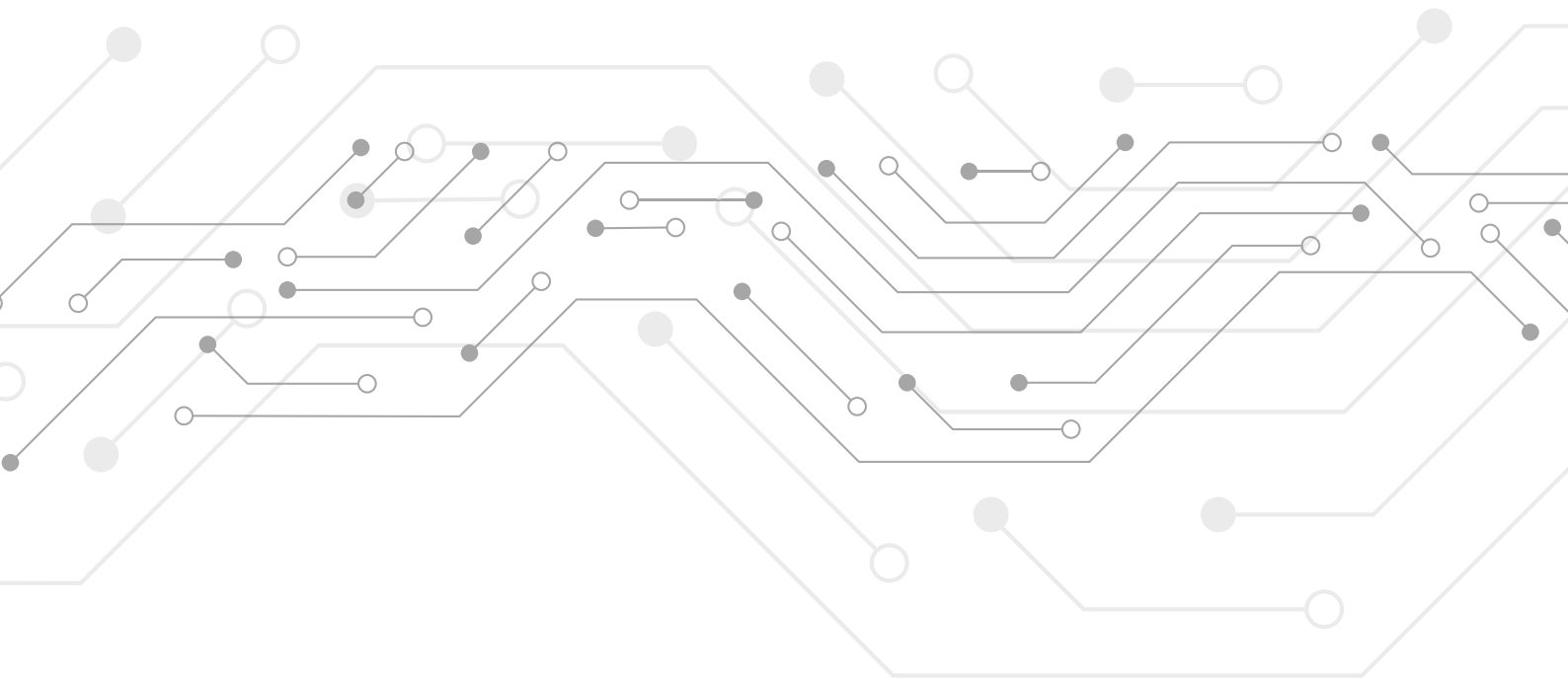


Arts Interventions with Young Adult Offenders

Community Rehabilitation
Company Evaluation Series



November 2021

ingeus



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Introduction

The Commission

Ingeus commissioned an independent, external consultant, Russell Webster, to undertake a series of evaluations on a range of interventions which Justice delivered as the lead organisation in the Reducing Reoffending Partnership (RRP), alongside Change, Grow, Live and the St Giles Trust, which operated the Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland (DLNR) and Staffordshire & West Midlands (SWM) Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) between 2015 and 2021. This evaluation focuses on the arts interventions delivered as part of the resettlement service predominantly in HMP Leicester between 2016 and 2021.

Chapter 1 summarises the research evidence on how engaging in the arts can help promote desistance. Chapter 2 describes the work undertaken with a particular focus on the Talent Unlocked festivals. Chapter 3 presents feedback from service users and professional stakeholders and includes analysis of the series of evaluations undertaken of Talent Unlocked by De Montfort University (DMU) and Chapter 4 summarises the report and presents conclusions.

Executive Summary

The evidence base

Over recent years there has been a consolidation of the research evidence on the impact of the arts on reoffending with a consensus that there is a clear link between taking part in arts-based activities and successful desistance journeys – the process of moving away from a life of crime. This is predominantly because becoming involved in the arts allows people to construct new, non-offending identities, as well as develop new supportive, social networks with law-abiding people.

