



# Music in Time

An evaluation of a participatory creative music programme for older prisoners

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This evaluation was developed as a research collaboration between the University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol and a Community Interest Company, Superact, which is affiliated with the south west regional branch of an arts charity, Live Music Now! The funding for the project was awarded by the former Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (the Transformation Fund) to support the development of a creative music educational programme for older prisoners. Superact CIC and Live Music Now! have extensive experience of delivering music education programmes for prisoners. UWE was invited to provide research expertise in terms of developing and conducting the evaluation. The evaluation took a formative, qualitative approach to enable the creative music programme provided by Superact CIC to be evaluated from the points of view of prisoners across a range of establishments in the south west of England.

This report describes the aims and objectives of the evaluation, provides an overview of the context, describes the methodology and fieldwork processes and reports on the findings. It is hoped that the information in the report can help inform future developments of creative arts programmes in this field.





## 2.0 BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

### 2.1 PROJECT FUNDING

The funding for the evaluation was awarded by the former Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills' Transformation Fund, under its Learning Revolution Programme. The DIUS was merged into the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in 2009. The Learning Revolution programme aims to deliver on commitments made in the UK Government's Learning Revolution White Paper, published in 2009 (DIUS 2009). The Transformation Fund was established within the White Paper to provide opportunities to connect public, community and independent sector organisations involved in informal adult learning, with the objective of *transforming* people's lives. In 2009, funding was subsequently awarded to bids that could show how innovative informal approaches to adult learning could be implemented. Specifically, the programme was intended to reach people perceived to be socially and economically disadvantaged, particularly older people and families, through the support and development of new creative learning opportunities.

### 2.2 MUSIC IN TIME PROGRAMME

Music in Time was one of 315 projects awarded funding from the £20million Transformation Fund. It represented a collaborative venture involving Superact CIC, the Age Concern Older Offenders Project (ACOOP), the University of the West of England, Bristol and HM Prison Service. Superact employs professional and amateur musicians from many different musical genres to bring creative learning opportunities to local communities across the UK. Musicians are trained and mentored to work particularly with older people, school children and people in the criminal justice system. The Music in Time project was developed specifically to address a perceived gap in provision for older prisoners and was therefore organised in collaboration with the SW region's ACOOP. Essentially, the aim of the project was to bring a music education programme to older prisoners as a medium for building confidence and self-efficacy, developing new relationships, and learning new skills.

The University of the West of England, Bristol became involved as a result of its existing prison research programme and its leadership of the South West Offender Health Research Network. As suggested, the Music in Time Programme was targeted at older prisoners but also drew in younger prisoners (under 50 years) and foreign nationals.

### **2.3 AGE CONCERN OLDER OFFENDERS PROJECT**

Age Concern Older Offenders Project (ACOOOP) offers social care, advice and support to older offenders and their families, both in prison and within the wider criminal justice system. ACOOP serves the South West of England, being an initiative developed by Age Concern Regional Support Services (South West), a charitable company comprising fourteen Age Concern organisations and thirty-three groups in the region, and Age Concern England. ACOOP works in partnership with prisons, probation trusts, other voluntary and community groups and prisoners and their families, including RESTORE 50+, a national older prisoners' self help group. Since May 2008, ACOOP has run fortnightly over-50s groups in two Devon prisons, organized through consultation with prison staff and prisoners. The purpose of these groups has been to deliver low level health and social care, and activities are structured around the National Offender Management Service pathways to reducing reoffending (accommodation; education, training and employment; health; drugs and alcohol; finance, benefit and debt; children and families; attitudes, thinking and behaviour) (ACOOOP 2010).

### **2.4 BACKGROUND LITERATURE**

It has been extensively reported that people entering the criminal justice system share disproportionately high levels of psychiatric morbidity and emotional and social exclusion, relative to the general population, with offending behaviour commonly linked to social exclusion, deprivation and health inequalities (Singleton et al 1997; Lader et al 2000; Marshall et al 2000; SEU 2002; Farrington 2006; Nurse 2006; de Viggiani 2007a; de Viggiani 2007b). Most prisoners are therefore considered to be at

greater risk of poor health and low level wellbeing, stemming from a broader social context of inequality and disadvantage.

Given the strong association between crime and health, contemporary criminal justice health and social care policy has reflected a convergence of health, social care and criminal justice goals (DH 2008; Bradley 2009). The 1992 Reed Review of Health and Social Services for Mentally Disordered Offenders recommended positive, responsive approaches towards meeting the complex needs of offenders, particularly women and people from Black and minority ethnic groups (DH/Home Office 1992). Moreover, the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) argued that effective cross-sector partnership working was essential to achieve positive health and social care outcomes for people with mental health problems in the criminal justice system. It identified offending and criminality as sharing many common determinants with social exclusion, characterised by high levels of family, educational and health disadvantage, and poor prospects within the labour market (SEU 2002). Criminal justice health and social care service development is becoming increasingly orientated towards meeting complex health and social needs of offenders and their families, focused on “social inclusion with enhanced access” and equivalent standards of care for offenders as for the general population.

*Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* (DH 2006) and Lord Darzi (2008) recently set out the vision of high quality health and social care services, responsive to local needs and planned and delivered locally. The challenge is to ensure these aspirations apply to everyone, especially those with greatest perceived need, which will require the NHS, the Prison Service and other organizations responsible for the care and resettlement of offenders to “work closely with key partners including local government, healthcare providers and third sector organizations” (DH 2007:15). Essentially, this means that the rich mix of agencies working within the criminal justice system has the opportunity to bring considerable gains for offenders and for society, with joint working offering real potential to reduce health inequalities and reoffending (DH 2006). Lord Bradley (2009) recently emphasized the importance of effective partnership working through joint commissioning and local accountability, recommending that Regional Strategic Partnerships and Local Partnership Boards work together synergistically to develop services and provision focused on health and

social care need. Bradley suggested this would require a substantive shift of values and priorities for some commissioning NHS organizations, especially those not previously involved in commissioning prison health services (Bradley 2009).

Older prisoners, defined as aged 50 years or above, are the fastest growing age group in prisons in England and Wales, comprising 8% of the total prison population (Prison Reform Trust 2009). According to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), this population rise is not explained by demographic changes, nor by increased prevalence of offending by older people, but by harsher sentencing policies, with a larger proportion of offenders aged over 60 years receiving longer sentences (HMIP 2008). This has particularly been the case in relation to those convicted of sex offences and drug trafficking. In 2009, there were 7,358 older prisoners, which included 518 aged over 70 years (NACRO / DH 2009; MoJ 2009), with around 2000 of the total serving life sentences (Prison Reform Trust 2009). Offences committed by males are predominantly sexual, and/or against the person, with around 80% of offenders sentenced to four or more years. Nearly half of all older women in prison are foreign nationals (44%) and many are serving long sentences for drug importation (Prison Reform Trust 2009).

In terms of health and wellbeing, over half of prisoners aged over 50 are reported to have experienced a mental illness, most commonly depression arising as a result of imprisonment. A Department of Health study conducted in 1999-2000 surveyed 203 sentenced male prisoners aged 60 years and above across fifteen establishments in England and Wales, and found that 85% had one or more major illnesses reported in their medical records, while 83% reported at least one chronic illness or disability. The most common illnesses reported were psychiatric, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal and respiratory (Prison Reform Trust 2003).

In 2004, HMIP published a thematic review of the conditions and treatment of older prisoners in England and Wales (HMIP 2004), in the light of the requirements of the Human Rights Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the National Service Framework for older people. The review raised concerns about how older people entering prison were managed, and about prisoners serving long sentences who would become elderly while in prison. In particular, it identified the lack of specialist

accommodation and provision to meet individual needs, the inappropriateness of prison regimes to the needs of older prisoners, the lack of tailored activities for older prisoners, and failure within prisons to adequately assess and address mental and physical health needs of this group. It also highlighted that older prisoners were commonly held long distances from their homes, which impeded resettlement work, prison visits and had a detrimental effect on their families. In its follow-up to the 2004 thematic review (HMIP 2008), HMIP noted that little progress had been made in terms of developing multidisciplinary approaches to the management of older prisoners, with 'disappointing' levels of social care provision. Nonetheless, positive developments were observed in terms of healthcare provision and some individual prisons and prison staff were noted for their innovative work to meet the specific needs of older prisoners (HMIP 2008).

NACRO / DH (2009), in their *Working with Older Prisoners* resource pack, point out that older prisoners have the same need for purposeful activity as other prisoners, whether this takes the form of employment or leisure activity. They suggest that for some older groups, however, reminiscence activities can be popular, which can include discussion groups, films, art and genealogy, plus activities or workshops focused on arts and crafts, testing general knowledge, creative writing, reading, history and music, and outdoor activities including gardening. Previous work by Superact with older people in the community has included interactive music workshops as opportunities for reminiscence.

While the benefits of music in prison have begun to be identified (Cox and Gelsthorpe 2008; Digard et al 2007; Wilson et al 2008), few studies have focused specifically on the contribution creative music programmes can bring to older prisoners. Evidence suggests that creative arts can play an important role in improving health outcomes and can bring demonstrable benefits to offender populations, especially improvements in mental health and wellbeing (Secker et al 2007; DH / Arts Council England 2007). Arguably, such programmes can help older prisoners find focus, build their confidence and discover new relationships, and may provide an important resource in terms of improving health and reducing re-offending. In particular, they may offer prisoners alternative creative and productive

outlets who may normally find it difficult to engage with formal systems of support, education or employment.

Previous Superact and Live Music Now project evaluations have suggested, anecdotally, that music can reach offenders in ways that mainstream health and education services struggle, for instance in terms of alleviating emotional stress, building self esteem and self confidence, personal achievement, improving communication skills, and enhancing peer and family relationships. The value of this type of work has also been expressed anecdotally by service providers across south west criminal justice institutions. Superact and Live Music Now SW have worked extensively across criminal justice settings, for many years, yet their activities have not been empirically evaluated or researched. This evaluation therefore provides an important opportunity to reflect on this work, in particular the contribution organizations like Superact and Live Music Now can bring to the health, wellbeing and resettlement of offenders in the criminal justice system.

## 3.0 CONTEXT, LOCATION & ACCESS

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the context in which the Music in Time programme and evaluation took place, providing details of the prison establishments involved, the specific settings of the workshops, numbers and types of prisoners recruited to the sessions, and ethical, access and security issues. Section 4 then describes the methodological approach and techniques used to carry out the evaluation.

### 3.2 ETHICAL APPROVAL

Prison-based projects that are defined as 'audit' or 'service evaluation' and that do not have direct healthcare relevance, do not require NHS research ethics committee or governance approval. They do however require National Offender Management Service (NOMS) approval if undertaken by external staff, and Ministry of Justice approval if they are considered to be national in scope, if there is an intention to publish or share the results with government departments, or if the outcomes are likely to lead to changes in policy or procedure. As this project was designed essentially as a programme evaluation, and Superact had good working relations in place with all the prisons involved in the project, full research ethics approval via the Ministry of Justice was not sought. Advice was sought from the University of the West of England (UWE) Research Ethics Committee given the very tight time scale available to apply for NOMS approval, and given that the participating prisons had agreed in principal for the evaluation to proceed. Essentially, ethical approval was given on the condition that permission was sought in writing from relevant governors or leads at the respective establishments. Advice was also sought from the NHS National Research Ethics Service who confirmed that NHS REC approval was not required. Full research ethics approval was nonetheless sought and granted from the UWE Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 1a). Full details of the ethical procedures employed during this project are outlined below, with relevant documents provided in

Appendix 1. In preparation for the project, all members of the project team, including the musicians and researchers, underwent Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, NOMS identity and security checks and security training at HMP Exeter.

### **3.3 SELECTION OF SITES**

The funding for the project was announced in August 2009, with completion required by the end of April 2010. This tight time scale of six months, required to set up, run and evaluate the six programmes, meant that the success of the project lay in being able to recruit prisoners from across the various prison establishments in south west England. The original project proposal for which funding was granted described an intervention that involved six music programmes organized across six older prisoner groups within the region.

Thirteen prisons are located within south west England, designated to accommodate adult prisoners: HMP Bristol, HMP Channings Wood, HMP Dartmoor, HMP Dorchester, HMP Eastwood Park, HMP Erlestoke, HMP Exeter, HMP Gloucester, HMP Guys Marsh, HMP Leyhill, HMP Portland, HMP Shepton Mallet, and HMP the Verne. From these, establishments were approached with whom Superact had pre-existing relationships with Heads of Learning and Skills and ACOOP representatives. This was partly to overcome the difficulty of negotiating access across multiple sites in a short time scale. Initially, three establishments were to be selected from four prisons that were known to have sizeable older prisoner populations and well-established ACOOP links; these were HMP Channings Wood, HMP Dartmoor, HMP Exeter and HMP Shepton Mallet. However, HMP Channings Wood and HMP Shepton Mallet were unable to participate due to local security issues and inability to accommodate a music programme with such a short lead-in time. Therefore, HMP Eastwood Park and HMP the Verne were approached as alternatives and each agreed to become involved; both had run successful workshops before and had staff with a keen interest in the benefits of music in prison. All but one of the prisons selected were male, HMP Eastwood Park being the only female prison in the region. Later into the project, it transpired that HMP Channings Wood was willing and able to participate in the project and became involved.



Initially, the plan was to deliver six programmes across three prisons; eventually, however, six programmes were delivered across five prisons, including one female establishment.

| <b>TABLE 1. PARTICIPATING SITES, MUSICIANS, WORKSHOP SCHEDULES &amp; PARTICIPANT NUMBERS</b> |                               |                                        |                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>PRISON ESTABLISHMENT and TYPE<sup>1</sup></b>                                             | <b>MUSICIANS / GENRE</b>      | <b>SCHEDULES<sup>2</sup></b>           | <b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b> |
| HMP Exeter<br>Male Category B, Local                                                         | Park Bench<br>(folk)          | 3 split full days                      | 12                        |
| HMP Dartmoor<br>Male Category C, Training (VPU <sup>3</sup> )                                | Amanes<br>(world music)       | 3 split full days                      | 16                        |
| HMP Dartmoor<br>Male Category C, Training                                                    | Park Bench<br>(folk)          | 3 split full days                      | 9                         |
| HMP Channings Wood<br>Male Category C, Training (VPU)                                        | World Music<br>(world music)  | 4 half days<br>1 split full day        | 10                        |
| HMP Eastwood Park<br>Female Closed Local                                                     | Ensemble 3<br>(classical)     | 3 split full days<br>1 evening concert | 15                        |
| HMP the Verne<br>Male Category C, Training                                                   | Kokila & James<br>(classical) | 2 split full days<br>1 evening concert | 18                        |
| <b>TOTALS</b>                                                                                |                               |                                        | <b>80</b>                 |

<sup>1</sup> Four security categories are used for adult male prisoners, A, B, C, and D. Category A is for prisoners whose escape would be considered highly dangerous to the public, or a threat to national security. Category B is for prisoners for whom escape must be made very difficult. Category C applies to prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions. Category D prisoners can be reasonably trusted in open conditions. Un-convicted adult prisoners (commonly referred to as Remand prisoners) will generally be treated as Category B prisoners. There are three security categories for women and young offenders, Category A, Closed, Semi Open and Open. Category A is for prisoners whose escape would be considered highly dangerous to the public or a threat to national security. Closed is for prisoners who are not trusted in an open prison. Open is for those who can be trusted to stay in an open prison. Un-convicted adult female prisoners (commonly referred to as Remand prisoners) will be held in closed conditions (HM Prison Service 2002).

<sup>2</sup> the timings of half day sessions varied by prison from between 2 and 4 hours (due to security constraints).

<sup>3</sup> Vulnerable Prisoner Unit (VPU): these hold prisoners segregated from the main prison population Under Rule 45: "Where it appears desirable, for the maintenance of good order or discipline or in his own interests, that a prisoner should not associate with other prisoners, either generally or for particular purposes, the governor may arrange for the prisoner's removal from association accordingly." HM Prison Service 2010).

### 3.4 FORMAT AND SCHEDULING

The plan for each of the six music programmes was to recruit up to fifteen participants to each, and for them to be facilitated by a pair or trio of musicians employed by Superact, each of whom represented specific musical styles or genres and received training in preparation for working with prisoners. Details of the participating prisons, the musicians, the workshop schedules and numbers of participants are summarised in table 1.

Each music programme was organized to run over six half day sessions. For most establishments, this was organized as three full day sessions over three consecutive weeks, each day split by lunchtime lock-up periods. This was essentially because of the short lead-in time available to obtain ethical approval, negotiate access to the sites, acquire security clearance for all project team members, including musicians, and to then organize the workshops in negotiation with gatekeepers at each site. The two exceptions were HMP Channings Wood, where there were four half day sessions and one full split day over five weeks. HMP the Verne was only able to accommodate two full split days in consecutive weeks. Previous experience of working with prisons shows that negotiating access and permissions can take many weeks, with ethical approval sometimes taking months. Since the programme was accompanied with an evaluation employing university researchers, and was not therefore solely a contracted educational programme, access and security issues were further compounded. These are explained fully in 3.5. This, moreover, limited the available time to recruit participants and organize the workshops. In retrospect, a longer lead-in time would have been desirable to negotiate with individual establishments and fit in with their requirements. Furthermore, this would probably have led to improved uptake and attendance at the sessions.

The format of each programme was essentially one that had been used by Superact and Live Music Now on previous occasions, where a pair or trio of musicians with prior training and experience were contracted to facilitate the programmes, blending their musical skills and talent with adult education approaches. As summarised in Table 1, one pair of musicians, Park Bench, ran two of the programmes, in HMP Exeter and HMP Dartmoor respectively. Four other pairs / trios ran the programmes in

each of the other settings, Amanes, World Music, Ensemble 3, and Kokila & James. While each had their distinctive style and genre, they used a similar approach, performing to participants at the outset and then using group and team building approaches to work inductively with participants, towards creating new musical compositions, which, in the final session, were professionally recorded to CD and, in the cases of HMP Eastwood Park and HMP the Verne, performed by the groups to a live audience of fellow prisoners. With security clearance, the musicians were able to bring an extensive range of musical instruments and equipment to sessions for participants to share in the use of, which included basic percussion instruments through to guitars and keyboards. Some prisoners were permitted to bring their own instruments along in the category C training establishments. This approach has been used repeatedly within prisons and other criminal justice settings in the region and therefore access, security clearance and safety had been well rehearsed.

### **3.5 WORKSHOP SETTINGS AND FACILITIES**

The locations provided within each prison for the music workshops were determined by each prison's Head of Security, usually in collaboration with Heads of Learning and Skills; in the Devon prisons, the ACOOP Volunteer and Healthy Living Co-ordinator (employed as a joint appointment between NHS Devon and Age Concern) was able to negotiate on behalf of the project team. Availability of specific locations depended partly on whether or not they were already being used for other purposes. The prisons participating in the project varied in terms of their space and the relative importance or priority they afforded to the project. Spaces allocated for the programmes were important in terms of being able to create appropriate conditions and ambience for playing and composing music and for safe and reciprocal engagement with participants. For the workshops to be effective in enabling participants to gain positively from the experience, the musicians would need to be able to foster participation and involvement among them, and build rapport and respect within the group.

For most establishments, the chapel would most likely have been the venue of choice for such workshops, since prison chapels tend to be calm, peaceful environments

where there is more space than is commonly found on the main residential wings. Moreover, acoustics tend to be good, seating is available, appropriate and movable, and participants can move about the space and feel relatively relaxed. The prison chapel was the venue used for the workshops in HMP Dartmoor and HMP the Verne, which, for all three programmes within these venues, worked well. Additional instruments were also made available, including pianos, keyboards and drum kits. Both venues also had kitchen facilities so that prisoners and musicians could access much needed refreshments in the breaks, provided by chapel orderlies stationed in these locations. Within HMP Eastwood Park and HMP the Verne, the live performances organized for the final evening of each programme were held in their chapels, each of which had a small stage and seating for reasonably sized audiences; eighty tickets were distributed to prisoners for the concert at HMP Eastwood Park. However, the choice of the chapel as a venue for music workshops can be perceived as problematic; chapels tend to be where music is most commonly played or performed within prisons, usually to accompany religious services, and most prisons have a dedicated choir. But for prisoners wishing to participate in non-religious music activities, facilities within prisons are scarce. Non-religious prisoners can be deterred from music-based activities if they associate them with religious worship or as having an ulterior religious motive, especially if the chapel is the venue. On the other hand, more religious prisoners and prison chaplains may object to the chapel being used to play or compose non-religious music, especially if it is interpreted as blasphemous or as having other negative connotations. Furthermore, while chapels tend to be the largest available spaces within most prisons, and space for participatory educational activities is scarce, they are popular and therefore often in use for other activities.

By contrast, the venue provided for the music programme at HMP Exeter was the visits hall, a long portacabin building with fixed seating in clusters of four, designed for optimum security and surveillance and minimum comfort. HMP Exeter is a cramped environment where the chapel is really the only venue conducive to participatory approaches, but which on this occasion was unavailable. Essentially, because HMP Exeter is a category B local remand prison, its heightened security means prisoners have to be more closely supervised than in a category C training prison. Prisoners are also less likely to know each other, making the process of building group cohesion difficult and time consuming. The visits hall had very poor

acoustics and was not conducive to participatory group activities. Consequently, the first session at HMP Exeter was difficult, as participants were obliged to sit in the fixed seating clusters, some with their backs to one another. This was challenging for the musicians who had to work within the constraints of the space to engage effectively with participants. Moreover, there was no access to refreshments for participants, musicians or researchers, for the duration of the first workshop, although water was provided for subsequent workshops.

At HMP Channings Wood, the musicians were not offered consistent use of one room for the duration of the programme. Instead, sessions took place in different spaces – either a small teaching room on the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit, where prisoners' were based, or an available classroom within a separate block. Finding the location of each workshop and locating all the participants used up valuable workshop time and proved disruptive for both prisoners and musicians. The prisoners themselves provided refreshments (tea, coffee and biscuits), paid for from their own limited resources, in gratitude to the musicians.

At HMP Eastwood Park, the music programme was based in a classroom within the Learning and Skills Department, which was a relatively cramped computer room that could accommodate up to fifteen participants in a tight circle. The room was claustrophobic, poorly ventilated and without external light. The acoustics were poor and it was located adjacent to two other classrooms separated by sliding partitions, which meant noise from the room was able to travel to adjacent classrooms. Nonetheless, staff within the Learning and Skills Department provided the group with refreshments during breaks in the form of water and biscuits.

Within most prisons, prisoners who have earned sufficient privileges and are judged not to pose a security risk can own and keep musical instruments in their cells. However, most prisoners who have earned this privilege only have the opportunity to play within the confines of their cell. Since 2007, Billy Bragg's charity Jail Guitar Doors has provided guitars to prisons in south west England, though at the time of this evaluation there were no opportunities for prisoners to access music lessons or any other form of music qualification within the five prisons involved in the project, and there were few opportunities for skilled or aspiring musicians to get together to

practice. HMP the Verne has the best available music facilities in the region, largely stemming from the commitment of the Prison Chaplain, formerly a professional musician, and his assistant, formerly a head of music at a school, who provided limited piano tuition and could provide prisoners with access to a rehearsal room during evening association periods.

## **4.0 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY & DESIGN**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This section describes the methodological approach and techniques used to carry out the evaluation. It outlines the aims and objectives of the evaluation and explains the evaluation approach. It describes the ethical standards applied to the evaluation, in terms of consent, confidentiality, data protection and risk management. It then describes the processes of recruitment and sampling, data collection and data analysis. Section 5.0 reports on the evaluation findings.

### **4.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aims and objectives of the music programme and the evaluation were essentially different. The music programme was aimed at motivating participants to learn new skills, via an interactive music programme, and, through the programme, find new focus in their lives, develop new relationships with others and increase their self-efficacy (belief in their own creative abilities). A key objective for Superact was to raise the profile of music as a creative art form for use with older prisoners, especially those who perceive themselves to be excluded or marginalized from mainstream criminal justice health and social care programmes. The purpose of the evaluation, on the other hand, was to explore participants' perceptions of the music programme and perceived benefits of delivering the programme with older prisoners, especially as an opportunity to improve health and wellbeing. A further objective for the researchers was to attempt to explore with participants the significance of music as a creative art form and any relation or bearing music as a creative or leisure activity had to their current circumstances.

### **4.3 EVALUATION APPROACH**

The evaluation used a qualitative, formative design primarily to explore, using participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and focus group interviewing, participants' subjective perspectives and judgements of the music programme. Secondary to this was some exploration of participants' broader values, beliefs and perceptions of music as a creative activity.

Formative evaluation methodology is typically used during the development or improvement stages of a project, to assess and inform further development in close collaboration with providers or stakeholders. The principal goal is to identify and resolve with stakeholders difficult or contentious issues, disagreements or conflicts of interest in a collective way towards establishing how best to develop and improve the service or innovation (Scriven 1991). Essentially, the researchers operate as "critical friends" to the programme team, supporting and advising through the development and evolution of the project. Qualitative and/or quantitative methods can be used to gather data, and may include observation, in-depth interviewing, survey techniques, focus groups, analysis of relevant secondary documentation and ad hoc dialogue with participants. Reporting back occurs throughout the course of the evaluation directly with stakeholders (Weston et al 1995). In this case, the researchers were working in close collaboration with the Superact Project Lead, the NHS Devon ACOOP representative and with the musicians. Two researchers were employed on the project, the Principal Investigator, Dr Nick de Viggiani, and a research consultant, Sheila Mackintosh. The plan was therefore for the researchers' to accompany the musicians from the beginning of each programme through to its completion and to participate in the workshops. During this time they would build trust and rapport with participants, provide feedback to the musicians and the Superact Project Lead, and gather data.

### **4.4 ETHICAL STANDARDS**

To proceed with the project, as explained in 3.2, ethical approval was required. This was granted by UWE's Research Ethics Committee. The conditions of the ethics



committee were that informed consent would be required from all participants, and that measures should be instituted to ensure confidentiality, protect confidential data and manage potential risks associated with the project.

## **Consent**

All individuals recruited to the project were asked to provide their informed consent to take part in the programme evaluation, which included them granting permission to the researchers to participate in and observe the workshops (Appendix 1b). The consent process was intended to provide volunteers with adequate information to enable them to understand what they were agreeing to, to ensure they understood what consent implied, to feel equipped to decide whether or not to participate, and to ensure they were aware that by volunteering there was no obligation to continue to participate – that they retained the right to withdraw from the project at any stage or to decline to be interviewed.

Given that literacy levels can be low among some prisoners and that a proportion of foreign nationals had volunteered to take part in the project, it was important to gauge participants' competence to provide consent. In some instances, a prison officer or the ACOOP representative was able to provide support and guidance to prisoners in terms of explaining the project to them and helping them to complete the consent form. Furthermore, to enable participants to fully understand the expectations of the researchers, the evaluation was explained verbally to volunteers at the first sessions and plain language was used in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 1c) explaining the evaluation. Consent was then undertaken on a one-to-one basis during the first session of each programme, using the printed consent form that participants were asked to read and sign, with the option to withdraw at any stage from the programme and opt into an interview and/or focus group towards the end of the programme. Although participants were advised and supported by prison officials and ACOOP representatives in deciding whether or not to volunteer, there was no attempt to coerce individuals into volunteering, particularly given that they had the option to withdraw at any stage.

## Confidentiality and Data Protection

Caldicott Principles, used as the benchmark for safeguarding patient information within the NHS, provided the ethical framework for maintaining confidentiality for the evaluation. Under these principles, information was sought through the evaluation to seek only to meet the principal evaluation aims. While personal data was accrued during the evaluation process, measures were instituted to protect individuals' privacy, anonymity and confidentiality in the management, processing and analysis of data. Personal details and identities have not been disclosed in this report and all person-identifiable information has been removed from any data published here. Likewise, person-identifiable information accrued and stored during the recruitment, consent and data collection stages, retained by the researchers for the purposes of data management and analysis, will be destroyed following publication of this report. During the evaluation and the production of this report, no circumstances arose where there was any need to breach confidentiality; participants were advised that this could be necessary if at any stage of the evaluation information was divulged that placed themselves or others at serious risk of harm. An independent transcriber was employed to assist in the transcription and anonymisation of interview data. The two researchers and the transcriber were the only individuals with access to raw data from interviews and focus groups and each signed a witnessed confidentiality statement (Appendix 1d)

As stated, personal identifying information was only used during the evaluation for the purposes of recruitment of participants and consent. Individuals who were recruited to the project and provided their consent to participate were allocated a unique alpha-numerical code, which was used subsequently to recorded references to them (e.g. in interview transcripts). Coding information (names and codes) was stored in a password protected Microsoft Word file on a University of the West of England password protected network drive, accessible only to the Principal Investigator. During the consent process, volunteers were asked to provide their name and signature to validate the consent process. This information was then stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Investigator's office at the University of the West of England, Bristol and will be destroyed within six months of publication of this report.

Electronic audio recorded data from interviews and focus groups was transported via a password protected digital audio recorder and the files immediately transferred to a password protected computer folder on the researchers' personal computer, accessible only to the researchers, and backed up on a password protected University network drive. The use of researchers' personal computers was unavoidable given that one was a non-UWE employee subcontracted to the project. Nonetheless, all subsequent data files were named with their respective alpha-numeric participant codes. During transcription of audio data to Microsoft Word files, where names or personal identifying information arose in the recordings, these were anonymised by substituting them with alpha-numeric codes or deleted. Transcribed Word files were also named with the participant's alpha-numeric code and password protected. Hardcopy printed transcripts were likewise coded. Essentially, all data stored on personal computers during the life of the evaluation was anonymised either when uploaded to PC or during the transcription process. All audio, word processed and hardcopy data (as described above) will be destroyed within six months of publication of this report.

Given the small numbers of participants recruited from each research site for this project, where there was a risk that participants could be identified, data specifically relating to individuals has not been linked to specific sites within this report, but is referred to in more general terms. In this way, individuals are in no way identifiable from the report and cannot be traced to specific sites.

## **Risk Management**

There were no anticipated risks arising from the project, nor did any unanticipated problems or hazards arise during the course of the project. The techniques used by the musicians and the researchers were not intended to be exploitative or intrusive and there was no indication from participants of this occurring. At the outset of the project, participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the music programme and / or the evaluation should they choose to. Moreover, the project team indicated that it would withdraw from an establishment if requested to do so.

As stated, participants and gatekeepers were advised that should individual participants unexpectedly disclose information of a sensitive nature that could potentially pose a risk to them or to others (i.e. any expressed intention on the part of the participant or another participant to self-harm, harm another named person, pose a threat to security, or signal any other breach of the Prison Rules or rules that apply to the respective site), this information would be disclosed to the prison's Head of Security. The project team (musicians and researchers) were all provided with access to the official Prison Rules before commencing the project.

Before commencing the project, project team members (musicians and researchers) had previous experience of working with prisoners or vulnerable individuals. Additionally, as stated, they underwent appropriate security training before commencement of the project. A requirement within all the participating prisons was that all music programme sessions were supervised by Prison Service or ACOOP staff with specific security clearance and training (in possession of a two-way radio, keys and trained in control and restraint techniques); project team members were therefore accompanied at all times when in the presence of prisoners. This also meant that confidential one-to-one interviewing had to be conducted in locations which guaranteed privacy but was accessible and visible to security staff.

Once approval had been granted by each prison to proceed with the music programmes and the accompanying evaluation, and the necessary security procedures had been completed, it was relatively easy to proceed. However, organizing the interviews and focus groups, and gaining permission to use audio recording equipment was problematic. For each researcher, the make, model and serial number of their respective digital recorders had to be catalogued with each prison, approved and then, on each visit, checked in and out of the prison, since there are strict regulations in place prohibiting mobile phones, cameras and recording devices being taken into prisons. Despite following the same security procedures and obtaining security clearance at all the prisons, on several occasions the relevant information had not been passed on to gate staff, which created delays on arrival at the various establishments while authorisation status was checked. The support of the NHS Devon ACOOP worker in the three Devon prisons was invaluable. She was able to facilitate entry to the prisons for the musicians and researchers, and organize times

and locations for focus groups and interviews with prisoners. In HMP Eastwood Park, the Head of Learning and Skills, and in HMP the Verne, the Chaplain, were also supportive. Without these key contacts within the establishments, who were evidently committed to and enthusiastic about the music programmes, it is likely that the project would not have been able to proceed.

#### **4.5 RECRUITMENT AND SAMPLING**

During the month preceding the project, the Music in Time programme was advertised via posters in association areas and via leaflets directly to prisoners, appealing to volunteers aged over 50 years. The residential locations where the programmes were advertised were pre-selected by Heads of Learning and Skills at the respective prisons. In the Devon prisons, this was done in collaboration with the NHS Devon ACOOP representative who was instrumental in displaying posters, distributing leaflets to prisoners and speaking directly with older prisoners to encourage them to take part. For the purposes of the evaluation, all volunteers to the music programmes were considered potential cases for the evaluation and were subsequently asked to consent to take part in the evaluation. The materials used to advertise the programme also explained that the music programme would be evaluated by researchers from the University of the West of England.

The original aim had been to recruit up to fifteen older prisoners to each music programme, which would amount to a total of ninety participants across all sites; it transpired that eighty prisoners were recruited, which included foreign nationals and some who were aged under 50 years; of these, one third of participants across the six programmes were aged over 50 years. The breakdown of participants is shown in Table 2.

Anecdotal feedback from gatekeepers at the prisons suggests that older prisoners were generally reluctant to volunteer for music-based activity programmes. Firstly, it was perceived that more lead-in time would have enabled prison staff and ACOOP workers to contact people individually and generate greater enthusiasm to volunteer. Probably more fundamental, though, was the uneven distribution of older prisoners

between and within the prisons. One evident problem in recruiting male prisoners aged over 50 years is that there tend to be higher proportions on the Vulnerable Prisoner Units (VPUs), while they are under-represented on the main wings. Prisoners held on VPUs are segregated from the main prison population under Rule 45; commonly these prisoners are segregated for their own protection, and are therefore held on separate wings along with other 'VPs'. Such prisoners can include sex-offenders, police informants, ex-prison staff or police officers, or others who may be subject to exploitation, bullying or harm. The Governor may place prisoners compulsorily on Rule 45 to maintain good order and discipline or at the request of prisoners themselves (HM Prison Service 2002; HM Prison Service 2010). The main dilemma this creates for prisoners is that they cannot participate in activities with prisoners from the main wings. In preparing for this project, the option was therefore to recruit solely from the VPUs or from the main wings.

| <b>TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY TYPE / BACKGROUND</b>   |                  |                                             |                               |                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>PRISON ESTABLISHMENT</b>                                         | <b>MUSICIANS</b> | <b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS / CORE ATTENDEES*</b> | <b>OVER 50s (UK / non-UK)</b> | <b>UNDER 50s (UK/non-UK)</b> |
| HMP Exeter                                                          | Park Bench       | 12 / 7                                      | 4 / 0                         | 0 / 8                        |
| HMP Dartmoor (VPU)                                                  | Amanes           | 16 / 10                                     | 9 / 0                         | 4 / 3                        |
| HMP Dartmoor                                                        | Park Bench       | 9 / 6                                       | 3 / 0                         | 6 / 0                        |
| HMP Channings Wood (VPU)                                            | World Music      | 10 / 7                                      | 9 / 0                         | 1 / 0                        |
| HMP Eastwood Park (female)                                          | Ensemble 3       | 15 / 12                                     | 1 / 0                         | 12 / 2                       |
| HMP the Verne                                                       | Kokila & James   | 18 / 10                                     | 0 / 0                         | 0 / 18                       |
| <b>TOTALS</b>                                                       |                  | <b>80 / 52</b>                              | <b>26 / 0</b>                 | <b>23 / 31</b>               |
| * core attendees are those who attended all sessions of a programme |                  |                                             |                               |                              |

As is evident in Table 2, volunteers were therefore recruited from two VPUs (at HMP Dartmoor and HMP Channings Wood), which had the highest proportions of over-50s, while the other groups, which were under-represented by over-50s, were recruited from the main wings of their respective prisons. In HMP Exeter, around fifty prisoners aged over 50 years were identified by the ACOOP representative as potential recruits, but most were on the VPU and it transpired that for security reasons it would not be possible to involve these prisoners. Therefore the programme at HMP Exeter was run with prisoners from the main wings, which drew a number of foreign nationals and a small proportion over over-50s who subsequently did not attend all the sessions. The VPU group at HMP Channings Wood, by contrast, included only one participant who was aged under 50 years. In HMP Dartmoor, two music programmes were organized independently, using different musicians, a VPU group and a group recruited from the main wings. There were older prisoners in both groups, with the highest proportion from the VPU. There was a core of older prisoners in both groups who became active and enthusiastic participants. Several of the younger prisoners recruited from the main wings were already good musicians and keen to be involved; they made a welcome addition to the group. As stated, HMP Shepton Mallet was planned as a site for the project since it accommodates life sentenced prisoners, has a higher proportion of older prisoners and is therefore supported with a dedicated ACOOP team; unfortunately, though, HMP Shepton Mallet was unable to participate in the project. Neither HMP Eastwood Park nor HMP the Verne had ACOOP representatives available to link up with older prisoners within these establishments, so, given the short lead-in time to these programmes, leaflets were distributed by Heads of Learning and Skills across all prisoners. Since HMP the Verne had an active programme of music activities, led by the Chaplaincy, it was relatively easy to set up a programme at short notice. However, in both these prisons most participants were from younger age groups.

As stated, other participants who volunteered for the music programmes included foreign nationals – making up over 40% of the people attending the workshops but only one of whom was aged over 50 years. However, in common with the over 50s, these prisoners often feel isolated and excluded from the main prison population. A joint decision was therefore reached by Heads of Learning and Skills, the Devon ACOOP lead and the Superact Project Lead to actively recruit them into the music

programmes, particularly where numbers of over-50s were expected to be low, as a strategy to foster diversity and inclusion. Consequently, there were high proportions of foreign nationals involved in the workshops in HMP Exeter and HMP the Verne. Moreover, about 60% of prisoners held within HMP the Verne are foreign nationals, representing over fifty different nationalities. Overall, the inclusion of foreign national prisoners worked well and added an extra dimension to the workshops, and is discussed further in section 5.0. Of the women recruited for the music programme in HMP Eastwood Park, one was aged over 50 years and two were foreign nationals aged under 50 years.

The option for prisoners to volunteer and then attend the music programmes was affected by their other occupations in the prison, especially within the category C training prisons where they are either working or involved in educational courses. A typical weekday can also be interrupted by legal visits, court appearances, medical appointments, visits, or prisoners may be moved from one wing to another, transferred with little warning to another prison, or released. A workshop programme, particularly one that is not a mainstream prison activity, has to fit around these other demands on prisoners' time. Participants were generally keen to attend the workshops, but, out of necessity, there was fluctuating attendance, with some participants attending some sessions and not others; table 2 shows that a core of 52 out of the 80 prisoners involved in the programmes attended all the workshop sessions. As each programme progressed, it was evident – across all the programmes – that participants enjoyed the sessions, and it emerged that people who had been unaware of the programmes or initially disinterested in them wanted to join in, but were unfortunately not able to be included.

Of those who volunteered to participate in the music programmes, none objected to the researchers observing and participating in the sessions. Almost all volunteers across all the programmes consented to be interviewed and to participate in a focus group discussion, with the option to withdraw their consent should they change their mind. Essentially, this constituted a convenience sample, based on available volunteers. The numbers that were subsequently involved in interviews and/or focus groups was then governed by security restrictions, explained in the next section.



## 4.6 DATA COLLECTION

As previously suggested, the evaluation used a qualitative, formative design primarily to explore, using participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and focus group interviewing, participants' subjective perspectives and judgements of the music programme. Secondary to this was the use of interviews to explore with participants their broader values, beliefs and perceptions of music as a creative activity.

The fieldwork essentially comprised six elements:

- Participation in and observation of the music workshops
- Individual semi-structured interviews with prisoners (audio recorded and transcribed)
- Focus group discussions (audio recorded and transcribed)
- Semi structured interviews with musician pairs or trios (audio recorded and transcribed)
- Brief one-to-one interviews with prison officers
- One semi-structured interview with the NHS Devon ACOOP worker (audio recorded and transcribed)

These are summarized in table 3 which shows the numbers of interventions or fieldwork episodes.

| <b>TABLE 3. FIELDWORK EPISODES</b> |                              |            |             |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------|
|                                    | Observation Periods          | Interviews | Focus Group |
| HMP Exeter                         | 2                            | 4          | No          |
| HMP Dartmoor (VPU)                 | 2                            | 8          | No          |
| HMP Dartmoor (main)                | 2                            | 0          | Yes         |
| HMP Channings Wood                 | 2                            | 0          | Yes         |
| HMP Eastwood Park                  | 2                            | 0          | Yes         |
| HMP the Verne                      | 1                            | 0          | Yes         |
| <b>Totals</b>                      | <b>11 (approx. 33 hours)</b> | <b>12</b>  | <b>4</b>    |

## Participant Observation

Observation was carried out by the two researchers, with support from the NHS Devon ACOOP representative and an ACOOP volunteer. Most observations were conducted in pairs, with a total of eleven music sessions observed by the UWE researchers across the six programmes. Only one session was observed in HMP the Verne since there were only two workshops in total. The NHS Devon ACOOP worker was present at all sessions within the Devon prisons, where she also made observations and maintained field notes.

During these sessions, the researchers participated in group activities with participants, which helped in terms of building rapport and trust. They maintained hand-written field notes recording their perceptions of how participants took to the music programmes, of the social experience, the banter and episodes of chat and informal discussion, how participants appeared to related with the musicians and with each other, and, how as a group, they reconciled issues, problems and difficulties. The intention while observing was to try to be as unobtrusive as possible, and not interfere with the process. Essentially, the aim was to note the following:

- What we saw: for example: how individuals positioned themselves physically; the group dynamics; physical distances or barriers; the organisation of the space; differences or boundaries between older and younger prisoners; the roles or visibility of prison staff.
- What we heard: for example: episodes of banter (that communicated emotions, attitudes etc.); instructions and how they were imparted; inclusiveness or engagement techniques of the musicians; perceived barriers to engagement; how participants appeared to relate to the musicians and to each other.
- What we sensed; for example: the emotions and attitudes of prisoners; perceived tensions.

In reality, it was difficult to operate as a neutral observer. The groups were generally small and we found ourselves on more than one occasion involved in a clapping exercise or holding a drum or other percussion instrument and being encouraged to join in making music. This proved to be very important. We could relate entirely to what the prisoners were feeling - the nervousness at the beginning, the

concentration needed, the concern not to make mistakes and appear foolish, and the feelings of satisfaction and elation when it went right.

Once we had taken part, we were able to sit back and make notes without others objecting, as we became increasingly accepted as part of the group. Much of the time, we sat within the circle of prisoners, not at a distance, and could see and hear very clearly what was going on.

Inevitably, our observations were subjective, so we endeavoured to record verbatim quotations, to sketch the group dynamics (how people occupied the space) and to keep a time line of what was going on. This observational material was then corroborated with what emerged in the interviews and focus group discussions.

### **Interviews and Focus Groups with Prisoners**

Security restrictions meant it was not possible to conduct individual semi-structured interviews in HMP Eastwood Park or HMP the Verne. This was mainly because these prisons were substituted into the project late, which did not leave sufficient time to obtain the necessary approvals. Moreover, HMP Eastwood Park would only allow interviews to be conducted with NOMS and Ministry of Justice approval. In those prisons where it was possible to interview prisoners, the option was to conduct *either* one-to-one interviews *or* focus groups, not both, as this would involve unacceptable organisation and disruption for the prisons. Given more time for the evaluation this would have been an appropriate triangulation technique, in terms of improving the validity of the data. But, since each prison had already had to accommodate the music programmes, some at very short notice, this was felt to be disruptive and ultimately unfeasible. Therefore, four one-to-one interviews were conducted with participants at HMP Exeter and eight with participants from the VPU at HMP Dartmoor. In all cases, a private room was made available for the interviews although it was necessary for the NHS Devon ACOOP representative to be present in a supervisory role. The rooms were large enough for her to remain unobtrusive and it was somewhat advantageous in that her presence meant a prison officer was not required to be present. These interviews were organized to take place after completion of the music programmes and proved to be very useful, as participants

were able to discuss more openly their music preferences and tastes, their backgrounds and their feelings about and perceptions of the music programme and the musicians. They seemed in no way deterred by the presence of the ACOOP representative.

Focus group discussions were organised with four of the six music programme groups at HMP Dartmoor (main wing prisoners), HMP Channings Wood, HMP Eastwood Park and HMP the Verne. In the first two prisons, these were organised as separate events scheduled following the music programme, each involving six participants. Again, they were attended by the NHS Devon ACOOP representative who was expected to be present in a supervisory role. These two discussions generated a wealth of valuable data, as prisoners had plenty of notice of what to expect and time to reflect on the experience; there was also ample time for discussion. The other two focus group discussions, in HMP Eastwood park and HMP the Verne respectively, took place during the music workshops, towards the end of each music programme. These were much shorter, and had to be conducted in the presence of a prison official and the musicians. Nonetheless, each discussion involved the whole group (with their consent) and enabled the researchers and the musicians to hear from participants what they had gained from the experience. Despite the presence of the musicians and prison officials, participants spoke frankly and openly during these discussions.

