

# Beats & Bars

## Music in Prisons: an evaluation

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# Prologue

In considering this report and its findings, readers are encouraged to take themselves back to personal experiences of learning something new – how to drive, how to ride a bicycle, how to speak a foreign language, or how to play a musical instrument, for example. Imagine the learning process with a group of people, most of whom were not known to you, and who might ridicule your lack of expertise and your mistakes. It is easy to underestimate what it takes to expose oneself in the learning process; easier still to assume that we all possess human capital (in terms of skills and confidence) and encouragement from those around us in our endeavours. The population of men in prison almost overwhelmingly lack these basic skills and confidence. Thus signing up to participate in a music project may require a good deal of courage.



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# Executive Summary

“ Separated from all civilian life and influences, and without domesticity, values become blurred, language coarsens and the mental processes become locked into formalised channels. The more sensitive instincts soon become blunted and the prisoner progressively cares less. Self-confidence is quickly eroded, which can lead to a prisoner feeling embarrassed and vulnerable. This will lead to a show of aggression, which can then lead to actual violence, if only to cover up his or her own misplaced loss of confidence. ”

*(HMP Albany inmate, quoted in Liebmann and Tumin, 1994: 78).*

The report that follows is an evaluation of a series of five-day music projects which took place in eight men’s prisons across England from October 2007 to July 2008. The evaluation was aimed at understanding the impact of the project on its participants’ engagement with purposeful activities whilst in prison, in particular the impact of the project on their engagement with the Learning and Skills department, as well as their behaviour and general well-being in prison. Seventy-one men participated in this evaluation. Seventeen members of prison staff across the establishments, including teachers, prison officers and governors, were also surveyed.

This evaluation is based on empirical observation and analysis of documentary data, interviews, focus groups, and survey questionnaires. It is the result of a sustained, in-depth evaluation of the process and outcomes of the music project by researchers from the University of Cambridge’s Institute of Criminology.



# Key Findings

- The Music in Prisons project can play a role in fulfilling the National Offender Management Service's seven pathways to reducing re-offending, and in particular the pathways that relate to education, training and employment; children and families; and attitudes, thinking and behaviour (National Offender Management Service, 2004).
- The project carries the potential to play a role in facilitating an individual's confidence to participate in education as well as their intellectual competencies; it serves to help individuals to build and maintain positive relationships with their families and with other individuals both inside and outside of prison; and it impacts positively on individuals' thinking and emotions.
- When asked how confident they felt about themselves as a result of participating in the activity, 65.2 per cent (n = 45/69) of men indicated that they felt 'very confident'.
- 71.4 per cent (n=35/49) of the men surveyed one to three months after the project had ended said that the project had made them feel differently about themselves.
- Approximately 64 per cent (n=23/36) of men surveyed said that the programme had made them feel differently about others.
- There was a statistically significant increase in men's feelings of hope for the future from before to after the project. Hope for the future is correlated with individual well-being.
- The music project may create a pathway for some inmates to engage in the skills training that they need. 88 per cent (n=58/66) of the men indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: this programme has given me more confidence to participate in other educational programmes.
- 73.5 per cent (n = 36/49) of the men indicated ten on a scale of one to ten when asked how likely they were to participate in more arts or education programmes as a result of participating in the Music in Prisons project.
- Of the 11 per cent (n=6/55) of participants in the project who did have adjudications (some as many as four) in the three months before the project started, none of them received any adjudications during the project or for the 3 month follow-up period afterwards.
- The men's experiences of the project, particularly their feelings of encouragement to try things without judgement and to work together on a venture, clearly facilitated the development of their individual competencies and self-esteem. The individual competencies that men gained through the project may have implications not only for behaviour in prisons in the short term, but perhaps also for foundational aspects of selfhood and human capital (the capacity to co-operate, relate to others, negotiate and share, for example). These things can lead to improved outcomes once someone has been released from prison - for example, in terms of establishing relationships, confidence in one's self, and abilities - all of which contribute to the development of social capital (opportunities, connections, and new horizons).
- The Music in Prisons project facilitated the expression of talents which can sometimes remain hidden within normal prison life, its routines and standard educational programmes.
- Finally, it is clear that the Music in Prisons project contributes to the Prison Service's aim to provide 'safe, secure and decent regimes'.

# 1. Background

The Irene Taylor Trust was set up in 1995 in memory of Lady Irene Taylor, a trustee of the Butler Trust and wife of the late Lord Chief Justice. Lady Taylor was very involved in the arts and had a particular interest in music. Through her continued involvement in the Butler Trust, she observed the rehabilitative and therapeutic effects of music on people in prisons. Her passions and interests in this direction were informed by knowledge of the innovative work being undertaken in Wormwood Scrubs education department, which led to the prison's music co-ordinator, Sara Lee, being awarded a Butler Trust UK Travel Scholarship and subsequently being invited to set up the Irene Taylor Trust.

The Trust is a registered charity and relies on donations as well as other sources of funding. It has the support of a number of distinguished individuals including Lord Phillips, Lord Woolf, Jon Snow, Ian Wallace, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and members of the Taylor family. The Trust is committed to encouraging and establishing the use of music as part of the rehabilitative, educational and therapeutic process within the criminal justice system and other areas of social disadvantage.

The main work of the Irene Taylor Trust is to run intensive high quality music projects for small groups of offenders in prisons and other secure facilities throughout the UK in order to provide positive experiences for them and to help in the process of rehabilitation, education and the forming of other transferable life skills. Since the Trust was set up some thirteen years ago it has delivered 135 different projects working in 51 different prisons and Young Offender Institutions, as well as a number of secure and medium secure hospital units, Youth Offending Teams and Immigration Removal Centres. During these projects the Trust has worked directly with over 1,800 men, women and young people.

Direct observation by the musicians and from those working with the offenders in prisons suggests that participants greatly benefit from having such positive experiences, and that their sense of self-worth and confidence increases greatly.

The Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge was commissioned to assist the Trust in conducting research to elaborate upon these observations and to develop the evidence basis for the development of the Trust's work in the future. The research evaluation is timely insofar as the arts in prisons have received considerable attention in the press in recent months. There have been a number of stories about positive initiatives to engage offenders – ranging from dance, painting, drama, and of course music (including the production of an opera in HMP Wandsworth). Wandsworth's Governor, Ian Mulholland, is on record as a supporter given that his remit includes reducing reoffending: 'We give prisoners a chance to



see what they are capable of. Some of them have never been praised. Positive feedback is fantastic for them. We need to do our best to reduce recidivism and I have to justify these programmes to the Director General of the prison service, but if I thought that it was just a jolly for the prisoners, I wouldn't be interested'. (The Guardian, March 1st, 2007:28)

In this sense, the current evaluation adds to the growing interest in and concern to engage prisoners in activities which facilitate personal growth as well as day to day survival skills through conventional educational and cognitive behavioural programmes and other related interventions. There are operational challenges of course which reflect overcrowding and the concurrent pressures which fall on prison staff, but the Projects Director Sara Lee suggests that these can be overcome by 'respecting what staff have to do' and 'working with staff' in order to make things happen. The descriptions of the projects which follow is testament to this.



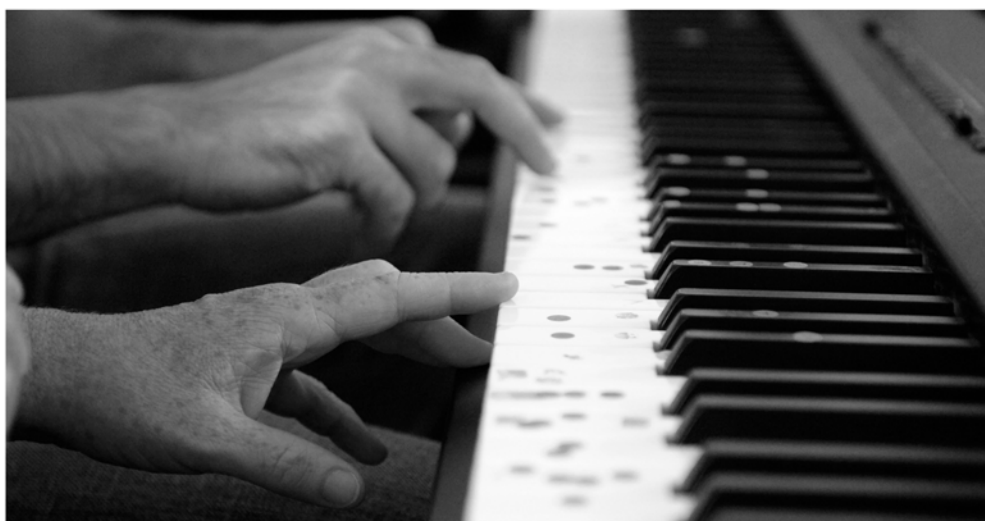
## 2. Research Aims

The Irene Taylor Trust is committed to a programme of research evaluation running in parallel with the delivery of music projects in prisons. A previous evaluation was completed in 2005, and showed that 100 per cent of the participants felt that they had learnt a new skill and would be encouraged to participate in other artistic ventures. This current evaluation was thus designed to build on the earlier work. The aims of the current evaluation were to:

- Help the Trust identify the impact of the project on an individual's patterns of participation in other purposeful activities in prison and routes into learning.
- Help the Trust monitor whether or not the project has a positive impact on an individual's behaviour in prison (in terms of adjudications).
- Help the Trust monitor whether or not participation in a project has any impact on self-esteem, confidence and other indicators of well-being.

It is now widely known that the prison population is well in excess of 80,000. Of the offenders in prison, 95 per cent are male and 5 per cent female. Sentencers in England and Wales periodically come under critical scrutiny for both not sending enough offenders to prison, and sending too many depending on the politics of the day. Part of the problem is to be found simply in the electoral cycle: Aspiring or new governments are hungry for help and ideas.

It is not surprising therefore that prison regimes have changed over recent years from 'humane containment' to 'decency'. At present, despite the increases in the prison population and pressing concerns about security, policy directives indicate that the treatment and rehabilitation of offenders are primary objectives (Morgan and Liebling, 2007) which adds to the timeliness of this research, although receptivity to 'Music in Prisons' projects obviously depends on individual governors.



