

The Writers in Prison Network

Special Projects Programme

Evaluation

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Contents

Section One:	Introduction	3
Section Two:	Methodology	4
Section Three:	The National Union of Journalists Pathways project	5
3.1	Project outline	5
3.2	The NUJ Pathways to Journalism model	5
3.3	HMP Wormwood Scrubs: an NUJ Pathways case study	7
3.4	The challenges of delivering the NUJ Pathways programme	7
3.5	The benefits of delivering the NUJ Pathways programme	8
3.6	Course administration and assessment	10
3.7	NUJ Pathways the WIPN/ NUJ development strategy	11
3.8	Summary	12
3.9	NUJ Pathways recommendations	12
Section Four:	Stories Connect: Changing Lives Through Stories	14
4.1	Project outline	14
4.2	The Stories Connect model	14
4.3	'Talking Shop': a Stories Connect case study	16
4.4	The benefits of delivering the Talking Shop project	17
4.5	The challenges of delivering Talking Shop	19
4.6	Stories Connect recommendations.....	20
Section Five:	The Melting Pot project: creative writing with DSPD prisoners	22
5.1	Project outline	22
5.2	DSPD specific project.....	22
5.3	The Melting Pot model.....	24
5.4	Key project delivery developments.....	26
5.5	Contribution to the wellbeing of men on the Unit and the therapeutic setting	27
5.6	Summary	30
5.7	Melting Pot project recommendations.....	31
Section Six:	The WIPN Special Projects recommendations	32
6.1	Summary	32
6.2	Marketing and advertising strategy development.....	32
6.3	Developing creative writing products as an intervention.....	32
6.4	The Introduction of an effective monitoring and evaluation data strategy	33

The Writers in Prison Network Special Projects Evaluation

Section One: Introduction

The Writers in Prison Network (WIPN) was appointed by Arts Council England to administer the Writers in Residence Scheme in 1998. This scheme places experienced professional artists into prisons for two days per week over two years. The residencies are to support writers and creative artists into prisons to deliver creative writing, drama, video, music, oral storytelling, journalism, creative reading and publishing programmes to offenders. In addition to the core business of administrating the Writers in Residence Scheme, the WIPN also provide a support and advice package called the Special Projects programme. This programme is designed to encourage Writers in Residence to apply for external funding to further develop their creative ideas into a format that can be used in other offender settings. This provides WIPN with the opportunity to support offender programmes that have the potential to provide a long lasting legacy beyond the original residency timescale. A myriad of products/programmes have been developed through this programme¹.

WIPN commissioned the Hallam Centre for Community Justice (HCCJ) to conduct an evaluation to inform and support the future development of the WIPN. The evaluation period ran from October 2010 to September 2011. As part of this evaluation, WIPN selected three Special Projects as case studies for inclusion. This report contains the evaluation of these three Special Projects:

- Special Project 1: National Union of Journalists Pathways to Journalism
- Special Project 2: Stories Connect
- Special Project 3: The Melting Pot²

Project specific recommendations are provided at the end the sections devoted to each project. More general recommendations which apply across all Special Projects are contained in Section 6.

¹For more detail with regard to other WIPN Special Projects see the leaflet 'Award Winning specialist professional artists with in-depth prison experience: Special Arts Projects from the Writers in Prison Network'" (2010 edition, updated annually).

² The Melting Pot programme is being evaluated by the HCCJ over a three-year period.

Section Two: Methodology

The HCCJ adopted a qualitative research approach to the Special Projects. Three evaluation visits were conducted in prisons where the three selected Special Projects were currently being delivered. Evaluation data was collected as follows:

Special Project 1: National Union of Journalists Pathways to Journalism

- Focus group with seven prisoners currently engaging with the course/completed the course (n=7)
- Interviews with Prison Education Tutors delivering the programme (n=2)
- Interview with Offender Learning Manager overseeing the delivery

Special Project 2: Stories Connect

- Interview with Writer in Residence
- Interviews with Stories Connect Facilitators (n= 2)
- Interview with Head of Learning and Skills
- Focus group with six prisoners who attended the programme (n=6)
- Interview with Writer in Residence who originally created the Stories Connect model

Special Project 3: The Melting Pot

- Attendance and observation of a Melting Pot Steering Group meeting
- Interviews with prison wing staff (n=3)
- Interview with Psychology Research Team member
- Interview with Melting Pot Coordinator/Lead Writer
- Interviews with prisoners currently engaging in the project (n=7)
- Interview with a Visiting Writer
- Interview with a Prison Education Tutor

Evaluation visits took place in May 2011 and examined the delivery and development of the projects and the impact of programmes on prisoners, the host prisons and those responsible for their delivery.

Section Three: The National Union of Journalists Pathways project

3.1 Project outline

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Pathways to Journalism programme is an accredited course which meets with NUJ industry standards. The programme resulted from a developmental partnership between the Writer in Residence at HMP Wandsworth, WIPN, the NUJ, and the Education Department at HMP Wandsworth. The NUJ Pathways programme teaches fundamental journalistic principles, such as writing style, accuracy, effective page design and magazine production skills. The programme is recognised by the NUJ, supported by the National Council for the Training of Journalists and approved by the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit. Between January and September 2011, the NUJ Pathways course ran in a total of eight prisons³.

The NUJ Pathways programme was initially developed by a Writer in Residence (2009-2012) and the then General Secretary of the NUJ, who are the authors of the initial NUJ Pathways syllabus. The initial course outline has since been further developed and the WIPN have mediated negotiations with the Open College Network (OCN) in order to achieve accreditation status. WIPN also provided a documentary DVD made at HMP Ford for the promotion of the programme at a launch in Westminster. To accompany the course, a detailed curriculum, along with clearly defined learning outcomes and assessment criteria, has been developed. In addition, workbooks for both tutors and learners are also now provided to support the course.

