project).

Towards the end of the interview: This week I generally feel: 'shy' (6 months after the Good Vibrations project).

The answers to these questions are reproduced below in tabular form related to "feeling shy".

Feeling shy	Before project	During project	6 months after project
Participant 1	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree
Participant 2	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree
Participant 3	Agree	Disagree	Disagree
Participant 4	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Participant 5	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Participant 6	Agree	Agree	Agree
Participant 7	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree

NB. Other emotions are not displayed in tabular form, but discussed descriptively throughout the research findings.

As can be seen, four participants stated that they felt shy before taking part in the Good Vibrations project. However, three of these participants felt less shy during and six months after the project indicating both an immediate and a long-term impact. And, of note, these general patterns of improvement were repeated throughout the range of emotions assessed through the emotion scale, as documented below.

Participants spoke of the importance of developing skills beyond that of learning to play instruments, namely listening and communication skills, which with hindsight, many reported they never really had before. They also cited learning to work in a group and being aware of others' needs as important. These skills were felt to be applicable in therapy groups and in their day-to-day life in prison. Interacting with others during the project continued on the wing and other activities, for some owing to their increased confidence in speaking to others and for others because they had learnt to value the opinions of other people. The project succeeded in altering participants' perception of others, in enabling them to learn the value of allowing others to express their feelings and making them feel more comfortable around people they hadn't met before. This was particularly useful within the therapeutic regime at Grendon, as it was described as 'all part of the journey'.

Participants also reported a positive impact in a wider sense on their relationship with their families, through telling them about the Good Vibrations project and subsequently demonstrating their achievements through the concert and CD. Seeing this reassured families about the behavioural changes their imprisoned relative was going through and some reported that this brought them closer together.

Staff broadly confirmed the improvements in communication, confidence and social skills reported by participants. The majority of participants directly attribute these changes to the project as it provided them with a unpressured and unthreatening environment in which to develop. Interestingly several participants commented that they had not anticipated the level of impact the project would have on them.

- Skills development, training and education in the six months after completing the Good Vibrations project

All participants expressed a great degree of pride and sense of achievement at having completed the course, and in particular having had the courage to take part in the concert in front of inmates and staff on the final day. In the past many participants had started other courses or programmes that for various reasons they had not completed. Completion and presenting their skills gave participants 'a sense of achievement and wellbeing'. As a result of this sense of achievement, six months after completing the project participants stated they were more confident to learn other things and more open to the idea of developing other skills. The concert was cited as a pivotal point, in that participants were nervous but felt it was important to be taken 'out of their comfort zone.'

For some, this sense of empowerment had encouraged them to consider other courses and they had begun to be proactive at learning other skills. This was clearly demonstrated by one participant who contacted the county library to get more information on Indonesian culture, whilst another gave up smoking in order to save up for a guitar. Others had taken part in and made active moves towards educational courses offered within the prison.

Participants compared the project to a range of other courses, both educational and arts-based. Some reported they felt other courses were inflexible and didn't allow participants to have a voice and express their opinions. The personal gains from Good Vibrations were cited as being as important as learning practical skills or educational attainment, but also served to highlight that learning had taken place in an highly enjoyable and rewarding way. This enjoyment, combined with the sense of achievement, encouraged the moves towards further learning, training and education mentioned above. One participant succinctly described the Good Vibrations project as 'a stepping-stone to other education'.

Making prisoners more culturally aware was also felt to be important, particularly as prisons were described as often being 'culturally dead' unless prisoners made the effort to be proactive and get involved in things like Good Vibrations.

- Emotional, psychological, and behavioural change in the six months after completing the Good Vibrations project

As discussed above, the results of the emotion scales confirm that many of the positive changes reported by participants and staff have been sustained. As none of the participants were reported as demonstrating significant behavioural issues immediately prior to the Good Vibrations project it is not possible to assess whether improvements in reported levels of emotions such as anger and calmness (see below) have resulted in significant behavioural change. However, what can be noted regarding behavioural change is that measurements of decreased shyness and loneliness are supported by staff who reported greater social interaction and improved social skills of those who had participated on the project. Additionally, the project had resulted in active behavioural change for the majority of participants who have gone on to engage in some form of further learning.