### 3. Previous Research

A key question, of course, is whether such initiatives ‘work’ and what is meant by ‘work’. Commentaries on the positive effects of arts abound. In *Art and Experience*, for example, the philosopher John Dewey has suggested that music enables human beings to connect and build meaning together (1980). Keith Swanwick (1988), a leading scholar in the field of music education, outlines that music has an integral role to play in any system of education, particularly in a pluralist society. If one of the goals of education is to ‘fashion the tools for organizing thinking,’ he suggests, then music taps into those ‘symbolic processes’ which comprise individual consciousness (1988:104-5). He outlines that music – and particularly the collaborative process of music making – has been shown to both facilitate the process of group learning, as well as play a role in helping individuals transcend cultural barriers; a process that may be increasingly important in encouraging tolerance in multicultural democracies like England and Wales. Swanwick argues that making music can help to create ‘new values; transcending both self and immediate culture’ (1988:107).

Offering a slightly different perspective, Csikszentmihalyi (1992) claims that ‘the creative flow’ produces the ‘sense that one’s skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand, in a goal-directed, rule-bound action system that provides clear clues as to how well one is performing. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant, or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted’ (1992: 71). Psychologist Howard Gardner (1993), in *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, adds to this by arguing that knowledge of music is related to the more abstract and complex realms of human knowledge that cannot be reduced to language. Indeed, he sees music as an ‘autonomous intellectual competence’ that should be understood distinctly from language and other intellectual abilities (1993: 120).

This theme is reflected in other writings too. The musicologist Peter Webster has proffered the view that some of the abstract skills gained through the process of developing a creative product include the development of flexibility and originality, craftsmanship, and aesthetic sensibility (1996: 91-2).

Other scholars have drawn attention to the way in which informal group learning about music can facilitate other learning and cooperation (Green, 2008; Davidson and Good, 2002). Others still to the impact of music on human emotions (Thayer and Faith, 2001) and in addition to the observed and subjective descriptions of the impact of music on the emotions, neuroscientists have studied the impact of music on the brain (Parsons, 2001). Music has been shown to have healing properties too. As Harvey has outlined: ‘music can have a positive effect upon both neural functions and hormonal activity and, as such, can facilitate the healthy functioning of the body’s own

immune and regenerative processes' (1987: 74). Writing some twenty years later, Krout (2007) has made similar points in that music has been found to activate the limbic system, which connects to our mood and emotions, as well as the autonomic nervous system, which connects to our ability to relax and fight stress and tension. From this, we might surmise that music may have the potential to impact on well-being in terms of autonomy and competence and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000; 2001; Bandura, 1997).

Internationally renowned conductor Daniel Barenboim, in conversation with Edward Said, has argued that music can serve two totally opposed purposes. We quote at length since we think that this captures much of the thinking above:

“ If you want to forget everything and run away from your problems and difficulties—from sheer existence—music is the perfect means, because it’s highly emotional...But, on the other hand, the study of music is one of the best ways to learn about human nature. This is why I am so sad about music education being practically nonexistent today in schools. Education means preparing children for adult life; teaching them how to behave and what kinds of human beings they want to be. Everything else is information and can be learned in a very simple way. To play music well you need to strike a balance between your head, your heart, and your stomach. And if one of the three is not there or is there in too strong a dose, you cannot use it. What better way than music to show a child how to be human?

...If you have a sense of belonging, a feeling of home, harmonically speaking—and if you’re able to establish that as a composer, and establish it as a musician—then you will always get this feeling of being in no-man’s-land, of being displaced yet always finding a way home. Music provides the possibility, on the one hand, to escape from life and, on the other hand, to understand it much better than in many other disciplines. Music says, “Excuse me. This is human life.”

(2004:24-26)

This is not the place for an extensive literature review, of course, but it is important for us to briefly set out the research scene as well as draw attention to some of the more general claims about music, and we do so by drawing on recent academic evaluations below.

Using the term ‘arts’ in its broadest sense, one of the most recent (though not exhaustive) reviews of the ‘arts in prisons’ undertaken for the Unit for the Arts and Offenders based in Canterbury (now known as the Anne Peaker Centre), describes the range of projects that have

been used in prisons in the UK and in the USA (Hughes, 2005). It also reviews the evidence on effectiveness and identifies three areas in the criminal justice system where it may be argued that arts initiatives have had positive impact: prevention provisions, custodial and community sentencing provisions, and resettlement provisions. It is acknowledged that the most developed research base draws on arts projects in custodial settings, and from evaluations based on North American interventions, although it is also acknowledged that ‘there are a number of promising UK-based interventions, which reported highly positive outcomes’ (Hughes, 2005:35). The evidence gathered reflected a strong and positive correlation between participation in the arts and overall improvements in the well being of participants. These ranged from increased educational attainment to increased self-confidence, and from social cohesion to a reduction in recidivism in the wider criminal justice context.

The National Audit Office (2004) indicate in their report entitled ‘Skills for Life’—based on a large survey of 16-65 year olds—that the UK has relatively high numbers of adults with low levels of literacy and numeracy compared with other countries. Just under 60 per cent of the population have low levels of literacy, and just under 80 per cent of the population have low levels of numeracy (low means below Level Two—with Level Two being equivalent to a good pass at GCSE grades A\* to C). Thus 26 million members of the population are thought to be below the levels expected of a school leaver. The National Audit Office has recently found that only one fifth of those assessed as having very low levels of basic numeracy and literacy skills actually enrolled in literacy or numeracy courses (NAO, 2008: 31). Within prisons it is estimated that at least 60 per cent of the population have literacy and numeracy skills below Level One, with Level One being the level of an average eleven year old (HM Prison Service, no date). Yet as Peaker and Vincent report from their analysis of arts programmes in prisons:

“ Arts can provide access to learning for prisoners who would not otherwise consider that formal education classes were relevant to them. They enable prisoners with very different levels of education and of previous artistic exposure to work alongside each other in a sociable activity. Involvement in creative activity can provide an instant sense of achievement which is important to people who may otherwise be extremely low achievers.

”  
(1994:3)

Though few studies have looked specifically at the impact of arts-in-prisons programmes on an individual’s route into learning, this link is clearly one that should be explored more fully.

Reviews of the research evidence also suggest an impact on individuals in terms of their coping mechanisms (Hughes, 2005). Understandably, prison regimes employ strict measures of control and discipline, but through this, a high stress environment is created (Gibbons, 1997). Arts projects thus serve a useful purpose in providing inmates with purposeful recreational activities which also have an impact on levels of stress (Peaker and Vincent, 1990). However, as music teachers have put it, the work is not simply therapeutic. Music and the arts are not used as a means of treating some undefined sickness or ailment. Rather, it is a matter of teaching skills that can be helpful to people. The aim is to teach artistic skills, but there is also a sense of 'teaching people to work as a team', 'discipline', 'co-operation', 'compromise' and 'sensitivity' (Williams, 2003). Peaker and Vincent provide substantial self-report evidence of impact on prisoners in this regard (1990; see also Jermyn, 2001, and Broadhead, 2005).

In addition to evaluations of arts-based projects which point to positive effects on inclusion, education, learning, co-operation and individual self-esteem and confidence, for instance, some studies have focused on the impact of arts projects on rule-breaking. In a systematic study of an arts-in-corrections programme that took place in a number of California prisons, a researcher found that inmates had significantly fewer disciplinary incidents while they participated in the programme (Brewster, 1983). Additionally, in a follow up study of a randomly selected group of individuals released from custody which included individuals who had participated in the California programme for at least six months, those individuals who had participated had a significantly higher percentage of favourable outcomes in parole. A 'favourable outcome' indicated that they had a clean record and hadn't been returned to custody for any violations (California Department of Corrections, no date). Data from a music theatre production, which Music in Prisons delivered in HMP Bullingdon in 1999, showed that 94 per cent of the participants (some fifty inmates) did not receive any adjudications for disciplinary offences during the time that they were involved in the project (over six weeks) (Dawes, 1999).

Hughes (2005) also shows that arts-based projects have also led to improved behaviour – with fewer disciplinary matters to deal with. Linked to this is the suggestion that staff involvement in and 'ownership' of arts-based programmes can serve to cultivate interest and foster good relationships with inmates – making implementation of any projects or programmes more successful.

Finally, Hughes (2005) reports that arts-based programmes enrich prison regimes by going beyond ordinary education classes and may well reach some inmates whom education departments have not been able to, bringing personal and therapeutic effects by increasing self-esteem and confidence.

There are of course some limitations to previous studies. Few evaluations have been conducted independently of the funding bodies, small samples have hindered generalisability (insofar as this

may be relevant), many studies lack control or comparison groups, and some have also concluded the evaluation process at the end of a given project, leaving no possibility to conduct follow-up interviews with participants.

This present study provides an independent perspective on matters through the commissioning of research; by including eight separate projects we have established a total sample of 71 participants (which is higher than in some earlier research evaluations), and the evaluation process has continued for up to three months following conclusion of the music project in each prison.

The exigencies of prison life and constraints on funding for the research have meant that the focus has been on participants and there is thus no control group or comparative element in the evaluation (involving non-participants). We have also had difficulty in obtaining prison data on individual offenders (no doubt because of other justifiable priorities). But we nevertheless think that the present study makes a valuable contribution to the emerging picture of positive impact on inmates. Our in-depth independent observations of the project are an important element of this.



## 4. Methodology For The Evaluation

The evaluation included both process and outcomes of the five-day music projects in eight men's prisons across England. The projects were held in the following prisons:

- HMP Wayland (Short and mid term sentences) October 2007
- HMP Edmunds Hill (Short, mid and long term sentences) October 2007
- HMP Wandsworth (Remand, short term and life sentences) November 2007
- HMP Brixton (Remand, short, mid and long term sentences) December 2007
- HMP Whatton (Vulnerable prisoners) January 2008
- HMP Manchester (Mid and long term sentences) January 2008
- HMP Littlehey (Vulnerable prisoners) April 2008
- HMP Edmunds Hill (Short, mid and long term sentences) June 2008

We employed a range of research methods (both quantitative and qualitative) throughout the project, including participant observation, focus groups, inmate questionnaires, staff questionnaires, and analysis of disciplinary and related prison records. We were also provided with follow-up information on many of the individual prisoners involved in the projects. Thus although there were no control groups in each of the prisons, the research includes both before and after measures in relation to participants.

### 4.1 Sample

**Table 4.1: Sample**

	Number of prisoner participants	Survey 1 (pre project)	Survey 2 (end of project)	Survey 3 (follow-up after 1-3 months)	Staff questionnaires
TOTALS	71	71	71	49	17

- There were a total of 71 men who participated in the projects we evaluated.
- Of these, we were able to follow up with 49 men one to three months after each music project was completed to administer a third survey questionnaire and conduct focus groups about the long-term impact of the programme.
- We received much less information on adjudication records than anticipated and some of the data provided were unclear. Nevertheless, we were able to obtain clear adjudication data for 77 per cent (55/71) of the men involved in the projects.



