

Institute for Community Research and Development

**An evaluation of Sandwell Youth Offending Service – a creative
approach to working with young people**

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with an introduction from Mike Botham and Chad Smith**

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Executive Summary: An evaluation of Sandwell Youth Offending Service – a creative approach to working with young people

Background

Sandwell Youth Offending Service (YOS) work with young people who have very complex life stories. The young people may have committed very serious offences but are also often highly vulnerable to exploitation and have experienced significant trauma. Their experiences can lead to mistrust or suspicion of those in authority and in turn, for practitioners, the challenge of engagement can seem insurmountable. Sandwell YOS therefore argue that an evolution of the current approach is required to more effectively engage, support, and help young people. The new National Standards for youth justice, underpinned by the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) helpful focus on a 'child first' principle support a change in thinking and encourage YOSs to take local initiatives. Sandwell YOS' vision is to focus on the use of the arts and increasingly reconceptualise the YOS over time into a 'Creative YOS'.

In January 2019 Sandwell YOS were awarded funding from the YJB's Serious Youth Violence Grant to help increase the use of arts with the cohort. The **Institute for Community Research and Development** were commissioned to conduct a process and impact evaluation, combining quantitative data to understand *if* any change was happening with in-depth qualitative interviews to understand *how* this change might be happening, foregrounding the voice and experience of participants. Most existing research and evaluation studies have looked at the impact of discrete arts programmes. The new creative programme of work being introduced by Sandwell YOS is innovative in working across the whole service with a range of arts and creative activities, and therefore no similar evaluation has previously been conducted.

Key findings

The qualitative interview data demonstrate improvements in young people's engagement, confidence, well-being, and aspirations. Young people and staff have developed new skills, and relationships between young people and staff have become more open.

The quantitative findings demonstrate:

- an increase in the percentage of contacts attended by young people when taking part in creative arts activities
- a reduction in breach of order by young people when taking part in creative arts activities

However, the limited amount of quantitative data available for comparison over time means that these quantitative findings should not be relied upon. More data are needed to conduct statistical analysis to test for the significance of any findings.

Sandwell YOS have taken the time to ensure the activities are young-person led, and take account of practical concerns that can have a large impact on engagement. Young people are engaging well with the creative arts offer, and therefore with the YOS more broadly.

Recommendations

The introduction of a new, creative approach to working with young people is already showing evidence of success. The energy, vision, and innovation of Mike Botham and Chad Smith in particular should be commended. Introducing a new way of working with young people across the YOS is a

significant cultural change for the organisation and it has therefore been important to evaluate the impact and process at this stage of the journey. The recommendations below are derived from the evaluation findings and are intended to help the YOS build upon the successes achieved so far and work towards sustainability.

Sandwell Youth Offending Service

- Continue to evaluate the impact of the creative approach. In particular by quantitatively measuring young people's engagement, collecting data on longer-term outcomes, and qualitatively exploring young people's experiences
- Acknowledging that cultural change in organisations takes time, consider implementing a model of change management to build on the staff engagement achieved so far. This might include a programme of one-to-one work with YOS staff and an external creative arts facilitator to further build knowledge and skills
- Continue to share evidence of the value of creative work with staff and partners – including the findings from this report – and continue to share the good practice, and challenges faced, with the sector through a 'good practice guide'
- Consider identifying a deputy lead for this area of work and/or thematic leads to ensure the work is a) sustainable long-term; and b) to facilitate greater ownership over the approach across the organisation
- Consider the balance of creative input from YOS staff and outside organisations, and how the overall creative offer can be refined and placed into a clear calendar of activities
- Identify progression routes through activities for young people, in particular by continuing to spend time on relationship building with external agencies who may be able to offer opportunities to realise the aspirations young people are developing through the creative work (for example, Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations; the new West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit)

The Youth Justice Partnership board

- Note the potential benefits to engagement and rehabilitation of Sandwell's creative approach, while acknowledging the investment needed – in terms of time, training, and cultural shift – to make this work sustainable
- Explore ways that long-term financial support could be provided to the YOS team to enable them to continue to build on this work and reduce time spent developing funding applications. For example, through a permanent 'creative lead' post
- Support the development of a 'good practice guide' to share with external organisations
- Identify funding streams through existing mechanisms, such as staff development, for capacity building for YOS staff
- Disseminate the findings presented in this report through leadership programmes with senior YOS staff and other change agents to encourage adoption of this approach
- Lead and facilitate relationship building with local partners to aid sustainability of the programme and build opportunities for young people

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1. Sandwell Youth Offending Service: their work and their approach

Introduction and context from Mike Botham, Sandwell Youth Offending Service Manager

Youth Offending Services nationally have been incredibly successful in helping to reduce the overall numbers of young people in the youth justice system. Numbers of first time entrants have dropped by 86% since the year ending March 2008, and the number of children and young people who received a caution or sentence has fallen by 82% over the last ten years (Youth Justice Statistics, 2017/18).

This equates to there being far fewer children in the youth justice system overall, which should be celebrated. However, as detailed in the Youth Justice Board's Strategic Plan 2018-21, from this success emerge new challenges:

- As the cohort gets smaller it becomes more concentrated with children who have the most complex needs (including health and education needs) and challenging behaviours. This is evident from the high reoffending rate, especially for those leaving custody.
- Having a more complex cohort means that the expectations placed on youth justice practitioners are greater than ever. There are high levels of violence e.g. in the secure estate, with a proportion of this being against staff. This combined with other very serious issues (e.g. high levels of children self-harming) means that staff must try harder than ever to keep children safe.
- Whilst we have seen such large reductions in the number of children entering the system, the rate of those children from some black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds is not falling at the same pace compared to white children. This means that the proportion of BAME children in the youth justice system is increasing. Those children who have been in local authority care are also over-represented in the system (YJB 17/5/2018:4).

In line with the above narrative, the YOS caseload in Sandwell now consists of smaller numbers of young people who have very complex life stories. The young people may have committed very serious offences but are also often highly vulnerable to exploitation and have experienced significant trauma. Their experiences can understandably lead to mistrust or suspicion of those in authority and in turn, for practitioners, the challenge of engagement can seem insurmountable.

Whilst the solutions to helping young people are multi-faceted and go beyond the scope of any individual service we believe that the YOS itself should be brave enough to acknowledge its limitations and improve its methods of engagement and intervention to be more dynamic, flexible, and fulfilling to the young people and the community it serves. After all, if a young person does not feel sufficiently motivated to turn up to an appointment with services like the YOS, ultimately very little will be achieved.

We argue therefore that an evolution of the current approach is required if we are to more effectively engage, support and help young people. The new National Standards for youth justice, underpinned by the YJB's helpful focus on a 'child first' principle, support a change in thinking and encourage Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) to take local initiatives. Whilst there are perhaps many alternative paths that could be explored, in Sandwell our vision is to focus on the use of the arts and increasingly reconceptualise the YOS over time into a 'Creative YOS'.

The Cohort

Communication Difficulties

According to the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (2008), around 60% of young offenders have some form of Speech, Language and Communication Need (SLCN) sufficient enough to affect them on a day-to-day basis. There is substantial and increasing national and international research evidence that SLCN is a direct risk factor for offending but also integral to accessing the complex verbal situation in the courtroom, in the restorative justice process, as well as the verbally mediated interventions delivered by the YOT to reduce reoffending.

From April 2018 to April 2019, 64 young people received an initial assessment by the Speech and Language Therapist. All of these young people displayed some form of communication difficulty. The types of difficulties identified in the cohort were: difficulties understanding and retaining instructions; difficulties with narrative (explaining a series of events); poor knowledge of vocabulary (both words related to criminal justice and everyday words); lack of understanding of social communication including conversation skills, body language and assertiveness; and finally inability to tell the time, use calendars or organise themselves.

The issues arising from these difficulties include: difficulty accessing education; low self-esteem; frustration linked to not understanding language used; inability to understand instructions and information regarding offending behaviour; inability to understand another's point of view; inability to predict the reactions or behaviours of others; social exclusion from peers; and emotional immaturity.

The speech and language evidence in Sandwell YOS would therefore suggest that we need an offer that is suitably accessible and flexible to meet the range of needs and abilities.

Disproportionality

Sandwell is a wonderfully diverse borough. 34% of Sandwell's population are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds (Source: Sandwell Trends) with increasing diversity in the younger age categories. In line with overall trends in the national youth justice data sets, Sandwell YOS has an over representation in the black and mixed ethnic groups which is particularly noticeable in the custody cohort.

We have asked young people from a variety of backgrounds what they thought of the service. The consultation exercise told us that:

- They did not feel we tried hard enough to engage them
- The interventions are not interesting or relevant to their reality

- They do not see people who they can connect with
- They do not see career paths that seem real to them.