In terms of how prisoners continued to deal with prison life in the months after the project, generally they reported positive outcomes in their behaviour and dealing with personal problems, which many felt would have longer-term impacts after their sentence in all areas of their lives:

'Taking part has given me a push to work harder, I've come from a background of drink and drugs and violence and that's all I have ever really known so to feel good about meself in positive way was something new to me......I'm capable of doing better things.'

In addition to the positive changes discussed above, the emotion scale also assessed participants' levels of boredom, anxiety, happiness, and contentment. Interestingly, participants reported being less bored even six months after the project. Unsurprisingly participants felt engaged at the end of the project, and this lack of boredom continued – decreasing only slightly – at least up until the time they were interviewed. It is possible that this is a result of the participants becoming interested in new hobbies and activities. Furthermore, the majority reported decreases in feelings of anxiety. Some attributed this to their increased ability to keep calm, while others suggested that they simply felt more comfortable in their surroundings and with other people. This could be

accounted for by the fact that participants had by this time spent longer at Grendon and so felt more at ease. While most participants reported feeling generally happy prior to taking part in the Good Vibrations project, those that felt unhappy reported feeling significantly happier both immediately after the project and longer-term. Similarly, those participants who felt discontented with life at HMP Grendon before the project reported feeling very contented at interview. In summary, participants reported positive emotional and behavioural changes across the board and, where it was possible to comment, these changes were confirmed by staff.

HMP DOVEGATE

It was intended that two full days would be spent at Dovegate interviewing as many of the fourteen participants of the most recent Good Vibrations project as possible, as well as interviewing staff. By doing so we hoped to provide some triangulation for the results reported from HMP Grendon. However, due to lack of availability of staff and being able to locate only two participants able and willing to be interviewed, only a small amount of data could be collected.

Both of the participants who were interviewed were adult males, aged between 25-35 and were due for release within the next six months. They had taken part in a Good Vibrations project during November 2007, and both had found out about it via the chapel staff.

Both participants were interested in Good Vibrations, not only because it presented an opportunity to engage with a creative activity, but also they were interested in learning about a different culture, that of Indonesian music. They did not know what to expect and were unsure about their ability to learn how to play music in one week, but both made the point that they considered themselves to be more outgoing and keen to learn compared to other prisoners. Similar to reports at HMP Grendon, both participants at HMP Dovegate emphasised that the Good Vibrations project had been a different and beneficial experience and they were keen to discuss this in vivid detail. Furthermore, they reported experiencing the project as a complete removal from everyday prison life, rather than simply part of the regime.

The first day was a positive experience for both participants, in that they were told they could choose what instruments to play, they found themselves socialising with other prisoners they had not met and everyone settled in very quickly. The tutors were described as 'calm' and 'kind', showing patience for

those who did not grasp how to use instruments or were unsure about working with others. Participant One noted:

You can tell they (the tutors) are devoted to this.....they really believe in it, it helps you want to get involved you know, to take it seriously'

The role of the tutors was notably different to both participants' previous experiences of education and training, in that they guided students' learning, were much more patient and encouraging and ensured the prisoners themselves made decisions. This sense of responsibility given to participants was empowering and helped them make the connections with each other to work together. Participant One also talked about life after the Good Vibrations project, feeling that this connection with others continued, as those who had taken part had some common ground and so could explore more aspects of Indonesian culture and music together and find other things in common.

The project also demonstrated to the participants that they had the ability to learn something entirely new, that they could work together and share ideas, and also, as one participant put it 'learn to walk with somebody else.'

Participants enjoyed the project immensely but expressed that more time learning about gamelan music and Indonesian culture would have been useful, and suggested that there could, in future, be more visits from Good Vibrations staff to promote the project and get more prisoners involved.

It was clearly disappointing that so few of the participants apparently wanted to be interviewed, although this did not seem to have anything to do with their views about the project itself. Rather, it reflected – as was reported to us – their involvement with other regime activities, such as visits, from which they did not wish to withdraw. We have no way of testing this, or indeed the veracity that twelve of the participants had indeed declined being interviewed. However, more generally, the two participants who were interviewed confirmed that the results reported from prisoners at HMP Grendon – some six months after they had taken part in the project – could be replicated outside of a therapeutic community.