## 4.2 Process evaluation

We engaged in participant observation of the five-day music project, spending a total of sixteen full days observing the projects and participating in the project activities. We maintained detailed field diaries and also asked the project leaders to keep field diaries.

After the project ended, we distributed questionnaires to staff members at the institutions who had either observed the project or who had close contact with some of the project participants. We asked them about their impressions of the programme, and whether or not they felt it had had any short and long-term impact on the men involved.

## 4.3 Outcome evaluation

We aimed to study the impact of the project on participants' well-being, their motivation to participate in other educational activities, and their behaviour whilst in custody. We decided to measure this impact both qualitatively through field observations and quantitatively through the administration of survey questionnaires.

We administered questionnaires to the participants one to three days before the project started, immediately after it ended, and one to three months after the project ended. These survey questionnaires covered various aspects of participants' motivation, self-esteem, well-being, and their satisfaction with the project. The well-being items were drawn in part from the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965), and from previous surveys that had been administered by members of the University of Cambridge Institute of Criminology's Prisons Research Centre (Digard, von Sponeck, and Liebling, 2007).

We also sought to obtain data about the impact of the project on participants' involvement in education programmes and their behaviour while in custody. We requested this data for the period of time three months before and three months after the projects were conducted. Again, we were disappointed with the amount of data received, but there are nevertheless some broad indications of impact.

## 4.4 Data analysis

We conducted a systematic analysis of the observational and survey data, coding the data for key themes.

We entered the survey data into the SPSS software programme and generated descriptive statistics and frequencies in our initial stage of analysis. We then conducted several statistical tests using non-parametric models, based on both the size and the structure of our data.

## 4.5 Measurements of impact

There were several ways in which we measured the impact of the project. In our observational study, our involvement in the projects from start to finish enabled us to observe the impact of the project over the course of the week. Because we also played a role as participants, we gained an insight into some of the more challenging aspects of the project and how they were dealt with by the men. In our observations, we were particularly attuned to the impact of the project on the men's well-being. We also conducted focus groups after the projects ended in which we asked the men about some of their impressions of the impact of the project more broadly, as well as some of the arguments they might make to convince a prison governor about the merits of the project.

Our survey data also demonstrated some of the measures of the project's impact, particularly over time. These data allowed us to gain a broader understanding of some of the key markers of the project's impact.

We also interviewed staff members and distributed questionnaires to them in an effort to gauge their perspectives on the project's impact. We were particularly interested in engaging with staff members who had direct contact with some of the inmates involved.



## 5. The Research Findings

### 5.1 Introduction

The Music in Prisons project makes measurable and substantial impacts on the well-being of participants in prison, and we demonstrate that these findings may have implications not only for these individuals' potential ability to desist from crime, but for their well-being while incarcerated, and in particular their motivation to participate in the educational and skills-building opportunities available to them while they are incarcerated.

We have organised our findings around three core themes: the impact of the Music in Prisons project on **well-being, relationships and learning**. In our assessment of the eight projects we evaluated, we found that it had a consistent and important impact on these three domains. But we begin our description of the findings by focusing on the men's experiences of working together.

### 5.2 The process of creating music together

Over the course of the eight projects, we observed that the impact of the project on the men was directly linked to the acts of creative and artistic expression that they were engaged in. The men regularly commented on how the process of creating, listening to, and collaborating on musical pieces impacted on their sense of self, their well-being, and their relationships to others. In focus groups three months after the music project at both HMP Littlehey and HMP Whatton, for example, the men all commented on how music enhanced their mood, "**broke barriers**" between people, and made people "**more full human beings**". The joy that music brought to the participants and the rest of the prison environment was evident in the Friday performances of the music projects, which often brought audience members - which included both prisoners and staff - to their feet.

The music project was an important form of creative expression for the men, particularly with respect to their history, culture, selfhood, and relationships. For example, Andy from HMP Edmunds Hill wrote a poem about the history of slavery which he performed to the band's music. Throughout the projects, men created and performed music that drew from various cultural traditions, such as reggae, country, blues, and hip-hop. For the men, creating music was an important process of expressing cultural and social identity, style, and creativity. The content of the songs, as well as men's ability to draw from and engage with various musical genres and styles, became an important form of creative engagement. Writing and performing music also became a way of coping within the prison environment; the content of the songs was sometimes about the experience of imprisonment and some of the challenges inherent in it.

Other men wrote tunes about their personal struggles and their connections to their families. For example, Bill from HMP Wandsworth sang a song about his criminal case (Track 7 on the CD included with this report), about which another inmate participant from his group, Phillip commented: **“he has turned something that could have made him angry and violent into something positive. And that song is the perfect example of the benefit of this project”**. Simon from HMP Wayland wrote a song for his children called ‘For My Boys’ (Track 3). We were struck by how the men in all of the projects consistently came together to perform these songs, even if the genres or emotions connected to the music were not initially familiar to them. We surmise that they did this because the process of building a song took precedence over addressing cultural differences.

Various forms of musical and cultural expression would often happen within one song: at HMP Edmund’s Hill, for example, Gajendra, a participant from Sri Lanka who played the djembes, found a way to incorporate his cultural style into an R’n’B song. Throughout the music process, we observed that individuals of various cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds came together in a powerful, and sometimes unprecedented way, particularly in a prison environment where divisions – especially between individuals of different races and ethnicities – are prevalent (Carroll, 1982, Genders and Player, 1989, Toch and Acker, 2004). The participants recognised the significance of this as well: James from HMP Edmunds Hill, for example, said that the project allowed **“people from a diverse range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds to collaborate and work towards a common goal”**. This is echoed in the contention of Chris from HMP Wandsworth that music uses an **“international lung”**.

Finally, a number of the men spoke about the impact of performing and listening to music on their emotions. Victor from HMP Littlehey said, for example, **“when I play the drums, it is like I am dreaming, floating away”**. Max from HMP Brixton said that the music gave him **“peace of mind...it made me relax and realise there is always hope”**. The men at HMP Whatton commented that music engages the brain, making it work after it has become ‘sloppy’ in prison. For this reason, as Table 5.1 shows, there was almost unanimous agreement from those addressed this question, that more arts programmes would benefit prisoners. In focus groups, men frequently noted that they felt music programmes should be a more consistent part of prison life.

**Table 5.1: Views about programmes**

**If you were in charge of the education department of this prison, what kinds of programmes would you have here?**

**97.1%** of participants (n=66 out of 71)\* indicated that they would have **more arts programmes** (including music, painting, drama, etc.)

\*(Hereafter readers should assume that the n numbers reflect the number of participants who addressed any one question)

Table 5.2 below shows differences in attitude and mood immediately before and then immediately after the project.

**Table 5.2: Changes over time**

Question	Immediately before project	Immediately after project	Change as a result of participation.
How much do you enjoy listening to and playing music?	9.56 (Mean score)	9.85 (Mean score)	There was an increase in participants' enjoyment of music.
% of individuals who said that they felt 'confident'?	46.2% (n=30/65)	54.4% (n=37/68)	Participants felt more confident.
% of individuals who agreed with the statement: I can relax and be myself in this prison?	65.2% (n=43/66)	74.2% (n=49/66)	Participants felt more able to relax and be themselves.
How would you rate your experience of working in a group?	8.12 (Mean score)	9.38 (Mean score)	Participants rated their experiences of working in a group better.
% of individuals who agreed with the statement: I often feel very angry?	24.2% (n=16/66)	13.4% (n=9/67)	Fewer participants felt angry.

[Mean scores were calculated for questions where participants were asked to respond on a scale of 1 to 10.]

The findings suggest that the men's experience of the music project was positive in terms of working in a group, feeling more confident or relaxed, and indeed, in terms of enjoying listening to music. These points are amplified in the sections below.

### 5.3 Well-being

The music project had clear and discernible impacts on participants' well-being, particularly on their sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, three factors which psychologists have identified as critical to an individual's sense of well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Nearly 90 per cent (n= 44/49)of participants surveyed one to three months after the project indicated that the feelings from the project lasted for them, and when asked about how positive they felt about the programme, 77.1 per cent (n=37/48) answered ten out of ten.

### 5.3.1 Autonomy

A number of men who participated in the music project described various ways in which the music project instilled a sense of autonomy in them. There were two main dimensions of this feeling: one, the sense by the men that the project made them feel ‘human;’ and two, the sense of self-confidence that they gained. The project leaders also structured the project in a way that enhanced individuals’ sense of autonomy by endowing participants with choices, acknowledging their feelings, and giving them opportunities for self-direction, all factors which have been shown to allow people a feeling of autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2000: 70). By allowing participants to choose which instruments they played, participate actively in the creation and direction of songs, and teasing out people’s resourcefulness, the project also became a kind of safe testing ground for people less accustomed to expressing their autonomy.

### 5.3.2 Humanity

After completing the music project at HMP Wayland, Johnny said: “**I feel human again**”. This sentiment was echoed by a number of other men. Theo from HMP Littlehey connected this feeling of humanity to the experience of inhumanity that many men feel in the prison system. He said: “**Projects like this fill the chasm that is in the prison system and give you back a little bit of your dignity and humanity**”. This sense of humanity that men expressed seemed particularly pronounced by their gender, as some commented that prison took their feelings of masculinity away from them, and in particular the sense that they could exercise any sense of control over their environments. A teacher from HMP Manchester who observed the project said: “**Inmates have found a spark within themselves that they can be proud of**”.

Many of these feelings of humanity could be attributable to the manner in which the project leaders treated the participants. Some men expressed the feeling that they had been recognised and respected as human beings by the project leaders. Walter from HMP Brixton expressed to the project leaders how nice it was to work in a non-judgemental environment.

The men on the projects – particularly those men on vulnerable prisoner units – were particularly sensitive about the stigma and judgement attached to being a prisoner. Throughout the project, we observed that the project leaders were attuned to treating each participant with due consideration and dignity, and were responsible and sensitive when it came to respecting the confidentiality of

individual inmates. This had a particularly strong impact on those men in institutions for vulnerable prisoners or on men who had spent many years in prison, particularly when they were younger. One young man from HMP Wayland commented, for example, that he appreciated being given the sense that he could have a 'normal' conversation with people from the outside world; he said that this gave him a stronger sense that he might be able to communicate and relate to people 'on the outside'. This, he said, gave him more confidence about coming out of prison and desisting from crime; he repeated this sentiment when we followed up with him three months after the project had ended.