The project

Ingeus provided a wide range of resettlement services and was aware that an experienced member of the team, Simon Bland, had a long-term personal interest in the arts, particularly music. Ingeus decided to capitalise on this expertise by appointing Mr Bland as an arts specialist worker within the resettlement team at HMP Leicester, despite the lack of dedicated funding for such a post.

The objective of this appointment was straightforward: to flood the prison with as many arts activities as possible to help people in prison to have the opportunity to:

- cope with the pains of imprisonment;
- develop latent talent and abilities;
- find a safe space for the discussion of painful issues to promote healing;
- become more engaged in the broader range of education and resettlement opportunities on offer; and
- develop a non-offending identity.

In addition to a wide range of one-off events, Ingeus, in partnership with De Montfort University and HMP Leicester developed probably the world's first prison arts festival. Talent Unlocked ran successfully over three years before being converted into an eight-week programme of arts-based broadcasts reaching 50 different prisons.

Outcomes

Several hundred prisoners have participated in the wide range of arts interventions delivered or developed in partnership with Ingeus over the last five years. Additionally, the environment in which prisoners live and staff work has received an ongoing boost and links between the prison and the local community it serves have been strengthened.

Talent Unlocked became emblematic of HMP Leicester's commitment to the arts which in turn enabled Ingeus to deliver a very broad range of arts opportunities throughout the year, many of them through an increasing number of partnerships with arts organisations from the local community. Ingeus was key in facilitating access to prisoners from local groups which, through another revolution of this "virtuous circle", resulted in those same local groups offering further opportunities to local prisoners on release and then to a broader group of people in contact with the criminal justice system in the Leicester area.

The quality of this work was acknowledged nationally with Simon Bland receiving two prestigious awards for his pivotal role in establishing the festival. The then deputy governor of HMP Leicester, Ralph Lubkowski, reflected on the overall impact of Ingeus' arts work:

"To create a sense of purpose, innovation and creativity within a very austere environment made a huge difference. It gave all of us something to be proud of and helped drive significant improvements in the service we were able to provide to the men in our care."

Going forward

Ingeus' investment in the arts has provided a demonstrable return on investment. Participation in the arts has been pivotal for hundreds of people in contact with the criminal justice system in terms of their emotional wellbeing, unearthing and development of talent, increased self-confidence and feelings of self-worth, boosting their chances of living productive and fulfilling crime-free lives. The then governor of HMP Leicester, Phil Novis, was fulsome in his praise of Ingeus' work:

"Ingeus have shown themselves to take an innovative and fresh approach to reducing reoffending, developing new and effective ways of working that reflect the latest research and evidence around what works. The impact of this way of working on countless men serving their sentences at Leicester and their subsequent engagement with services was clear to see. Ingeus are exactly the sort of provider we need to support Justice services and help us overcome the challenges we face as a system."

Ingeus continues to invest in this approach, creating a dedicated arts role within its delivery of Commissioned Resettlement Services and actively seeking partnerships with community arts providers to enhance the lives of the men and women it works with.

Chapter 1: The arts and re-offending



Overview

Over recent years there has been a consolidation of the research evidence on the impact of the arts on reoffending. Bilby and colleagues¹ (2013) in a study commissioned by the Arts Alliance analysed the impact of five different arts interventions² with people in contact with the criminal justice system. The overarching conclusion of the study was that there was a clear link between taking part in arts-based activities and the movement towards secondary desistance. In its summary of desistance (the process of moving away from a criminal lifestyle), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation provide a helpful overview:

“Desistance theories accept that the process of desistance is neither a quick nor easy process, with the analogy of a journey being adopted to illustrate the complexities. It can take considerable time, potentially many years, to change entrenched behaviours and the underlying problems. Lapses and relapses should be expected and effectively managed³.”

The Inspectorate also explains the three stages of desistance:

Primary desistance	Behaviour: The cessation of offending
Secondary desistance	Identity: The adoption of a non-offending identity
Tertiary desistance	Belonging: The recognition by others that one has changed, along with the development of a sense of belonging

¹ Bilby, C., Caulfield, L.S. and Ridley, L. (2013) Re-imagining futures: Exploring arts interventions and the process of desistance. Online: www.artsevidence.org.uk/media/uploads/re-imagining-futures-researchreport-final.pdf

² Four interventions were run in prisons and one by a Youth Offending Service.

³ HMI Probation (2021) Desistance: general practice principles <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/research/the-evidence-base-probation/models-and-principles/desistance/>

It is this secondary desistance stage, the development and adoption of a non-offending identity, with which arts interventions are particularly associated.

In addition to participation in arts activities enabling individuals to begin to redefine themselves, an important factor in desistance from crime, the Bilby report went on to identify a number of other key findings:

1. Arts projects facilitate high levels of engagement. This is significant because many individuals in contact with the Criminal Justice System have struggled to engage with productive activities in the past. Participants must engage in order to be able to redefine themselves. Engagement in arts projects has also been shown to lead to greater participation in education and work-related activities.
2. Arts projects can have a positive impact on how people manage themselves during their sentence, particularly on their ability to cooperate with others – including other participants and staff. This correlates with increased self-control and better problem-solving skills.
3. Engagement with arts projects facilitates increased compliance with criminal justice orders and regimes.
4. Arts projects are responsive to participants' individual needs. Current policy documentation on commissioning services to meet offenders' needs highlights the importance of responsiveness in meeting diverse needs.
5. The status of arts practitioners as professional artists is highly significant in the success of projects and their impact on participants. The value of this should not be underestimated by agencies of the Criminal Justice System when considering using external organisations.
6. Arts projects provide safe spaces for individuals to have positive experiences and begin to make individual choices.

Cheliotis and Jordanoska⁴ (2016) undertook a review of the literature in order to assess the role of arts-based programmes in reducing reoffending and came to a similar conclusion that arts-based programmes are unlikely to lead directly to desistance by themselves, but that indirect contributions are important and are “partly captured by the concept of secondary desistance”. The researchers argue that the concept of secondary desistance includes a range of factors which indirectly contribute to desistance from crime: motivating participants to take up basic literacy education that they may lack, to equipping them with vocational skills, to helping them improve their social skills and make amends with their families and communities.

⁴ Cheliotis, L. K. and Jordanoska, A. (2016) The arts of desistance: assessing the role of arts-based programmes in reducing reoffending. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 55 (1-2). pp. 25-41. ISSN 0265-5527

The evidence base

The evidence library hosted by the National Criminal Justice Alliance for the Arts⁵ highlights a number of common, proven benefits of arts interventions for people in the criminal justice system:

1. Arts interventions enable people in prison to reconnect with the outside world
2. Arts interventions help people to recover health and wellbeing
3. Arts interventions can be instrumental in reducing reoffending. This third point is substantiated by data submitted to the Justice Data Lab by Prisoners' Education Trust⁶, which delivers distance-learning courses, which found that grants made for arts materials resulted in reducing the one-year reconviction rate on release from 35% to 30%.

The Arts Alliance Evidence Library continues to consolidate the evidence base for the impact of arts interventions with people in contact with the criminal justice system. At the time of writing (August 2021), the library contains 106 evaluations of the work of 40 different arts organisations undertaken by 45 academic institutions.

It is clear that arts interventions in the criminal justice system are an important component in the range of approaches useful to promote desistance and reduce reoffending.

⁵ <https://artsincriminaljustice.org.uk/evidence-library/>

⁶ Ministry of Justice (2021) Employment and reoffending behaviour after support from Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) - 4th Analysis. Justice Data Lab Experimental Statistics

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/954465/Prisoners_Education_Trust_PET_4th_analysis_report.pdf

Chapter 2: The work delivered

Overview

Ingeus provided a wide range of resettlement services in its Through-The-Gate (TTG) service and was aware that an experienced member of the team, Simon Bland, had a long-term personal interest in the arts, particularly music. Ingeus decided to exploit this expertise by appointing Mr Bland as an arts specialist worker within the resettlement team at HMP Leicester.

The overall objective of this appointment was straightforward: to flood the prison with as many arts activities as possible to help people in prison to have the opportunity to:

- Cope with the pains of imprisonment
- Develop latent talent and abilities
- Find a safe space for the discussion of painful issues to promote healing
- Become more engaged in the broader range of education and resettlement opportunities on offer
- Develop a non-offending identity as a musician/singer/rapper/writer/performer etc.

The model

Analysis of the evidence base combined with long experience of prison-based resettlement work, enabled Ingeus to develop a clear idea of the critical success factors of prison-based interventions. In interview Mr Bland described these as:

- A significant focus on in-cell activity, providing as much access as possible for people to engage in arts activities without forcing them to choose between other education or resettlement opportunities. Sometimes arts sessions were the culmination of work already done in-cell, on other occasions work started in sessions was completed in the private cell space. By recording music sessions on CD, people in prison had the opportunity to either reflect on their own work or enjoy music created by others.
- A regular and sustained arts programme rather than performance-based interventions which ran intensively for a short period of time. This approach enabled people to develop their arts skills and

confidence over a period of time and create a stronger artistic identity.