IS THE GOOD VIBRATIONS PROJECT 'DIFFERENT' OR 'SPECIAL'?

Undoubtedly participants feel that taking part in a Good Vibrations project had a significant impact upon them on a personal level, but we must also ask what – if anything - makes Good Vibrations different to other programmes that aim to improve social skills and confidence. Here, what appears to make Good Vibrations unique is the sense of calm reported by participants. This may be more significant that it at first appears.

All but one of the men interviewed talked about becoming entirely focused and engrossed in the music and the process of playing the instruments. What is interesting is that participants seem to have learnt what can be best described as a form of meditation, and report being able to focus on this sense of calm even six months after the project. It has not been possible to establish whether this has had any behavioural impact, as prison staff report that none of the participants presented significant behavioural issues prior to the project. However, results from the emotion scales support this finding, with all participants who reported general feelings of anger prior to the project showing significant reductions in their level of anger immediately after the project and six months later. All participants reported being a calmer person as a direct result of the project.

Additionally, there are a number of factors cited time and time again by participants – both in this research and previous studies – as being particularly important to their engagement, their enjoyment, and their willingness to complete the project. Factors identified as important in keeping prisoners engaged in projects are clearly significant and here participants specifically identified the style of facilitation of the project as important, including the ability for participants to shape the learning experience, the performance of the music to an audience, and receiving a CD of the performance to share with family and friends. While these characteristics are integral to all Good Vibrations projects, they are also likely to be replicable in one form or another elsewhere, and as so could provide lessons for the development of other prison-based projects.

CAVEATS AND ENDINGS

Although specific measures were put in place to increase the reliability and validity of the data collected (see Methodology), the authors acknowledge that the quality of the data collected could have been enhanced by interviewing participants before, during and after the project. As time and resources did not allow for this, the alternative process - as described above - was adopted. In addition, caution must be urged when inferring cause and effect from individual projects. However, it should be noted that in this study the majority of participants were adamant that participating in Good Vibrations had a notable impact on their thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

So too there are caveats in relation to the numbers of prisoners who have been interviewed and from the fact that field research was reduced from three to two prisons. It was also clearly disappointing that we were only able to interview two prisoners at HMP Dovegate. However, it should be remembered that this research can now be contextualised within research about Good Vibrations which has been undertaken in a number of other prisons. Of course, numbers are less important for the validity of qualitative research. What is important is the quality of the information that can be gathered from participants, and how this information helps us to better understand the world which they occupy. Finally there is the issue of "generalisability". In other words can this small – and possibly unique sample – be an accurate reflection of how other prisoners might respond, or have responded to Good Vibrations projects? We believe that these results can be applied more broadly, and while we have built this conclusion on a small numeric sample this is entirely in keeping with the qualitative tradition within criminology.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilson and Logan (2006) found that participants in a Good Vibrations project at HMP Brixton developed the desire to change and felt that they had the ability to do so. This study demonstrates that many participants have actually put that desire to change their behaviour into action. The key findings from this research suggest that six months after completing a Good Vibrations project participants experienced:

- Greater levels of engagement and an increased openness to wider learning;
- Improved listening and communication skills;
- Improved social skills and increased social interaction;
- Improved relationships with prison staff; and
- Decreased levels of self-reported anger and a greater sense of calmness.

In short, the study concludes that participating in a Good Vibrations project has a sustained and positive emotional and psychological impact on participants, leading to positive behavioural change. While it has not been possible to assess whether these changes will translate into new behaviours after release from prison, increased engagement with education and improved anger management are positively associated with reduced recidivism and so the sample studied here are at least on the right track.