The interviews and focus groups were facilitated by use of a topic guide (Appendix 2) which comprised a range of open questions designed to prompt and guide respondents. The format of each interview and focus group did not tend to follow a set pattern; rather, each was facilitated by the researchers and the direction led by the respondents, with more focused, personal questions used during the one-to-one interviews. These were each conducted by one researcher, overlooked from a distance by the ACOOP representative, whereas the focus groups were facilitated by both researchers.

## Interviews with Musicians and Stakeholders

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the musicians, usually during lunch breaks when prisoners had to return to their cells, between 12.00 and 2.00pm. The exception was with Kokila & James at HMP the Verne, where limited time enabled only a brief discussion. The discussions with the musicians were wide-ranging and explored:

- Their backgrounds
- Their musical experiences and instrumental skills
- Experiences of teaching in different settings
- Previous experience of working with prisoners
- Their perceptions of working in the current prison / of the venue
- Comparisons with other prisons they have worked in
- The mix of prisoners
- Their perceptions of the attitudes of participants
- Their feelings / impressions of the musical skills of participants
- Issues relating to the recording of the final CD (time constraints, track selection, the benefits of a goal, sense of achievement, etc.)
- Feedback they had received from prisoners
- Changes they had observed in prisoners during the programme
- What they felt prisoners got out of the sessions in terms of non-musical skills (e.g. confidence, self-respect, etc.)
- The value creative music activities can bring to prisons
- Feelings about how music could be encouraged in prison and after release
- Perceived attitudes of prison staff
- Things they would like to change in any future music programme
- Things they would do differently themselves
- What they personally gained from this work

The intention at the start of the project was to attempt to interview prison staff who performed key gatekeeper roles. However, this proved more difficult than expected, as few prison service staff were directly involved in the planning and supervision of

the workshops. On the whole, prison officers were only involved in escorting prisoners to and from the wings. In HMP Dartmoor and HMP Channings Wood, the ACOOP worker supervised the sessions rather than a prison officer. It was only in HMP Exeter and HMP Eastwood Park that Prison Service staff were always present. At HMP the Verne, the Chaplain and his assistant were present throughout the day. Brief discussions were therefore held with one prisoner officer at HMP Exeter, the Head of Learning and Skills at HMP Eastwood Park and the Chaplain and his assistant at HMP the Verne. Numerous conversations took place with the NHS Devon ACOOP worker who was able to share a great deal of insight and experience of working with older prisoners.

#### **4.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data (arising from focus groups and interviews) was transcribed verbatim from the audio recordings, anonymised and coded to identify themes and categories emerging from the inductive process. The findings from this analysis are presented in section 5.0.

## 5.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Working through the raw data from the interviews and focus groups, alongside field notes from the observations, the analysis produced three broad categories of data, relating to *the workshop experience, benefits and opportunities of the programme, and the perspectives of the musicians*. From each of these categories a range of themes were elicited from the data. This section is presented in a descriptive style, effectively telling the story as it was. Each data category is discussed in turn, drawing on primary data and citing participants' words – as verbatim quotations – for illustrative purposes. Throughout, participants' identities are concealed; nonetheless, we have used participants' own words wherever possible. We have also attempted to extrapolate perspectives of older prisoners from those of younger prisoners and foreign nationals.

### 5.2 THE WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

#### *Finding out and choosing to take part*

There are some key lessons to learn from the experience of organising and running the Music in Time programme, particularly about how to promote the programme to prisoners and achieve good levels of attendance. The main challenge for this project, as has been pointed out, was the short lead-in time. However, it is also useful to take account of participants' views to ensure future such initiatives are promoted in the best way possible.

At Eastwood Park and The Verne, there was high level awareness of the programmes before they began and both recruited well. In many ways, the task of recruitment was easier in these two venues as there was no requirement, due to the short time available, to engage solely with older prisoners. Moreover, senior staff at these

prisons already had experience of organising such initiatives and had considerable influence within their establishments. At The Verne, there was an active group of musicians keen to become involved in any kind of creative music activity offered and who therefore volunteered for the programme without hesitation. At Eastwood Park, the room that was used for the workshops was located in a busy corridor of the Education Department, which meant that other prisoners would look in through the window set into the door when passing the room, and several who'd not volunteered for the programme came to the door to ask to join in; unfortunately for them, the programme was already at full capacity.

In the Devon prisons, more emphasis was placed on trying to recruit participants aged over 50. Commonly, though – except in the case of the VPUs – older prisoners tended not to be accommodated on one wing but were generally scattered across the prison wings, making it difficult to engage with them and encourage them to volunteer. Furthermore, at both Channings Wood and Exeter, there were no senior prison staff with real influence involved in promoting the programmes, which made it that much more difficult to recruit participants. Measures used to recruit volunteers included the display of posters in association areas on all wings, leaflets distributed to all prisoners, and face-to-face invitations by the ACOOP representative. One prison officer in Dartmoor prison with a decency and equal opportunities role, and a strong commitment to projects involving older prisoners, was also instrumental in recruiting volunteers. The measures used to promote the programmes evidently worked for some prisoners, especially those already interested in music. One older prisoner commented:

*"I saw it advertised in the over 50s club because I'm over 50 – and nearly 21! It was advertised as a music workshop, which was a little bit open-ended, so I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. I do know that music workshops mean getting 'hands-on' involved, but it didn't specify what this meant. Perhaps that was a good thing. I had no real expectations, simply because I didn't know what to expect. But, I certainly went along open-minded, though with great anticipation."*

With insufficient time to properly promote the programmes across the wings, some prisoners would have missed the information and the opportunity to volunteer, or misunderstood what to expect from the programme. One prisoner remarked, *"I think*



*you would have got a better response if you'd done it over a longer period. We only got about a week or two to think about it."* Another made the useful comment that,

*"If you'd had more time to organise it, or if a prisoner had been dedicated the job of organising it and collecting people's names that were interested, that would have helped as well. They used to have education champions at one time. That would've filled the course up, no problem."*

Another suggestion was to involve prison officers on the wings, as they would have been able to promote it to everyone. No matter how good the publicity, older prisoners were clearly filtering out information and not recognizing that this was something different and distinctive. Most prison wings have many posters displayed in association areas, which several admitted they didn't generally read, particularly as they didn't usually convey information other than about routine prison activities. One prisoner said,

*"I didn't see the notice. I tend to glance at the board every now and then but, to be honest, the notices all look the same. They're usually pretty boring, so I give up on them. And that's probably the same for a lot of people."*

He added that most people tended to be apathetic about anything going on in the prison. Another participant who had missed the publicity said, *"I only knew about it because I saw the drums when I walked past the workshop."* Another said,

*"Well, in fairness, the notice was up for a week, wasn't it? I only went along because when I was walking up the corridor I saw the guys arriving, and somebody said, 'You know a bit about music, come on in', so I did."*

There were misconceptions about the workshops that probably affected attendance. In the focus groups there were several comments relating to this. One participant said, *"The whole session wasn't as I expected it to be in the first place. I didn't know whether it was going to be making music or listening to music, or something else entirely."* Another said, *"It was pretty vague ... We didn't know what it was going to be about."* Likewise, one participant suggested that *"There wasn't really much direction on what it was all about ... We didn't know whether it was going to be up our street or not, but thought we'd try it anyway."* Furthermore, one participant stated that

*"... the way it was worded would have appealed to musicians, and, in fact, you had a lot of musicians who actually came. So if it was made a little bit more open, I think you might have had more people."*

These misunderstandings were not a real problem in most cases, as people volunteered and turned up to the sessions despite not knowing what they would be expected to do, and, as it transpired, they evidently enjoyed the experience. However, it did cause difficulties in one or two instances. In one prison, an older prisoner was openly hostile at the start of the programme because it wasn't at all as he'd expected it to be: *"I thought I was just coming along to listen. I didn't know I was going to have to take part."* During the first session, he sat at some distance from the rest of the group, and when encouraged to join the circle, he did so but with his arms firmly folded. The musicians eventually won him over by playing a familiar song and encouraging participants to join in with the chorus. At this stage, he started to tap his feet in rhythm and then joined in with the singing. But this individual was an exception; he had not volunteered because of an interest in music, but really as a way of getting out of his cell. He said that he hoped to be released relatively soon and had no intention of settling into life in prison, and therefore he had no real incentive to participate.

Music can also unlock memories and emotions and, for some older people, this is something they may prefer to avoid. One prisoner had heard about the programme but only came along after encouragement from a friend. Music had been such an important part of his life outside prison that he was worried that if he started to play he wouldn't be able to contain his emotions. He missed two of the sessions, but did eventually turn up and, in the end, said that he was very glad he had come along. Some participants had also been reluctant to volunteer because of alternative priorities and incentives. For instance, some were concerned that by attending the programme they could lose out on vital wages that they'd otherwise be earning in their regular jobs. As one prisoner commented,

*"Some people will only come if it means they won't lose their money ... The loss of one or two bob is quite a lot of money in prison."*

## *Breaking the ice*

The Music in Time programmes varied. Different pairs or trios of musicians ran the programmes, each bringing their own style and musical genre – from folk and world music to classical (Table 1, p.13). Section 5.3 explores the backgrounds of the musicians in greater detail, while this section focuses specifically on the workshops – how they were organised, how prisoners were encouraged to participate, how their skills and confidence developed over the course of the programme, and how it culminated in the production of a CD and, in two instances, a concert performed before a live audience of prisoners and prison staff.

From observing and participating in the workshops, it became evident that all the musicians had been taught similar approaches to engagement. However, there were nuances – some performers began the programme by playing some music themselves, which worked well to create a relaxed atmosphere. Only then did these musicians introduce warm-up exercises, such as clapping and percussion exercises, partly as “ice breakers” and partly to develop participants’ sense of rhythm in a non-threatening way. This also served to get participants not only listening, but watching and anticipating what others were going to do and to begin to feel part of a group. Other musicians went straight into warm-up exercises, using them to foster involvement and introduce fun from the start. This approach worked particularly well with the female prisoners.

All the musicians approached the workshops in a relaxed style – taking quite a laid back approach; they did not rush the sessions or force individuals to take part. It was noticeable that some older prisoners tended to hang back, especially in the workshops composed of mixed age groups. Occasionally they sat at a physical distance from the main group, whereas younger participants were more likely to occupy seats towards the front or nearest the musicians, and were more enthusiastic about participating from the start. On such occasions, the musicians did not make an issue of this, but would try to involve them, in non-threatening ways, for instance by providing them with basic percussion instruments or, during breaks, making the point of talking to them and finding out more about their musical interests.

Towards the start of each programme, in all the groups, the musicians made a point of asking participants to introduce themselves, to briefly state their musical preference or taste and to signal whether they could play a musical instrument. Those who possessed instruments of their own were encouraged to bring them along to future sessions. It transpired that musical experiences and skills varied enormously within the groups; some individuals were professional musicians, some were accomplished singers, some had developed basic guitar or piano skills while in prison, some simply enjoyed listening to music or had attended live music events before prison; others had limited knowledge or skill and had never seen a live band. Musical tastes, moreover, covered a wide spectrum, including religious and classical music, pop, rock, heavy metal, rap and hip hop.

For everyone involved – prisoners, musicians, and researchers – the initial hour or so of the programme was “uncharted territory”, a formative stage when participants were not certain what to expect – or what would be expected of them – and the musicians were unsure how participants would react. However, it was testament to the musicians, and to the power of the music, that very quickly people began to engage. Across all the programmes, participants’ tended to exhibit reserved and downcast expressions and body language, tending not to speak much and avoiding eye contact with one another; this was true as much for the women as for the men. But usually by the end of the first session there was a distinctive change to the group dynamics. Most, if not all, participants had begun to join in, tapping to the rhythm of the music, clapping, shaking a percussion instrument, some more overtly than others. The most obvious sign that participants were beginning to engage with the musicians, and with each other, was the increased levels of eye contact, non-verbal communication and relaxed expressions. One older prisoner remarked:

*"It was different, stimulating, it was very enjoyable – I got into it more and more as time went on. I was very sceptical at first – but, yeah, it was good."*

The progression from sceptical non-participant to fully involved and engaged participant took time for some, and took longer in some of the prisons than others, particularly Exeter. A category-B male remand prison is a tough environment in which to deliver such a programme because of the rapid turnover of prisoners. This can

foster insecurity, nervousness and uncertainty among prisoners, who are less likely to know one another than those in category-C training prisons. Some prisoners do not know whether they are going to receive a custodial sentence, and those who do will probably be transferred on another prison; so the prison population is transient and less settled. At Exeter prison, as suggested previously, the visits room provided for the music programme was not suitable as it had fixed seating and poor acoustics. Furthermore, the group comprised a mix of older prisoners and foreign nationals, some of whom could not speak English easily. None of the core group, who attended all the sessions, were musicians, which made it more difficult for the musicians to engage with and involve them. Two groups of prisoners, the foreign nationals and the remainder tended to sit physically apart from each other. The musicians attempted to overcome this by asking participants to stand in a circle to take part in various warm-up activities. Reflecting on what was happening, one of the researchers wrote

*"Would these men do this if they weren't in a prison programme? Would they normally be inclined to sing, stamp their feet and move - in an environment with people they didn't know?"*

Yet, a short while later, the same observer was able to write: *"There is amazing participation – they are all smiling and evidently enjoying the sing-along."* Music and rhythm is a universal language and men who would never normally communicate were evidently able to share a common experience.

In the other prisons, participants knew each other better, which made it easier to build rapport. In Dartmoor and the Verne, there were many participants with musical skills and talents who had brought instruments along to the sessions, and here the prisoners were engaging with the process and producing new compositions pretty quickly, with minimal support from the musicians. One group in Dartmoor prison had three accomplished guitar players who rapidly gained confidence and began to encourage others to join in with percussion instruments. This group's programme ran over three split days in the chapel, a large space where loose chairs were arranged into rows. When participants returned after lunch on the first day, new participants arrived, bringing their guitars, keen to join in. During the ensuing afternoon session, the musicians made efforts to include some of the less involved older participants by

shifting the chairs into concentric circles, and some of these participants ventured forward to join the more exuberant participants. Others seemed content to continue watching from the sidelines, joining in occasionally with singing or clapping. By the end of the day, a fantastic sound was emerging, participants, researchers, the ACOOP representative and the duty prison officer tapping their feet and enjoying the experience. There were smiles on the faces of prisoners who, when they had first arrived in the morning, had been reserved, withdrawn and expressionless.

The music programme at Eastwood Park women's prison, was fully subscribed with volunteers, comprising quite a lot of young women; several appeared to be quite fractious, irritable and potentially disruptive. A small number had instrumental skills and a few had sung before, while the majority came with no particular musical talent. The first session began with a furious clapping exercise that became progressively faster and more complicated, and which involved good coordination skills; consequently, it quickly had participants breathless and laughing. They used another clapping exercise to enable participants to introduce themselves and reinforce individuals' names. It was such an effective ice-breaker with this predominantly younger group that participants settled quickly into improvising and composing their own music, although there were frequent breaks as participants' concentration levels lapsed. The final day of the programme at Eastwood Park coincided with St Patricks Day, so the group collectively decided to follow an Irish theme for the sessions, and, during the first session, were introduced to a wide range of instruments including keyboards, percussion instruments (bells, rattles, shakers) and guitars. They began by creating a composition that was accompanied by electronic keyboard that was not unlike an Enya track, and represented the dawn breaking over a remote Irish landscape. In the afternoon session, additional instruments were introduced that gripped everyone's attention. Electronic beams and foot pedals wired to a laptop computer with a mixing programme and amplification enabled participants to produce the sounds of violins and obscure sound effects against a musical scale, which enabled those without specific musical skills to produce quite sophisticated music. What entered the room as a potentially unstable group who could have been difficult to manage, left the room after the first day seemingly excited and buzzing about their first day's achievements.

## *Making progress*

*"I found it an uplifting experience. It gives you confidence ... it was like a community thing really, a bond with people I might not normally associate with on the wing. I felt positive after the first time and so was quite happy to go along the second time. I actually looked forward to it."*

This comment captures the feelings of many of the prisoners. For many, the music programmes were such positive experiences that they wanted to come back again for more. Most walked into their second session as seemingly different people. As one observer noted,

*"They came striding in, looking really keen and eager to get started."*

The Exeter group was the most difficult to work with, for reasons already outlined, and never quite gelled in the way the others did; nonetheless, the participants still felt that they had gained a lot from the experience. A Polish participant said he had volunteered for the programme because he wanted to escape from the boredom of the wing environment, that the experience was fun and that he was keen to record an old Polish ballad. Another participant said that before the programme had started he'd talked about it with his cellmate and they had joked about "*grumpy old men with tambourines*", and that he'd thought at the beginning of the programme at the first session,

*"'what am I doing here' ... But when we actually started doing the folk song, I got into it and I did actually create a few verses for it."*

His perception was that everyone felt awkward during the first session, but that a definite sense of group cohesion had developed by the end of the programme. For the observers, it was clear that by the third session the interaction between participants had markedly improved, with concentration levels much higher and genuine enthusiasm for the activities. Noticeably, there was increasing banter between the musicians and the prisoners, although some of this was black humour.

In the other prisons, the musicians were able to move things on much faster. Prisoners and musicians seemed to have high expectations of one another, which created a positive and productive series of sessions. In the second half-day session at Channings

Wood, the musicians explored with participants the rules of composition, which this group of predominantly older prisoners responded to with enthusiasm. By the end of the session, they had written their own song and they left the workshop promising to write more lyrics for the next session. In fact, by the following week they not only added more words to the song, but had started to compose several more songs and already had plenty of material for recording to CD in the final week. The songs in all the prisons tended to reflect the experiences of the participants and were often about what they had lost or about freedom.

In Dartmoor, subsequent sessions were highly productive; so much so that participants involved in both programmes did not want to stop for coffee and tea breaks. Eventually, the smokers in one group forced a break, but even then the buzz of conversation was around music, with several participants suggesting they should form a group at the end of the programme; as one remarked, "*I think we could make a good band.*" Concentration levels among participants involved in these sessions was intense, with individuals watching each other closely and encouraging each other to come in on the right beat. At the end of the last sessions with the two Dartmoor groups, participants were reluctant to leave and both pairs of musicians received impressive rounds of applause.

With the Eastwood Park group, there were various interruptions and disturbances during the second week of the programme. A new participant joined the group who had a marked effect on the group dynamics resulting in several disruptive arguments. Another participant, who had been with the group from the first week, was informed that she had received a life sentence; she was clearly extremely upset by the news but chose to continue with the programme. Nonetheless, by the third week, the group had produced a composition of their own, which spanned almost ten minutes of instrumental work, two pieces of rap and song they had written themselves. They had also worked meticulously on the song, 'Someone to lean on', which included solos and harmonies; they evidently enjoyed working on it because the lyrics had real meaning them being in prison.



## ***GONE, GONE, GONE***

*Gone like my sanity*

*Gone like my home cooked tea*

*Gone like my standard status*

*Gone like cabbage and potatoes*

*Gone, gone away ...*

*Gone like my girlfriend Mara*

*Maybe she'll be back tomorrow*

*Gone like the taste of beer*

*Gone like my time in here*

*Gone, gone away ...*

### ***Creating a recording***

The musicians who worked with the group in Exeter prison, who were used to working with prisoners, said that this experience had been their most difficult to date, essentially because of the conditions they were working in. As one of the musicians put it, "*Getting a CD from this group will be a miracle*". However, on the day of the recording, the participants arrived at the workshop looking keen and eager - and with new material. One participant had brought some Spike Milligan poems to read aloud, and another, who had come across in previous sessions as having a cynical attitude, had decided to read aloud a short piece he had found about a prisoner with a hard, macho attitude who, back in his cell, alone with his own thoughts, was really just a vulnerable individual. Two foreign nationals, who had previously appeared particularly detached within the group, had decided that they wanted to record some folksongs from their home countries. During this final session, the prisoners showed huge respect for each other, for while each of them performed and recorded their contribution, the rest observed in absolute silence. The recording of the CD gave participants a real focus that would otherwise have been absent.

As The Verne has the best developed music facilities, with a practice room, it was inevitable that the most professional performances were evident here. This group only had two sessions to produce a CD, but they came to the first workshop with

material they had already rehearsed and therefore they were able to produce twelve tracks of very high quality, some recorded in a single 'take'. As a group, they had decided to use the concept of a bus stop – they had been on a long journey to get to prison and this was the wait before they got out and continued their journey. The musicians commented that participants were able to do so much themselves, without support from them, though participants said that the programme had actually given them a structure that they had been lacking. Although there were many talented musicians in this group, some were quite new to music and were given a lot of encouragement by the more experienced participants. Several "novices" had been encouraged to write poems or songs after the first workshop that they then either read or sang, which was their first experience of being recorded and performing in front of an audience. A common theme that the music programmes seemed to trigger across all the prisons was a desire to write poetry or lyrics, and through this medium prisoners were able to explore thoughts and feelings that had previously been buried. In the focus group discussion with prisoners at The Verne, several mentioned how music had broken down barriers and enabled them to express emotions in a way they had not been able to do so before.

At Eastwood Park, the CD was recorded on the final afternoon of the programme. Rehearsals in the morning were somewhat chaotic, but improved during the afternoon session, when participants started to work well together and were able to build up layers of sound which were really atmospheric. However, it took several 'takes' to get it right. A full day proved to be quite exhausting, with long periods of concentration. The Head of Learning and Skills, who had attended most of the sessions, commented "*You've done brilliantly – You've come so far since the early sessions.*" It was noticeable that participants had really proud smiles on their faces as they left the room, clearly elated from the experience.

Across the six music programmes, participants seemed to exhibit and feel enormous pride and sense of achievement in getting to the end of the programme and producing a CD. One of the women at Eastwood Park said, "*It's important that there's something at the end of it, something to show for it.*" One male prisoner said,

*"I phoned up my sister and said I'm going to have a little present for you – a CD. And she said 'What? You're in a band?' She was laughing at me. I said, 'Yeah, I play the drums. When they get the CD done I'll send it out to you'. She'll be going to the nieces and nephews with it."*

All participants were anxious to receive a copy of the CD but were concerned that the prison authorities wouldn't release it to them for security reasons. Several mentioned that they would want to send copies to their friends and relatives. These recordings were a vital part of the Music in Time Programme, for they provided each group with focus and direction and a palpable sense of achievement.

At the mid-way point of each workshop programme, a designer working with Superact came in to talk to the participants about the production of artwork for the CD covers. By this point, most groups had at least one song written and a theme was starting to emerge for the content of the CD. The designer showed examples of covers that had been produced in previous workshops, some computer generated, some prisoners' own drawings or paintings, others like graffiti. She asked them to discuss possible titles for the CD, themes for the illustrations, colour schemes and typefaces, and asked for volunteers to do the artwork. Individuals were rather reluctant to come forward to do the design, most being too absorbed in the music, but there was generally one participant who agreed to take it on. In some groups, it was an outlet for individuals who had not taken a central role in singing or playing and gave them an opportunity to shine. A participant at Eastwood Park, who had occasionally been quite withdrawn (and later heard she had been given a life sentence) sat and drew an image of a guitar with handcuffs that the other girls thought was fantastic and which became their CD cover. One of the older prisoners in the Dartmoor VPU group took on the task. He said he would normally back away from making a commitment to doing something like that. He produced a computer image relating to their main song which was called 'Crazy Circus'. All the artwork was sent to Superact, who produced the finished covers.

## **THE WORST IN ME**

*At times I have a split personality,  
and you only ever see the worst in me,  
it seems like I just lost my focus, see,  
and my dark side is always provoking me.  
Why have all my people deserted me?  
It feels like I've lost hope,  
I'm losing breath and started to choke,  
I'm trying to be a different bloke ...  
Please show me how to cope.  
I'm plagued by indecision and doubt  
I need to learn what I'm about  
Inside my head I scream and shout,*

*"Please, someone, let me out"  
so that I can take control,  
let happiness refill the hole,  
dig deep and search my soul,  
and, maybe one day, reach my goal.  
I need my salvation,  
some justification, not victimisation.  
I will find my vocation, with dogged  
determination,  
so you no longer see the worst in me.  
You'll see me burstin' free,  
because I've learnt, you see,  
to trust the good in me ...*

## *Performing Live*

Live performances before audiences of prisoners and prison staff were organised in two of the prisons, Eastwood Park and The Verne. In both these venues, participants were asked to nominate fellow prisoners they wanted to invite. Nominated individuals were screened by the security department before invitations were distributed by prison staff.

At the Verne, live performances are organised on a regular basis, involving prisoners and / or musicians invited into the prison. On this occasion, an evening event was organised at the end of the final day of the programme and quite a small number attended, comprising twenty seven. This event was professionally recorded and participants who had been somewhat hesitant earlier in the programme rose to the occasion and produced great performances. Kokila, the lead musician, joined in on the violin, adding an extra dimension. She also encouraged the audience to join in with a long improvised piece using percussion instruments. It flowed relatively smoothly and some of the programme participants improvised with rap lyrics that blended really well. At the end of the event, people were reluctant to leave as they had clearly enjoyed themselves and felt they had achieved something above and beyond ordinary everyday tasks and goals.

At Eastwood Park, live performances of this kind are rarely organised, so there was much excitement and fervour among the participants about the forthcoming event. One of the musicians made the following comment to the group:

*"At the beginning, when we said we would be performing, the reaction we got from you lot was, 'Oh, no!'. Now you're really up for it! You have gained that much confidence over the week that now you're like: 'Let's nail it! Let's do it!'"*

For this event, organised for the evening of the final day with the Chapel as the venue, eighty-eight invitations were distributed to nominated fellow prisoners and sixty-three attended. Unlike male prisoners who generally have to wear standard prison issue clothing, female prisoners can wear their own clothes. On this occasion, participants made a special effort to dress in their trendiest clothes and look their

best. As they ascended the 'stage', they appeared proud and excited. One participant, who had seemed unconfident at the beginning of the programme was very well dressed and grinning from ear to ear. The event began with some impressive recitals from the musicians who had led the programme. Significantly, unlike with the other programmes, this was the first time these participants had heard the musicians play. Throughout the programme, the focus had been entirely on the prisoners and not on the musicians' skills or talents. Once the participants began their piece, the audience erupted, cheering each solo – especially the rap – while each verse of the song *Longer* struck a chord with the audience, who responded by joining in with the chorus. One of the musicians performed a recital playing the French horn accompanied by an electronic beat box, which brought the house down. The finale, sung by all the participants, was *Someone to Lean on*, which included harmonies the group had rehearsed during the workshops. One of the women commented afterwards how "*amazing*" the event had been, how much everyone had enjoyed it and how "*unbelievable*" it was that they had managed to do what they had done in such a short period of time. In her words, "*a live performance like this creates a real buzz and sense of achievement, something you don't often get in prison.*" Another participant commented: "*It's the satisfaction of performing, and of being part of something too ....*"

### *Moving on*

A proportion of prisoners definitely wanted to carry on learning music. However, there are considerable obstacles. There is almost a complete lack of music tuition – programmes that existed until the last year or so appear to have been discontinued in most prisons because of financial cut-backs. In part, this reflects the low relative importance attributed to music. It is seen as a 'luxury' rather than something essential or mainstream. Some prisoners also felt that there may be an even harder attitude amongst a minority of prison staff, that prisoners 'don't deserve' to be able to play music. One of the prison officers interviewed said that many staff just feel "*it's a waste of time*".

## **LONGER**

*It's the judge's fault -  
Loads a screws and bolts  
And their friggin keys,  
They keep teasing me.*

### **LONGER, LONGER – RPT**

*We get up at eight,  
They put shit on our plates,  
We can't be late  
Cause it's behind the gate.*

### **LONGER, LONGER – RPT**

*The days are getting longer,  
The nights are getting colder,  
I ain't getting no younger  
Just getting older ...  
Oh, yeeeeees!*

*Today was great,  
We met musical mates.  
The mood was good,  
Like beats in the hood*

### **LONGER, LONGER – RPT**

### **RAP -**

*This is the story all about us,  
How our life got turned upside down -  
Got sent down by the man stood behind the Crown.  
Stood in the box, all I could hear  
Was the locks ...*

*Jules and Laura were great and Charlie was a saint.  
We are never late, 'cos we push beats to the rhyme  
'Cos we had a great time.*

*Tick tock, tick tock  
'Cos you can't lock the locks  
But can't stop the clock*

### **LONGER, LONGER - RPT**

*I wonder when I'm going home,  
I want to see my home-land.  
I want to be free  
And I want to feel safe.  
But it just takes LONGER ...*

**LONGER, LONGER, LONGER  
LONGER, LONGER, LONGER  
But it just takes LONGER**

Prisoners were making the best of the situation and teaching themselves, but knew they would move on faster with some help. One person interviewed expressed it this way:

*"I have managed to acquire a decent keyboard from the chapel and I've got a music book, 'Teach Yourself Piano', so I'm teaching myself. Now, that's OK, but if I had somebody to say, 'Yes, you've got that right', 'Yes, you've read it', 'You've understood it' and 'You've interpreted it correctly' ...*

*But we've got nothing like that."* Another prisoner, who had taught himself guitar, realised that most people didn't have his determination:

*"If you want to do it, you can do it, you don't need anyone coming in to teach you, you can learn. But you've got to be a motivated person - it's very easy to sit on your bed, watch TV and smoke cigarettes."*

Instruments are available to prisoners – mainly guitars from the Jail Guitar Doors charity. But those who had guitars repeatedly mentioned the problem of acquiring replacement strings. They pose a security problem as they can be used as a garrotte, but, more commonly, they are used as the nib or needle in illegal tattooing. Each prison had a different vetting system; in some cases, prisoners had to apply to the chapel, in others they were available in the canteen or the prison shop, and in others visitors could give them to wing staff who would then allocate them. In some places, they were so difficult to acquire that one prisoner admitted,

*"Individual ones, second hand ones would be fine. ~ a string would be great! You could always put it together with another bit of string."*

As a result of the workshops, a real rapport had developed between some of the prisoners, and they evidently wanted to carry on being able to play together. They were also very willing to mentor and teach each other. However, in all prisons except the Verne, there was no dedicated practice space and in some prisons the mixing between different wings that took place in the supervised workshops was not allowed outside of that setting:

*"There isn't really anywhere to go to sit down as musicians and have that much of a chance to do anything. Maybe that'll change, maybe we'll be allowed to go*



*over to the Chapel a bit more, because it's not used that often. I mean, it would be great to be able to do that, even one afternoon a week would be good. I mean, we have talked about it and I think it has created a new connection between us. And we do talk about the course quite a lot, and it would be nice to just be able to do that."*

There are also problems practicing alone for those prisoners who share a cell. But for some people, music is such a necessary part of their life that they will do anything to learn and to get time to play:

*"At first, they gave me the guitar but wouldn't give me the strings. It took me another seven months to get the strings; it was a slow uphill battle but I got there in the end. Then I started playing from books, but I didn't really understand what I was doing. And then when someone came in who could play, I sort of kidnapped him to teach me something. That's how I learnt. Every time someone came into prison who knew a bit about guitar, it was 'Come and show me how to do something'."*

At the Verne, there is a dedicated practice room at the back of the chapel. One trusted prisoner has the responsibility of unlocking it and supervising the sessions. There is a programme of different sessions every day, with a core of good musicians who use it regularly, while others are encouraged to drop in. They have managed to raise money for the next stage, which is to install some recording equipment. When the Music in Time CD was recorded, there was a lot of interest in the equipment, with several participants anxious to learn as much as they could about recording techniques. This was seen as yet another skill that would be useful on the outside:

*"I am definitely looking forward to a recording studio in the music room, if it is possible, 'cos that would give people skills that they didn't have, and also lots of motivation."*

They are planning to create an album once or twice a year and to develop a programme in sound engineering with a recognised qualification at the end.

### 5.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE MUSIC PROGRAMME

#### *Musicians' perspectives of the programme*

Five different sets of musicians took part in the Music in Time Programme. Park Bench, a folk duo of two guitarists, ran two workshops, one in Exeter and the other in Dartmoor. They had previously worked in prisons, secure mental health units and with older people. The second Dartmoor workshop was run by Amanes, a duo who played music with a Mediterranean feel, comprising a saxophonist and another who played guitar, mandolin, Greek stringed instruments and tonic flute. They had worked with older people and in schools but had only done one performance in a prison before. Ensemble 3, who ran the programme at Eastwood Park, consisted of an oboe player, a French horn player and a versatile keyboard player and guitarist. All three were experienced in facilitating music workshops, but none had worked in prisons. In the Verne, the workshops were run by Kokila & James, who were a classically trained violin player and a pianist; they had done a limited amount of work in prisons before. Finally, World Music led the Channings Wood workshops. They were a very experienced duo, one of whom played the South American flute and drums, and the other guitar. They had run many prison based programmes and currently provide training for other Live Music Now musicians. At the beginning of the Music in Time Programme, the World Music musicians facilitated a training session for all the musicians taking part in the project.

The musicians showed considerable insight into the dynamics of each group, how individual prisoners developed throughout the programme and how such activity can help prisoners learn skills to equip them to deal with prison and return to a normal life once they are released. It is useful to examine their experiences, to draw out lessons for the future development of these types of music programmes.

All the musicians were very aware of the difficulties inherent in teaching in these settings. They had expected to be working with mixed age groups and with individuals of different nationalities, and that there would be a range of musical skills, from those who had never played an instrument before to proficient musicians. They also had to work to a tight deadline to produce enough material for a

professionally recorded CD and, in some cases, to prepare for a live performance, in most cases in just three days. Adding to these problems was the lack of continuity, as some participants did not turn up to all the sessions. If a prisoner who did not turn up to a session had a key role, playing an instrument or singing, or had written lyrics but didn't return with them, this could cause considerable difficulties. All the musicians were well aware that they had to be very flexible and have enough material to cover these eventualities.

A common goal was not to play too much themselves, but to let the prisoners generate most of the music. Referring to their first workshop, one musician commented,

*" the creative input and structure is definitely coming from the participants – we haven't imposed anything, we've just tried to follow where they want to take it."*

But it was hard to predict what the following week would be like. In some groups, there were several enthusiastic participants willing work on melodies and lyrics in their own time, between the sessions, but others had done very little, relying instead on the professional musicians to move things forward.

The groups with both older and younger prisoners were the most difficult for the musicians to get working together as a unit. They tried various musical 'games' to encourage involvement and tried to break up the seating plan so that people were not just sitting in their friendship groups, but operating as a more unified group. They did all they could to involve the over 50s. In particular, when participants were allowed outside to smoke during breaks, the musicians talked to them and tried to find out about them, which meant that they were then often more willing to cooperate when they re-started the session. One musician said he did his best to create a 'campfire' feeling so that participants were facing each other and playing into the middle, so that they really felt part of a group.

There were a few other challenges. In one instance, one participant would not join in stating that he felt the warm-up percussion exercises were 'childish'; consequently, the musicians asked him what he would prefer to do and then changed tack to try to

include him. In another group, a tricky situation arose when one participant with slight learning difficulties was singing very loudly and slightly out of tune, which was irritating other members of the group. The musicians had to reassure her and keep her involved, while satisfying needs of others to 'get things right'. The musicians did really well to encourage the group to be more accepting, while at the same time making sure the over-enthusiastic singer reduced the volume.

It was noticeable that the musicians were generally very trusting with their instruments. Much of the kit was expensive and they all relied on it in their professional careers. But they allowed all the participants to pick up the instruments, study them and try them. As one musician said, "*To trust them to do that is very important in terms of building bridges,*" and another said, "*It's all about confidence building.*" It was clear that this was very important for the prisoners and that the musicians trust in them was reciprocated.

All the musicians were very aware that these sessions were of great importance to the prisoners, and they wanted to do a good job. It was almost more challenging when a session had gone particularly well to work out how they were going to make it that good for them again the next time. They also had to get over to the prisoners the way they work as musicians – the practice of coming up with an idea, refining and rehearsing it, then refining it again and re-rehearsing. This can be quite an arduous process and great feelings or a sense of achievement may only come at the end, when recording or performing. This was particularly hard to get across to some of the younger prisoners in Eastwood Park, but was a concept more readily grasped by older prisoners.

All the musicians agreed that they had thoroughly enjoyed the process of running the programmes and expressed their sadness when they came to an end. In fact, several of them said it was one of the best musical experiences of their lives, and one added, "*You know that you've made a difference*". At the end of the live performance at Eastwood Park, one participant who had been quite withdrawn during the workshops came up and gave each of the musicians a hug, which meant more to them than anything. One of the other musicians said,

*"There is just such a buzz doing this kind of work, when you get people buzzing, literally buzzing because you have been with them for an afternoon is fantastic."*

And,

*"what comes out of this is always incredible motivation and positive energy."*

Such an experience would also clearly benefit the musicians' own careers. They all said that they had learnt something new from every session, that it had inspired them to create more music of their own and to improve the live gigs they do.

### *Prisoners' views of the musicians*

The prisoners who participated in the programmes were extremely appreciative of the input of the musicians. The things they valued the most were the respect they were given, the fact that the musicians treated them as equals and did not talk down to them, and that they listened and responded to suggestions in a very open way. One Dartmoor prisoner said,

*"I think the best thing about it was the openness, that they were open to any new ideas. They brought ideas of their own, of course, and we worked round those. But they were very open to suggestions and to us working along with them. Throughout the three sessions we managed to create something with all sorts of different music – that was the best thing about it, I think.. It was very free, and freedom here is something that is very valued in any form."*

The musicians were generally quite young and brought energy and enthusiasm that rubbed off on participants. There was admiration for their obvious talent, but what the prisoners really liked was that they never tried to show off their skills, but instead placed the focus on the prisoners themselves – what they could do and how they could develop their own abilities. As one prisoner said,

*"I think they were very, very good. I mean, they were very talented musicians in their own right, and that came across straight away, but they were also natural teachers. Their enthusiasm was infectious, and at no point were they trying to look good. The focus was on us, which I thought was excellent."*

The musicians dealt with mixed ages, different nationalities and a variety of levels of musical skill and talent, which could have been quite hard to handle. It took considerable skill, which was recognised by one prisoner in Dartmoor:

*"The main thing they were really good at was their people skills. Getting people involved with it, even people who didn't necessarily want to do it, getting them there without coercing them. They persuaded them to do it and for the people who clearly didn't want to get involved, they didn't push it either. I thought it was very good."*

Another followed up on this, saying,

*"I thought it was amazingly well done that we got as far as we got – because, you know, they were dealing with a lot of people who were very diverse. I mean, I have not played any musical instruments before and I thought they really allowed everybody to come in".*

Another said,

*"the encouragement was there – one of the prisoners wasn't there much but he was still encouraged to take part in the end."*

Although there was a great deal of praise, participants were also very candid about what the musicians could do to make things even better. On a few occasions, sessions started late. Usually this was not the fault of the musicians, but caused by delays at the prison gate and the need for instruments to be checked for security reasons. On occasions where musicians were not on time for the beginning of a session, some prisoners were very disappointed to have missed even a few minutes of valuable workshop time, so anxious were they to get going. Most musicians have to travel long distances to reach the prisons, so if there are delays it is important to communicate messages to the wings so that prisoners are kept informed.

There were a few comments about musicians being a bit disorganised. This was particularly in relation to songs lyrics, which some prisoners felt could have been typed up between sessions and distributed to participants at the next session, rather than wasting valuable time writing them out on a board:

*"We all sat there and watched him write the words on a board – well, what a waste of time! Perhaps he could think about getting things like that prepared in advance, because it must have taken him a good fifteen minutes to write that down, and we were all sitting there twiddling our thumbs."*

But this is also a reflection of the passivity of a lot of prisoners at the beginning of the course, because, as adults, the prisoners themselves could easily have taken responsibility for this rather than leaving the musicians to do everything.

A few prisoners also felt that because they'd not been involved in a creative music programme before, they would have preferred more explanation about what to do. Some of them, particularly the older ones, found it hard to pick up the beat or understand when they had to stop and start. One participant, who was drumming for the first time, said,

*"I soon realised that everybody was watching him (the musician) – watching his face – watching his hands – because he was leading us, and it was important that we synchronised. And I don't think a lot of people realised that – the point could have been got over a bit more firmly."*

But, despite these few negative comments or episodes, there was, overall, enormous appreciation for the whole programme. As one Exeter prisoner said,

*"It is very difficult to find people who want to come and work with prisoners in the first place, and I think they really did work well. They were really nice guys, they did their best and I take my hat off to them and thank them very much."*

### ***Comparisons with other prison activities***

The music programmes were well received across all the prisons, and the musicians were felt to have pitched things at the right level. One participant said that *"the first thing that came over to me was that they knew what they were talking about. Often here, people here haven't got a clue what they are talking about."* Another prisoner elaborated on this, suggesting that

*"Generally in prison, you are treated as an idiot. The courses are pitched to the very lowest level the prison authorities perceive. I'm on a course at the moment – a transition course – I sit there thinking, 'For God's sake, say something meaningful!', whereas this course really challenges you and makes you think – It's made me have to take some risks by taking part and to act in an adult way."*

This sort of comment was common. Prisoners appreciated being treated as equals. Both researchers in their observations noted that the musicians had not talked down

to the prisoners; far from it, they had treated them with respect, assumed they were there to learn and had given them some quite complex information. They were taught intricate rhythms, how to compose music, to not be afraid of improvisation, and to come forward with their own lyrics and melodies.

There was an extended discussion in one focus group about how much it would cost to bring in a musician on a regular basis to teach music. The members of this group were really passionate about the benefits of music relative to many of the other courses that were expected to participate in. One said:

*"This is one of the most frustrating things. You've got an education department that wants people to learn, and you've got people who want to learn. The whole thing is stupid. They would rather try and teach mathematics to people who don't want to learn, put them on a course that they won't attend – which is a total waste of money. You've got a teacher sitting there with two people instead of ten! Whereas, if you put guitar lessons on, you might get ten people to attend."*

The prisoners are aware of the imbalance in courses on offer in prison and the lack of vocational activities.

*"If you look at the classes on offer, you'll find there are about ninety different literacy classes, compared with maybe thirty practical ones like brick-laying."*

One participant made the very valid point that for someone who really develops their musical talent while in prison, such an opportunity can offer a good way to earn money following release from prison. And for people with a prison record, the music industry is a largely non-judgemental business to join. In his view, music lessons were more important than many other vocational skills:

*"I mean, I've had a second job for years, as a musician, and supported my family by doing it. It paid for all the extra things like holidays. Being a musician helped pay for it. I think it is invaluable."*



## *Perceptions of older prisoners*

The response of the older prisoners was, on the whole, positive. In their view, the programme was different from anything they had done before in prison, which several commented:

*"It was nice for people of our age group to get out of ourselves, to do something different. I was very sceptical at first, but as time went on, I have to say, I did find it very enjoyable. It was nice to do something that I'd never done before – because I'd never played an instrument at all, ever. I found the whole experience good – Thank you."*

*"I went along because there is very little opportunity to do anything which is creative or different in here – Your life's very prescribed in here ... each day is kind of 'ground hog' day ... So, something like that makes a real nice change. And also being involved in something which took place over the course of a few weeks, which kind of evolved."*

However one person had mixed feeling, because of the emotion music can bring out:

*"For me, it was actually quite profound. It actually stirred up quite a lot of deep memories for me, and it sort of took me back a bit. I was almost reluctant to actually let myself enjoy it."*

Some older prisoners were obviously going through very difficult times. One older prisoner had lost his wife and, from his perspective, had nothing to look forward to outside prison. He joined the group in the second session, after missing the first one because he was ill. He didn't participate, but sat outside the circle of other prisoners and watched. Later, he told the musicians that he could play the harmonica and would like to record a piece for the CD. After the other participants had left at the end of the penultimate session, he played for them and at the next session made a recording, which obviously gave him great satisfaction. You could see him, literally, come alive with the music. And he thanked the musicians profusely at the end for all they had done.

The ACOOP representative, when interviewed, spoke at length about the problems encountered by older prisoners, and how many of them seldom left their cells. Several prisoners commented on this and how music can therefore help if one is isolated within one's cell. One participant reflected on this:

*"I see a lot of old people, and all they do is sit in their cell. And they come out for their dinner and then go back to their cell. They have nobody to talk to, but when something like this comes along, it gives them an alternative."*

On the first day of one of the programmes, the ACOOP representative went to find an older prisoner whom she'd heard was feeling too ill to attend. It transpired that the prisoner had had a bad night (unable to sleep for personal reasons). His cellmate eventually persuaded him to come along; he spent the first five minutes or so looking uncomfortable, but an hour into the session, he was singing a solo and left the workshop smiling and admitting that he felt much better.