3.2 The NUJ Pathways to Journalism model

The NUJ Pathways programme offers an opportunity to study at four different levels, from entry level through to Level Three, which is equivalent to A-level standard⁴. The course structure is sequenced logically with one level building on another. Figure One gives an overview of the content of the course at each level.

³Chelmsford, Dartmoor, Grendon, Haverigg, Pentonville, Ryehill, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs.

⁴There is also an undergraduate pathway available, however, this is outside the scope of this evaluation (Diploma Standard 1, Undergraduate and Diploma Standard 2, Graduate).

Figure One: NUJ Pathways to Journalism Course Levels: Summary

Levels	Syllabus	Description
Entry - 3		
Entry Level	Journalism: The Basics	Foundation course focusing on fundamental journalistic principles, such as style, accuracy, team work and following an editor's instructions.
Level One	Introduction to Journalism Introduction to Design and Graphics in Journalism	Examines effective page design and IT. These levels use newspapers and magazines as a main resource. Concentrate on preparing learners for practical work on their prison publication.
Level Two	Journalism Design and Graphics in Journalism	At Level Two, learners embark in earnest on magazine work. Their work and design is evaluated. This level is set at GCSE (grade C and above) standard.
Level Three	Journalism: Integrated Skills	Emphasis shifts to reporting, feature writing and interview techniques. The importance of writing to required lengths and deadlines are underlined. Writing and design skills are integrated at this A-level standard course.

Part of the portfolio development for assessment is to produce a magazine or similar publication that is written and edited by offenders. NUJ assessors should visit establishments regularly to ensure standards are maintained.

Prison education providers wishing to deliver the course pay a standard OCN rate. They also sign a licence with WIPN and the NUJ, with an attached fee. This fee covers the provision of all workbook materials for both tutors and students, an on-site staff training day, ongoing support, and certificates. WIPN and the NUJ have an annual standardisation meeting where they meet with prison staff delivering the NUJ Pathways programme to ensure consistency of approach among course providers and to ensure any issues arising from the delivery of the course are addressed.

3.3 HMP Wormwood Scrubs: an NUJ Pathways case study

The NUJ Pathways programme has been delivered at HMP Wormwood Scrubs for the last four years, by two tutors who work for the local education provider. The tutors divide the delivery of the course, with one taking the *'more creative elements of the courses - so media stuff - design, Photoshop, radio/audio recording and producing the magazine'* (NUJ Pathways Tutor), whilst the other tutor teaches the writing/journalism sessions.

One of the tutors delivered the NUJ Pathways programme at a previously held post in another prison, having initially heard about the course through contact with WIPN Writers. On average, around 15-20 offenders per month at HMP Wormwood Scrubs participate in the course across entry level and Levels One and Two⁵.

3.4 The challenges of delivering the NUJ Pathways programme

The evaluation has identified a variety of challenges to delivering the NUJ Pathways programme from the perspective of those delivering the model; prison staff; and the offenders participating. These are summarised here:

- Prison education is currently under National review and it remains unclear as to what criteria will be set for the accreditation of prison education programmes in the future
- There is a lack of clarity around course assessment criteria in the NUJ Pathways handbook
- Accessing teaching space with IT facilities is often difficult and learners have no internet access. These factors can limit learning opportunities:

"We've done loads on the course- articles, posters, leaflets and written pieces for the magazine. We do get newspapers, but have little access to current affairs because we don't get internet in here, but we do some

⁵ Level Three of the course is not delivered at HMP Wormwood Scrubs.

political stuff, it's just that everything can change so fast out there- your article can be out of date so quickly". (NUJ Pathways Learner)

"We would like more access to technology - IT and intranet access- or even- just access to interactive CD's or DVD's, maybe dictionary or encyclopaedia or topic area specific". (NUJ Pathways Learner)

- Whilst the Library resource at the prison is excellent, it is located off site, resulting in access difficulties during class times
- Many offenders do not stay long enough to complete the course. This is because they are released, transferred or they choose to disengage from the course
- There is little room for the inclusion of creative writing journalism in the NUJ Pathways course, as the NUJ standards are currently more focussed on factual writing:

***"I want to get to write stories too- so creative writing would be good".
(NUJ Pathways Learner)***

- The NUJ Pathways Levels above One and Two are not available at the prison:

"The higher qualifications are not made available here, we can only go up to level 2- why can't we have level 3? We are running out of things to do here". (NUJ Pathways Learner)

3.5 The benefits of delivering the NUJ Pathways programme

The evaluation has identified numerous benefits of delivering the NUJ Pathways Special Project to offenders from the perspective of those delivering the programme; wider prison staff; and the offenders participating in the course. These are summarised here:

- NUJ Pathways programme gives opportunities for basic skills improvement, which is much more likely to engage prisoners than the Skills for Life Curriculum offered by

formal prison education. Prisoners find the activities a fun, stimulating and rewarding method of learning:

"It's good to have found something we are good at and its fun, being able to re-discover one's passion and talents. Most have us haven't done anything since our school-days and I love doing the research for material". (NUJ Pathways Learner)

"My favourite bit was when I got to interview a Somalian Artist. I learnt a lot from setting up the interview, writing the questions, how to present it and the text was difficult too". (NUJ Pathways Learner)

"I liked doing a piece on Men's health, which I enjoyed putting together and having to get the justification for your ideas down on paper and I felt I was doing some good too". (NUJ Pathways Learner)

- Prisoners enjoy the practical nature of the course and the 'learning by doing' teaching style. Tasks are often related to 'real life' (e.g. one offender had designed a leaflet for his 'Odd Job Service', which he hoped to return to upon release)
- Prisoners enjoy working with text from media they are familiar with (e.g., news pieces and magazine articles) and this way of learning provides a link with real life outside of the prison gates
- In particular, the production of the magazine can be used to engage offenders in thinking about events that are occurring outside of prison, so *'Outside is still there and you are a part of it'* (NUJ Pathways Tutor). Thinking ahead to release, this offers a useful resettlement tool
- The NUJ Pathways course provides an opportunity for offenders to *'write for a reason'* and to use writing as a positive means of self-expression:

"I dealt with a huge event in his life through my writing". (NUJ Pathways Learner)

- The 'portfolio' style of assessment is flexible and not too prescriptive - this is a particular advantage given the frequent movements of many offenders through the prison system. Prisoners are able to rejoin the course where they left off should they be transferred or have to disengage for any other reason
- More or less able students can be started at different places within the course structure, as each module does not require the completion of a previous one. The assessment for NUJ Pathways is an ongoing portfolio-based one, not tied down to exam dates
- NUJ Pathways gives learners a great sense of achievement, quickly:

"Many of our offenders have not had a positive experience in education previously and with the current push towards employability and the course expose them to creativity in a non-threatening environment. Men do come forward to join education after engaging with NUJ Pathways- it takes one good experience to bring them in". (Offender Learning Manager)

- The NUJ Pathways programme fits well into the general prison education programme and contributes towards purposeful activity
- Learners have gained skills in team working and negotiating/debating

3.6 Course administration and assessment

The evaluation has identified the following administration and assessment issues with regard to the delivery of the NUJ Pathways course, from the perspective of those delivering it and wider prison staff:

- Programme monitoring data would be improved if collated centrally (i.e. numbers of individuals accessing and/or completing the NUJ Pathways course levels)

- Where NUJ Pathways delivery tutors felt the NUJ Standardisation meetings were useful, meeting more frequently would improve ongoing communication and information sharing between the WIPN/NUJ and those delivering the course
- Given the flexible and often individualised nature of NUJ Pathways course work, it was reported as sometimes challenging for facilitators to ensure the evidence of progress standards were met in student portfolio work. It was felt that these issues would be alleviated if NUJ assessors visits were made more frequently

3.7 NUJ Pathways the WIPN/ NUJ development strategy

At the annual NUJ Pathways Standardisation meeting in February 2010⁶, a strategy was developed to redesign, redevelop and rebrand the NUJ Pathways course. This decision was taken to ensure the course retains sector standards and reflects the prison education sector's shift in emphasis to educational opportunities that are directly linked to employability. The WIPN is currently working with the NUJ National Executive to achieve this by enacting the following changes to the NUJ Pathways programme:

- The NUJ Pathways course is being renamed Magazines in Prisons (MIP)⁷
- Existing resources for the programme are being redesigned to highlight the post-release employability and social cohesion aspects of the programme in cost-benefit terms
- On completion of redrafted resources, the MIP will be re-advertised to all prisons
- Increased partnership working will take place between the WIPN and NUJ (e.g. member of the NUJ's National Executive Council will attend the WIPN board meetings)
- A Google group will be set up for all stakeholders
- The MIP programme will be advertised on the WIPN website
- An increase in the charge to the prison service for providing the MIP project collected by the WIPN will occur to cover the costs of the redesign

⁶Involving the NUJ, representatives from the WIPN and course facilitators.

⁷ NUJ WIPN Magazines in Prison; Market review and proposals: February 2011.

- It is hoped that this increase in costs will ensure that the MIP programme will become self-sustaining

3.8 Summary

The WIPN has, through the development of the NUJ Pathways Special Project, gained an association with a respected, national, professional body and has a project well underway in its development. The NUJ has gained a reciprocal association with an organisation ideally placed to help spread good practice across the prison system. The evaluation has identified numerous benefits of delivering the NUJ Pathways Special Project to offenders from the perspective of those delivering the programme; wider prison staff; and the offenders participating in the course. The NUJ Pathways to Journalism embodies the kind of symbiosis that the WIPN continues to seek out and support: a project that nurtures and rewards creativity.

3.9 NUJ Pathways recommendations

It is anticipated that upon delivery of the development strategy - agreed at the NUJ Pathways Standardisation meeting in February 2010⁸ - to redesign, redevelop and rebrand the NUJ Pathways course, some of the issues raised in this evaluation will be addressed. However, based on the further findings of the evaluation, the following recommendations are made regarding the future operation and strategic development of the NUJ Pathways Special Project:

Working in prisons involves certain inevitable limitations, which are often challenging and unique to working in this sector, however:

- Given the national review of prison education accreditation, the WIPN and NUJ need to consider the impact on the delivery of the programme of the potential replacement of the OCN accreditation and the NUJ Pathways model may need to be adapted accordingly

⁸Involving the NUJ, representatives from WIPN and course facilitators.

- IT and internet access and the accessing of library facilities can often prove challenging in the prison environment. However, given the 'outward' looking characteristics of this media course, this issue remains pertinent. It may be possible for regularly updated resources to be made available in the library, for example, access to CD-based encyclopaedic materials. Further, access to the library and IT work time could potentially be negotiated through the existing Education Department's resources
- There is an inevitable amount of offender movement in the prison sector, which can result in offenders being unable to complete the NUJ course levels. However, it is hoped that through the WIPN/NUJ future plan (outlined beforehand) to re-advertise the course to all prisons and the NUJ course being made available in more establishments may alleviate this situation
- There is currently no funding available in the prison sector for educational courses beyond Level Two. This situation currently appears unavoidable given the present austerity measures. However, participants in the NUJ courses felt that the introductory handbook would benefit from removing references to the higher levels of the NUJ course structure, as it established expectations of studying at a level they would be unable to aspire to in reality until the current funding situation is resolved
- A standardised system for monitoring the numbers of prisoners accessing and successfully completing the NUJ course was raised as being important for course facilitators to ensure the benefits of providing the course could be provided to their host prison. The WIPN and NUJ would also benefit from collating these data centrally for inclusion in future advertising of the programme and for any future funding applications
- Regular visits by NUJ Assessors to prisons delivering this course would assist in ensuring a high standard of evidence of progress when collating student portfolio work

Section Four: Stories Connect: Changing Lives Through Stories

4.1 Project outline

Stories Connect is a structured reading programme which utilises literature to prompt discussion on issues relating to offending behaviour. This programme aims to provide a safe medium in the form of 'talk-based' forum sessions for offenders to express their views on what they have read.

The programme is based on an innovative rehabilitation programme in the United States called Changing Lives Through Literature (CLTL). This programme has run since 1991 across eight states and has been used with repeat offenders within a community sentence as an alternative to custody. The CLTL has proved remarkably successful. Of the 597 course completers in Texas between 1997 and 2008, only 36 (6%) had their probation revoked and were sent to prison. Similarly, in Massachusetts in 1991, only 19% on these sentences reoffended, compared to 42% of the control group over the year long study⁹.

The Writer in Residence at HMP Channings Wood heard about CLTL from the WIPN in 1999 and began developing a similar programme for the UK. The UK programme, 'Stories Connect' was developed in partnership with members of the Education Department, Principal Officers and the Training Unit at HMP Channings Wood. In 2000, the Writer, with WIPN support, made a successful application to the Visual Arts Programme at the Arts Council to develop this area of work. In 2003, again with WIPN support, the Writer successfully applied to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for funding in order to develop the resources and a training package for facilitators in order to replicate the programme in other prisons.

4.2 The Stories Connect model

The Stories Connect programme¹⁰ addresses key issues, such as male violence/abuse, family life, and individual responsibility, through fiction¹¹. Stories Connect is designed to engage

⁹ Barker, Ann (21/07/10) 'Novel Sentences', The Guardian, Society: 1-2.

¹⁰ Subtitled 'Changing Lives through Stories'.

offenders in thinking about their offending, through story and characters, in a safe and supported environment. In the Stories Connect handbook¹², it is recommended that the programme incorporates the following characteristics:

- Each department within a prison should be consulted about the setting up and delivery of the Stories Connect programme, with specific involvement from a member of the Senior Prison Management Team, Probation, Psychology, Security and Sentence Planning departments
- A wide range of Stories Connect facilitators should be made available to co-host the delivery of the programme along with the Writer in Residence. These should ideally be recruited from prison staff and include representatives from the uniformed/discipline staff, the Offender Management Team and Sentence Planning Department
- The host prison should receive the Stories Connect handbook, which contains detailed guidelines on running a Stories Connect group¹³
- Facilitators should attend one of the training packages developed - either a three-hour Stories Connect Awareness Raising Session or a two-day Stories Connect Training Package¹⁴
- The prison's Listener Scheme/Counselling Service should be informed of the intervention, to provide support if any sessions should raise issues or cause distress for participants
- The Stories Connect group should be made up of both offenders and prison staff
- Participants should be provided with a range of material (books, articles, speeches, short-stories, poetry, drama, theatre and video) which are usually taken away to study before the next weekly two-hour session

¹¹ From Special Arts Projects Publication: WIPN 2010 Edition.

¹² Stephenson, M (2007) Stories Connect. Changing Lives Through Stories: The innovative reading programme for offenders. The Handbook.

¹³ Information on setting up the group, costings, running sessions, ice-breakers and games, suggested texts, sample lesson plans, photocopiable resources and advice on evaluation strategies.

¹⁴ The first day is spent outlining how the programme works. The second day is run to assist individuals to adapt the programme to work with their specific client group and covers issues such as accommodation, recruitment and selecting texts.

- At the last of the 10 sessions, the facilitators outline the expectations of a final essay, which is designed to record what the participants have learned about themselves and the use of literature as a tool for understanding human nature.

4.3 'Talking Shop': a Stories Connect case study

The Writer in Residence at HMP Full Sutton, a maximum security prison for men¹⁵, had initially heard about the Stories Connect programme at a WIPN conference some years before. They had attended the Stories Connect Facilitator Training in 2006 and successfully delivered the programme to three prisoner groups during a previous residency at HMP Rye Hill. They therefore approached the Head of Education and Skills at HMP Full Sutton, who was enthusiastic about the Stories Connect model and what it could offer the prison:

"My job is to try and get offenders involved with 'texts', so the Stories Connect model was used here to promote and engage offenders, as way of getting those who 'don't normally engage' with education involved, it's a route in, as a place not associated with learning or education per se". (Head of Learning and Skills)

At a staff meeting of all prison department heads, the Head of Learning and Skills discussed the prison's introduction of the Stories Connect model. The Security Department screened all the texts proposed for the course.

The 'Talking Shop' (as the Stories Connect model of delivery was named at HMP Full Sutton) was delivered to two groups: one from the mainstream population of the prison (the mains group); and one from the vulnerable prisoner's wing (the VIP group). The participants were provided with a variety of excerpts from speeches, chapters of books and short stories to read through each week and 10 weekly two-hour sessions were arranged for follow-up discussion. Due to the lack of prison staff time available, the scheme was ultimately delivered by the Writer in Residence with library staff support. Library staff were provided

¹⁵ Category A and Category B.

with training, through attendance at the Stories Connect conference and a Stories Connect awareness training half day.

4.4 The benefits of delivering the Talking Shop project

The evaluation identified a variety of benefits of delivering Talking Shop from the perspective of facilitators, prison staff, and offenders participating in the programme, which are summarised here:

- Engagement with the project encouraged prisoners to be tolerant of each other's opinions and to behave respectfully towards one another:

"I used to be the one who shouted the loudest- shout people down- not any more- I think, listen and respond better now". (Talking Shop Participant)

"I learnt to settle disputes and diffuse conflict through listening to other people, using dialogue- that's the best way to go". (Talking Shop Participant)

- The group discussion format broke down hierarchies and enabled participants to feel they were being treated with respect. This represented a welcome change from how they were treated 'on the wing'
- The reading material chosen was often from the news and therefore served to remind offenders of life outside the prison walls:

"It was a change in the mundane routine of prison life- it reminded us that there is more to life than being here-Talking Shop was like a breath of fresh air in here". (Talking Shop Participant)

- Participants were exposed to different genres/types of work/authors that they would not have normally engaged with. This provided welcome stimulation within the mundane routine of prison life
- Texts were chosen to illicit connections with participants own lives, enabling them to engage with self reflection and evaluation as well as encouraging feelings of empathy:

"I've learnt to approach things from a different perspective, a different person's perspective. I have more respect for human life now- the reading has let me into other people's lives and they may be different than me, hold different things as being more important than me, but I understand that now". (Talking Shop Participant)

- The group discussion encouraged a climate of openness and honesty which felt empowering for participants and enabled self expression:

"I find it difficult to express emotion, but here [Talking Shop], it felt safe to do that, a place of safety. A place where we can be open about how it feels to be men, honesty and openly. We all progressed through the sessions together and expressed freely. It was very empowering to discuss things so openly and we all had to get to a place we could be vulnerable to each other to be honest". (Talking Shop Participant)

"It's different from Offending Behaviour Courses (OBC), because this is not a course- it's a moral discussion. The OBC's – you get to know what you need to say to get them to tick the box- whereas here- you have to be honest and genuine- you can't hide here". (Talking Shop Participant)

- Talking Shop provided a forum where participants gained self-awareness and self-knowledge:

"I have gained more insight and knowledge here than anywhere else. I've learnt more about me than with any Psychologist". (Talking Shop Participant)

- Stories Connect is a flexible model that can be adapted to fit the regimes of individual institutions. For example, at HMP Full Sutton, a reading group model was ultimately adopted

4.5 The challenges of delivering Talking Shop

The limited number of Talking Shop facilitators available for the course delivery at HMP Full Sutton proved to be the most significant challenge, in particular a lack of discipline or sentence planning staff presence. The course was delivered by two library staff and the Writer in Residence, who at times found themselves in situations they felt ill equipped to manage:

"The literature triggers things they identify with which is often hard to handle and the men often pushed the conversation in to areas that were pushing the boundaries - it often got a bit deep for us facilitators. We found some attitudes difficult to hear and to challenge". (Talking Shop Co-facilitator)

The same facilitators recalled that during one session, they were shocked and concerned regarding a prisoners views during a discussion of rape. On this occasion, they witnessed the offender's peer group challenge these views but reflected they would have been far more comfortable with other prison staff being more involved to assist in situations like the one described above.

The Writer in Residence had many years of experience of working with challenging offenders in this type of environment prison, yet also at times struggled with particularly unpleasant group dynamics. In particular, one participant spent the sessions continually wrestling for control of the discussion and attempting to intimidate the Writer in Residence.

The Writer in Residence took this issue to the WIPN quarterly steering group for advice and support. However, the prison decided to disband the group. Reflecting on the experience now, the Writer believes they should have excluded this one individual from the group, so as to preserve the Talking Shop for the other participants, thus adhering to the WIPNs underpinning rationale of inclusivity.

The Talking Shop was seen by the Head of Learning and Skills as a valuable opportunity to broaden the range of prisoners engaging in reading and discussion, outside the context of Offending Behaviour programmes. However, course participation did not assist the prison in meeting any of their targets and the programme was therefore considered to be a 'soft-skills' activity. Perhaps because of this, the prison has experienced issues in sourcing sustainable funding for the continued delivery of the 'Talking Shop' group. Further, given the issues raised in the experience of delivering this model at HMP Full Sutton outlined above, the use of the original Stories Connect model has been reviewed and a reading group model has been adopted which fits better with the regime. The prison has provided 12-months of funding for this work and the Prison Reading Group is to be facilitated by library staff. Participants are provided with a book to read every four weeks, which is then discussed during monthly sessions in the prison library.

4.6 Stories Connect recommendations

Based on the findings of the evaluation visit, the following recommendations are made regarding the future operation and strategic development of the Stories Connect special project:

- Effective assessment of individual prison's abilities to deliver the Stories Connect model (as outlined in the handbook) should be undertaken. The WIPN could consider developing a 'contract' with host prisons detailing what the prison will be expected to provide to ensure the effective delivery of this programme, for example, ensuring Sentence Planning and Discipline staff representatives are made available to facilitate sessions

- Facilitators/Writers should be given very clear guidance around suitability and appropriateness of texts when working with certain groups of offenders
- Effective support and supervision should be offered to writers/facilitators, particularly around managing difficult groups and individuals within groups
- A named and specially designated member of prison staff should be identified at host prisons to support and guide the development and implementation of the Stories Connect programme
- This named individual should have responsibility for utilising the evaluation data collection tools supplied in the Stories Connect resource handbook and ensuring the effective collation of monitoring and evaluation data on behalf of the WIPN
- Monitoring data collection tools should be standardised where possible across projects and data should be easily accessible to the WIPN and included in future advertising/ funding applications

Section Five: The Melting Pot project: creative writing with DSPD prisoners

5.1 Project outline

The Melting Pot (MP) is a three-year creative writing and mentoring programme, working with some of the most isolated and vulnerable prisoners at the Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorder (DSPD) Westgate Unit at HMP Frankland in Durham. This ambitious and pioneering project is the first of its kind in the UK. In September 2010, the Hallam Centre for Community Justice (HCCJ) at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) began a three-year evaluation¹⁶ of the MP. This document reports on the first year of the evaluation¹⁷.

The project is a direct result of a long-term development partnership between Writers in Prison Network (WIPN), the Writer in Residence at HMP Frankland (2002-2006), and the Learning and Skills Department at HMP Frankland. During 2007-2008, the WIPN and the Sir James Knott Trust worked together to assess the impact of the Writer in Residency at HMP Frankland with a view to developing new project opportunities. This culminated in a successful bid to the Northern Rock Foundation by the Writer, with WIPN support, to deliver the three-year MP project. Key Melting Pot project objectives are to:

- offer a highly unique extra-curricular, sensitive and intelligent approach to creative writing and mentoring among DSPD prisoners;
- identify and help contribute to the overall well being of men within the DSPD Unit;
- contribute to the therapeutic and rehabilitation programme within the DSPD setting

5.2 DSPD specific project

In the UK, a specific DSPD Programme operates within two high security establishments in the prison estate for men¹⁸ and specifically focuses on the rehabilitation needs of prisoners

¹⁶ The first year of the evaluation was funded as part of the overall WIPN evaluation. Years two and three are being funded by the Northern Rock Foundation, who also fund the MP project.

¹⁷ A copy of the full first year evaluation of the Melting Pot project is available from the Writers in Prison Network on request.

¹⁸ These are the Westgate Unit in HMP Frankland and the Fens Unit at HMP Whitemoor. The DSPD programme also operates in two high security psychiatric units in England - Rampton and Broadmoor.

who are deemed to have dangerous personality disorders. Prisoners are encouraged to address their own personal difficulties and receive intensive therapeutic treatment programmes, along with interventions, such as education, sport, and extra-curricular meetings and visits.

The principles which govern DSPD prisoner service delivery are set nationally but units have discretion over the means of delivering services, within the framework set out in Ministry of Justice (MoJ) 2008 guidance¹⁹. As the evidence base for the effectiveness of different treatment pathways with this client group is scarce (Home Office Report 30/03²⁰), the treatment programme in each unit has developed independently, governed primarily by an expert advisory panel. Ministry of Justice guidance regarding treatments or interventions offered by DSPD units has a focus on reducing the risk of serious offending presented by such prisoners.

HMP Frankland is a high security dispersal prison, holding over 700 prisoners convicted of serious offences. The MP project is based in the Westgate Unit in HMP Frankland. The Unit opened in May 2004, following substantial investment, to accommodate those prisoners deemed to be highly dangerous and to have severe personality disorders. Treatment programmes on the Unit focus specifically on the rehabilitation needs of the individual prisoner deemed to have a dangerous personality disorder. Westgate Individualised Treatment Needs Analysis and Progression (WITNAP) is the assessment process undertaken by all prisoners accepted onto the Westgate Unit. Following initial assessment, prisoners move on to the treatment phase. The Westgate Unit use The Good Living and Development (GLAD) model with prisoners to assist in identifying and understanding what motivates them.

¹⁹ Ministry of Justice (2008) Dangerous and severe personality disorder (DSPD) High Security Services for men: Planning and Delivery Guide
http://www.personalitydisorder.org.uk/news/wpcontent/uploads/High_Secure_Services_for_Men.pdf (03/04/12).

²⁰ Home Office Report 30/03: Review of Treatments for personality disorder
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr3003.pdf> (03/01/12).

5.3 The Melting Pot model

A huge amount of 'groundwork' was undertaken by the Coordinator/Lead Writer in order to ensure that the project had solid foundations from the outset. The endorsement and support of the Westgate Unit Director, the Senior Management Team and the Clinical Management Team was sought and gained. Where appropriate, training was provided by HMP Frankland at the earliest possible stage (e.g., Personal Safety Control and Restraint training and Security and Personality Disorder Awareness training). In addition, full security talks were given to MP staff, and keys and official identification were provided. During the development phase of the project, the WIPN assisted the Melting Pot Coordinator/Lead Writer with tender writing and course development, as well as providing ongoing support whenever required. A concerted advertising drive, regular attendance at staff meeting/briefings, liaison with therapeutic/psychology/education staff and ongoing work with prison officers on each of the four units in Westgate have enabled identification of potential prisoners who might be approached to participate. Once the course is fully subscribed, potential participants in the next Melting Pot cycle are categorised as 'floating' and are provided with one-to-one support and help while awaiting admission to the next Melting Pot Cycle.

The Coordinator/Lead Writer attends the Westgate Unit three days per week (Wednesday to Friday) on alternate weeks; this involves attendance on all four units. The MP project currently provides 15 hours per week in group work²¹ and between 8 and 20 hours per week of in-cell work, which is counted as purposeful activity for the prison. Whilst the majority of MP activity is delivered by the Coordinator/Lead Writer, two Visiting Writers are also involved in the delivery of the MP programme. The Visiting Writers attend the unit for one-to-one evening mentoring session work during the alternate weeks the Coordinator does not attend the prison. The involvement of Visiting Writers has proved successful and represents good practice in a number of different ways. First, it has reduced the isolation of the Coordinator/Lead Writer and offers him the opportunity to 'bounce around' ideas and gain creative input from other writers. Second, it enables cover when Coordinator needs to

²¹ As per prison protocol recommendations, no more than five prisoners at any one time can participate in group activity.

take leave. Third, and crucially when working with a challenging and potentially demotivated group, it has ensured a consistency in approach, which has assisted in maintaining prisoner engagement.

The MP activity is delivered in 3 'cycles'. For example, Cycle 1 included the following 3 'strands':

- 1) A six-month creative writing course with four prisoners. This was delivered in a group setting and also involved one-to-one mentoring²²
- 2) One-to-one mentoring support to six additional prisoners
- 3) MP Outreach work, which focussed on the promotion of a 'culture of writing' within the Westgate community. This strand has involved the Coordinator:
 - working with 10 'floating' MP prisoners, timetabled for one-to-one sessions
 - attending staff, department and individual meetings (Clinical Director and DSPD Governors, Senior Management Team and Clinical Management Team)
 - developing course and monitoring templates and recruitment processes
 - introducing Visiting Writers to the Unit and the Melting Pot participants
 - making links with external organisations (e.g., meeting to explore a possible arts collaboration with Durham County Council Film Festival)

The MP Coordinator has also developed a personal portfolio for participants, to contain:

- All written work produced
- Worksheets and notes supplied by Coordinator and Visiting Writers
- Participant journal for observing and recording personal thoughts and reflections on engaging with the programme

Monitoring and tracking forms for all MP participants have been specifically designed and are now in use. These provide a general overview on each prisoner after each contact session, either group or one-to-one. The timetabling of MP activity has been an ongoing

²²A 40-minute mentoring session every two weeks.

issue and a challenge for the Coordinator/Lead Writer. A key achievement has been to formalise mentoring and support activity amongst the timetable allocation on the Unit.

The MP project is governed by a Steering Group which meets quarterly. Steering Groups are generally well attended (including a prison Senior Management Team presence), which reflects a strong commitment to the MP. Steering Group meetings also provide an 'official' forum for the WIPN to provide guidance and support to the Coordinator/Lead Writer. A further strength of the Steering Group is the involvement of the funder (the Northern Rock Foundation), which has maintained a strong interest in and commitment to the work undertaken.

5.4 Key project delivery developments

There was a strong consensus in interview data that the embedding of the MP has been crucial to the way its delivery has respected the Unit's protocols and rules. The MP activity has 'fitted into' the Westgate Unit regime and has been carefully timetabled so as not to interfere with core commitments and protocols (both prison and prisoner). The following successes, in terms of embedding the MP into the regime at the Westgate Unit have been of particular significance:

- An excellent rapport with officers, staff and non-MP offenders on the unit has been established. This has enabled effective liaison and coordination with key staff members.
- Coordinator/Lead Writer has formed positive and cooperative relationships with key players at HMP Frankland including the Head of Psychology, CAMS/Education Department workers, the prison Library. Productive liaison with the Education Department has taken place on gaining support for specific pieces of work (e.g., the magazine, recording of a radio play).
- The Coordinator/Lead Writer has been invited to attend Care First team meetings, which involve an internal debrief for all staff with offender contact. Individual offender behaviour is discussed and here the Coordinator/Lead Writer can both offer and receive relevant information about prisoners with whom he works.

- The Coordinator has been formally asked by prison staff to feed into the core behavioural monitoring programme on the Unit. This involves him recording any significant prisoner behaviour which he observes during MP work in the core monitoring programme book which is used by all other Unit staff on a daily basis.
- The MP Coordinator formally feeds into prisoner GLAD plans. The fact that the Coordinator has been invited to contribute in various different ways to reviews of prisoner behaviour and need seems to reflect a high value on the relationship which the Coordinator has built up with prisoners.
- Coordinator/Lead Writer has been granted access to the prisons P Drive and also P: Nomis. Also, the Head of the Westgate Unit has helped to find space and storage for the Coordinator/Lead Writer.
- Coordinator/Lead Writer has been granted use of the group session rooms on the Unit with full integrated prison officer support. Not only does the allocation of prison officer time to the MP indicate strong support for the project but it also raises awareness of the project among prison staff and highlights interest.

5.5 Contribution to the wellbeing of men on the Unit and the therapeutic setting

There is clearly a high level of motivation to engage with the MP on the Westgate Unit. By the end of Cycle 1, three prisoners expressed a desire for continued support beyond their direct project involvement, which the Coordinator/Lead Writer was willing to facilitate. In addition to the above, some participants felt that being in an intensive therapy situation affected their energy and motivation with regard to participation in the MP activities:

"Sometimes during intensive therapy- you are too emotionally drained to engage with writing- he [the Coordinator] understands what it is like sometimes and gives me no hassle if I need a break one week". (MP Participant)

Enthusiasm for the project among both staff and prisoners has increased over time. On one level, prisoners have clearly enjoyed the experience of writing, learning new skills and of having the opportunity to be engaged in activity outside of the core prison curriculum:

"Creating something out of nothing is very satisfying".

"Bringing characters to life- giving them life- great".

"A story has a beginning, a middle and an end- so it's a strategic view of how to construct things like stories - I use different skills than before". (MP Participant)

In addition to creative writing skills, participants appear to have begun to develop a range of 'soft skills', including enhanced communication. On a deeper, more profound level, there is evidence to suggest that prisoner involvement in MP has provided a vehicle for self-exploration and self-expression, offering a sense of freedom with the confines of the prison walls:

"I have so many things in my head, writing gets them out". (MP Participant)

"Within writing, I have learnt to express emotion and also feel emotions through poetry. It has helped me express my feelings, and my emotional understanding is better". (MP Participant)

Prisoners have begun to use language to describe complex emotional experience and as a release mechanisms for intense and 'hard to say' emotions:

"I used to lock in my experiences- not talk about it- now I write about them. Bottling up how you feel does not help. Write about it- it relieves things- it makes them more manageable somehow". (MP Participant)

In addition, there is some tentative evidence of improved self-management and self-regulation among some participants, for example reports of reduced self harming for one participant and a reduction in psychopathic score reported by another. For some

participants, the creative writing process has enabled them to reflect on their life situation and relationships, one participant had gained the confidence to use their writing to enhance family relationships:

"I have sent [some writing] to my father- the family are keen to read it. It has made staying in contact easier- given them something to talk about too-. We have a closer relationship now, closer together since I begun writing".
(MP Participant)

For others, an opportunity to focus less on his offending:

"It re-directs my attention from my habitual habit, my index offence and redirects it into something more constructive. It takes mind away from index offence and focuses it somewhere else, on something else and given me another direction. It's like being challenged constructively by [Coordinator] and the writing in a way that makes me think about focussing on expressing my ideas clearly. It gives me hope and has given me something more constructive to hold on to". (MP Participant)

The fact that MP participants are starting to use their writing to reflect in a meaningful way on their life experiences indicates that engagement with the project may complement the therapeutic regime on the Westgate Unit by increasing the readiness of men to accept and engage meaningfully in their therapy. It is clear that the work undertaken in MP is filtering through to therapy sessions:

"I have referred to my creative writing in therapy - my therapist seems to like they responded well when it came up in discussion". (MP Participant)

One prisoner spoke about how his early childhood memories had become a large body of creative writing work and how this had fed into his therapy sessions. One of the MP Visiting Writers also reflected on the potential for creative writing to 'safely unlock' some of the challenges that each prisoner faces, which may then be explored in a therapeutic situation:

"Students have to give something of themselves when writing creatively, it is therapeutic certainly as it brings out these issues and in the third person- so in a non-threatening way. It gets the stuff out of their head and on to the page- it gives them distance from it". (Visiting Writer)

As any therapy involves clinicians trying to access and address their client's views of the world around them, the potential for a creative writing project to assist in this process are powerfully described below:

"With the writing- you put yourself into it. You are taking someone with you into your world". (MP Participant)

The data collected during the course of the year one evaluation suggests that MP is making a significant contribution to the overall wellbeing of men within the DSPD Unit.

5.6 Summary

The year one evaluation of the Melting Pot has revealed an innovative and unique project which contributes to the overall wellbeing of men on the DSPD unit in a myriad of ways. Effective management of the programme by the Coordinator/Lead Writer, in conjunction with ongoing support from the WIPN and the wider steering group, has enabled the project to function well in a challenging setting. Challenges have been encountered regarding the embedding of the MP within the Westgate Unit regime and progress has sometimes been slow (e.g., gaining designated prisoner officer support for the project, formalising MP activity within the timetable allocation, and enabling creative writing work with prison staff). However, the excellent relationships fostered on the Unit and having Visiting Writers working alongside the Coordinator/Lead Writer in developing and delivering the MP project has worked well. The project has benefited greatly from the input of artists with serious writing credentials along with a strong commitment to working with DSPD prisoners.

5.7 Melting Pot project recommendations

Whilst there are inevitably challenges involved in engaging and motivating prisoners with very complex mental health issues, a proactive and well-considered approach has been developed. The Melting Pot project is an excellent example of a creative project which is prepared to take risks and undertake challenging work with this challenging prisoner cohort. The MP represents an opportunity to further assess the potential of using creative writing with DSPD prisoners specifically and also other prisoner cohorts. To support and give direction to this process this section offers recommendations regarding the future operation and strategic development of the MP:

- The input and integration of clinical staff into the MP programme should be further developed - this may include discussion around the feasibility and/or desirability for course content to fit into treatment cycles
- The clinical staff team could also be asked to consider referring appropriate clients into the MP programme
- The extent to which MP activity is aligned with policy guidance on the treatment of DSPD prisoners and how it may contribute to treatment pathways should be regularly considered
- Where appropriate, continue to develop course content which encourages participants to reflect upon their behaviour and emotions (and especially ways in which this may be linked to their offending)
- Continue to foster the support of the Westgate Unit Director as well as the Senior Management Team and the Clinical Management team - this may be especially important in the context of staff changes and cuts
- Continue to seek designated prison officer engagement for the MP
- Encourage all peer support activity and formalise if appropriate (e.g. pair up participants to foster long standing relationships and enhance motivation)

Section Six: The WIPN Special Projects recommendations

6.1 Summary

As demonstrated, the Special Project Programme is an excellent programme which fits the underlying ethos of the WIPN network of continuing to support the wider development of their Writers in Residence beyond their prison residency period. A myriad of products/programmes and tailored offender-centric course-packages have been developed through this programme of continued WIPN support²³. These projects have also provided the WIPN with a widening portfolio of products with which to promote their service to prisons and for utilisation through their existing Writers in Residence. Given the WIPN's strategic decision to move more towards a business-model of delivery in the current funding-restricted environment, the following broad recommendations have been made in the hope that these will inform the strategic development of the Special Project programme.

6.2 Marketing and advertising strategy development

The WIPN need to focus on the development of the marketing and advertising strategy of Special Projects as distinct 'products' by enhancing (updating, rebranding, refreshing through redesigning) Special Project advertising.²⁴

6.3 Developing creative writing products as an intervention

More strategically, the WIPN need to explore the development of creative writing packages as products that can be designed and formatted more specifically as an intervention to be utilised by the prison sector. The Melting Pot project is an ideal opportunity to explore this possibility.

²³ For more detail with regard to other WIPN Special Projects see the leaflet: 'Award Winning specialist professional artists with in-depth prison experience: Special Arts Projects from the Writers in Prison Network' (2010 edition) which is updated annually.

²⁴ At the time of writing, the WIPN had secured funding to employ a Marketing Manager, which is a positive development in terms of this recommendation.

6.4 The Introduction of an effective monitoring and evaluation data strategy

Although many of the Special Projects have data collection and evaluation activities developed within their programme, a more strategic, WIPN-led centralised and standardised data collection strategy needs to be put in place urgently. This will ensure these data will be accessible for marketing and funding application purposes.