Given recent recommendations that the most appropriate way to assess the real impact of projects in prison is to track participants over time (Miles and Clarke, 2006), it would be advantageous to follow this "Grendon sample" of Good Vibrations participants as they progress through the penal system, and then after they are released back into the community. Good relations exist between the research team and HMP Grendon – and especially with the men who form the "Grendon sample" – and so this would be seem a perfectly feasible proposal. So too following this group would provide much richer and deeper evidence about the impact that Good Vibrations might have on participants in the years to come and we would recommend that due consideration is given as to how this research goal might work in practice.

The interviews conducted at HMP Dovegate - and the results of previous research studies - suggest that the findings from this report are not unique to HMP Grendon. The positive results from previous evaluations would seem to be confirmed by this research. It appears that Good Vibrations projects have a positive impact upon participants in a variety of prison settings. However, as a very limited number of individuals were interviewed at Dovegate, we recommend broadening this work out to compare the effects on participants of Good Vibrations projects in other prisons.

It should also be noted that a number of the characteristics of the Good Vibrations Gamelan in Prisons Project have been cited time and time again by participants – both in this research and previous studies – as being particularly important to their engagement, enjoyment, and willingness to complete the

course. Some of these characteristics appear to be specific to participation in gamelan music. But it should be noted that others are likely to be replicable in other projects. These include: the style of facilitation (including the ability for participants to shape the learning experience to a large extent); the performance of the music to an audience; and the opportunity to share their achievement with family and friends (in this case a CD of the performance). We recommend support for the development of projects that share these characteristics.

Finally, we would recommend that the emotional scale that was developed by the research team be incorporated more widely into any further evaluations that are undertaken about the impact of the Good Vibrations Gamelan in Prisons project.

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Appendix A



CENTRE FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY AND RESEARCH

Good Vibrations in Prisons Project

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research identifying number	
Date of interview	
Time of interview	
Comment:	

		Notes
1.	About you: What sort of person do you consider yourself to be?	
	 Happy/Unhappy. Outgoing/Quiet. Sociable/Prefer being alone. Confident? 	
	Emotion scale 1.	
2.	Can you tell me the length of your sentence/when you are due for release?	

3.	When did you take part in the Good Vibrations project?	
4.	How did you find out about it?	
5.	What were your expectations of the gamelan sessions?	
•	Had you heard from others who had taken part?	
•	What motivated you to take part?	
•	How did you feel about it: Anxious; curious; excited; happy; interested; nervous; neutral.	
6.	How did you feel on your first day?	
•	Did you feel you settled in quickly?	
•	Were you happy to participate straight away?	
•	Talk me through what happened.	
•	Did you already know the other men taking part? If not, how did you find this?	
7.	What did you think of the Good Vibrations tutors?	
8.	Have you recommend this project to other	

prisoners? How have they reacted?

- 9. How did you feel at the end of the week?
- Emotion scale 2.
- 10. Do you think the gamelan sessions have had any impact on how you deal with prison life?
- Relating to other prisoners or staff?
- How were you feeling about prison life prior to the Good Vibrations project?
- Did taking part in the Good Vibrations project have any impact on the way you feel – positive or negative?
- Has this continued or subsided? How are you feeling now about your future?
- 11. Was there anything about this project that was particularly useful or meaningful to you?
- · Did you feel part of the group?
- If so, what helped you feel part of the group?
- 12. Do you think the sessions will help you during your sentence or in preparation for your release?
- Have the sessions inspired you to take part on other courses?
- How does this sort of project compare to other education and training services in the prison?
- Emotion scale 3.

13. Is there anything else you would like to discuss in relation to the Good Vibrations project?	
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Appendix B

Prior to taking part in the Gamelan sessions I generally felt:

Angry	Anxious	Bored
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
Calm	Contented	Depressed
6. Strongly disagree7. Disagree8. Neither agree nor disagree9. Agree10.Strongly agree	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
Нарру	Lonely	Moody
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
Sad	Shy	Stressed
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree

At the end of the Gamelan week I felt:

Angry	Anxious	Bored
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
Calm	Contented	Depressed
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
Нарру	Lonely	Moody
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
Sad	Shy	Stressed
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree

This week I generally feel:

Angry	Anxious	Bored
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
Calm	Contented	Depressed
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
Нарру	Lonely	Moody
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
Sad	Shy	Stressed
 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree 	 Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree