

Public services: the value of cultural commissioning

Arts provision in the Criminal Justice system

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Creative Scotland's Arts & Criminal Justice programme

- A three-year programme funded to deliver arts activities within Scotland's criminal justice system
- Two strands:
 - In-prison: 5 projects
 - Community strand: 6 projects
- Delivered by the two colleges running SPS's learning centres, together with arts organisations
- Includes drama projects, storytelling, painting, arts magazine

Aims of the project

- To promote the integration and normalisation of arts & creative activities within the education service provision (Learning Centres) in Scottish prisons and communities affected by crime
- Push towards more streamlined provision of arts/creative activities via the commissioning of learning

Why aim to integrate arts provisions with Learning Centres?

- Maximises the potential for arts to lead to further learning
- External arts projects previously often ad hoc
- Lack of coordination means clashes of timing (“they’d programme over the top of us”), disrupting progress and taking away attention
- Makes arts & creative activities potentially more sustainable by integration with a universal service within the prison system

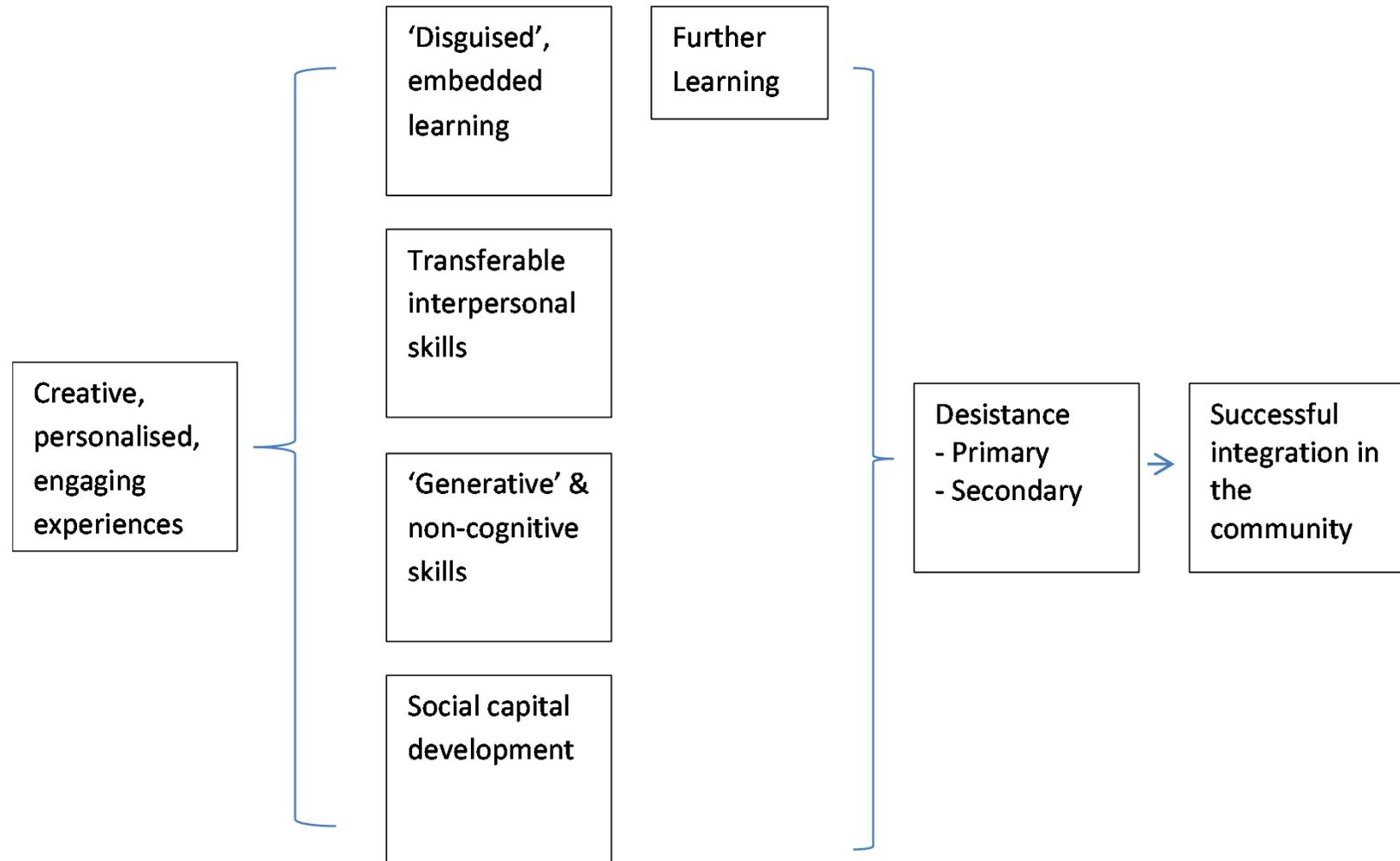


Our evaluation

- To assess
 - the extent to which the programme is successful in achieving its aim of creating a ‘culture change’ towards normalisation of arts / creative activities within the system
 - how are these objectives achieved
- Via surveys, focus groups, interviews, site visits



Evidence shows that arts provision results in positive outcomes...



“... [arts] can play an important part in changing individual, institutional and social circumstances which sponsor criminal behaviour”

...and this is reflected by our own research (i)

Learning centre survey

- Over 70% of LC staff believe that:
 - creative activities contribute to core outcomes (e.g. literacy/numeracy); and that
 - prisoners involved in creative/arts are more inclined to take up the wider education offer in the LC
- Prisoners seem: happier, more confident, more engaged with their work, “less inclined to react quickly to bad situations and more inclined to think”, more open and willing to communicate
- 76% of LC staff think social & emotional climate of the prison becomes better where arts & creative activities are integrated with the prison’s learning offer

...and this is reflected by our own research (ii)

Project visits

- “Projects like this help prisoners learn problem-solving; they can adapt this to various other areas of their life” (prisoner)
- “We never usually talk about how we feel – but here we can do that as part of the show” (prisoner)
- “The first year I refused to take a speaking role but now I’m happy to speak on stage – I didn’t realise I was developing my confidence while it was happening” (prisoner)
- “Drama is great for helping boys to view their relationships in a non-threatening way. Many have fractured home lives and this work may equip them to deal with that better on release and to build better relationships with family and inmates” (artist)



Arts & criminal justice: towards a 'commissioning model'? - Scotland (i)

- Signs of increasing intent at SPS level to systematise provision:
 - National Strategy in development: Arts and Criminal Justice Action Plan
 - One governor leads designated arts/drama portfolio
 - Model commissioning framework for partnership work with third sector organisations (inc arts)
 - SPS provided funding to build £4m performing arts space to support ongoing activities at Polmont
 - Efforts to better coordinate external arts projects with existing LC provision are showing success

Arts & criminal justice: towards a ‘commissioning model’? - Scotland (ii)

- **Governors/ Heads of Offender Outcomes now largely convinced of benefits of creative activities**
 - “It’s not just about entertaining, but about doing something meaningful - challenging prisoners, tackling behavioural issues, trying to break up a cycle” (HMP Barlinnie)
 - “Partnership and public working has increased tenfold. We realise our partners will serve us best” (HMP Polmont)
- **Some changes in officers’ views**
 - “Officers are learning to see the value of education and arts, but this doesn’t happen overnight. The younger generation is less aggressive” (HMP Polmont)
 - “In the past 18 months we’ve seen a lot of change right across the prison. Officers are becoming more relaxed, barriers are being broken down” (HMP Barlinnie)
- **Scottish Prison Arts Network (SPAN) established to bring practitioners together**

Arts & criminal justice: towards a 'commissioning model'? - England

- Many pro-active charities and arts organisations working in the field
- Arts Alliance as national body for promotion of arts in the Criminal Justice System
- Overall: less advanced than Scotland/ less high-ranking political support - upcoming Arts Alliance research project aims to bring about a step change in the credibility and reach of arts projects within the Criminal Justice System in England



Continuing challenges to greater integration of arts & creative activities in Scottish prisons (i)

LC-specific

- **Clash of goals: LC contract judged on literacy & numeracy outputs not on arts outcomes**
- **Staff not fully prepared: LC staff don't receive training on running arts & creative projects**
- **Structural disconnect: LC is a separate service from SPS – can itself not be well known within some prisons**
- **The association with traditional education turns off some prisoners**
 - can be difficult to reach these unless activity goes out to the blocks
- **Misses other agendas: tying arts & creative activities so closely with education sometimes seen as overly narrow**
 - should not forget the role of arts & creative activities in improving prisoner's well-being and mental health

Continuing challenges to greater integration of arts & creative activities in Scottish prisons (ii)

SPS-specific

Persisting 'rigidities' in organisational culture

- Lack of awareness and training: SPS officers receive no training on the value and role of arts and creative activities
- High SPS officer turnover, made greater through rotation system
- SPS 'block' officer culture still often antagonistic to arts and creative activities

Persisting 'rigidities' in organisational routines & structures

- Hierarchy of activities remains the same
 - System doesn't incentivise or reward officers for getting involved
 - One size does not fit all – Governor autonomy and different prisoner requirements (e.g. short term/long term)
 - Lack of integration with other skills development elements of prison system (e.g. workshops)
- Low engagement - and little recognition of the value of arts activities – persists among rank and file SPS officers

Continuing challenges to greater integration of arts & creative activities in (Scottish) prisons

Wider context

- Very negative popular media representation of arts & prisons activities
- Continuing lack of public backing from politicians (particularly England?)

Conclusions

- Lots of the building blocks are in place in Scotland but SPS still some way off regularly contracting arts practitioners → most likely to be sub-contracts to the LC contracts
- English Prison Service seems well behind SPS
- Similarly, Arts Council has not made the same commitment to this area as Creative Scotland ('Great Art for Everyone'?)