Several older participants also spoke about the de-humanising effects of prison, especially that they are rarely treated as though they have any intelligence. By contrast, the music programmes were a breath of fresh air to them, where the musicians treated them with respect and as intelligent adults. One participant said,

*"It's like, for a couple of hours you're not in prison. You might have turned up at a village hall somewhere out in the community. For that small space of time, you are treated like a person rather than a prisoner."*

Another commented:

*"It was very life-affirming – us being treated as adults and being treated with dignity. They made you feel as though you were a part of something."*

Because the proportions of older prisoners who took part in the programmes were generally low, invitations were extended to foreign nationals, who tended to be younger. This created mixed feelings among some of the older prisoners in some establishments. Some thought it was a good thing, as it made the workshops more interesting, particularly as some of these younger guys were musically talented, but others were uncomfortable with the mix. One participant summed up these mixed feelings:

*"Unfortunately, those other minorities included all the younger element, who, when we got there, dived in and grabbed all the instruments before the older guys like myself had a chance. Now, you could say, 'Well, that's the older guys' fault'. On the other hand, if those youngsters hadn't been there, I think the whole thing might have been a flop. The older guys were quite happy to sit there"*

*and listen, but were useless at taking part. Even I dragged my heels about getting involved. It wasn't until the last day that I actually got involved in playing the drum, and I bitterly regretted leaving it until the last day, because I thoroughly enjoyed it and found I could drum quite well and keep the beat. But, there you go ..."*

With one of the Dartmoor programmes, some older prisoners only came to the first sessions of the two workshops; it was unclear why they stopped attending. Whether they had other things on, or had misunderstood what it was about, or perhaps felt excluded by the younger participants, was impossible to establish, as we were not able to interview this group; anecdotally, though, the ACOOP representative had heard that some of the older prisoners had felt marginalized by the younger ones. One older prisoner who did stay, and who took a really active part in the music as a drummer, said,

*"I was disappointed a little bit when a few of the older ones left. It seemed to diminish and reduce down to just four older ones and the young ones participating. There were a lot more older people who I would have liked to see participate a bit more themselves, but they seemed to pull back ... I don't know why. Maybe they didn't feel as confident; I'm not sure what their reason was. Maybe they felt a bit intimidated by the younger participants, I'm not sure, but we invited them [the younger ones]. If it wasn't for the younger ones being there, there would have just been four of us."*

The younger prisoners generally seemed to welcome having older prisoners involved in the sessions; one said,

*"They've got this 'over 50s thing' and it tends to form a barrier and stop people mixing. But because this was meant to be a diversity workshop as well, everyone got involved."*

In those prisons where older prisoners were involved in the programme, the overall feeling among those who participated in the whole programme was extremely positive. One Dartmoor prisoner said, *"We all appreciated it and enjoyed it."* One individual who had not actually taken part but watched from the sidelines commented,

*"I enjoyed being entertained and seeing other people enjoy themselves. You don't often see a smile on a face in prison do you."*

## *Perceptions of foreign national prisoners*

Foreign national prisoners who participated in the music programmes tended to be more forthcoming in providing feedback. These participants were mostly younger, and enthusiastic to take part in any activity that enabled them to spend time out of their cell. They didn't appear to object to being part of a mixed group with older people. As one said,

*"Yeah, the mix is very good. With the music, it is easy to know people, easy to trust them, there's more communication with people – old people and young people together. Without music, we haven't got a topic – normally, we don't talk to each other."*

The main barrier for these participants was language, which, for some, meant quite a lonely existence in prison. Some were reliant on friends who spoke their language to interpret for them, particularly in Exeter prison. Those who had spent longer periods in prison tended to have better spoken English and were likely to be attending English speaking courses.

The biggest group of foreign national prisoners was in The Verne, given that this prison accommodates a high proportion of foreign nationals. Most of these prisoners had been transferred from other prisons to complete their sentences, having served relatively long periods in prison. Participants were very forthcoming about the importance of music during their stay in an English prison. As one commented,

*"Well, to me, music has been quite an escape during the time I have been here in prison. It has helped me to feel calm, even being in this terrible situation ... It is the only thing that actually keeps the pressure away, because that is terrible. It has also helped me to get to know other people from completely different cultures ... It's really helped."*

Some enjoyed the opportunity to meet and converse with the musicians.

The music facilities at the Verne were evidently much appreciated and well used. One participant said, *"The time has gone quickly in here, because we go to the music room nearly every day."* Another said,

*"I've done a year and a half in a prison where there's been no music at all. I came here and found the music room, and it's been nice. It's been a good release for me, you know ... because if you've got stuff on your mind and you can say it in lyrics and with music, it's a very good way to get your feelings out."*

The workshops provided prisoners with a focus and a goal, especially the recording session that they all looked forward to:

*"That's what makes it different from normal rehearsals, you know, the fact that we have a target that makes us work together as a team."*

### ***Perceived benefits of the programme***

Through the course of this evaluation, it became evident that for most prisoners who participated in the programmes, the opportunity to create, compose, play or take part in music based activities with other prisoners, played an important role in terms of their sense of wellbeing. Several people expressed this in different ways:

*"It's a major part of my life, especially when I'm stuck behind that door on my own."*

And,

*"If ever I find I can't get to sleep at night, I lie there going through in my head some of my favourite tunes on my discs at home, and that is just wonderful – it takes you back to where you were."*

It was a theme that ran across all participants, regardless of age, background or nationality. One foreign national prisoner said,

*"It's simple. It's like life needs some colour, some musical colours. So now I can't live without music every day. Every day, I take at least half hour to play the harmonica. If one day I don't play my harmonica, I don't live some music, I am always thinking I have lost something that day."*

Several prisoners expressed the need for music in much stronger terms:

*"In terms of living – surviving the prison experience – music has been absolutely essential. I could not have done it without music. I mean, I would have just shrivelled up and died, I think."*

The music programmes allowed people to reconnect with a strong sense of well-being, sometimes for the first time for a long time, as this short exchange between a prisoner and one of the researchers revealed:

Q: *"What did you get out of it?"*

A: *"I got joy out of it."*

Q: *"I could tell ... You had a big smile on your face the whole time."*

For some, the experience marked the start of the development of new skills, as they were introduced to different instruments or to singing for the first time. Others had experience but had not thought they were good enough, or had let their skills lapse. For those who were already relatively skilled, it was a way of connecting with other people with the same interests and developing their talents further. For these, music was obviously an important part of their lives and a vital mechanism for dealing with the prison experience:

*"I would say my guitar is a vital tool for my sanity. I would seriously have problems if I didn't have an instrument to release on."*

Likewise,

*"Unless you play, it's impossible to understand what it means – that sense of freedom you experience – It doesn't make any difference where I am at the time ... When I came back to prison and they wouldn't let me have my guitar for a month, it was a nightmare. A month felt like a year."*

The workshops were perceived as a way to reconnect with the outside world and had a significance for these prisoners that most people outside prison probably wouldn't appreciate or understand. One prisoner in Dartmoor prison said,

*"You actually under-estimate the importance of these things. When you're outside, you probably wouldn't sign up for something like this; but when you're in prison, it's a relief, it gets you out your cell ...."*

Another Dartmoor prisoner, referring to the programme, likewise said,

*"When I'm in that room, I can be myself."*

The following sections explore in more detail some of the specific benefits of the programme, revealed through observations and conversations with prisoners.

## Social Bonding and Interaction

Prison is generally a hostile environment, where individuals have to be on their guard and maintain a seemingly robust psychological and emotional barrier to keep themselves safe. It is therefore unusual for prisoners to 'drop their guard', expose themselves emotionally and cooperate openly and reciprocally with others. The music programme had the unusual effect of doing just that; as one prisoner put it,

*" What we were doing in there was something we don't normally do, engaging in a way we don't normally engage."*

Another participant likewise said:

*" We wouldn't normally talk to each other – but now we know each other."*

Similarly,

*" You see each other on the wing, but you don't really know each other. That's the good thing about this ... by playing instruments with people you've got to communicate, and by communicating you form some kind of relationship. Since we started, I've been speaking to loads of people much more."*

It became evident that social relationships that had formed during the workshops had extended out onto the wings, as suggested by one participant:

*" All those who actually participated are now communicating with each other about the experience. We have something in common ... There is a kind of bonding that has come through it. Whereas before, we were strangers and probably wouldn't have talked to each other, because we all had were our little cliques that we tended to stay in. It's helped us to open up, broaden our knowhow and see that it's OK to bring other people into friendships ... In prison, you tend to have just a few close friends ... trusting others is always a difficult issue."*

Essentially, it emerged that prisoners rarely had the opportunity, or felt safe enough, to socialise openly on the wings, and let down their guard. In the relaxed environment of the music programme, on the other hand, individuals had begun to open up with each other; this was particularly noticeable among the male prisoners, where relationships were generally built on trust and there were high levels of suspicion and paranoia. As one participant suggested, *" Prison is a very volatile place. It's full of people who don't want to be there"*. The workshops therefore enabled

individuals to feel less suspicious and more trusting of fellow participants, and more able to express themselves openly than they were used to. One participant felt that more opportunities like this should be available as many would, in his view, benefit from the experience:

*"It's a very positive thing, and there are people I'm now talking to who I wouldn't normally have talked to before. So it's about forming new kinds of friendships and being able to be creative at the same time."*

One older prisoner suggested that the experience helped individuals to feel less socially isolated:

*"It brings people out of themselves, especially if they're suffering, down and out, and that sort of thing. If you can draw them in, you can begin to see a difference in them in no time at all. They become part of something that's worthwhile, and they develop friendships. And it becomes a bit like a support network as well. So it's advantageous all round."*

Similarly,

*"We have a chance to interact with each other, maybe create new relationships ... so it does break down barriers. Normally, people just walk right past and you wouldn't even acknowledge them, or maybe just nod your head. So it is very good to be able to talk to each other, to get to know other people's names, and if someone's shy, quiet then try to get to know them on a more personal level."*

The sense that prisoners could often misread one another on the wings and therefore potentially avoid social interaction was summed up by this participant:

*"I was surprised by somebody who came up with a song. He was a foreigner and he was quite good, if you know what I mean. It showed me something about other people, other people's potential talents or abilities."*

On the other hand, the level of camaraderie suggested here did not apply to everyone. During an interview after the completion of the programme, one participant said,

*"When we see each other, we say 'Hi', but it's not really made a big difference."*



## Health Benefits

Some participants made explicit connections between the music programme experience and health, especially in relation to mental and emotional wellbeing. One participant described the music programme as an opportunity to "*express your inner feelings*". In his view, prisoners would often store up anxieties and emotional distress over long periods of time in prison, which could then precipitate mental health problems. As another participant put it,

*"I've been in prison nine months and, physically, I've gone downhill. You have to keep your mind working, but the whole system is designed to shut you down."*  
This was in some ways echoed by another participant, who said,

*"You can be in prison, but you don't have to be a prisoner in your mind. They can't do anything in there if you keep active, and music helps you to do that."*

One participant mentioned a fellow prisoner whose mental health, in his view, had visibly improved as a result of the music programme:

*"There was one guy who was in a really bad way, a very vulnerable person on loads of medication – a right mess, he was. He said he wanted to join the music group ... and eventually ended up coming back over onto the main wing with us [from the VPU]. Then he just started to look forward to the next music session. It gave him something to hold on to. He was coming into a group that was giving him encouragement and he felt part of something. It gave him confidence to come back onto the normal wing. He had people he could talk to."*

Similar feelings were aired by other participants. One female participant described the experience as one that "*lifted our spirits*", and a male prisoner said the experience had "*cheered a lot of the fellows up*."

## Life Skills

Participation in the music programme was perceived by many participants as having an important role in terms of not only developing new music skills but, probably

more significantly, developing and improving their life skills, especially such things as increased self-confidence, self belief and self efficacy, personal worth, positive self concept, organizational and leadership abilities, creativity, concentration and patience, and being able to respect others. In this sense, the process was empowering and helped individuals to focus and reflect.

At Eastwood Park, a member of the prison staff commented that many of the female prisoners had anger management problems. She said that some of them participated in an Origami workshop once a month because this required them to carefully follow precise instructions that were believed to have a calming effect. Likewise, she said that the music workshops had a similar effect in terms of helping participants to develop self-discipline, concentration and the ability to work as a team. In addition those who were encouraged to learn an instrument would have a lifetime skill they could take with them on release.

During the live performance at Eastwood Park, an individual in the audience commented to one of the researchers that her friend, who was performing, had been bullied when she had first come into the prison, but that the course had made her so much more confident and self-assured. Others suggested that previously quiet and unassuming individuals had been able to reveal another side to themselves through the experience. One participant said that, in his view, the experience had been essentially about building self-confidence and motivation. For him, writing songs was a way of improving his confidence in his own abilities. Another participant said that the experience had helped to improve his self esteem:

*"It opened up the possibility to have a go at something I wasn't sure about ... whether you're good or not good at it is irrelevant – it was an opportunity for me."*

Likewise, speaking about personal achievement, one participant said,

*"It grows within a person, your personality changes, your actions change. When you start to achieve in something, you start saying to yourself, 'carry on achieving and achieving and achieving'."*

This came across from one prisoner who felt he had started to develop a new musical skill:

*"I never knew how to play the drums before I came into prison. I never played anything. So when I come out able to play the drums, you know, I will actually have achieved something really good and, on a personal level, although I probably won't be in a band or anything like that, I will have achieved something I can be proud of."*

Partly, it was also about feeling respected as a human being, with the recognition that they would eventually be released from prison and need to reintegrate back into society:

*"At the end of the day, most prisoners do get released back into society, so it's about not being brutalised and victimised while you are here. It's about people achieving something and working together; their self esteem grows a bit, their confidence grows. Now, that surely has got to be a good thing overall. Yet, I can also see people on the outside thinking, 'These geezers get to play music' – that must seem a bit weird for people looking in."*

### ***Involving prison staff***

Previously it has been suggested that key prison staff should be more involved in the promotion and support of the programmes to ensure they recruit well. However, there are ways prison staff could be made more aware of the programmes.

One prisoner made the perceptive observation that there should be more Prison Officers involved in workshop sessions, so that they could then observe and experience participants' progress. This participant said he would have appreciated it if a governor grade officer had attended the recording session, since,

*"If they aren't involved, then they haven't got a clue what's going on ... If you include them, then you may make an ally. A lot of good stuff happened and nobody from the prison knows that."*

We know that prison staff were made fully aware of the programmes and were invited to attend, but most prisons have limited staffing levels making it difficult for them to drop into sessions. The converse to this is that the presence of uniformed staff could stifle communication within the groups and ultimately impede creativity,

although when staff were present, or the researchers for that matter, this did not seem to affect group dynamics. Provided that observers joined in with the sessions, this was probably more of an asset than a hindrance as it reinforced the equal status and level of respect between prisoners and others. Again, if there had been a longer lead-in time to plan the programmes, attendance by senior staff could have been timetabled in. It would certainly have been useful to involve them more, to demonstrate the potential benefits of the programme for the wider population of prisoners.