We take this issue and the young people's feedback seriously and have made significant efforts to develop our response following this consultation. For example, we have access to mentors whom wherever possible we aim to match culturally to the young person; and have developed a parental peer support group with a community organisation. However, we could do more if we fundamentally change our approach to be more responsive and it was from this feedback that the idea of the creative YOS developed.

ALTAR (Abuse, Loss, Trauma, Attachment and Resilience)

The West Midlands Combined Authority in conjunction with Dr Alex Chard and the seven West Midlands YOTs have coordinated an action research project on Abuse, Loss, Trauma, Attachment and Resilience (ALTAR) in the YOS cohort. Whilst the full report is not yet complete, it is likely to show significant levels of these factors in our cohort which further challenges the assessment and interventions we currently utilise and how suitable they are for the cohort.

Reoffending

Latest Youth Justice Board data (April 18 -March 19) shows the following regarding reoffending:

Reoffending rates after 12 months - Three month cohorts

Reoffences per reoffender Apr 17 - Jun 17 cohort (latest period)	3.19
Reoffences per reoffender Apr 16 - Jun 16 cohort	3.36
change from selected baseline	-4.9%
Binary rate - Apr 17 - Jun 17 cohort (latest period)	38.8%
Binary rate - Apr 16 - Jun 16 cohort	38.9%
percentage point change from selected baseline	-0.1%

Reoffending rates after 12 months - Aggregated quarterly cohorts

Reoffences per reoffender Jul 16 - Jun 17 cohort (latest period)	3.08
Reoffences per reoffender Jul 15 - Jun 16 cohort	3.59
change from selected baseline	-14.1%
Binary rate - Jul 16 - Jun 17 cohort (latest period)	39.3%
Binary rate - Jul 15 - Jun 16 cohort	46.4%
percentage point change from selected baseline	-7.1%

Whilst heading in the right direction, the binary rate (percentage of the cohort who reoffend) demonstrates that there is a significant percentage of the young people working with the YOS who reoffend. This would indicate that current interventions have a limit to their success.

Why arts and creative engagement?

The challenges for a YOS that wants to work effectively with this cohort are numerous and for some young people, our impact can be limited. A more fundamental shift in engagement is needed if long-term desistance is to be achieved.

This has to be an approach which will be:

- suitably flexible to adapt to all the diverse needs of the cohort
- be interesting and accessible to the young people
- develop positive self-image and self-expression
- give exposure to genuine alternative career paths and lifestyle choices.

As part of our development towards a Creative YOS, we would seek to be integral to the research base and are aiming to build a long-term relationship with the Institute of Community Research and Development at the University of Wolverhampton.

What does this mean in practice?

A YOS underpinned by creative engagement would not seek to undermine existing national standards, good practice or HMIP expectations in that assessment, planning, intervention and review would remain core expectations of case work. Neither would it impact negatively on risk management or safeguarding which would remain critical to keeping young people and the public safe. In that regard, we also recognise that some young people will have pressing situations which require immediate action and basic needs to be met. These will be prioritised and arts based intervention sequenced appropriately.

However, the underpinning value or principle is for the YOS to consider in all aspects of its delivery how the arts and more creative delivery might contribute to improved outcomes. Our aspiration is not just to deliver 'one off' artistic events, instead it is about change in approach to engagement and intervention.

The vision will be refined over time, however the concept has multiple elements:

Arts on offer:

1. We would seek to develop a diverse 'menu' of arts/cultural activities for young people to get involved in. We would aim to have every young person leaving the YOS having experienced some form of arts as a positive activity, to capitalise on any talents, and support them to take any emerging interests as far as they want to take them.

Innovative delivery:

2. Intervention plan targets conceptualised and delivered in a more innovative form by practitioners given freedom to be creative. This allows for more flexibility in approach which responds to the very diverse needs of the cohort. Photography, spoken word, drama, music, art – they can all be applied to intervention topics (e.g. offence types) or broader issues (identity etc.) in ways which engage young people far more than historic intervention types.

Accreditation:

3. As a service we would be aiming to achieve the Artsmark standard.
4. We will seek to accredit any work completed by the young people with qualifications to add to their CV.

Employability/Careers:

5. We aim to develop links with industry and partner agencies to establish educational/vocational pathways which are accessible and interesting to the young people (what we call 'creative careers').

Connecting communities:

6. We would seek to engage creative local people and local community groups to this programme. This would aim to connect the young people to their neighbourhoods for the longer term.
7. It is our hope that parents will relate to this approach and feel more open and attached to the YOS's purpose.

Evaluation:

8. We will continually evaluate what we do and will contribute to the evidence base surrounding the arts and youth justice.

Risks and Challenges

It is important to recognise that all the challenges around relationship building with our young people will not suddenly be resolved by offering more creative sessions, but we hope to have a more attractive offer, which makes meaningful engagement more likely. Equally, young people's motivation to engage will not suddenly increase just because we are changing our offer and it will require significant effort for any new methods to succeed.

Our commitment to the young people is that they will be integral in shaping this offer throughout its development, which we hope will mitigate the risk of non-engagement with the concept.

This transition will be resource intensive. Implementation would clearly lead to significantly different delivery methods, which is likely to divide practitioner opinion and require cultural change. The intention would not be to turn all staff into artists, but to assist them in understanding the value the arts can bring, to make engagement with young people more likely and ultimately more impactful. Some practitioners will thrive, and some will need significant support.

An overview of the creative journey so far from Chad Smith, Sandwell Youth Offending ISS worker

Sandwell YOS were successful in being awarded funding from the Youth Justice Board's Serious Youth Violence Grant in January 2019 to help increase the use of arts with the cohort. Using this grant we were able to kick-start the journey towards our vision and we are grateful for that opportunity.

We would also like to acknowledge all the partners who have been inspired by what we're trying to achieve and have contributed via advice, support or direct delivery with the young people.

Progress to date: The Consultation

In line with our commitment to involve young people at all stages, work commenced by consulting young people, parents and staff using questionnaires and face-to-face work. The purpose was to capture a clear picture of what we should deliver on, ensuring that the funding was used effectively. This included 49 young people (out of a cohort of 117 young people) who were interviewed at the time of consultation. The key outcomes were:

- 84% of young people identified at least one type of creative activity they were interested in.
- 58% of young people said that they would very likely or likely take part if YOS were to offer a creative type activity.
- 56% felt it would help them stay out of trouble.
- The most popular creative activities identified by young people were; barbering, music production, jewellery making, painting/graffiti, media and cooking.

14 (100%) of Case managers who were available at the time were consulted. The key outcomes were:

- 57% of staff felt this approach would reduce offending.
- 64% felt this approach would improve young people's attendance.
- Staff stated that more training and resources would enable them to deliver an arts focused intervention plan. They added that it would be beneficial for there to be a dedicated full-time member of staff responsible for developing and delivering arts within the service.

9 parents were consulted. The key outcomes were:

- 100% of the parents were interested in taking part in an activity alongside their child.
- 100% of the parents (who fully completed the questionnaire) felt that if their child was involved in creative activities it would definitely or could maybe improve their child's confidence, give them something to do together, keep their child out of trouble, give them something positive to talk about together, improve the relationship with their child and make them feel proud of their child.

The response

Based on our original aims outlined in the grant and the consultation work we have delivered the following work to date:

Creative Careers (15th April - 27th April): During the Easter Holidays we offered a number of activities for young people and their parents to take part in. The themes of the activities were careers where a successful career path may not rely on a traditional educational route but based on a specific skill set. The activities on offer were Pottery, Nail Art, Photography, Furniture Up-cycling and Graffiti. This concluded with an exhibition of all the items made at Wednesbury Art Gallery.

Media Project: Building on from the Drama project (December 2018) young people have made a video based on a young person's experience of County Lines and how exploitation takes place in the style of 'point of view'. This was written, directed and filmed by young people supported by West Midlands Police, Leaving Care Team and YOS Staff who helped with roles or provided a venue for the filming to take place. The next steps will be to produce a piece of work to accompany the film in order for it to be used as a preventative programme for other young people.

Nail Art: A number of staff were trained by another staff member on basic nail art techniques and this is now being offered as an engagement tool for young people. The feedback has been positive. Young people have presented feeling more relaxed during the session, they have engaged for a longer period of time and young people appear more open with case managers. This is compared to traditional methods.

Music Programme: This is an ongoing programme where young people have access to an Arts Centre's music studio once a week and provides them with the opportunity to record their music/song lyrics.

Individual bespoke sessions: Young people have taken part in activities based on their own skills or interests. This has included creating a number of different art pieces including spoken word, paintings, quilt making and meeting a published writer to obtain advice on how to publish a book. Some of these pieces have been entered into the Koestler Arts Awards 2019. This is the first time the YOS have had entries for the national competition. Each young person who has entered will receive a certificate and feedback from a renowned professional artist.

Group sessions: Current group work programmes are being reviewed and modified to include creative elements and modern techniques such as the use of You Tube videos. This will be a longer term piece of work which will take time to shape.

Challenges

Parents have been particularly difficult to engage. We are responding by improving the relationship that we have with parents by continuing to listen to their voices and offer opportunities for them to help shape the service.

It is vital that Case Managers understand the value of working with young people in a creative way. There are some staff who currently view creative interventions as being a separate entity or an additional piece of work to the intervention plan. This is perhaps understandable at this stage as we intend to support staff to understand the potential of this approach.

To help with changing this attitude it is important that Case Managers have the opportunity to develop their skills in order to increase their confidence and ability to work with young people creatively. We also believe that the evaluation will provide the evidence needed to fully convince Case Managers that creative interventions are effective.

Planned/continued pieces of work

Arts College: We have been awarded funding by Unitas and the PCC to run a Summer Arts College in August 2019. The programme will target 10 young people who are NEET and/or assessed as being a high risk of reoffending and engage them using various art forms for 5 hours per day over a period of 3 weeks. The programme will conclude with an end performance and a celebration. The overall aim of the programme is to support those young people who are NEET into appropriate training, education or employment.

Enterprise Programme: Alongside Prince's Trust, we are currently in the development stage of writing a 12 week programme aimed at providing young people with the skills and knowledge needed to set up a business. There will be practical and creative elements running through the programme using an 'Apprentice' style approach. We aim to target young people who have been involved in 'County Lines' type offences. There will be the opportunity for young people to progress onto other Princes Trust Programmes at the end. We aim to start this programme in September 2019.

Recr8: We have commissioned Recr8 to deliver 3 sessions of #WHY programme, which is an alternative approach to tackling knife crime by using drama techniques exploring the reasons why young people carry a weapon.

Arts Award: We aim to ensure that in the long-term every young person who becomes involved with the service leaves with an Arts Award accreditation. Arts Award offer a range of qualifications and accreditations that are nationally recognised and can be found on the Regulated Qualification Framework. We are currently aiming to deliver offer 3 awards: Discover (introductory award), Explorer (Entry level 3) and Bronze Art (Level 1 qualification)

Arts Mark Journey: Having had our statement of commitment accepted for the Arts Mark Award, the YOS has a further two years to gather evidence for submission to achieve an Arts Mark accreditation. We are one of a small number of YOTs pursuing this and were pleased to be asked to present on our work at the Criminal Justice Arts Alliance conference and at the ICRD event at the University of Wolverhampton on research in this area.



CASE STUDY: Dylan

Dylan (not his real name) is a 15 year old male who is NEET and currently is not engaging with any services. Initially he engaged positively in his order but towards the end he became reclusive, choosing to spend all his time in his bedroom and refusing to leave the house regardless of what was being offered.

The case manager executed a number of strategies to encourage Dylan out of his bedroom, but with very little success. The case manager was mindful that he was at risk of being breached for non-compliance. This was something that the service wanted to avoid given that the young person had stopped offending for a time and he was only weeks away from completing his order.

Dylan had previously mentioned to his case manager that he enjoyed painting. In response to this, the case manager took a blank canvas to his home and asked him to create something. He said he would be back in a week to check his progress. This conversation took place through Dylan's bedroom door with the case manager at the foot of the stairs.

The case manager returned the following week with very few expectations. To his surprise, Dylan had created a portrait of a clown using his little sister's pastels. Dylan came out of his bedroom and downstairs to have a discussion with the case manager about his creation. This piece was subsequently entered into the Koestler awards. The case manager also learnt that Dylan's grandfather was an artist and had designed a famous movie poster.

Whilst Dylan was still refusing to leave his home, he did continue to produce pieces of art and discussed these with his case manager. This kept the line of communication open and his engagement active at a level that kept him from being breached. Dylan successfully completed his order.

2. Research Context

In 2013 the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance funded a national study to explore the impact of the arts and creative activities in criminal justice settings (Bilby, Caulfield & Ridley, 2013). The report *'Re-Imagining Futures: exploring the process of desistance'* highlighted some interesting learning points:

- Participation in arts activities enables individuals to begin to redefine themselves
- Arts projects facilitate high levels of engagement
- Arts projects can have a positive impact on how people manage themselves during their sentence, particularly on their ability to cooperate with others
- Engagement with arts projects is associated with increased compliance with criminal justice orders and regimes
- The status of arts practitioners as professional artists is highly significant in the success of projects and their impact on participants
- Arts projects provide safe spaces for individuals to have positive experiences and begin to make individual choices
- Showcasing creative work can provide opportunities for people to reconnect with families and friends and is an important aspect of the work.

There are numerous studies that suggest that arts-based interventions can influence the process of desistance, by creating a sense of personal agency (Anderson et al., 2011; Caulfield, Wilkinson & Wilson, 2016; Davey et al., 2015; Henley, 2012), where 'desistance is the process by which people who have offended stop offending (primary desistance) and then taken on a personal narrative (Maruna, 2001) that supports a continuing non-offending lifestyle (secondary desistance)' (Bilby et al., 2013: 13). A recent review of 12 studies on music programmes in prison concluded that they 'are perceived by participating prisoners as a liberating process, which encourages participation and allows for noncoercive personal development' (Kougiali, Einat & Leibling, 2017: 1). It is thought that this is mostly due to increased protective factors, including social support, that arts programmes can provide (Cursley & Maruna, 2015). The new role models found in participants' peers and art facilitators can be a particularly important protective factor (Viggiani et al., 2013).

Winder et al. (2015) suggest that through arts based programmes participants learn to manage their emotions in a safe way and Cartwright (2013) highlights that participation also provides a safe outlet for any negative emotions. A number of studies have found that this positive regulation of emotions through arts participation is linked with increased well-being and decreased anger and aggression (Wilson et al., 2009; Miles & Strauss, 2008; Caulfield, 2015). Henley (2015) also found that music-based projects have other positive impacts, including lowering anxiety levels, reduction in incidents of self-harm, and greater ability for self-expression. The building and maintenance of positive emotions is thought to be crucial in countering stressful experiences (Rutten, 2013). The existing literature suggests that arts-based programmes increase a participants' ability to deal with personal

problems and improve coping mechanisms (Wilson et al., 2009; Henley, 2012; Viggiani et al., 2013; Miles & Strauss, 2008).

Abrahams et al. (2012) noted that the spaces created within arts programmes allowed for social barriers to be broken down. The literature generally makes note of the importance of how participants view the facilitators, with professionalism and personality of the facilitators highlighted as important (Eagle, 2008). The skills shown by facilitators has been argued to be essential in the successful delivery of the programme (McLewin, 2006), with these skills modelling positive leadership to participants (Frogett et al., 2017). Daykin et al. (2014) found that young peoples' levels of engagement were linked with how relevant they deemed the project to be, who seemed to be behind the process, and whether they felt they belonged there for any purposeful reason. When young people had the chance to take ownership of a programme and set their own ground rules then levels of engagement were good (Eagle, 2008).

Studies that take a 'mixed-methods' approach to investigating the value and contribution of the arts in criminal justice allow an understanding of both *if* and *how* the arts can have an impact. For example, Winder et al. (2015) found that through engagement with arts-based activities, participants learnt to foster their emotions in a safe way, and became ready for more formal treatment programmes in prison. Recent research taking a mixed-methods approach in community youth justice settings found that arts programmes can have a positive impact on sentence engagement and engagement with education (Caulfield et al., under review). These studies combined quantitative data to understand *if* any change was happening, with in-depth qualitative interviews to understand *how* this change might be happening, foregrounding the voice and experience of participants.

3. Evaluation Aims

The evaluation approach and the data collection tools were mapped against the key aims of Sandwell's new creative approach in order to understand both *if* and *how* any impact occurred. The primary aim of the evaluation was to understand how far Sandwell's work had an impact on:

- engagement with the YOS
- motivation and aspirations
- YOS staff openness to, and confidence with, using the arts and creativity to deliver youth justice services

The evaluation also sought to understand:

- if there were any changes in beneficiaries' relationships outside the YOS sessions (e.g. with family members, peers, and others)
- if there was any impact on attitudes and behaviours, and well-being
- the relationship between the *impact* and the *process*, and any barriers to success

Impact evaluation: The evaluation team worked with young people to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences and the impact on them, and placed the findings within the appropriate research evidence base and policy-context. While it was not practical or methodologically robust to seek a control group, the evaluation team worked with data routinely collected by the YOS to understand whether any change had occurred in young people's engagement. The evaluation team worked with parents/carers and YOS staff in order to triangulate the findings with young people. The evaluation team also investigated the impact on staff.

Process evaluation: This element focused on understanding how (and how efficiently) the new approach had evolved, and the relationship between this and the outcomes (impact). Qualitative data were collected through interviews (young people, staff, and other stakeholders) about the way the service had been developed, implemented, and managed. This element has helped identify any barriers to success and will help support the continued development of the service.

Most existing research and evaluation studies have looked at the impact of discrete arts programmes with criminal justice settings, with a number of studies focused on community youth justice (e.g. Caulfield et al., under review; Daykin et al., 2013). The new creative programme of work being introduced by Sandwell YOS is innovative in working across the whole Service with a range of arts and creative activities, and therefore no similar evaluation has previously been conducted.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data collection

A. Monitoring data

Data were obtained from the YOS Childview system on young people's:

- attendance at appointments (statutory and non-statutory: including the creative activities, Offending Behaviour Programmes, one-to-one caseworker meetings, educational classes)
- Breaches and written warnings

Programme participants' current attendance, breach, and written warning data were compared to their data prior to introduction of the creative activities.

Attendances at appointments were used as a proxy measure for sentence compliance (statutory and non-statutory appointments: including the music programme, Offending Behaviour Programmes, one-to-one caseworker meetings, educational classes). As Ugwudike (2013) notes, for criminal justice practitioners, concepts of compliance are strongly associated with attendance. Although attendance is not an exact proxy for compliance, non-attendance at YOT appointments has been linked to a high risk of reoffending (Hart, 2011).

B. Survey data

A bespoke survey was designed to capture broader data from parents/carers. The survey asked questions about: young people's involvement in the creative activities; young people's previous experience with creative activities; the impact on parents/carers of seeing the creative outputs; what young people had communicated to parents/carers about their involvement in the creative activities; parents'/carers' understanding of how young people had found their involvement in the creative activities; and any changes in young people observed by parents/carers.

C. Interview data

Interviews were conducted with young people, YOS staff, and parents/carers. The semi-structured interviews asked participants to discuss:

- Young people: what activities they have been taking part in; who they have been working with; what they have enjoyed and what they have not enjoyed; how much input they have had into the activities; anything that could be improved; what they have learned; what they have achieved; what feedback they have received; how they feel; any personal impact; any impact on their interactions and relationships; and their hopes and plans for the future.
- YOS staff: their role; involvement in and awareness of the creative activities; observations of young people's engagement with the creative activities; the support staff have received; their confidence with creative ways of working; any challenges; observations of any impact on young people; and views on the sustainability of the creative activities.
- Parents/carers: young people's involvement in the creative activities; parents' involvement with the creative activities; things that have been going well; things that could be improved;

the impact on young people (feelings, skills, attitudes, behaviours, aspirations); and any impact on relationships.

4.2 Data analysis

Monitoring data were cleaned and processed ready for analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Qualitative data were analysed using a process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Caulfield & Hill, 2018). The first step of analysis consisted of familiarisation with the data via transcription of the recordings to a Word document and reading the transcripts thoroughly. Working through the transcripts line-by-line, the data were coded inductively (i.e. the codes and themes emerge from the data itself rather than applying a pre-existing structure to the data). The iterative process of analysis allowed the coded data to form themes, which were then reviewed against the data and literature.

4.3 Participants

A. Interviews

The creative arts programme that formed the basis of this evaluation engaged young people, staff, parents/carers. Nineteen face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with:

- 9 staff members
- 8 young people
- 2 parents

Originally, five interviews had been planned with staff but nine were conducted in part to compensate for a lack of survey data.

B. Survey data

Three bespoke surveys with parents/carers were conducted. The original evaluation plan set out an intention to conduct 30 surveys, but unfortunately this was not possible (see page 11 of this report where this challenge is discussed). Two of the survey respondents also agreed to be interviewed to explore their experiences in more depth.

C. Monitoring data

Data on 30 young people were received from the YOS from the ChildView system in September 2019. The young people were aged between 13 and 18 years old (average age 14.97 years). 21 were male (70%) and nine female (30%).

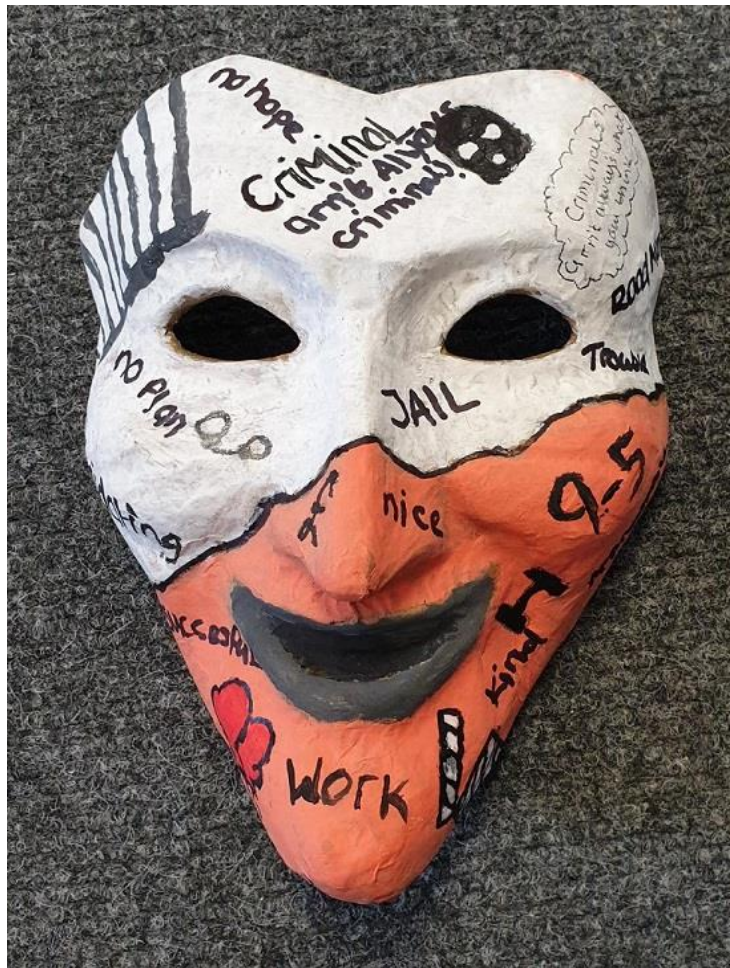
The ethnicity of the young people was as follows: White British = 14; White European = 1; Black African = 5; Black Caribbean = 2; White and Black Caribbean = 1; Other Mixed = 1; Yemini = 1;

Pakistani = 1; Czech = 1; No info recorded = 3. Eleven young people had speech and language difficulties recorded¹.

This group is broadly similar to the profile of young people in contact with the YOS in terms of age, who are aged between 12 and 18 years (average age 14.90 years). In terms of gender, a higher proportion of females took part in the creative programme than are seen in the general Sandwell YOS profile: 147 male (89.63%), 15 female (9.15%) (two unknown, 1.22%)².

4.4 Ethics

A highly trained research team, with considerable experience of conducting research in the criminal justice system and with vulnerable groups, conducted the evaluation. The evaluation was granted ethical approval on 22nd March 2019 by the Faculty of Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Wolverhampton. No data were collected prior to participants' providing fully informed consent. The research team all possess current Enhanced Criminal Record Certificates.



¹ Speech and language concerns identified by a Case Manger are referral to a SALTS worker who then completes an assessment. A report is then produced, which includes recommendations for Case Mangers on how best to work with that young person and any necessary referrals to other specialist agencies

² Note that in terms of the total young people on an order there were duplications due to how they are recorded i.e. if a young person is on remand but as a current order they would be listed twice or where a previous order as not been closed properly. This appears to be the case on 6 occasions (males).

5. Findings

5.1 Monitoring data

Data were obtained from the YOS Childview system on young people's:

- attendance at appointments (statutory and non-statutory: including the creative activities, Offending Behaviour Programmes, one-to-one caseworker meetings, educational classes)
- Breaches and written warnings.

Programme participants' current attendance, breach, and written warning data were compared to their data prior to introduction of the creative activities (see discussion of the limitations of this data set on p. 38). Data were received for 30 young people. However, 13 of these young people had only a one-off arts engagement recorded (all had been offered/opted for one session, and had attended this). Data for these young people was therefore removed from the analysis, giving a total of 17 young people in this section of the analysis (3 female, 14 male).

These young people had between two and 23 arts engagements recorded (average 8.29). The young people attended an average of 6.82 appointments (82.27% of appointments scheduled).

Attendance and compliance: pre- vs. post- creative arts

Of the 17 young people for whom data were analysed, six had a previous sentence for comparison. Where a young person had multiple previous sentences recorded, data from the sentence prior to the sentence with arts involvement were analysed.

- An average of 45.16 contacts scheduled in the previous sentence (min. 21, max. 132). In the previous sentence 85.61% of scheduled contacts were attended³.
- An average of 90.16 contacts scheduled in the current sentence (min. 19, max. 207). In the current sentence 90.02% of scheduled contacts were attended⁴.

The findings above demonstrate an increase in the percentage of contacts attended by young people when taking part in creative arts activities. However, the limited amount of data available for comparison over time means that these findings should not be relied upon. More data are needed to conduct statistical analysis to test for the significance of any findings.

Breach of orders: pre- vs. post- creative arts

Of the 17 young people for whom data were analysed, six had a previous sentence for comparison. Where a young person had multiple previous sentences recorded, data from the sentence prior to the sentence with arts involvement were analysed.

- Three of six (50%) of young people had breached the requirements of their order in their previous sentence.

³ Note that there were an average of 3.16 contacts where the outcome was unknown on the ChildView system

⁴ Note that there was an average of 1 contact where the outcome was unknown on the ChildView system

- One of six (16.66%) young people had breached the sentence where they were engaged in creative arts activities.
- Of the broader group of 17 young people who had engaged with creative arts (2-23 sessions) two had breached the requirements of their order (11.76% - one included in the bullet point above, one in the broader group only).

The findings above demonstrate a reduction in breach of order by young people when taking part in creative arts activities. However, the limited amount of data available for comparison over time means that these findings should not be relied upon. More data are needed to conduct statistical analysis to test for the significance of any findings.

5.2 Interview data

Seven overarching themes emerged from the data analysis, of which three relate to the process of delivering creative activities in a youth justice setting and four relate to impact of the project. The themes are summarised in Table 1. The themes combine findings from the participants, staff and family members, allowing the findings to be considered from the perspective of multiple beneficiaries. The small amount of survey data has been included in this section. The themes are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes

Category		Theme	Sub themes
P r o c e s s	5.2.1	Facilitating engagement in creative arts	Practicalities Young person centred Breaking down barriers
	5.2.2	Staff involvement	Levels of staff engagement Internal communication Staff workload Sustainability
	5.2.3	External partnerships	External partnerships
I m p a c t	5.2.4	Personal impact	Confidence Well-being Attitudes towards creative activities
	5.2.5	Skills development	Creative skills Communication
	5.2.6	Building better relationships through creative conversations	Relationships with staff Relationships with peers
	5.2.7	Generating new opportunities and aspirations	Aspirations Young people's plans for the future

Process

5.2.1 Facilitating engagement in creative arts

Practicalities of engagement – Seven members of staff discussed the necessity of arranging **transport** to pick up and drop off young people at the sessions to facilitate their engagement with the programme. It was felt that without the flexibility to offer this support with travel, many young people would not attend the sessions.

“It’s not that they can’t be bothered to do it, it’s that they can’t be bothered to get there. Once they are there, they always enjoy it.” [Staff 8]

“For a lot of young people, the barrier is travelling and using public transport.” [Staff 7]

Timing was another key factor that affected levels of engagement for the young people and influenced when staff ran certain sessions. Staff expressed how sessions during school hours restricted the engagement of some young people on their caseload and that morning sessions were often particularly challenging for many of the young people they work with, and thus the summer programme, for example, will start late morning:

“We’ve gone with 11.00 – 5.00 in terms of time, because young people don’t get out of bed. That gives us the best opportunity to be able to knock doors and wait.” [Staff 3]

Staff also spoke of the importance of running sessions during evenings, weekends and especially holidays to keep the young people involved in positive activities:

“There was a lot of sessions on during the Easter Break, because that’s when the young people get in trouble, when they have nothing else to do.” [Staff 1]

“I think the gap right now is in providing more evening and weekend things, because that is when these kids are getting into trouble.” [Staff 4]

The flexibility of the session delivery, and ensuring the opportunity is available for all young people was supported by one parent, whose son would not leave the house, so staff brought the arts equipment to the house:

“When he did struggle to leave the house and stuff, they helped him by coming to him, to the house. I think that benefitted him.”

In addition, one parent commented on the importance of YOT staff providing transport to the session due to other family commitments that may otherwise have restricted their ability to engage.

Young person centred – Staff felt it was important that activities centre round the interests of the young people and that they are given the **autonomy** to suggest activities they would like to attend and subsequently were offered a choice of which activities they wished to engage in.

“The projects you have in place need to appeal to the young people. It can’t be forced upon them ... So, it needs to be voluntary, needs to be something they do with their own free will, needs to be something that captures them and interests them.” [Staff 1]

“From what’s being offered at the minute, although there’s much bigger scope to extend on them, I think they’re fantastic because they are things that really meet what the young people want.”
[Staff 5]

Nevertheless, some staff suggested that the offer to young people was not delivered routinely by all staff:

“So for me, with my caseload I offer the opportunities to all the young people, even if I know they’re going to say no, then I still offer it, just to let them know that there are other things available.” [Staff 7]

“I do feel some case managers do filter their young people, they make the decision for that young person, whether or not they think they would like it. So I get a lot of oh I don’t think that’s suitable for Joe Bloggs, and no he wouldn’t be interested in that.” [Staff 3]

Whilst it was important that all young people were provided with opportunities to get involved with creative activities, another important factor for consideration that staff mentioned frequently was **group dynamics** and that these were managed (e.g. according to age, conflicts between young people and high-risk offences) to maximise positive engagement for all young people.

“I think every young person should have the equal opportunities to access something Now whether you’re running a workshop and then have to think about group dynamics, maybe in that capacity you think so and so shouldn’t really come to that workshop with so and so, that can be easily managed, that’s just risk assessing and kind of mapping out who shouldn’t be together.”
[Staff 4]

“We do work with some young people who the concerns are that they may exploit and manipulate younger ones, not being very good influences on them. So we wouldn’t want them to mix continuously in a group for that reason.” [Staff 2]

Breaking down barriers – The process of being involved in creative arts workshops appear to have helped break down various barriers, such as traditional learning environments, with more relaxed and informal settings and engaging in different ways with police officers.

Four members of staff described how the nature of using your hands in creative arts led to young people feeling more comfortable to open up and have an informal conversation. Another member of staff explained how the use of drama allowed them to get a better insight into young people’s knowledge and experiences through their input into the sessions, which could also lead to a more informal group discussion:

“The hands-on thing distracts, gives them a bit of comfort almost, and enables them to talk more openly, it encourages them.” [Staff 9]

“What makes it powerful is, when they’re doing the drama because it’s a character it’s not their story, but the way they kind of an input, they let you in. I was able to say, ‘okay, so what would happen next and what would be the consequences of that, and does everyone else agree with it?’” [Staff 3]

Staff explained how it was important that the creative environment did not resemble classrooms or police interview rooms, particularly when many young people they work with are not engaged with school and learning through more traditional means. Three members of staff spoke about the venue for such activities and they needed to be appropriate for the creative activity, particularly in terms of size and space available to create.

"We all process things differently, we all work in different ways. Especially if you've gone through the school system and you've realised that's just not for you." [Staff 4]

"There is a place for creative arts within our service where young people would have a different way to express themselves rather than just be sat in a room with a practitioner, kind of sat across a table that very much replicates the school setting, or the police interview setting, or a court setting." [Staff 3]

"I've seen in my view what does work, and what doesn't work. Every now and again you do need to change things. We're at a stage now where the traditional interventions we do where you sit in front of a whiteboard, and you see a short film on prison life or something, actually it needs to be a bit more dynamic and having the ability to do these projects creates that environment." [Staff 9]

Finally, one staff member described how engaging in creative arts allowed the barriers to be broken down between young people and individuals in positions of authority:

"...when the young person found out that a real police officer was coming into play the police officer he just wanted to stop. He was like I ain't doing this anymore, ... really negative attitude, and then kind of by the end of the day sat down with that police officer, had pizza with her, fist bumped, and kind of...yeah. The experience of doing that with the police kind of broke the barriers down. I think they stopped seeing the officer as an officer, and started seeing the officer as a person. Because in between filming the scenes they were just having a general chat about music and that as well, so that was quite powerful as well." [Staff 3]

5.2.2 Staff involvement

Levels of staff engagement – Staff who participated in an interview generally approved of the use of creative arts within youth offending teams, particularly when there is a full time lead in place, and their role is more supportive and to facilitate young people to engage in the programme rather than organise and deliver the activities. Staff reported mixed levels of engagement with the programme from colleagues, according to their personal level of interest and time constraints. Six of the staff interviewed referred to how the creative arts programme was being organised by one member of staff, which helped them overcome the main challenge of conflicting work commitments.