### 5.3.3 Self-confidence

We observed the project had a significant impact on individuals' sense of self-esteem and confidence. It was observed by both the researchers and the project leaders throughout the project that a number of men suffered from serious deficits in confidence before the project began, in both their abilities to be self-governing as well as their abilities to exert any control over their life circumstances. The men at HMP Whatton also noted that the experience of incarceration itself lowered their morale and self-esteem, and this was especially true at the vulnerable prisoner units where the project took place. Though this lack of self-esteem manifested itself in many different ways, this lack of confidence seemed to be a relatively common trait amongst many of the participants.

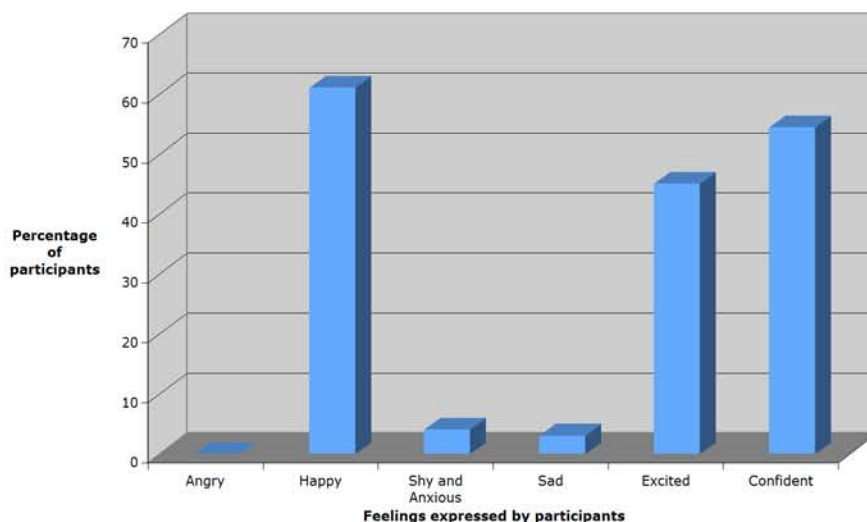
The men's lack of confidence at the start of the project was observable in different ways: in their approach to the instruments, their concerns about performing in front of an audience, their relationship to other members of the group and the project leaders, and in their life outlook more broadly. We observed that the project impacted men's self-esteem in a number of ways, in part through the management of the project itself: the project leaders were adept at acknowledging every individual's effort, and at highlighting their individual strengths, whether they were skilled musicians or not. Paul from HMP Brixton said, **"I appreciated being encouraged and commended"** by the project leaders. We observed that the men were instilled with a sense of confidence and accomplishment after meeting the challenges set out by the very difficult project.

The men also commented on how the CD produced by Music in Prisons from the final performance, as well as the final performance itself, gave them an enormous sense of accomplishment. The performances, which took place on the final Friday of each project, were an opportunity for the men to show what they had done to staff members and other inmates. At several of the prisons, the Governing Governor and other senior level staff members came to the performance and the participants were able to receive their certificates from these figures; we observed this process have an enormous impact on the confidence of several of the men.

The CD, which is designed by a professional graphic designer and produced and mixed by one of the project leaders, is of a very high quality. The men received multiple copies of the CD so they could share their work with family members and friends. Many men commented on how proud they were of the CDs, and how much they valued them as a reminder of their time on the project. Delaney from HMP Littlehey commented that his daughters wouldn't be able to believe that their father was on a CD.

Finally, a number of men built up their confidence through the opportunity to express themselves differently than they could in other prison environments. For example, Simon from HMP Wayland flourished over the course of the project where he had once been withdrawn and hesitant in the rest of the prison life; he wrote a song for his sons and performed proficiently on the guitar (Track 3). A number of other inmates and staff members commented that they had never seen Simon smile, and that he had undergone a complete transformation in his confidence (though Simon said; **“well, I do smile - but only in my cell”**). Sara, the Music in Prisons Projects Director, noted: **“We would not have known he lacks confidence as he came in and involved himself immediately. Maybe he feels comfortable and in control in this situation.”** Sara also describes this process of change in Jamal from HMP Littlehey: He **“got through his lyrics for the first time and as a result got a massive big up from everyone. He is so very shy and nervous and to get it right and have it acknowledged was a massive boost for him”**.

**Figure 5.1: How do you feel right now?**  
(Second survey, immediately after the end of the project)



N.B. Participants were able to select more than one emotion to describe how they were feeling.

Our analysis of the survey data echoes these findings about the impact of the project on the men's levels of confidence. After the activity finished, 65.2 per cent (n = 45/69) of men said that they felt



'very confident' after participating in the activity. When asked after the project to circle images which represented particular emotions, men chose the following emotions: happy (61%, n = 42/69), excited (45%, n = 31/69), and confident (54.4%, n = 37/68). Additionally, in the survey conducted one to three months after the projects ended, 84.8 per cent (n= 39/46) of respondents indicated that the project gave them more confidence to try new things (including arts and education programmes).

#### 5.3.4 Self-efficacy and competency

A number of the men on the projects expressed a sense that the project had impacted their feelings of self-efficacy. They spoke about how the project gave them a sense that they were recognised as individuals with potential. Nearly 71.4 per cent (n = 35/49) of the men surveyed one to three months after the project had ended said that the project had made them feel differently about themselves. In follow-up interviews with the men from HMP Whatton, for example, the men said that the project **"brought out the best in everybody"**. James from HMP Edmunds Hill said that the project helped him **"see people as having something to contribute"**. Bob from HMP Edmunds Hill said that the project **"made me realise that I still have a lot to give in life—my whole outlook has changed"** and that his belief in himself had been **"enhanced"** by the project.

A number of other men described how the project enabled them to express a talent that they could not ordinarily express in prison or elsewhere. They said that prison was overwhelmingly a place where their limitations, rather than their strengths, were on display. Additionally, the focus of the Prison Service in general, and the Learning and Skills departments in particular, on eliciting men's basic and transferable skills did not allow them room to express talents which fell outside of the 'practical' skills delineated by the Service. The men at HMP Edmunds Hill wrote a song called 'Listen,' (Track 1) where the opening line is **'we've come together, to show you how much we can shine.'** These words reflect the felt need of these men to demonstrate their abilities in an environment where they often feel that they are not able to 'shine'.

For many of these men, this experience translated into a greater sense of self-efficacy, which the psychologist Albert Bandura describes as the belief in one's capacity to organise and execute courses of action directed at certain attainments (1997: 2-3). Some of the men in this project described the feeling of momentum they gained from it, not only to do music outside of prison, but also to participate more fully in prison life in general. A governor at HMP Manchester who observed both the project and the progress of prisoners afterwards on his wings, said: **"By performing in front of others it gave the prisoners a great self-belief and just for those few hours took them away from their more violent environment. It also put a little light at the end of their tunnel"**.

Keith from HMP Whatton spoke about how the project impacted his feelings about what he expected to get out of his time in the prison. Whereas before the project he had simply sat in his cell and made matchstick figures, he felt that the project made him now consider doing programmes which he would not have done before. In general, the men expressed views about how the project instilled in them a sense that they could achieve more from their lives. David from HMP Brixton said **“it inspires you to do something positive. It’s better to create something than to destroy it, and when you create music, you’re creating a bit of yourself too”**. Walter from HMP Brixton argued that the project sparked his sense of insight into the direction that he was going.

“ By performing in front of others it gave the prisoners a great self-belief and just for those few hours took them away from their more violent environment. It also put a little light at the end of their tunnel.

”  
Wing Governor, HMP Manchester.



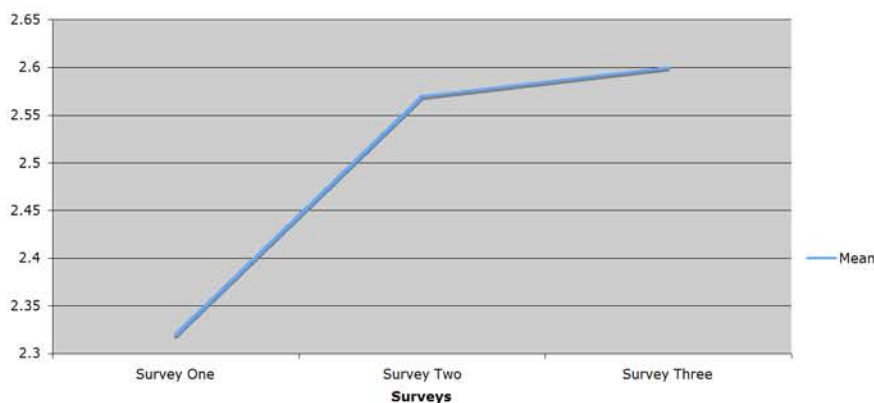
One of the variables associated with self-efficacy that we measured was the impact of the project on men’s sense of hope for the future. Psychologists have linked the experience of hope to well-being (Snyder, 2002: 257). There was a statistically significant increase in men’s feelings of hope for the future over time.

**Table 5.3: I have hope for the future**

	Pre-Project (Survey One)	Immediately Post-Project (Survey Two)	1 to 3 Months Post-Project (Survey Three)
1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree	1.68 (Mean)	1.43 (Mean)	1.4 (Mean)
	Standard Error = .081	SE = .085	SE = .072

(NB. A lower mean value indicates a stronger hope for the future)

**Figure 5.2: I have hope for the future (mean responses)<sup>vi</sup>**



The project also impacted men’s motivation to participate in other activities in the prison, which will be discussed below in the section on education.

## 5.4 Relationships and Relatedness

Because the Music in Prisons project is structured around group work, the collaborative process is essential to its success: musical groups are inherently about communication and relationships—they demand synthesis. John from HMP Wayland said that **“we all came together and...we communicated using music.”** Seventy three per cent (n=52/69) of the participants surveyed after the project ended rated their experience of working in a group a ten on a scale of one to ten. This is an important finding in light of the fact that over 30 per cent of the men (n=17/56) surveyed before the project began said that they generally avoid other inmates. Many men commented on the relationships they built and maintained through and after the project.

The participants also built their confidence through collaboration; making eye-contact, for example, which was difficult for some, was an essential part of a musical piece, and often became the means through which individual gains in confidence could be observed.

#### 5.4.1 Relationships with other inmates

The music project impacted men's relationships to each other as well as to individuals on the outside. Scholars have noted that prisons are increasingly places which individualise inmates (Jewkes, 2005: 378; Crewe, 2005): Much of the work that is now done in Learning and Skills departments, as well as prison workshops, for example, emphasises individual skills development. The Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme, which emphasises personal achievement and behaviour, is firmly rooted in the individual's life and behaviour in the institution. A teacher from Wayland noted that the music project played an important counterbalance to this phenomenon. She said: **"It's so good to see them working together, because so much of what we do here is individualised"**. Reggie from HMP Wayland noted that in this kind of environment, the project had given the men **"new opportunities for friendship, support and encouragement"**.

The music project seemingly helped to build relationships between the men on a number of different levels. As noted above, the inherent nature of the music group dictated that the participants had to listen to each other and make eye contact in order for a song to be successful. Barrie from HMP Edmunds Hill commented: **"When you play in a band you have to listen to others"**. The project also instilled in the men a sense of commitment to the songs and the performance: Reggie from HMP Wayland explained that **"I feel like if I didn't come, I would let everyone else down"**.

A number of the men in the projects also took the initiative to help other people during the week. In all of the prisons, we observed multiple instances of men teaching each other instruments, helping each other with tough sections of a song, and providing positive support. The projects also became a safe testing-ground for demonstrating these leadership qualities; the men would not be teased or punished if they were not perfect at what they attempted to do. Sara, Projects Director, noted at HMP Wayland **"there was a high level of support for each other in the band—this wasn't needed from us but they desperately needed it from one another."** This support translated for some of the men into a greater sense of confidence in interacting with other men who they previously wouldn't have interacted with. The men in all of the projects consistently used the word 'teamwork' when describing the project.

This collaborative and supportive process also built a strong bond between group members. The men at HMP Edmunds Hill spoke about the lasting effects of this bond when we followed up with them three months after the project, and a number of the band members spoke about getting together after they had left prison. Danny, a trainee

musician with the project at HMP Brixton noted that the project **“gave them a positive communal experience, working towards a common goal and building a camaraderie not based on the usual prison inmate bonds.”** Men from all of the prisons repeatedly used the word ‘unity’ to describe the experience. Other men used the words ‘brotherhood’ and ‘family’ to describe it.

#### 5.4.2 Relationships on the outside

The project also impacted on men’s relationships to the outside world. Research has demonstrated that individuals who are incarcerated who have positive family relationships are less likely to re-offend (Laub, Nagin and Sampson, 1998; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002), although efforts to rebuild or form new relationships can be difficult (Farrall, 2002; Farrall and Calverley, 2006). Just over 13 per cent of the participants indicated that one of the things that they do not look forward to in the future is seeing their family, and 10.4 per cent of the men indicated that they did not look forward to seeing their friends. When asked what some of the things were that they thought about for their future, however, nearly 53 per cent of the men indicated that they thought about being with their family. These numbers reflect the anxieties that men experience in returning to their communities and rebuilding relationships which they both value as well as find potentially harmful. That is why some researchers and policymakers have emphasised the importance of encouraging men and women in prison to build positive and meaningful relationships while they are behind bars (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

Discussions with the men suggested that a significant number of men on the project wrote songs for family members, or spoke about how the process of learning an instrument was about developing a skill that they could share with those family members (Tracks 3, 5 and 8 are songs about partners and family members). For example, Delaney from HMP Littlehey spoke about learning the piano so that he could play with his daughters, who were skilled pianists. Sujit from HMP Brixton said that he wanted to learn the piano so he could understand the process his children were going through when they learned the instrument. Andrew from HMP Whatton wrote a song called ‘I love you’ to express feelings to his wife which he said he had been unable to express previously. Sara noted that Ian from HMP Manchester’s ‘big ambition about this project is to send his CD to his mum who will say “this is great”’. Another inmate from Manchester, Fred, said that **“on a personal level it’s let me give something special to my son.”**

#### 5.4.3 Relationships with the project leaders/musicians

The project also gave the men an opportunity to be mentored by and develop relationships with the project leaders. The project leaders were all skilled musicians who were professionally trained; this meant that they were adept at developing original compositions, demonstrating and teaching songs, and facilitating comprehension of

music. A number of men – particularly those who had some musical experience prior to beginning the project – took the project as an opportunity to learn more about music from the leaders, talk to them about opportunities to get involved in musical projects outside of prison, and aspire to their professionalism and success.

The importance of the experience of relatedness in this project cannot be understated. It was perhaps one of the more striking and surprising findings of this project, and may have important consequences for men's well-being and their ability to develop and cultivate empathy towards others.



## Case Study: Tom, HMP Wayland

Tom joined the project at HMP Wayland because of his love of music. He had some experience playing the guitar and writing songs, and became an early and engaged participant in the project. He offered to play one of his own songs for the group, which helped others develop confidence to play and the project to move forward.

Tom shared some of his original lyrics during the music project, and the group ended up playing two of his songs during the performance. Though the project was sometimes a struggle for Tom - he mentioned being anxious and stressed about his wife's pregnancy and the need to find a home when he was released from prison - he derived great confidence and strength from it. Tom also demonstrated his leadership potential during the project, assisting another participant with his guitar-playing, and generally playing a role in organising and leading songs.

Tom developed his confidence and comfort with the group over the course of the project. Projects Director Sara remarked on the third day of the project that he 'has come out of himself more now, is feeling more comfortable maybe and also finding a very common interest with one of the team. He does everything with great enthusiasm and at full volume and is certainly one of the binding characters in the group. He clearly just loves music and has spent a lot of time learning new things and perfecting what he already knows. He remains patient and seems more understanding of those who are less able and who are playing quite inaccurately sometimes on his songs. He is a strong rock musician who is using the time to work at things, learn new things and to have a go at some new stuff on the kit.'

When we returned to HMP Wayland after the project to interview staff members, the student support officer noted that he had seen a significant change in Tom. We interviewed Tom himself at HMP Edmunds Hill, where he was transferred shortly before he was released from prison. When we arrived at the prison and asked to see him, the Deputy Head of Learning and Skills told us that he had known Tom for many years as he had come in and out of the prison system, and he had seen a real change in him.

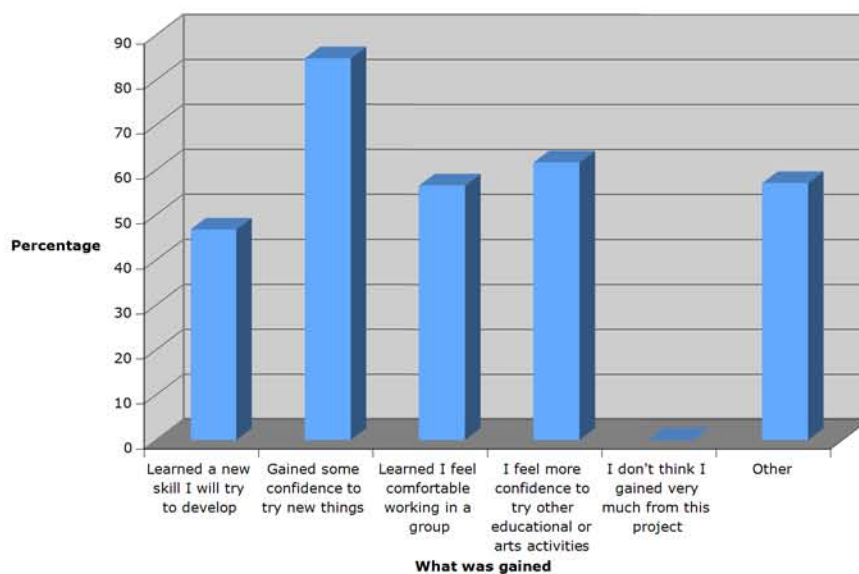
When we surveyed him three months after the project ended, he said that the project had "given me confidence to go out and do something about" his love for music now. He said "I've got a guitar here and must have written a dozen songs and some are quite political." He also said: "It's something that should be expanded to everyone that has got themselves in a rut - not just criminals - to give them self-worth. For me the people that don't feel they have anywhere to go. To give them a sense of self-satisfaction and freedom."

Tom was released from prison in February 2008, and he now lives with his partner and eight month old daughter in Essex. He contacted the Irene Taylor Trust about working on a project with them, and is now set to work as a trainee musician on a project. Though he has suffered from a back injury which prevents him from working, Tom is now highly motivated to pursue his interest in music. He says the project gave him a renewed confidence in his abilities as both a musician and a lyricist, and he has been seeking out opportunities like the one he has pursued with the Irene Taylor Trust. He says that for people like him, who go in and out of the prison system for 'stupid things,' the music project is something that people can 'get their teeth stuck into' and which they can find grounding in.

## 5.5 Learning

We found that the project made several discernable impacts on participants' learning skills as well as their motivation to participate in additional learning and skills projects. In particular, we observed that the project impacted some of the 'softer,' more abstract skills that may be important in developing intellectual competency, such as communication and listening skills, testing and expressing one's voice, and building the self-efficacy that may be necessary to try new skills, such as learning to read and write. Jamal from HMP Littlehey recognised this when he said to the group, "**this is the time to make mistakes, if they are going to happen**" when he spoke about the rehearsal process; though he was speaking of a specific experience, his thoughts resonate more broadly. The project impacted on participants' motivation to become more actively involved in the programmes offered in prisons through the Learning and Skills departments. This was particularly important because nearly 28 per cent (n=16/58) of participants indicated that they had never participated in other educational programmes in prison prior to doing the project.

Figure 5.3: What do you think are some of the things that you gained from the music project? (3rd survey)



In the chart above, comments in the 'Other' category included:

- 'trusting people'
- 'having a good time'
- 'sense of accomplishment'
- 'how to interact socially with a range of people you wouldn't ordinarily mix with'
- 'a realisation that I could do more than I thought I could'
- 'it just made me realise that I still have a lot to give in life'
- 'it's just a spiritual feeling'
- 'it just goes to show that everyone is capable'.



### 5.5.1 Literacy and communication

A number of the participants involved in the projects had limited literacy skills. Although we do not have exact statistics about these individuals, we estimate based on our knowledge of the individuals that as many as 25 per cent of the participants had difficulty reading and writing. Approximately 13 per cent of the participants were non-native English speakers. Over the course of the project, we observed a number of ways in which the limited reading and writing skills of these individuals were accommodated by the project, and perhaps even improved on by it. Project leaders were flexible to the needs of participants who had limited skills in these areas; for example, if an individual struggled to write the lyrics to a song that they wanted to perform, project leaders would sit with them and write down the words. For example, a project leader worked closely with Simon from HMP Wayland to write his song for his two boys (Track 3) Project leaders also encouraged Reggie from HMP Wayland in his writing and performance after he expressed anxiety about reading and writing because of his dyslexia.

The project leaders also displayed great creativity and innovation in working with individuals who had limited language and literacy skills. For example, Stephen from HMP Whatton could not read or write as a result of a stroke, but he wanted to perform a song. The project leaders worked with him to write a song during a creative writing exercise, then they read aloud portions of the song to Stephen, who repeated those words back into a recording device. The band then developed music for those words, which were played over the speakers in the live performance (Track 4). Stephen, after hearing the performance, was overcome with emotion.

On another project, the project leaders developed a system of communication with Vivek, a participant from India who did not speak English. They labelled the keyboard keys with letters and then wrote the order of the letters on a piece of paper for Vivek. They then pointed to the letters when he had to play them during the performance. Each of these efforts allowed individuals to participate more fully in the project, and subsequently perhaps even participate more fully in prison life where they might have ordinarily been excluded or alienated.

“ The effects will last as it allowed the inmates to show skills which may not have been visible prior to the programme. ”

Teacher, HMP Littlehey.

We observed over the course of the project that playing music served to facilitate expression for many of the men, particularly those who were not able to express their voices elsewhere in prison life. For example, teachers from HMP Littlehey told us that they were eager to see how the project might impact a participant named Theo, who was

ordinarily very quiet and withdrawn. Theo, a musician outside of prison, expressed great confidence and musical ability in the project, and the teachers all said that they saw a side of him that they had never seen before. The example of Theo is just one of several in which men were able to express a part of their culture, history or selfhood in a way in which they said they weren't able to in other parts of prison life. The opportunity to express 'voice,' was, for a number of men, an important stepping-stone to engagement with further activities in the prison or simply a way of alleviating the pains of imprisonment. One teacher from the education department at HMP Littlehey who observed the project said, **"the effects will last as it allowed the inmates to show skills which may not have been visible prior to the programme"**.

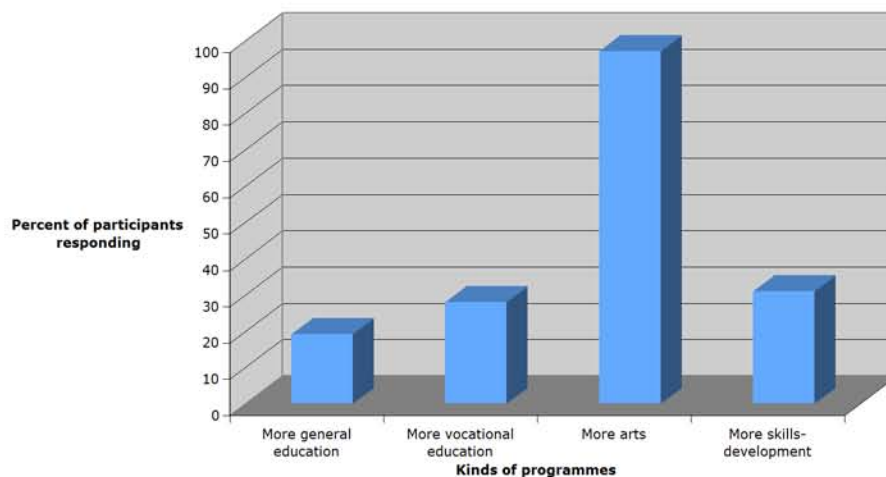
Finally, because the music project itself was a form of communication that required that men engage with each other through eye contact, listening and words, we observed that the project made an impact on their skills in these areas. The project also enhanced men's abilities to articulate themselves. Bill from HMP Wandsworth, for example, whom the others found very difficult to understand due to his heavy accent and speech impediment, developed confidence in his speech and articulation through his performance. In her notes about Bill, Sara noted: **"A man who few can understand, but he turned up with a folder full of beautifully written lyrics and presented two songs to the group, one about how he had felt he had let his mum down and the other about a circle of love"**.



The difficulty for men in listening to and communicating with each other should not be understated. However, the men’s ability to communicate with each other was by no means perfect, and in some prisons it was perhaps more difficult than others. For example, in HMP Whatton, which is classified as a prison for vulnerable prisoners, the men appeared to lack confidence in themselves and were largely focused on their individual efforts. The project leaders therefore had a more difficult time trying to co-ordinate the group.

The positive feelings about their experiences come through very strongly in Figure 5.4 below which describes the importance that they attached to arts based projects such as the Music in Prisons project.

**Figure 5.4: What programmes would you have if you were in charge of the prison education department? (2nd survey)**



### 5.5.2 Workplace, management skills and behaviour

By anyone’s standards, the music project was extremely hard work for the men. The twice-daily sessions would last up to three hours at a time, and the work involved was often demanding and stressful. The sessions involved the full use of individuals’ faculties - intellectual and physical. Men would often find they had calluses and cuts from playing the instruments, for example, and faced immense frustration in trying to master songs. However, the men in all of the projects remained generally positive about doing the work of creating songs together. Amanda, the Writer in Residence at HMP Manchester who observed the project noted, that the men achieved a **“sense of the real discipline needed to work creatively with others”**.

The projects also sometimes raised some ‘real world’ problems – such as conflict between group members, problems with equipment and facilities, and project coordination, that often had to be addressed by group members themselves. As noted above, the project became a safe testing place for the resolution of these problems. Conflicts or problems that arose within the group that may have been dealt with differently on the prison wings – by physical fights, for example – had

to be dealt with through negotiation and mediation instead. For example, when a conflict arose within the group at HMP Edmunds Hill, the project leaders convened a meeting in which group members reflected on what was happening. Though some of the men were angry and upset, they had to talk out their difficulties and continue with the project, and they did so with a successful performance. When we interviewed the men from HMP Edmunds Hill a month after the project ended, one of the group members said, **“I wouldn’t have changed it, even the arguing”**.

“ It helps people relax. Takes the stress out of their mind. Lets them release their emotions. Especially in here where it’s all bottled up. I’m sure there would be less fights because when you come out you feel calm. You’ve mellowed out and you don’t want to get into trouble. ”

Leon, HMP Wandsworth.

The Projects Director, Sara, has observed that part of the approach to managing group struggles is to create a safe and supportive structure for the music to happen within: By acknowledging the inherent chaos in creating and establishing a music group in a prison environment, but trying to manage it nonetheless. When reflecting on the project at HMP Wandsworth, Sara said: **“It was noted by staff how patient we all were with the madness that was occurring in the room. In particular, how we were able to let the madness get to a certain point and how more often than not it burnt itself out, but on the occasions it didn’t one of us dealt with it.”**

The men’s negative attitudes and behaviours were also affected by the project. Though many of the men would say that the project helped reduce tension and stress, it could be argued that a number of the men also gained new insights into the nature of that tension and stress, and learned how to manage them more effectively. Not only did a number of men remark on how the project helped to ‘reduce tension’ in the prison environment, they also spoke about how they ‘talked things out more’ and saw people differently. Approximately 64 per cent (n=23/36) of men surveyed said that the programme made them feel differently about others. Leon from HMP Wandsworth said: **“It helps people relax. Takes the stress out of their mind. Lets them release their emotions. Especially in here where it’s all bottled up. I’m sure there would be less fights because when you come out you feel calm. You’ve mellowed out and you don’t want to get into trouble”**. Mike from HMP Edmunds Hill similarly remarked that the project allowed inmates to let off steam that would otherwise be let off in a negative form, for example, through violence. Sergio from HMP Edmunds Hill noted: **“Music tames the wild beast”**.

Staff members noted a number of significant changes in the behaviour and motivation in individual inmates after the project ended. A wing governor from HMP Manchester, quoted above, who is responsible for

approximately 280 prisoners on two wings in the prison, observed that the music project **“has [had] a calming effect on them thus channelling their frustrations”**. He also said **“I have already noticed on my wings a few of the performers are more settled and are interacting with staff more, they are a lot calmer and less confrontational”**.

Uniformed staff members at HMP Wandsworth mentioned to the project leaders that there were a couple of participants who were real problems on the wing, but the week in the project significantly impacted on their behaviour. An officer at Wandsworth commented that the project **“could be used as a vehicle to effect change in behaviour.”** A prison induction officer at HMP Edmunds Hill who observed the project said **“the prisoner I know best has taken a really positive step and is looking into getting involved in helping others with music when he is released and he states that most of the guys that got involved enjoyed and benefited from it”**.

### 5.5.3 Routes into learning

One research aim was to determine whether the music project had any impact on men’s interest in participating in other educational programmes. Just over 72 per cent of men who participated in the project had participated in educational programmes, both inside and outside of the prison, prior to beginning the music project. When we asked the men immediately after the project whether they felt that it had given them more confidence to participate in other educational programmes, 88 per cent (n=58/66) said that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. When we asked men in their third survey about how likely they were to participate in more arts or education programmes as a result of participating in the Music in Prisons programme, 73.5 per cent (n = 36/49) of the men circled ten on a scale of one to ten.

Needless to say, questions as to whether or not there is real impact on motivation to learn new things might depend on previous experiences, and on how individuals are selected and recruited to the music projects. We comment further below. What is unmistakable is the increased confidence to participate, regardless of previous patterns of participation in educational programmes. Table 5.4 shows this very clearly:

**Table 5.4: Confidence to participate in programmes**

This project has given me more confidence to participate in other educational programmes.

(2nd survey – immediately after the end of the project)

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
TOTALS	60.6% (n=40/66)	27.3% (n=18)	12.1% (n=8)	0

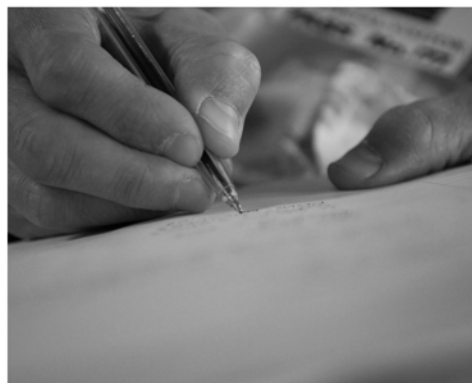
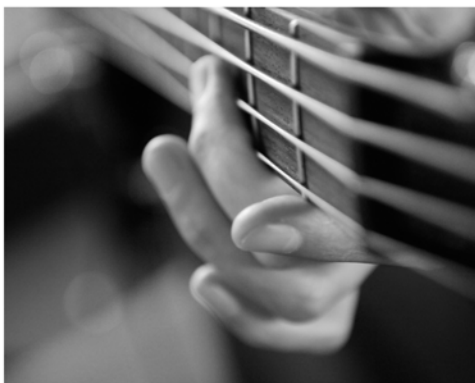
A number of men in the project saw the project as an opportunity to learn more about music so they could apply and enhance their skills inside prison if they were able, or outside upon their release. For example, Orlando from HMP Littlehey joined the project in order to boost his skills so he could apply for a distance-learning course in music. There were a number of other men like Orlando who were serious about learning music and applying their skills in it on the outside. The men were interested in improving on their skills of music comprehension, performance and production and in perhaps taking them to a higher level through other qualifications.