Greater involvement of prison officials would have also helped the ACOOP coordinator in the Devon prisons. She was expected to carry a lot of responsibility, for supervising workshops and organising the transfer of prisoners. This meant she was spending a lot of time away from her other duties. She was keenly aware of the benefits of the music programmes, having experienced similar programmes provided by Superact prior to this project, and was therefore eager to be involved. However, she did say that she would have appreciated more support from prison staff:

*"It's not a case of 'if we had more money we could do more'. You have to have somebody who is prepared to take responsibility for it in the prison. I think it's a case of trying to run these workshops more regularly, perhaps three times a year, and it is certainly feasible to get them prioritised above other things."*

At Eastwood Park, a member of the prison staff was present at all times and the Head of Learning and Skills sat in at intervals over the whole period of the programme. She was well aware of the effort participants had put into their performances, the difference it had made to many of their lives and that the live performance was one of the best that the prison had ever put on. She said to the musicians at the end, *"It was a fantastic three weeks. We'd love to have you back at any time."* A member of the prison's Board of Visitors attended the performance and commented, *"I've never been at an event where I've seen the girls so attentive and respectful."* This prison had already hosted several music programmes and managed to accommodate the Music in Time programme at short notice, precisely because of this close involvement of senior prison staff and their underlying commitment.

But for these kinds of creative arts programmes to work effectively in the longer term, they need to become part of the mainstream activities of prisons, or be adequately funded to prevent existing staff from having to take on extra workloads. Many people who helped to organise the programme were already working long hours, and, on top of their routine roles and responsibilities, were tasked with organising workshops, managing the security arrangements, escorting the musicians and prisoners, supervising the sessions, and making it possible for the live performances to happen; these all added considerably to their time commitments. However, if the music workshops were on a par with other vocational courses, and became part of the normal prison education and vocational curriculum, these additional stresses would probably not occur. There are many skilled musicians ready and willing to run these programmes, and, for prisoners, it would add considerably to their mental and social well-being and ability to resettle back into society.

### *Developing the programme*

We asked the musicians and the prisoners for their views on the length of the programme.

In the remand situation, it was felt that half-day sessions would be better, as participants' concentration levels were poor and they struggled to get through a full day. Shorter sessions over a longer period would give them time to build relationships, reflect on what they had learnt and to produce their own songs. Several prisoners had been encouraged by the programme to start writing songs and poetry, but they hadn't progressed far enough over just three weeks for this material to be included on the CD.

One prison, Channings Wood, did have half days that worked well. The main drawback was the fact that there was a different room used each time, participants didn't always know where the sessions were going to be. There was a lot of unproductive time spent hanging around, waiting for the sessions to start, which meant that each session was quite short. This could easily be resolved if there was a fixed base for the workshops. The prisoners made it clear that if they had been able

to get into a room, they would have been practicing while they waited for the musicians to arrive. One prisoner commented that *"Mornings, perhaps, would have been better than afternoons, because it is a longer period."*

A Dartmoor prisoner had mixed feeling about the length of the programme, but made the interesting point that psychologically it is good to have something to look forward to each week, so six weeks was better than three.

The vast majority of the prisoners thoroughly enjoyed the programme and, rather inevitably, wanted it to continue for longer.

*"Two or three days extra – if it had gone on for another few days – I didn't feel as if I had had enough time."*

*"I think it should be longer so that people can get more out of it, and actually focus more on the people who can't play necessarily. We could have done with two sessions a week over maybe two months, or something like that."*

*"The point I'm trying to make is that you can't do anything in three days. It's great to do it, because it's something different, but if you are on about people learning instruments, you are not going to do that in three days. It needs to be week in, week out, as a band practice or whatever you want to call it, and then I think you will achieve something."*

### ***Music programmes just for older prisoners?***

There were mixed feelings about this amongst the older prisoners themselves. As one participant said,

*"The minute one says come and get an instrument, the youngsters are vrrroooooom, and the older bloke sits back and thinks, 'Oh, all right, I'll see what happens'. There's no way of dealing with that unless you take the over 50s separately – but that then starts to break the whole thing up, which is not a good idea."*

However, the experience of Channings Wood showed that a group comprised solely of older people can work extremely well; it simply needs a longer lead in time, and more explanation and encouragement to generate enough numbers to make it viable. Where there is a mix of younger and older prisoners, some thought has to be

given to how to manage the dynamics in advance. Perhaps it would have been better to allow the older prisoners to come in first, so they could find out what was going to happen. Then they could have been allowed to have a go with the instruments without the younger generation present, which might have given them more confidence. The younger prisoners don't have a problem having older people in the room, but some of the older prisoners obviously need more support if they are to take an active part.

### *Should there be more programmes like this?*

All the participants in the interviews and focus groups were asked if there should be more programmes like Music in Time. The response was an overwhelming 'Yes', except for one participant who would have liked the sessions to have continued for longer, as he felt three sessions over three weeks did not provide sufficient time to really progress as far as he would have liked. Most participants also said they would like to be involved in another round of workshops this year. By the end of the last Music in Time programme, the word had spread around the wings of all the prisons involved and other prisoners had become much more interested in what had been on offer. Participants had clearly talked about it on the wings and felt that more people should have been able to take part. Several said things along the lines of:

*"If there was a follow-up now, I think there would be a very good response rate, because of the word from the guys that took part the first time. To build on what's gone would be really positive."*

In this sense, participants had become excellent advocates for the programmes.

In Dartmoor, prisoners involved in the focus group said that there had been a recent survey of prisoners, with a response rate of 175 – about a third of the prison population – which concluded that a high proportion of prisoners wanted the opportunity to learn music, have more musical entertainment, or the chance to become involved in other creative arts programmes, including dance.

Several prisoners suggested that a vocational educational course, with a qualification at the end, would be something they would definitely sign up for, were it available. Superact and Live Music Now were involved in piloting a six week music education programme with the University of Exeter, which was primarily aimed at development of social and life skills towards a qualification entitled 'Personal Effectiveness and Employability'.

Finally, one prisoner, a self-taught guitarist, felt that music had given him such a sense of purpose that he wanted to do more when he was released. However, he felt he would need support and wondered if the programme could be extended into re-settlement centres for ex-offenders on probation.



## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

We hope that this report shows how important a creative music programme – like *Music in Time* – can be in bringing a real difference to the lives and potential of prisoners. This evaluation has illustrated how such a programme can bring many different benefits, as well as challenges. Fundamentally, programmes like this bring to prisoners an array of personal and social opportunities, including improved self confidence, self esteem, self efficacy, interpersonal and communication skills, focus and discipline, enhanced well-being, and improved mental health.

The prisoners involved in this project themselves recognised the tremendous impact the programmes had on them personally, and the potential benefits they could bring to others in the criminal justice system. As one prisoner told us:

*"... the team effort that develops is brilliant ... In a place like this, anything that can bring people together who've gone astray – especially something as positive as music – has got to be highly advantageous."*

Given some challenging security and time constraints, the *Music in Time* programme was highly successful in drawing in so many volunteers, especially older prisoners. The opportunity to create, play and participate in music activities evidently started to make important inroads into the psychological, emotional and social well-being of participants.

To conclude, the following key factors should be considered in planning a music programme with older prisoners:

- Satisfactory lead-in time;
- Involvement of key stakeholders, including those prison staff whom prisoners respect;
- Using prisoners themselves to promote, advocate and organise the programmes, as educational or health champions;
- Ensuring that publicity materials make it clear what volunteers should expect;

- Giving ACOOP workers and volunteers sufficient information, time and support to provide an effective liaison and advocacy role; and
- Provision of suitable space for workshops that is available consistently over the period of a programme.

For musicians, who tend to be self-employed and brought into the programmes as a third party, the following are recommended:

- Guaranteed windows of time allocated for programmes where musicians can plan workshops and dovetail with their other work programmes;
- Establishment of a direct contact / liaison person within each prison to enable planning and security arrangements to run smoothly;
- More open lines of communication with prisoners and prison wing staff so there is clear information in advance and during programmes, and participants then have clear expectations of the programmes.
- Greater commitment and appreciation from prison authorities towards creative music programmes as educational and resettlement opportunities for prisoners.

Longer term prisons could look at developing more intensive programmes:

- Regular programme of workshops over the year
- Mainstream creative arts course leading to a qualification prisoners could use on release
- Music lessons – particularly for guitar lessons to go alongside the provision of instruments from Guitar Jail Doors
- Provision of a practice room
- Recording facilities for the production of albums and to learn techniques leading to a vocational qualification

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# APPENDICES

|             |                                             |
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| Appendix 1b | Participant Consent Form                    |
| Appendix 1c | Participant Information Sheet               |
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| Appendix 2  | Topic Guide for Interviews and Focus Groups |







Our ref: SE/lt

9<sup>th</sup> December 2009

Nick de Viggiani  
School of Health & Social Care  
Glenside Campus  
Post Station 2

Dear Nick

**Application number: HSC/09/10/57**

Application title: A formative evaluation of 'Music in Time', a music education and skills programme for older prisoners

Your ethics application was considered by the School Research Ethics Sub-Committee and based on the information provided was given ethical approval to proceed with the following conditions:

1. Please send copies of the governor's agreement to Leigh Taylor for our files when you have them.

If these conditions include providing further information please do not proceed with your research until you have full approval from the committee. You must notify the committee in advance if you wish to make any significant amendments to the original application.

Please note that all information sheets and consent forms should be on UWE headed paper.

If you have to terminate your research, please inform the School Research Ethics Sub-Committee within 14 days, indicating the reasons for early termination.

Please be advised that as principal investigator you are responsible for the secure storage and destruction of data at the end of the specified period. A copy of the 'Guidance on Managing Research Records' is enclosed for your information.

We wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely

Simon Evans  
Chair  
School Research Ethics Sub-Committee



# CONSENT FORM

## MUSIC IN TIME EVALUATION



University of the  
West of England

*Please tick the boxes you agree with*

- The evaluation has been explained to me
- I've been able to ask questions about it
- I don't mind if the researchers participate in and observe the music sessions
- I'd like to be interviewed about the music sessions
- If interviewed, I agree that the interview can be audio recorded
- I'd like to take part in a group discussion which will be recorded

### Please Note

Your decision to take part in this evaluation is voluntary.

You can withdraw from it at any time.

If you decide to withdraw, you won't be asked why.

Your personal details (name, offence, identity) will not be used or shared.

Your words may be used but will not be connected in any way to you.

Only the two researchers will have access to the recordings and will destroy them once the evaluation is completed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Name                      Your Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Name                      Signature                      Date

Contact details for further information: Dr Nick de Viggiani, University of the West of England, Bristol, BS16 1DD. Email: [nick.deviggiani@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:nick.deviggiani@uwe.ac.uk)



# **INFORMATION SHEET**

## **MUSIC IN TIME EVALUATION**



University of the  
West of England

The music programme you are volunteered to take part in are being evaluated by two researchers from the University of the West of England, Nick de Viggiani and Sheila Mackintosh. At the beginning of the programme, we will introduce ourselves to you.

We'll ask you to sign a consent form giving your permission for us to observe the sessions. This form will also give you the option to volunteer to be interviewed and to take part in a focus group discussion about the music sessions. These will both be audio recorded and are completely voluntary.

We hope the evaluation will be a chance for you to tell us your views on the music sessions.

---

### **What we want to do**

1. We plan to watch and take part in some of the sessions; we will take written notes to keep a record of our observations.
2. We will invite you to be interviewed. If you agree, the interview will be like a conversation where you will be asked questions about the music workshops and about your music interests and tastes. It will take place towards the end of the programme and could last between 30 and 60 minutes.
3. We will invite you to take part in a focus group discussion with other volunteers from the music programme. This is completely voluntary and will be an open discussion about the sessions that will occur at the end of the programme.

### **Consent / Confidentiality**

The interviews and group discussion are voluntary. We would like to audio record them to help us represent participants' views accurately in our report. We will not divulge personal details about individuals (names, identities, offence details). Any information we record that identifies individuals will be removed. Recordings will only be used to compile the report and will be destroyed once the report has been published.

You can choose not to take part in the evaluation and / or the music workshops. You can withdraw at any time without having to provide a reason.

### **Safety**

If at any time an individual reveals sensitive information about themselves or someone else that poses a potential risk of harm to them, or suggests a breach of the Prison Rules, the individual will have to be referred to the senior officer responsible for your welfare.

### **Thanks for your help**

For further details, please contact: Dr Nick de Viggiani, University of the West of England, Bristol, BS16 1DD. Email: [nick.deviggiani@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:nick.deviggiani@uwe.ac.uk). He can also be accessed via the ACOOP representative or Head of Learning & Skills.





University of the West of England

**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCHERS AND RESEARCH SUPPORT STAFF**

**RESEARCH TITLE:** Music in Time: A formative evaluation of a music education and skills programme for older prisoners

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr Nick de Viggiani

**CONTACT DETAILS:** Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, University of the West of England, Stapleton, Bristol, BS16 1DD; email nick.deviggiani@uwe.ac.uk

**With regard to my involvement with the above project, I agree to the following conditions and will ensure that I do not breach these conditions at any stage, including following completion of the research.**

Please initial alongside each of the following:

- I agree to safeguard the confidentiality of all research participants .....  
.....
- I agree not to share information arising from interviews or research participants with other parties beyond the research team .....  
.....
- I agree that I will not use data arising from this research for any personal or business gain .....  
.....
- Where a conflict of interest should arise in the course of my involvement with this research study, I will inform the principal investigator .....  
.....

|           |       |                |
|-----------|-------|----------------|
| Your Name | Date  | Your Signature |
| .....     | ..... | .....          |

|                 |       |           |
|-----------------|-------|-----------|
| Name of Witness | Date  | Signature |
| .....           | ..... | .....     |







University of the  
West of England


## MUSIC IN TIME EVALUATION Topic Guide for Interviews and Focus Groups

- What kind of music are you into?
  - What kind of music did you grow up with? What were you into?
  - Can you think of two or three favourite pieces of music?
  - Do you have a musical background / upbringing?
  - Have you ever played music or sung before?
  - Have you ever been in a band or choir?
  - Does certain music have a special meaning for you?
- One-to-one  
Interviews

- 
- Do you ever get to listen to music in prison?
  - Do you watch music on TV?
  - Can you get to play music in prison?
  - Do you ever share your musical tastes with others in prison?
  - Do you think your musical tastes are similar or different to others?
- What value – if any – does music bring to life in prison?
  - Do you think music has any value in helping you make friends with others?
  - Does it help break down barriers?
- Have you taken part in these kinds of workshops before?
  - How did you find out about it?
  - Why did you volunteer?
  - Were there any conditions attached to you choosing to do this?
  - Was your decision to take part affected by other prisoners (or staff)?
- What did you think of the programme?
  - Did it meet your expectations?
  - What do you think of the musicians?
  - Were you happy with what you were asked to do?
  - How did the sessions make you feel?
  - Did you discuss the sessions back on the wing? What was the general feeling?
  - What, if anything, did you get out of the sessions?
  - Has the experience made any difference to your time in prison?
  - Has the experience helped you at all?
  - Is there anything else you would like to add?
- One-to-one  
Interviews &  
focus groups







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