"Because obviously in terms of encouraging delivering these individuals to participate in the project, you've still got your other case load to manage and deliver,"

"I think anything that we can engage people in a different way we're always open to considering; I think the reluctance would be from some of the team, in my opinion, if they were required themselves to do the work. But because [he] was organising it, and putting this package forwards, I think it was very much seen as a positive thing because it gives us different avenues to book our young people [on to]." [Staff 5]

Explaining why some staff may be reluctant to engage with the arts, one participant stated that the creative arts project is *“so different to the type of work that we do, the statutory work that we do.”* [Staff 5]

Internal communication – Staff discussed the need for improved communication across the team of both what activities are on offer and the success stories. For those that were interested in the creative arts but not able to attend the meeting due to conflicting commitments, there was a lack of written follow up to share the discussion with staff.

“So, I think after the meeting everybody else could have been sent an update of what was discussed and asked for their input by email.” [Staff 2]

Four members of staff suggested that it would be helpful, for both young people and staff, to see the activities and outcomes, and for the any examples of impact to be highlighted to facilitate staff buy-in and engagement in future projects.

“but I wouldn’t say those success stories have been broadcast to the whole team.” [Staff 2]

“anything that is a new concept to a young person I think they need to kind of see it a couple of times, they need to see other people doing it.” [Staff 4]

With the creative arts opening up conversations and/or providing insights into their learning styles, interests or offending behaviour, thought needs to be given to how this information is then communicated between staff. With case managers often not attending the creative sessions, this knowledge needs to be conveyed.

“they’ll start opening up to us, then we’re able to say to their case manager, that this young person is really struggling at home because mum and dad are fighting all the time, then the case manager can start that conversation.” [Staff 8]

With one member of staff ultimately leading this work, there appears some different perspectives of how the programme aims to be embedded into the service. All staff interviewed had an awareness and understanding of the discrete creative workshops that had been organised. However, there was a lack of coherence when thinking about embedding creative arts into the work of the YOT more generally.

“through consultation with staff, we had a few staff meetings to discuss how we would maybe move forward with adapting the programmes or changing the programmes, not everyone attending those meetings, there was a small core group who do buy into the idea, who are proactive, who do like change, who want to see something in the service – they attended. But there was a general consensus that actually, they haven’t got time to sit down and look through a programme and make something creative...the emphasis was put on myself to do that.” [Staff 3]

Workload - The impact of the creative activities on staff daily workload varied, possibly according to the role and level of involvement with the creative activities. One member of staff who referred young people in reported a reduced workload, whilst another staff member explained the need to manage staff time and capacity carefully, particularly when supporting young people to attend the sessions:

“it gave me more capacity in my work load as I’d diverted sessions I would have completed to another member of staff to facilitate for me.” [Staff 5]

Sustainability – Recommendations were made regarding how to actively involve more staff to help support the sustainability of the programme and also embed creative arts into the team’s every day work:

“I think to make it more sustainable, there would need more staff input from our service.” [Staff 5]

“a permanent role needs to be established in the organisation and it could be classed as a specialism, or so to speak.” [Staff 1]

“if it’s something that can be flexible, well, okay, because I managed to do the art project my case load for example may be reduced for that week I’m doing, or somebody’s going to oversee my case load whilst I’m focusing on the project.” [Staff 4]

Gaining and sustaining momentum of the project is also important. One staff member explained how programme longevity is crucial for the programme to be successful, whilst a second discussed the need for staff to know what to be *“aware of what resources are available.” [Staff 2]*

“By the time you build the interest with the young people because they’ve heard other young people have done it, or their availability is there, they may say no the first time, but actually, 2 or 3 times later, they might be like actually I’d really like to do it now. Sometimes those projects are no longer in place, or we don’t have the availability or capacity...” [Staff 5]

5.2.3 External partnerships

Partnerships with external organisations and professionals emerged as important to the success of the programme delivered. Staff commented on attributes of professionals and how this had a positive influence in the session; for example trusting the young people with expensive equipment:

“it was an adult way of treating a young person, they were given control of a camera which was very responsible, they responded to that by being quite responsible.” [Staff 5]

Another important factor is the variety of professionals that engage with the programme and maximising the opportunity for young people to relate to the professionals.

“...if you’ve ever been to court, you see the same....older gentleman who is the judge, and I don’t think the kids feel that those particular people relate to them, or know or understand their life. They need people that have lived their life as well and delivering the sessions, like ‘look, I know that life, I was that kid, I was you before, but actually look at where I am now, and look at me now trying to help you’. So I feel like they need to get a different mix of people delivering these workshops.” [Staff 4]

“There’s also something in having people from the local area, people that speak like them, look like them, dress like them, know the local places to visit and all of that, I just think it makes it more relatable to the young people.” [Staff 3]

A further advantage of professionals delivering workshops is to show young people that this is a career option if they chose to pursue it and also that they may relate more to that individual than to their case manager trying to deliver a creative session that they are less familiar with:

“So, to have the opportunity to have artists who are working within that area, and it’s their profession, it gives it validation and the young people buy into it more.” [Staff 3]

“They were told how much she was being paid for the day It’s making them think, you know what, there are alternative ways of getting an income.” [Staff 9]

One staff member explained how the funding behind the programme to source professionals and relevant venues and space is important:

“...bringing in qualified people to provide that knowledge they have, which we as general practitioners don’t [have].” [Staff 5]

Consistency of delivery was considered important for the continued delivery of the programme and engagement of young people. Forward planning and creating a calendar of events was suggested as a means to help improve the programme and build stronger relationships with external partners and professionals.

“being able to plan so we can use the same people, and build up that relationship with people.” [Staff 8]

Furthermore, staff discussed linking in with the local community, including university students studying creative arts, for mutual benefit:

“...students who want a bit of work experience, or who want to work in this sector in the future, or are in theatre or education and to see if we could tap into that.” [Staff 3]

“trying to source like up and coming people, so you know like, for example, a photographer, someone who is local in the area so they’ve got the community interest as well, and they’re up and coming so you’re giving them an opportunity as well to have experience in quite a complex, challenging environment for their cv as well, so trying to bring the community together a bit better, by utilizing people in the community.” [Staff 4]

“to have more links within the community with different art links going on, the more we know, the more that we can possibly get involved with.” [Staff 7]

Key findings - **Process**

- Practical issues – such as transport, timing of sessions, and venue – have a large impact on attendance and are clearly being considered well by the YOS. Sessions should be planned around school, offer more provision in school holidays (and for those not in school), avoid early starts, and continue providing support for travel. It is important to avoid traditional classroom environments, which might be unhelpful in engaging young people who may have negative experiences of school.
- The flexible and responsive approach taken by the staff should be commended. However, consideration should be given to the pressures on staff time.
- The young person-led approach to designing the creative arts offer should be commended. However, more work could be done to ensure the whole offer is available to all young people. For example, by working with staff to avoid ‘pre-selecting’ activities for young people.
- Staff are clearly considering the group dynamics and mix, and should be encouraged to continue to consider the potential risk and benefits of bringing together different groups of young people. In particular, considering the impact of peers on the attitudes and behaviour of adolescents.
- The creative arts sessions clearly increased the communication of the young people and there is some indication that stronger bonds have developed between the young people and staff. For a group with relatively high levels of communication difficulties, this is an important finding.
- The evaluation considered the relatively early stages of development of the creative arts offer. As this develops, creating a clear calendar/programme of activities would be beneficial for planning and relationship building.
- Staff are gaining confidence in engaging with the new creative arts approach and having a lead for this work to drive it forward has been vital to the development so far. For some staff, there may be a need to further build their confidence with the creative arts.
- Changing the practice and culture of an organisation takes time – some individuals will champion that change, while others will take longer to adapt. This is usual, but a focus on change management is important to maintain team cohesion and continue to drive change forward.
- The quantitative findings indicate the new approach is increasing staff workload. The data are limited, but this should be monitored.
- Bringing in professional artists/practitioners is helpful to engaging young people. This finding supports previous research on the mutually respectful relationships built through these interactions and how valuable this is to engaging young people in positive activities.
- The links developing with the community are a very positive element of this programme. Continued support should be given to this, acknowledging the time investment needed, and identifying clear progression pathways for young people.

Impact

All staff expressed that the project was worthwhile and had received positive feedback from young people about the creative activities in which they had engaged. Staff shared examples of the impact of the creative activities within youth offending settings; although three staff felt it was too early to describe the impact given the limited number of sessions delivered to date, they did state that they saw signs of potential impact emerging at this point in the programme. Staff perspectives of the impact of creative activities within youth offending settings are discussed under the following subthemes: personal impact; building better relationships through creative conversations; and generating new opportunities and aspirations.