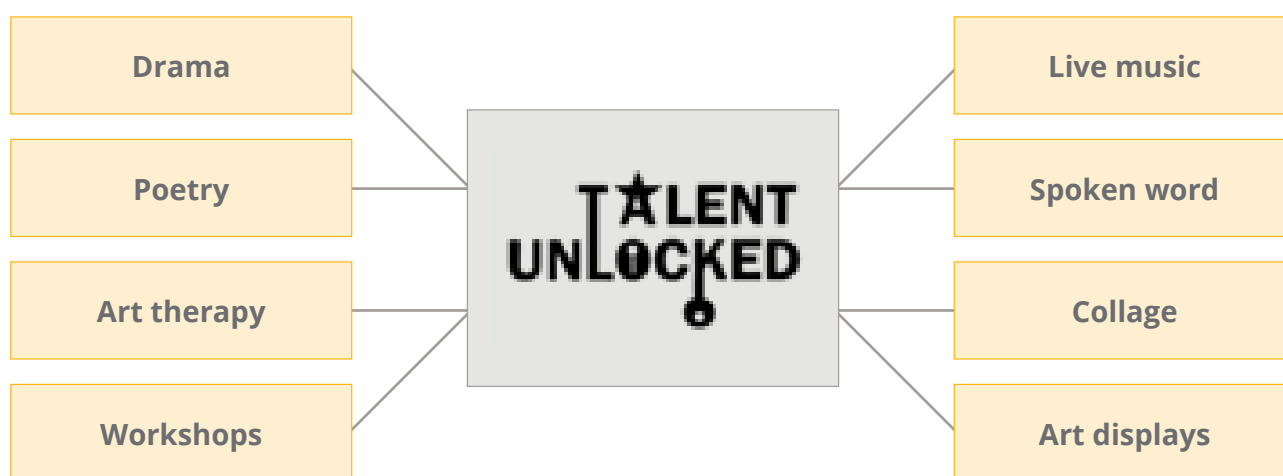
- Flexible and mobile service delivery. Guarantees of space in prison are rare, and there are several reasons why certain prisoners cannot go to certain places, restricting their access. Mr Bland developed a recording studio in a rucksack which meant that he was able to set up activities in a range of locations as required by the prison situation. He was even able to continue during the pandemic by offering sessions in the prison grounds.
- A wide range of different activities designed to offer arts opportunities to as many people in prison as possible.
- Proactive and autonomous. It was critical to the success of the work, that Ingeus staff were radio trained and confident in the movement and/or supervision of prisoners. Without these assets, arts work was always vulnerable to being cancelled because of staff shortages in a busy local prison. Ingeus staff worked in close partnership with prison staff, ensuring that any new initiatives were always discussed with a governor, prison security and the Prison Officers Association in advance, modifying plans in line with their suggestions and advice.

This plan of work was greatly enhanced when the then Deputy Governor Ralph Lubkowski approached Ingeus and asked the team to create a prison arts festival. Ingeus accepted the challenge and worked with staff and students involved with the Arts and Festivals Management course at De Montfort University (DMU) to create what is believed to be the first prison-based arts festival of its kind. The Talent Unlocked Festival first ran in October 2017 and has been repeated on a yearly basis. The fourth iteration, delayed to January 2021, even survived the prison lockdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic by evolving into a digital event.

The rest of the chapter describes first the Talent Unlocked festival and then some of the other wide range of arts interventions delivered over the last five years in HMP Leicester, other local prisons and the community.

Talent Unlocked

The first three Talent Unlocked festivals ran for two-week periods in the Autumn of 2017, 2018 and 2019. The festivals included a wide range of different arts shown in the graphic below. Some events were small group activities enabling a range of people in prison to express themselves by, for example, rapping, singing, acting or collage. Others were larger performances, by groups of prisoners or outside performers (including the De Montfort University Orchestra and a range of local arts groups) or a combination of the two.



The festival contained an average of 21 events each year with the 2018 and 2019 editions running simultaneously in both Leicester and Stafford prisons. Data about the number of people attending events was only recorded in 2019 and only for HMP Leicester, however the 22 events held that year featured total audience numbers of 237⁷.

The fourth edition of the festival had to be radically modified to survive the pandemic-induced lockdown. Ingeus worked with DMU to develop a new partnership with Wayout TV, an in-cell TV channel for communication and education in prisons, to broadcast the festival. Although the face-to-face interactions were obviously lost, this digital initiative allowed the festival to be broadcast in almost 50 English prisons reaching a potential audience of 36,000 prisoners. Ingeus and DMU with the help of arts practitioners, prison staff, prisoners, actors, musicians, artists, poets and beat boxers delivered eight thirty-minute episodes with each episode comprising three separate films of artistic events. Episode 1 was launched on Sunday 13th December 2020 and the festival series ran each week until Sunday 31st January 2021. Wayout TV received so much positive feedback that it decided to repeat the festival which ran for a second time from 7th February until 4th April 2021.

⁷ Some prisoners attended more than one event. The average population at HMP Leicester is c. 300.



Prisoners performing at Talent Unlocked

Other arts interventions

In addition to Talent Unlocked, Ingeus provided a wide range of arts interventions throughout the year working with a range of prison and community partners. As the work became more established within HMP Leicester, Ingeus took the lead role in facilitating a wide range of new arts work. The organisation used its experience of working within the custodial setting to work as a bridge between community organisations and the prison. Ingeus was able to ensure that outside organisations knew and understood prison security requirements and were informed of the sort of approaches which had proved successful in engaging the interest and participation of prisoners.

Ingeus worked closely with the prison writer in residence, Alistair Fruish, to bring local artists and prisoners together in a series of creative events. These included:

- Large scale performances by performers such as the Philharmonia Orchestra and DMU Jazz Combo.
- Smaller pop-up performances by local artists on different prison wings.
- Participative events where prisoners rapped and sang.
- Discussions and talks led by a wide range of people from across the arts including well-known figures such as Russell Brand.



Paper artwork

Ingeus also partnered with a wide range of other local community arts organisations including Soft-Touch Arts⁸ and Drum & Brass⁹ who delivered arts workshops in prison working with words and poetry, performance skills and music. Both these organisations also kept in touch with local people in prison and offered a range of community-based activities for people on release. The joint work in prison led to a series of active partnerships in the community for people under the supervision of DLNR CRC. Soft-Touch offered a full community programme which included art, cooking and music and probation staff often attended making it possible to enhance service users' engagement with their supervision and offering many more opportunities to promote desistance and reduce reoffending.

Another partnership was between Ingeus and a local music producer "Wavey¹⁰" which responded to an informal needs assessment conducted by Mr Bland which showed that many prisoners were interested in being an MC. They jointly developed a "Studio in a Rucksack" project which delivered recording sessions on a pop-up basis across different prison wings and even, during the COVID lockdown, outside in the prison grounds. People were encouraged to write and perform. Music and performances were recorded on CDs to enable prisoners to practice their performances in their cells.



©Soft-Touch Arts

⁸ <https://www.soft-touch.org.uk/>

⁹ <http://drumandbrass.co.uk/projects/>

¹⁰ Naji Azim Richards

This list of partnerships and arts interventions is not intended to be comprehensive but to indicate the wide range of arts activities taking place in HMP Leicester throughout the last five years, culminating every year in the Talent Unlocked festival.

Other local prisons heard about the initiative. In addition to the Talent Unlocked festival running at HMP Stafford, Ingeus also supported HMP Stocken to start a “Studio in a Rucksack” service and has facilitated partnerships between that prison and local arts groups.



Performing in the yard

Working through the pandemic

The pandemic and associated prison lockdown meant that most activities in prison, especially those delivered in groups, were suspended for more than a year. However, Ingeus realised that arts activities would be increasingly important to help support people who were, in the main, restricted to their cells almost all day every day. We have already seen how Talent Unlocked adapted by going online and how Mr Bland was able to deliver some of his 'Studio in a Rucksack' sessions in the prison grounds in the summer of 2020.

However, activities did not stop there. With the continued support of a new governor team, Ingeus continued to deliver an ad hoc programme of arts activities, adapting to the changing Covid restrictions. Ingeus also co-ordinated the development of a wide range of in-cell arts packs alongside community partners such as Soft-Touch. The local Leicester community also got involved in supporting people in prison with individual residents partnering with local arts shops to raise funds for materials. The model in the image below was one of many produced by prisoners during the pandemic.



Prison cell made from matchsticks

Chapter 3: Feedback and evaluation

Introduction

This section starts by collating and analysing feedback on the Talent Unlocked Festival (mainly via the data collected in a series of evaluations undertaken by DMU) before looking at feedback from partners and stakeholders on the range of other arts interventions described above.

Feedback on Talent Unlocked

The first three Talent Unlocked Festivals were evaluated by teams comprising students from DMU in partnership with Peer Advisors trained by Ingeus' partner, St Giles Trust. The fourth, digital festival was formally evaluated by Dr Jacqui Norton of DMU¹¹. The evaluator has collated the feedback from all four festivals in the section below.



Prisoner conducting DMU orchestra

¹¹ Norton, J. (2021) Talent Unlocked evaluated. DMU.

The views of prisoners

The evaluator collated and analysed feedback from a total of 173 official feedback forms¹². The main themes identified by prisoners are listed below, complete with direct quotes taken from the evaluations:

Pride from having taken part

"A sense of achievement"

Motivation and inspiration to become more involved in the arts

"Buzzing – remembered how much I love/loved making music."

"Inspired to write again."

Uplift in mood and a reduction in anxiety

"A good experience – it took my mind off my negative feelings"

"The session helped me to feel positive and had a well needed effect on my motivation."

"I write poetry because it helps my anger management and gets things off my chest."

A reassertion of being more than a prisoner

"Getting lost in life takes you away from your talents and hobbies, this session helps remind you of who you are, what you like, it was excellent."

Enjoying contact with the outside world

"Good to get people from the outside visiting prisoners"

An improved living environment

"Contributes to good atmosphere in the prison"

¹² Feedback forms were not distributed for the fourth, digital, festival because of lockdown restrictions. However, comments from prisoners sent to Wayout TV are included in this section.

The views of those running sessions

The DMU evaluation also captured the views of workshop facilitators at all three Festivals which the evaluator has collated and analysed below. Again, the main themes are listed, accompanied by direct quotes from workshop facilitators:

Arts in prison help build self-worth

"This feels like important work to me, it's confidence building and life affirming. It shows the men that there is another world out there and it is possible to make better choices...It's something that should be pursued in other prisons too."

The importance of bringing mainstream activities to people in prison

"Such events always make me reflect on how marginalised prisoners are in general – but great to provide the opportunity to participate in something entirely different"

The importance of giving people in prison the chance to discover and demonstrate their artistic talents

"We need more workshops like this across all HMP establishments as there are many talented people in prison with no ways of expressing, discussing or putting their talent to use"

The impact of the festival on people coming in from the community in terms of being aware of what goes on in prison and removing some of the stigma of being a prisoner

"We were apprehensive before entering the prison, but seeing the men interact so enthusiastically with the events just proved that everyone deserves an involvement with the arts."

The views of key stakeholders

The evaluations also contain comments from key stakeholders including prison governors who make the case for the arts being key in promoting desistance:

*"The arts allow those in our care to express themselves, to learn new skills and rediscover forgotten talents, and to build positive new identities and hope for a better future that makes it less likely they will reoffend."*¹³

They additionally highlight the benefits of connecting the prison and its prisoners with the local community:

*"The Festival also connects prisoners with their communities by bringing performers and audiences into prison, builds family ties through the sharing of experiences, and perhaps most importantly it brings people together, raises morale, and breaks down barriers which has a positive effect on relationships, and therefore safety and decency, within our prisons."*¹⁴

¹³ Governor Lubkowski cited in Norton op. cit.

¹⁴ Ibid

Feedback on other arts interventions

The evaluator interviewed seven key stakeholders to get their views of the impact on the range of the other arts interventions delivered over the last five years in HMP Leicester. The section below looks at these interviewees' perceptions of the impact of the work on the prisoners who took part. Nine main themes emerged.

Improved behaviour

Interviewees spoke of regular feedback from prison officers about improved behaviour on the wing of those involved in arts programmes. This was attributed to a range of reasons: people feeling better about themselves from expressing themselves and ventilating concerns and worries via artistic outlets; improved mood from participation and a sense of achievement; and determination to be a model prisoner in order not to lose out on future sessions.

Improved self-confidence

Interviewees talked about seeing prisoners "come out of their shell" and participate more over the weeks of an intervention. Again, they reported prison officers' feedback that an individual "was a different person" since getting involved. Interviewees talked about the sense of achievement that many participants reported, often after becoming involved in artistic expression for the first time.

Greater social interaction

Prisoner participants were described as being less isolated and more involved in social networks.

Engagement in other activities. Another consequence commented on by several interviewees is that prisoners participating in arts sessions often then took up other educational and resettlement opportunities which they had not previously engaged in.

Working through problems

Interviewees talked about how some participants used the artistic activities they engaged in as an avenue to acknowledge and talk through issues of trauma and loss. This enabled other group members to do the same.

The chance to be heard

Several interviewees commented on their perception that many prisoners had not had a voice in their lives and the opportunity to be heard through artistic expression had resulted in positive changes and more positive attitudes.

Feelings of wellbeing

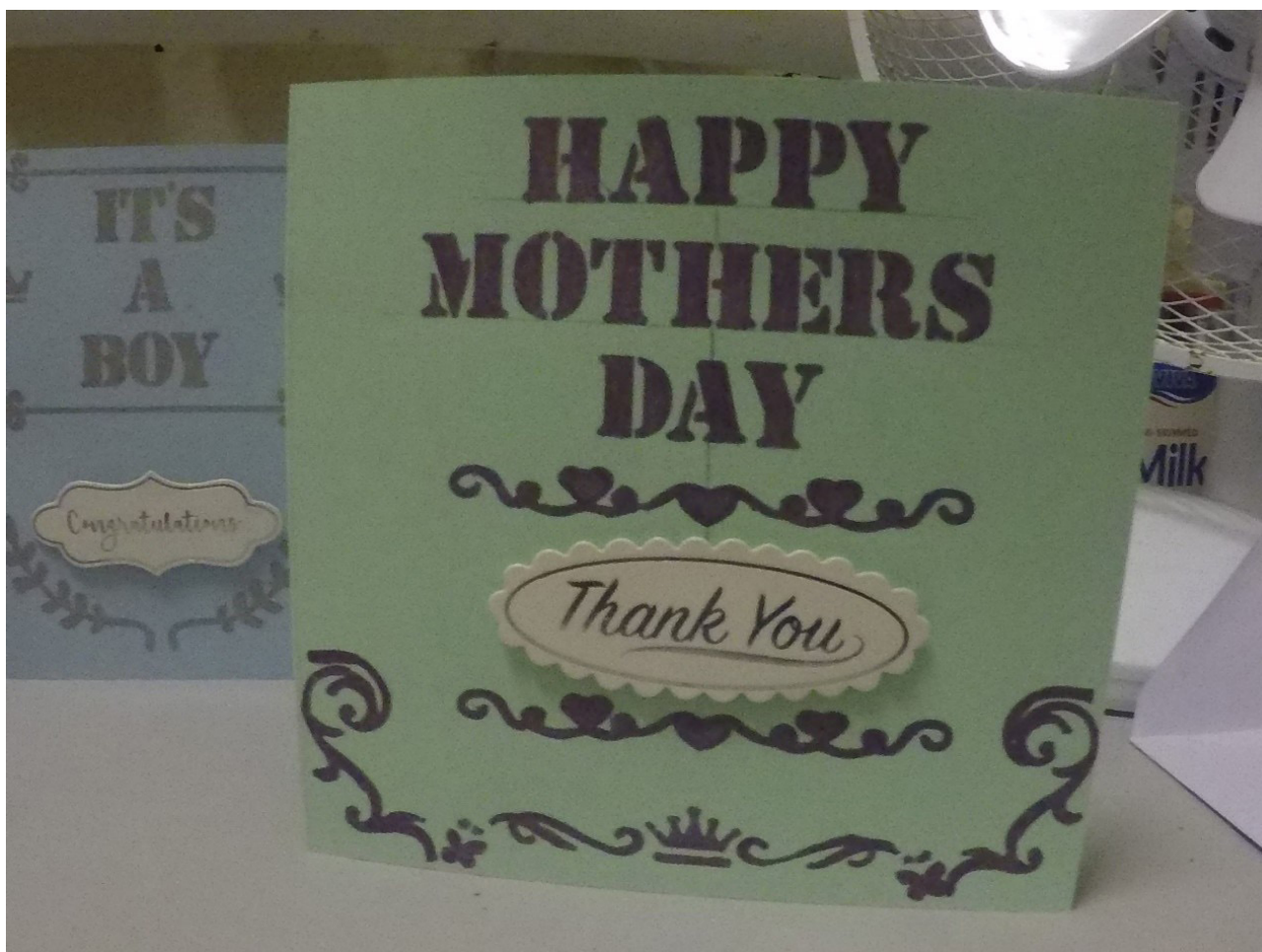
The joy of participation in artistic activities for some and the benefits from the cathartic expression of pain and distress for others both led to reports of prisoner participants generally being uplifted and more focused on building a better future.

Building relationships between prisoners and prison officers

Although many interventions were for small groups of prisoners, some of the larger performances involved prison officers performing alongside prisoners. This was reported to have a very healthy impact on the overall atmosphere within the prison as well as building significant bonds between individuals from either side of the custodial divide.

A new, non-offending, identity

Finally, most interviewees commented on how participation in the arts allowed people to show a different, more personal side of themselves and to create other, more positive and creative identities than those associated with their offending behaviour, for example rapper rather than gang member.



Handmade cards for family members

Chapter 4: Conclusions

Overview

This evaluation has shared the evidence base for the impact of arts interventions in reducing reoffending by a number of indirect effects, most important of which is the creation of a non-offending identity, encapsulated in the concept of “secondary desistance”.

Ingeus’ decision to expand the range of resettlement work available in prison by investing in a member of staff with skills in the arts proved to be the catalyst for a substantial number of arts interventions delivered year-round in HMP Leicester since 2016. The impact of the Ingeus arts specialist caseworker was magnified many times by a receptive and pro-arts senior management team at HMP Leicester which resulted in, probably, the world’s first prison arts festival. The partnership with De Montfort University (which already had good working relationships with both Ingeus and HMP Leicester) led to a productive and creative alliance which not only saw the Talent Unlocked Festival spread to other local prisons but, eventually, to an eight-week programme of arts-based broadcasts reaching 50 different custodial establishments.

The festival became emblematic of HMP Leicester’s commitment to the arts which in turn enabled Ingeus to deliver a very broad range of arts opportunities throughout the year, many of them through an increasing number of partnerships with arts organisations from the local community. Ingeus was key in facilitating access to prisoners from local groups which, through another revolution of this “virtuous circle”, resulted in those same local groups offering further opportunities to local prisoners on release and then to a broader group of people in contact with the criminal justice system in the Leicester area.

The quality of this work was acknowledged nationally with Simon Bland receiving two prestigious awards for his pivotal role in establishing the Talent Unlocked Festival. He won the Change Innovation Award in the official HMPPS Prison and Probation annual awards in 2019. Additionally, Simon was formally commended by the Butler Trust in their 2019/20 awards

“for his creative and inspiring use of the arts – and particularly music – to engage with even the most hard-to-reach prisoners”.



Lamboginny performing on the wing

The then governor of HMP Leicester, Phil Novis, was fulsome in his praise of Ingeus' work in developing arts interventions and the impact on the men in his care:

"Ingeus have shown themselves to take an innovative and fresh approach to reducing reoffending, developing new and effective ways of working that reflect the latest research and evidence around what works; their commitment to take a leading role in the Talent Unlocked arts initiative, not least Simon Bland's design and coordination of the hugely successful Arts Festivals at HMP Leicester, is testament to their collaborative and forward-thinking approach. The impact of this way of working on countless men serving their sentences at Leicester and their subsequent engagement with services was clear to see. Ingeus are exactly the sort of provider we need to support Justice services and help us overcome the challenges we face as a system"

The then deputy governor, Ralph Lubkowski, reflected on the impact of Ingeus' arts work in a more holistic way. When he first came up with the idea of a prison arts festival, Mr Lubkowski, alongside the rest of the senior management team, was committed to improve what had been a failing local prison by trying "anything positive". Like many other dilapidated, Victorian prisons at the time, HMP Leicester was struggling with big problems of violence and drugs with a much reduced and somewhat demoralised workforce. The investment in the arts projects, headlined by Talent Unlocked, was part of a bigger project to effectively turn the prison around. Mr Lubkowski is clear that the partnership work between Ingeus, De Montfort University and local arts providers made a big difference.

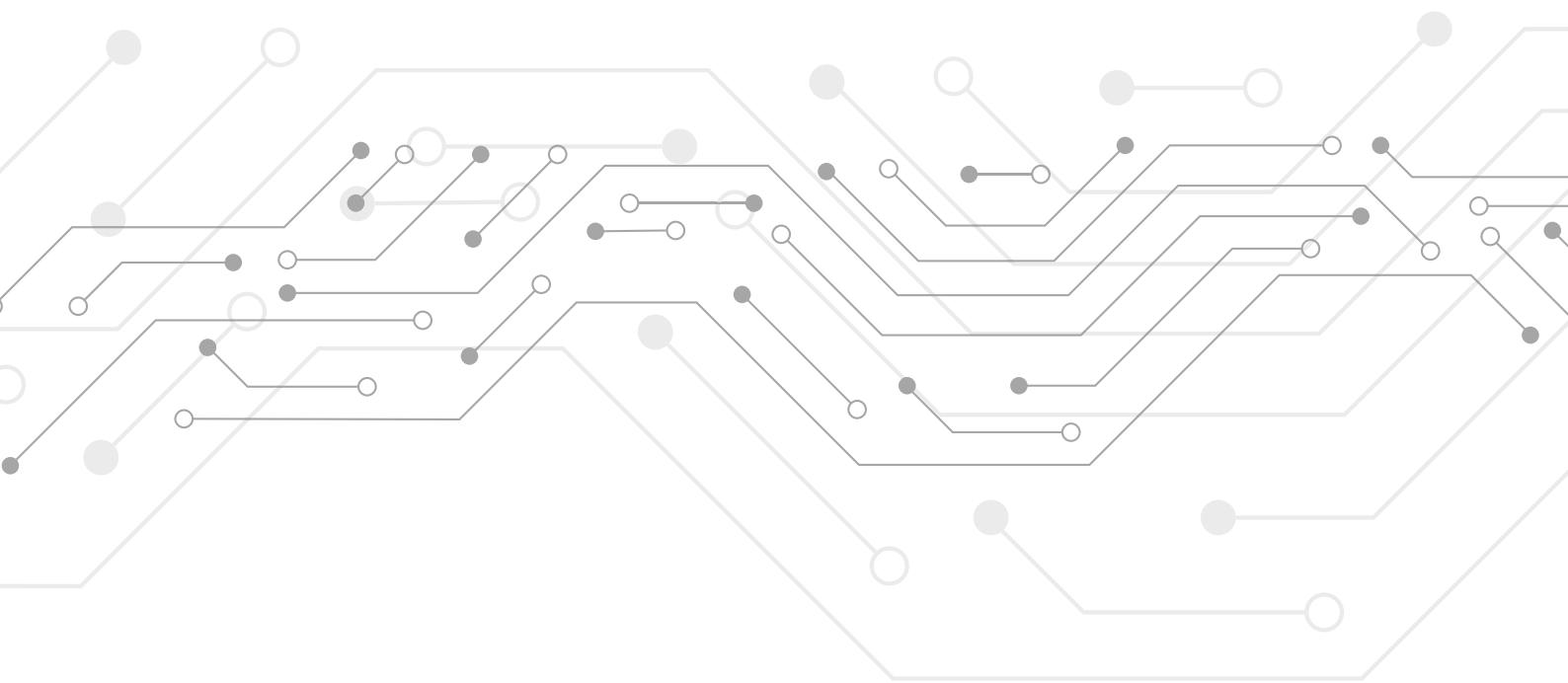
"There is no question that our investment in the arts shifted the mood, atmosphere and, to some extent, the culture of the prison in a positive way. To create a sense of purpose, innovation and creativity within a very austere environment made a huge difference. It gave all of us something to be proud of and helped drive significant improvements in the service we were able to provide to the men in our care."

Achievements

Several hundred prisoners at least have participated in this wide range of arts interventions delivered or developed in partnership by Ingeus over the last five years. There have been substantial gains for individuals in contact with the criminal justice system in terms of their emotional wellbeing, unearthing and development of talent, increased self-confidence and feelings of self-worth, boosting their chances of living productive and fulfilling crime-free lives. Additionally, the environment in which prisoners live and staff work has received an ongoing boost and links between the prison and the local community it serves have been strengthened. The message of the benefits of arts in prison is being spread by the digital version of Talent Unlocked and it is hoped that, once the pandemic is under more control, other prisons will be inspired to follow the lead of the multi-agency team responsible for this work in Leicester's prison and city.

The future

It was clear to Ingeus that their investment in a specialist arts post together with a commitment to partnership work resulted in much more extensive gains that would normally be expected from a single post. Mr Bland's work as a catalyst and facilitator was equally, perhaps more important, than the arts-based interventions he delivered directly, having a positive impact on many hundreds of people in prison and the prison culture and environment itself. For these reasons, Ingeus has continued to invest in this approach, creating a dedicated arts role within its delivery of Commissioned Resettlement Services.



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