“ The project has helped to engage some of the prisoners who do not always benefit from more traditional methods of education. ”

Head of Learning and Skills, HMP Manchester.

Though some of the men were particularly interested in learning more about the arts and music, others found that they gained a new sense of confidence about engaging more fully in prison life. From the data gathered since the programme finished we have learned that a number inmates have gone on to participate in new education courses, a number of inmates have gone on to participate in new workshops, and some have assumed new responsibilities in the prison. The Head of Learning and Skills at HMP Manchester said, **“the project has helped to engage some of the prisoners who do not always benefit from more traditional methods of education. Several put their names down for the Writer in Residence group as a result of the project and this will help them to improve their literacy skills.”**

In terms of participants going on to assume positions of responsibility, one individual became a chapel orderly, another became a peer supporter and one a peer tutor with the Toe by Toe literacy programme, for example. More generally, staff have described prisoners as being supportive of others within the education department following the music project. At HMP Wayland, for example, where our data set is more complete than from other prisons, 7 out of the 9 participants in the music project have engaged in further courses following the Music in Prisons project.



## Case Study: Keith, HMP Whatton

Keith came to the music project from the wing for retired men at HMP Whatton. He was one of a number of men who were strongly encouraged to participate by a member of the prison regimes staff, in part through the enticement that they would be paid to participate.

Keith expressed his anxiety about participating in the music project at the outset. He said that he spent most of his days making figures from matchsticks and watching television, and that he didn't participate in any of the prison activities. A recovering alcoholic, Keith said he was beginning a new life, emerging from the cocoon of alcoholism and seeing the world differently, but that the process was a slow and difficult one. He said that he would "have a look" at the project, and that it was a bit of a "new adventure" for him outside of his wing.

Keith had never played any instruments before, and decided to tackle the bass guitar. He worked hard at learning the bass over the course of the week. The project leaders observed that Keith was one of the most musical people in the room, and that he paid close attention to what was going on around him and what was happening with the music. They consistently spoke about Keith's important contribution to the group, and we observed that their encouragement and support of Keith influenced his sense of confidence as the week progressed.

Keith told the project leaders that they would never know how hard it was for him to actually walk into the door on Monday morning and begin the project. He said that he was incredibly scared about the prospect of doing the project, particularly because he had no idea what would happen in it.

Keith described his experience in the project as a transition back into 'reality.' Though he had stopped drinking six months before the project started, he said that the project was the first big thing that he had done when he was present and clear about what he was doing.

In his survey after the project ended, Keith said that he was very likely to participate in other arts or music programmes if they were offered to him, and that the programme had given him more confidence to participate in other educational programmes. When we asked him how confident he felt after participating in the activity, he indicated that he was 'very confident.'

Keith said that he felt better about himself for doing the project, and that just one week earlier he wouldn't have done it. He rated his experience in the project very highly and said "I'm still on cloud nine" after it ended. Three months after the project ended, Keith said he still felt the effects of the project, that he now felt confident about being able to do things he would never have tried within the prison regime, and was willing to participate more actively.

It became clear from speaking to and observing Keith that the project had deeply influenced how he approached and understood his time behind bars, which in turn may ultimately influence his choices and direction in life beyond bars. He had, in his own words, 'woken up.'

## 5.6. Adjudications

A further measure of the impact of the project concerns behaviour within the prison and particularly disciplinary offences. Does experience of the music project improve behaviour where it has been problematic? Measurement of this sort requires reliable data on patterns of behaviour before and after participation on the project, as well as a control group of inmates who do not experience the music project. We did not have this kind of data and given the varying selection procedures for inmates to join the music projects (with inmates being selected from education departments in some prisons, and in others some inmates being selected because they had no prior behaviour problems, or because staff thought that particular inmates would 'benefit' from the music project), we cannot make definitive claims.

Nevertheless, we collected adjudication data for 77 per cent (n=55/71) of the men. The rest had either been released or moved on to a prison where it was not possible to obtain data.

- Of those for whom we were able to collect data, 89 per cent (n=49/55) had no adjudications in the 3 months prior to the project. This is because prisons often recruit from those men with good behaviour to make the process of security clearance simpler.
- Of the 11 per cent (n=6/55) who did have adjudications (and some as many as 4) in the previous 3 months, none of them received any adjudications during the project or for the 3 month follow-up period afterwards.

Informal staff observations support the idea that the music projects generally facilitated engagement with prison staff and other prison programmes and courses, in particular for at least two of the inmates who staff had identified as individuals who had spent much of their adult lives in prison. For example, a Principal Officer at HMP Manchester observed a significant change in several of the men who participated in the project. He said, **“of all of the men who took part, the most significant change was in Ian. Before, I used to spend most of my time fighting him on the wings, but he really turned a corner after the project. He did have lots of adjudications in the past, but none after the project. I was also wing governor for Alex and Sunil. Both of them were quite notorious gang members, but they both changed after the project. All three of them really turned a corner. I was so impressed, I put a comment on their wing records.”**



## Case Study: Ian, HMP Manchester

On the first morning of the project, Ian announced to the group that he was “not into nowt, but I’ll try anything. I’m not shy!” However, in his preliminary questionnaire Ian revealed that “I’m pretty shy and don’t really like doing things.” Ian’s shyness was noted by the project team. He spent much of the first day with his head in his hands, unable to accept any help or support from the team.

On the second day of the project, Ian worked hard with the Writer in Residence to put together some lyrics for a soul number, which he had refused to do on the first day as it was “too gay.” As the band began working on his song, Ian suddenly became engaged with the whole process, wanting to know everyone’s names and taking on board all the suggestions made. (Track 6)

During the week, Ian took huge steps forward, practicing diligently and developing patience. Once his song had started to emerge, Ian’s confidence and enthusiasm also grew. By Wednesday he had already picked out his outfit for the gig and was looking forward to sharing his achievements with his mum, saying repeatedly: “You know what, I can’t wait ‘til this is done and I get my CD and my mum says ‘you know what, this is great.’”

Over the course of the week, Ian’s confidence grew so dramatically that it was even noticed by other prisoners on the project.

Before the project, Ian had a reputation within the prison as being someone who was “difficult to manage on the wings” and, when asked how he got on with other inmates, he commented that he “often got into confrontations.” Ian had accumulated a total of four adjudications in the three months before the project began, but didn’t have any adjudications either during or three months after the project ended.

One of the wing officers commented: “Of all the men who took part, the most significant change was in Ian. Before, I used to spend most of my time fighting him on the wings, but he really turned a corner after the project. He did have lots of adjudications in the past, but none after the project. I was so impressed, I put a comment in his wing records.”

Ian himself noticed changes in his behaviour. Before the project, Ian strongly agreed with the statement ‘I often feel very angry.’ Immediately after the project, Ian agreed with the statement, but commented that this was “less so this week” [during the project]. Six weeks after the project, asked to reflect back on what changes he had noticed in himself, he observed that “I’ve not been in any trouble recently”.

## 5.7. Recruitment

As previously implied, one of the possible limitations of an evaluation of this kind is the absence of a control group or reliable data on participants. From the data we have been given, for example, we are aware that 72.4 per cent (n=42/58) indicated that they had previously been involved in educational projects. Indeed, the evidence in Tables 5.5 and 5.6 below suggests that many of those selected for the music projects were already motivated to participate in educational activities of one kind or another.

**Table 5.5: Motivation upon hearing about the project.**

When you heard about the project, what did you think?

(Survey one - pre-project)

	'That's for me'	'I'm not so sure about this'
TOTALS	95.5% (n = 63/66)	4.5% (n = 3)

**Table 5.6: Motivation to take part in activities.**

I feel motivated to take part in activities in this prison.

(Survey one - pre-project)

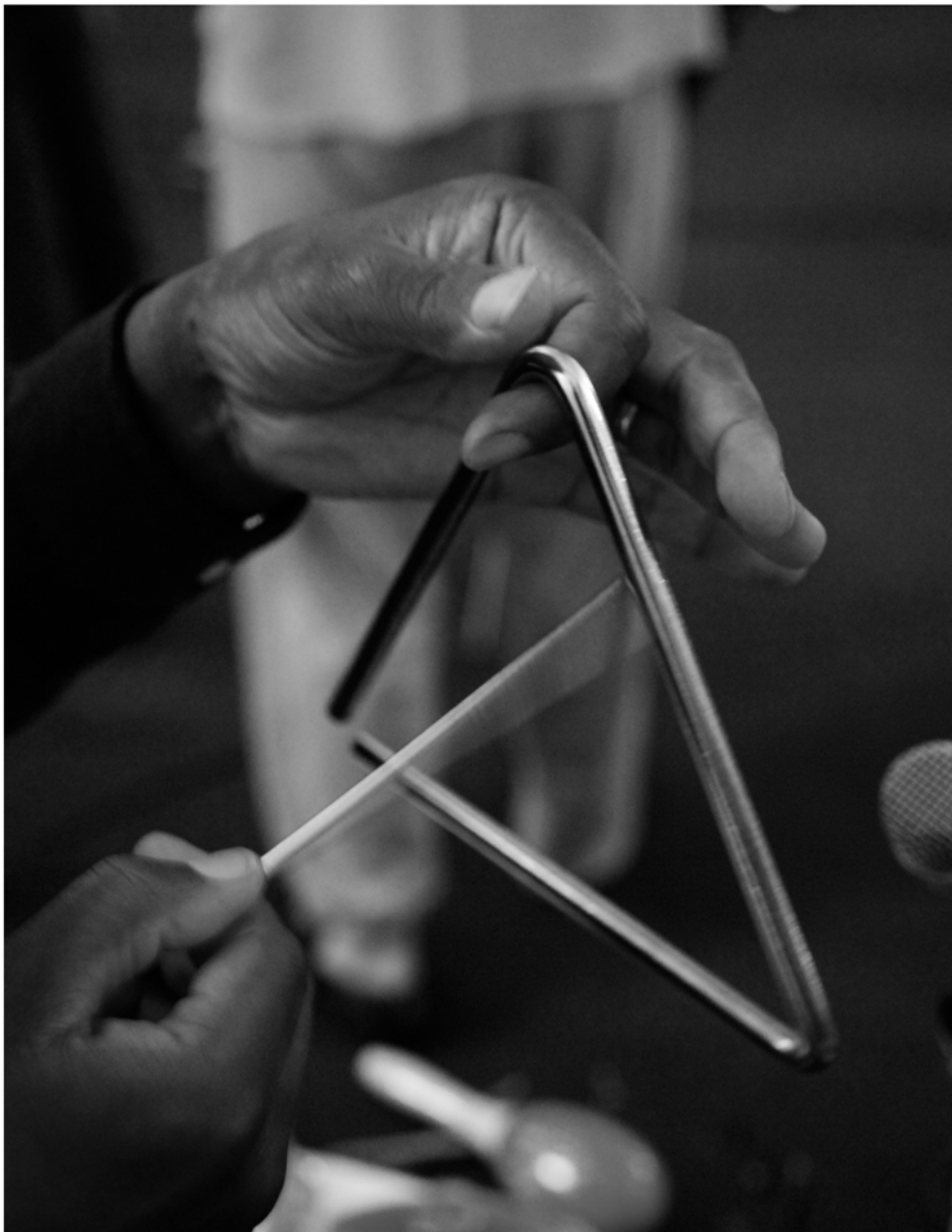
	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
TOTALS	43.3% (n=29/67)	47.8% (n=32)	6% (n=4)	3% (n=2)

The recruitment strategies for the music project by the prison administrations may have limited the pool of participants to those individuals who were already motivated to participate in activities to begin with and who did not have prior behaviour problems. For example, at a few of the prisons, posters describing the music project were only circulated in the education department, and so the project was only available to those already participating in classes offered there. In another prison, we had the opportunity to observe the selection process for participants, which involved eliminating individuals who had prior adjudications or who were considered to have problematic behaviour. The Head of Learning and Skills at HMP Wandsworth confirmed that all participants underwent security clearance before joining the project.

It is likely that the very significant risk procedures that prison staff have to go through with prisoners when assessing them for any activity leads to the tendency to draw on those who have already been accepted by the education department or who have been active members of institutional life. In fact, 82.6 per cent (57/69) of the men surveyed said that they had previously participated in music, arts or

educational programmes before. However, it is clear that there is scope to reach beyond this, and based on our evaluation of the process of the music project and the skills of the musicians, we argue that they are more than equipped to do this.

Based on our observations and interviews, the men who engaged in the project represented a wide range of backgrounds and interests. Many of them were extremely motivated to participate and came for their love of music. A handful of others had been told that they should participate in the programme by staff members; at HMP Whatton, for example, six out of nine of the participants came from the wing for retired men, having been actively encouraged to participate in the project and offered remuneration to participate. From speaking with staff and examining our survey data it is clear that at least twenty of the men had been specifically encouraged to participate because they were considered more difficult to engage or harder to reach: We think it is an encouraging sign that staff would make such an effort.



## 6. Concluding Comments

- The findings thus far show that the Music in Prisons project has beneficial effects on well-being, relationships, learning capacity and motivation. It is less clear at present what the overall impact on adjudications is – given the need for a comparison or control sample. Data deficiencies make it difficult to interpret patterns of behaviour across the prisons, although staff have given us positive reports on particular individuals.
- Our analysis of the findings leads us to suggest that the project has a positive impact on the men involved. We would argue that the Music in Prisons project can play a role in contributing to the fulfilment of the National Offender Management Service's seven pathways to reducing re-offending, and in particular the pathways that relate to education, training and employment; children and families; and attitudes, thinking and behaviour (National Offender Management Service, 2004). The project has the potential to play a role in facilitating an individual's confidence to participate in education as well as their intellectual competencies; it serves to help individuals to build and maintain positive relationships with their families and with other individuals both inside and outside of prison; and it impacts positively on individuals' thinking and emotions. As Jo Tilley-Riley, Director of Strategy and Funding for Music in Prisons, argued in 2007: 'They have to learn to talk and listen; communication is essential if you're in a band. For some, it's the first time they've ever done this, and since many prisoners find conventional courses hard, fail to complete them and become demoralised, finishing a project is crucial for confidence...an inmate we've just been with had been banned from every educational course in the prison. He stayed for the duration and was brilliant.' (The Guardian, March 1st, 2007:28).
- There is further follow-up work to do to monitor participation in courses and adjudications to determine the impact of the Music in Prisons project. This could be facilitated in a test project in one or two prisons (assuming security clearance for participants) by identifying a small group of prisoners who have not previously engaged in educational courses of any kind and who perhaps have a history of adjudications.
- Research indicates that there is a relationship between an individual's sense of self-efficacy and confidence to participate in educational activities (Zimmerman, et al., 1992). This project clearly does impact on individuals' feelings of self-efficacy, as well as engaging those individuals with limited or undeveloped educational skills who may not have succeeded in traditional educational settings. This leads us to surmise that the music project creates a pathway for some inmates to engage in the skills training that they so obviously need. Perhaps this is rooted in the approach of the programme: McNeill et al have outlined that 'it seems that offenders require active and participative rather than didactic (lecturing), unstructured or experiential methods' (2005:18). There is support for experiential initiatives from pedagogic work on

multiliteracy; for example, Cope and Kalantzis posit that 'effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national borders' (2003:6).

- Men's experiences of the project, and particularly the encouragement they felt to try things without judgement and to work together on a venture, clearly facilitated the development of their individual competencies and self-esteem. The individual competences gained through the project may have implications not only for short-term behaviour, but perhaps also for foundational aspects of selfhood and human capital (the capacity to co-operate, relate to others, negotiate and share, for example). These things can lead to improved outcomes once someone has been released from prison - for example, in terms of establishing relationships and confidence in one's self and abilities, all of which contribute to the development of social capital (opportunities, connections and new horizons). As McNeill et al have put it: 'Desistance requires social capital (opportunities) as well as human capital (capacities)' (2005: 32). As some of the participants we have profiled have indicated, the project is a powerful emotional experience. It is arguable that it is on the basis of an accumulation of such experiences that the potential for change increases.
- Finally, it is clear that the Music in Prisons project contributes to the Prison Service's aim to provide 'safe, secure and decent regimes'.



## 7. Recommendations

Our evaluation of the music project leads us to make some important recommendations about the uses, recruitment and management of music projects in prisons.

**1** During the course of our evaluation, we had the opportunity to observe the management and organisation of all of the projects. We recognise that these projects take an enormous amount of organisation and coordination - as well as the active participation - on the part of prison staff. Many prison staff members in these projects should be commended for their hard work in helping to make these projects successful; those projects that we felt were most successful were the ones where staff:

- Invested in the success of the programme.
- Played an active and sustained role in the recruitment of participants, particularly in the months leading up to the project.
- Helped to facilitate our successful evaluation and were cooperative with our requests for data.
- Were well-organised with respect to the security concerns of the project.

**2** With respect to the utility of the music project in general, our data indicate the importance which the participants give to the role of music projects in the Learning and Skills agenda more broadly. While we recognise that their support for music and arts project may stem directly from their experience (and proximity to) the music project itself, we suggest that the level of inmate support for arts projects more generally - and their sense that their needs are not being met in this respect - should be given serious consideration. As we have noted above, the benefits of arts programmes on individual well-being cannot be underestimated.

**3** In order for the Music in Prisons project - and other projects like it - to have the greatest impact, we recommend that the prisons extend this opportunity to other sections of the prison population. Based on our evaluation of the process of the music projects, it is clear that the leaders of the Music in Prisons project are well-equipped to work with a range of individuals, including those who may be considered by staff to have behavioural problems. We also feel that this opportunity should be extended to those individuals who are not already engaged in Learning and Skills departments, because, as suggested above, the project may have a positive impact on an individual's motivation to participate in further education. We recommend that prisons target particular prisoners as a further attempt to extend the evaluations of 'what works'.

Though the project had a positive impact in all of the prisons we evaluated, we felt that some of the projects could have been more successful had participants been more thoughtfully recruited. Preparation in terms of thinking about the appropriateness of any chosen space for the music project and possible obstacles to getting prisoners to the music project would also have helped. Finally, the emphasis on assessing 'what works' involves recognition that evaluations involve the need for follow-up data.



## End notes

<sup>i</sup> We attempted to conduct the evaluation at HMP Cardiff in April 2008, but the project was cancelled after we arrived at the prison and learned that the project had been organised for a space that was situated above a video-linked courtroom. Prison administrators were unable to find an alternative space and so the project had to be cancelled.

<sup>ii</sup> We administered the survey questionnaire one month after the project ended in remand prisons and in those Category C prisons where inmates were most likely to be released within one month of the project's conclusion. In other prisons we administered the questionnaire in the second or third month following the completion of the music project in those establishments.

<sup>iii</sup> Non parametric models differ from parametric models in that the model structure is not specified a priori but is instead determined from data. The term *nonparametric* is not meant to imply that such models completely lack parameters but that the number and nature of the parameters are flexible and not fixed in advance.

<sup>iv</sup> We have changed the names of all of the participants described in this report.

<sup>v</sup> We conducted a statistical analysis of the change of participant's hope for the future over time using the Hotelling's Trace test. This test measures the overall differences in group means. It is a test that is used in situations when more than one outcome variable has been measured. The scores we obtained were:  $F(2, 45) = 6.86, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .234$ . Before the project started, the mean rating of hope for the future was 1.7 ( $SE = .081$ ) and this increased to a mean of 1.44 immediately after the project ended ( $SE = .086$ ), with a lower score in this case representing a stronger hope for the future. This was maintained until after one to three months after the project ended ( $M=1.41, SE=.072$ ). The F score is used to test the overall differences between group means,  $\eta^2$  represents the effect size of the score, and SE represents the Standard Error, or how much variability there is across samples from the same population. The Standard Errors reported here are small, and therefore demonstrate that the statistic is an accurate reflection of the population from which the sample came (Field, 2005: 730-745).

<sup>vi</sup> The chart was created by subtracting the mean scores from the number four; this allows us to visually express the increase in the mean scores, even though the higher mean score in our statistical analysis actually represents a lower sense of hope for the future.

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