5.2.4 Personal impact

Confidence – When asked if they had noticed any changes in the young people who had taken part in creative activities, five staff commented on improvements in confidence. This included the confidence in their creative skill and ability, in communicating with other people (both staff and peers), and the confidence to try new things.

“I think all my young people have certainly become more confident in that activity area, perhaps even in communication, they’re a bit more confident communicating with other people.” [Staff 1]

“Seeing that young person being able to talk in front of ten people in the room, in front of people he didn’t know, and to articulate himself so well about the work that he did in that art project, I was astounded by it. It just shows that giving him the opportunity to do something that he loves or want to do, really brought him out of his shell, to give him the confidence to be able to do that.” [Staff 7]

Three staff members also explained how young people were proud of their achievements and were confident to share their outputs more widely:

“Yeah, she absolutely loved it, she’s still buzzing. I think she said this morning her photos are on the mantle of her dad’s house, and her nan’s house, so she’s actually got the photos of her from her photography class displayed all around her family and she keeps showing people. So she’s really proud of it.” [Staff 5]

All of the participants spoke about the various skills they gained through participation in the creative activities. Although these skills are discussed in section 5.2.5, here we show how enhancing communication skills helped participants to gain confidence. For example, two of the participants spoke about becoming confident in their interactions with others:

“Yeah, it was good, because normally I don’t like to work with other people, I like to be on my own. It just made me speak to the people more, innit. Because I never used to speak to them, now I speak with them on snapchat and that.” (Young Person 6)

“By talking more, associating other people, having jokes (...) Yeah, because normally I wouldn’t be speaking to them.” (Young Person 4)

One of the participants spoke of his enhanced confidence in communication with YOS staff:

"My communications. A couple of years ago you couldn't have talked to me, I'd have just told you to go away, you feel me? But I'm older, more mature, developed, these lot have, Let's just say, you see YOS? They've helped me get through a lot. All the staff here. All the staff here I trust, we have a friendship, because they've helped me get through a lot of things in life. It's mad." (Young Person 1)

Well-being - All of the participants spoke about the positive impact of the creative activities on their feelings and well-being:

"It was just chilling out and drawing, that was probably the best part. (...) Yeah, it was just chilled out, really." (Young Person 2)

"(...) it was just relaxing and really chill." (Young Person 8)

"Happy for doing something different." (Young Person 4)

"The only thing I can think of is that it's made me more relaxed and less stressed." (Young Person 8)

Two of the participants spoke about how creative activities comfort them, allowing them to focus and take their minds off day-to-day problems:

"I love making videos and everything, so it was like it made me feel better because it took my mind off of things as well, because I was going through a lot at the point, so I was like, I'm with these people, all they want to do is the same thing I want to do right now with this video, so we're going to get it done. I love being around positive people, it's what you need." (Young Person 7)

"Mostly, was just relaxing and chill. It got my mind off of everything else.(...) I: I've been more...dunno...more chilled I guess, before I used to do a lot of things, now, not that I've gone lazy, but I've been more chilled, don't go out as much." (Young Person 8)

Two further participants favoured taking part in creative activities over traditional one-to-one interviews/activities:

"Good and comfortable. (...) I was just comfortable doing it. I'd rather do that than talking to be fair, but I don't mind doing both.(...) I: Yeah, yeah, just do something productive rather than sitting down and doing one to ones, yeah." (Young Person 5)

"It's good for like, because some people don't like sitting down and speaking about things so it's good to express things in a different way. Yeah, it helps in different ways." (Young Person 5)

One participant spoke about a post-creative activity sense of accomplishment that positively influenced his feelings:

"Like I've achieved something. (...) it made me feel better." (Young Person 6)

One of the participants stressed that taking part in the creative activities not only made him feel good, but also kept him from engaging in anti-social behaviour:

"It makes me feel good, it makes me feel joyful. At least I'm not out on the streets doing badness, at least I'm not going out trying to rob a car, or rob somebody, or smacking someone in the face. It keeps me occupied." (Young Person 1)

Finally, two participants pointed out that positive feelings associated with taking part in creative activities extend beyond the duration of the activity:

"Yeah, it lasts definitely. See when I did my university lecture [as a part of creative activities – emphasis added], I was buzzing for a week. I was like yo, I've just done a lecture to everybody, to all these students, mum. They want me to go to university – Wolverhampton University, to do a risk talk and I'm like I've got to check my diary, I'm a busy man [Laughter]." (Young Person 1)

"Yeah, even after it, I was still feeling good, that whole day I was feeling good, and it's rare for me to stay feeling good at least a whole day. I always at least change my mood a couple of times a day when I just think about some things. Because it's hard when you've done so much, it pops into your head. When I'm happy, I'm fine, I just stay out of everything." (Young Person 7)

Attitudes towards creative activities – Although many staff were supportive of using creative approaches, staff mentioned a change in attitudes towards, and consequently levels of engagement with, the arts for both young people and staff. Two staff specifically commented on how young people appeared to be more engaged in the creative sessions compared to traditional routes of engagement:

"What was good about it [creative activity] was that it engaged young people that in the past have not really engaged very well.... In every other session that she's done, she's watching the clock, after half an hour she's wanting to go, she's making excuses, she'll get abusive and leave. But she wouldn't leave after the end of it [photography workshop]. She was there for 5 or 6 hours, really enjoyed it." [Staff 9]

One staff member also explained how the creative activities were more inspirational for both those delivering the sessions and the young people engaged:

"It's like taking a mundane subject that they don't want to know and kind of making it either fun or interesting or inspiring to the young person, I like that because for me myself it's made it into something new and inspiring, if I'm happy delivering it, it's going to have a knock-on effect to the young person." [Staff 7]

Through being aware and/or involved of the creative activities project, some staff reported a change in their attitude towards the use of arts in their work, from recognising what counts as creative activities, to actively wanting to replicate some creative activities in their own sessions.

"I felt that it was confined to painting, sculpting, stuff like that, I'd never considered photography, filming, or music to be an art form, and I think it should be recognized as an art form, so it's changed my mind on that." [Staff 1]

Three staff explained how the creative activities have provided the opportunity for informal staff development of new skills and have enjoyed being able to vary the way in which they work with young people:

“it’s had a positive impact, especially for my professional life, just for me as well, trying new things with young people, I’m always learning and developing, I feel you always need to and need to work in different ways.” [Staff 7]

“it’s opened my eyes into seeing the way that things can be done differently.” [Staff 8]

Staff also commented on the uplifting experience of being involved in the creative activities:

“In my working life, it’s been nice to get some positive outcomes that you wouldn’t have had. It’s nice to think actually, you know what, we’ve impacted on this young man.” [Staff 9]

Most of the participants reported a highly positive experience of engaging with the creative activities:

“I liked them all, I liked them all (all art activities – emphasis added). With everything I do, it’s creative, bear in mind, I’m a musician, and I also did a music-group thing. (...) Everything was good and positive.” (Young Person 1)

“I enjoyed them, innit, anytime I come to YOS, for whatever reason, I have a nice time. Even if I just walk in for an appointment, or for a telling-off, or something, it’s nice.” (Young Person 1)

“It was pretty decent, so I can’t really moan about it, and I enjoyed it, so it’s as simple as it gets.” (Young Person 2)

“It’s just been really good and I learned a lot of things. Just been nice doing something different for a change, because I’ve never done that in my life. It was just nice doing something different.” (Young Person 8)

“I enjoyed it all, it was all good old fun.” (Young Person 5)

One of the participants highlighted that his participation in the creative activities was obligatory:

“There are just things you have to do as part of the order.” (Young Person 3)

However, others engaged in creative activities even though they did not have to:

“They asked me to join the group, when they was doing it, and I said yeah. They picked me up from the house. (...) Yeah, they put it to me, they said I didn’t have to do it, but if I wanted to do it. So I was interested, so I said, yeah, yeah.” (Young Person 6)

Speaking about the overall experience with the creative activities, two participants highlighted that they valued that the project did not resemble school:

“Yeah it was good though, it didn’t feel like you were at school. It didn’t feel boring, you always had something to do.” (Young Person 6)

“Yeah, because I always in education get angry, I can’t deal with it for long, I end up walking out. Because it was a project that we constantly did, I didn’t get bored, or nothing.” (Young Person 6)

Even those participants who expressed feeling reluctant to engage at first, came to engage and value the activity:

"Basically, my case worker, he was like oh yeah, there's a pottery class, do you want to join it? I was like, alright then, cool, I'll join it. Obviously, at first, I was like I don't know, pottery is more for women? But like, I was like I'll give it a go, so I gave it a go." (Young Person 1)

"I thought it (art programme) was going to be, actually, I thought it was going to be like writing and that, but it wasn't, when she explained it, I understood it." (Young Person 6)

Most of the participants highlighted their appreciation for staff explaining the aims and objectives of the creative activities to them:

"He explained them pretty well, he's good with that. (...) He told me how we're going to do it, where we're going to do it and when, the people who were going to be there, stuff like that." (Young Person 2)

"They told me and they gave me a leaflet to tell me about it." (Young Person 4)

The possibility of choosing from various types of activities was highly appreciated:

"We had like a questionnaire. And everyone who comes in filled it out with what they like doing in their own time and stuff. And I like art, so I put art on there. Yeah, yeah. They showed us some activities, we chose a few and narrowed it down. (...) Yeah, yeah, they just said like...I chose what to do, and they helped me to do it, if you know what I mean." (Young Person 5)

"Yeah, I had a choice of nail art, upcycling, photography, some other one...I don't know the rest. But I picked this one." (Young Person 6)

Young people reported that they had a lot of choice and ownership in deciding which creative activities to pursue, and that staff supported them in these choices:

"I had a choice, like. [Case worker] gave me lots of different options. I just chose to do that because I like doing music, and the other one with [case worker], it's something I hadn't done before and I wanted to try it." (Young Person 8)

"Yeah, we just thought of like...I could have done a mask, I could have done anything. So yeah. I said yeah I'd do a mask, and do like two sides of a person." (Young Person 5)

"She [case worker – emphasis added] knew I liked art and music and that, she talked to [another case worker] and he asked me to do it. (...) They didn't really have to be explained, it was simple and easy." (Young Person 8)

5.2.5 Skills development

Discussing the impact of the arts programme, parents commented on how engaging with the arts at home had helped their children to learn new skills and manage emotions:

"I think he gets angry and stuff, so like I think it [doing the art] has helped him stay calm."

"He learnt how to use acrylic paints and stuff which he hasn't before."

"Yes, he told me he had been learning to write lyrics, and learning how to sing and all those things. He likes it."

Creative skills - Most participants did not have extensive previous engagement with creative activities, and emphasised a variety of new artistic skills acquired through the programme including photography, editing, drawing, painting and sewing:

"Photography, I'm a model, I do modelling, so a photographer wasn't a problem for me, obviously you're taking shots behind the camera instead of the front of the camera, you learned to edit it, to do it yourself, everything. With photography, the editing is hard, you can do photoshop and that, but you don't want that, because you want things to look natural for me it's just adding a little bit of colour to it." (Young Person 1)

"Yeah, it was a small group, a lady came, she was actually nice. She was learning us how to use the cameras innit, like different angles, different lighting, how to use the cameras, you know, how to take a decent photograph. And then, also she showed us how to edit as well. Not just the cameras, the editing as well." (Young Person 6)

"Using different pulls to draw with." (Young Person 2)

"No, it's just painting, drawing, so there's a lot of skills to be learned, like with the mask and stuff." (Young Person 5)

"Probably just new skills. I never knew how to sew before. I'd do it again. I'd never done it before, so I learned how to use a sewing machine." (Young Person 8)

For one participant, the impact of creative activities programme was that he has learned how to be patient:

"The only thing I've probably learned from that is patience." (Young Person 8)

One participant described how the programme had helped him become more organised and keep appointments:

"One of them life skills is keeping to appointments, you feel me, say you're at work, and you have a job and an appointment, say you're late to your work...what I say is if you can be late to your YOS appointment then you can be late to your job, and that ain't on, because if you're late every day to your job, your boss can fire you, innit?" (Young Person 1)

Communication - Participants recognised that taking part in the creative activities had helped develop their communication with others:

"Now I can relate to people more, I can see their point of view. If someone talks to me, I can say I can relate to you." (Young Person 1)

Developing communication skills helped one of the participants to understand others' points of view:

"I improved in communication as well, but learned a bit of understanding about that there's always two sides of someone, it isn't always just one." (Young Person 5)

5.2.6 Building better relationships through creative conversations

Relationship with staff - Six of the eight staff interviewed explained how their relationship with the young people they work with had improved because of their engagement with creative activities. They highlighted how being involved in the creative activities has helped young people to see the role of staff differently; in particular, that staff were not solely there to discipline them but rather help them to upskill and flourish:

"The main difference is that the young people see us as a more positive figure, we're not the system, we're not police, we're not social workers, we're people who actually address problems and give them new opportunities. My three cases clearly see now that there's a lot more to us than telling them off for bad behaviour." [Staff 1]

Staff also went on to describe the impact of the improved relationship whereby staff were able to develop a better understanding of the young people through more open and relaxed conversations about their life, offence, knowledge and/or motivation, which staff were then able to utilise to better assess risks and provide support for the young people.

"I actually learned a lot more about her, she opened up a lot more about her past issues." [Staff 6]

"What was great for me as a practitioner, that was kind of giving me insight into how kind of entrenched this young person was, because of the language he was using, and the kind of his knowledge around the operational side of setting up county lines." [Staff 3]

"He really struggled with it [pottery] and he gave up ... The reason he gave up was because he doesn't like failing. ... That gave us the opportunity to talk to him about the fact that there actually isn't anything wrong with failure ... It was a way of learning a little bit more about him, what makes him motivated and what doesn't, and to work with him." [Staff 9]

One staff member described how the relationships had continued beyond the creative sessions, and that young people will now *"openly come to me and discuss things with me."* [Staff 7]

Speaking about the difficulties of engaging young people in a *"boring classroom"*, three staff explained how the environment in the creative sessions facilitated more in-depth and engaged conversations with the young people:

"...on the art project some young people managed to talk more, felt comfortable ... it is well worth it because it is helping them talk, it is building relationships, which would otherwise take a long time in this room." [Staff 1]

"He's talked about the impact of his offending has had on him and on others, to sit down and do a session discussing it with him would be really difficult, but to do it in his music has opened up that discussion really well." [Staff 5]

Relationships with peers - Finally, staff also commented on improved relationships between young people as a result of the small group activities, including changing perceptions of peers and the opportunity for young people to share their advice having experienced different parts of the youth offending system:

"This young person who had just come out of prison said, no if you're going to go to prison, this is the way you do it, you behave yourself, keep your head down and this young person took it on because this young man would listen to someone who's been to prison compared to me. So that was a really effective piece of work." [Staff 1]

5.2.7 New opportunities and aspirations

Aspirations - Staff felt that some young people *"are aspiring to be something lower than what they could achieve"* [Staff 8], but recognised the value of the creative arts programmes in raising these aspirations. Six staff commented on the ability of creative activities to: provide new opportunities that many of the young people they work with have never experienced or considered previously; instil confidence to try new activities; and generate new aspirations for the future when young people enjoy and recognise that they are good at arts-based activities.

"They've tried something they probably haven't tried before, or you know what, they've tried something that they wouldn't have had the opportunity to do before. Even if they say no, I think it's really important to help them have that confidence in trying things." [Staff 7]

"He'd talked about attending evening college to study electrical installation, because that was the route his father had gone down and he would follow that. He's actually changed his mind and is enrolling to study art in September. So again that's a direct reaction to a couple of hours with a graffiti artist where he was praised for what he did." [Staff 9]

Staff also spoke of creative activities changing the future direction of young people. In the first instance, as described in the quote above, it changed future career aspirations. Staff also commented on how creative activities helped provide young people with means to use their time more constructively, for example, providing an interest in positive alternatives that may steer these young people away from re-offending.

"...it's something that will stop them developing criminal ways, rather than being on the road, they'll say you know what, I'm going to do more photography." [Staff 1]

Similarly, such activities can provide the young people with skills that can be used to engage with opportunities outside of the youth offending service.

"...there was a discussion around the fact that the church needed a photographer to do portrait stuff and you know, just to be in and around the church to take photographs. He told them he'd done a photography course, and he'd like to do it. So, you know, a real positive outcome from doing that." [Staff 9]

Young people's plans for the future - Most participants spoke about how taking part in the creative activities had prompted them to think about their future in a positive way. Participation appears to have opened up opportunities for young people to reconsider the direction their life was taking. One participant, for example, highlighted his desire to open a business:

"Yeah, I'm planning to open up my own business, designing shoes and stuff. (...) Yeah, I want to take that [business idea – emphasis added] forward. Yeah, it's pushed me a lot more, yeah." (Young Person 5)

In addition, participants spoke about how making changes in their lives requires time and persistence. One participant recognised the importance of patience in regards to his plans for future:

"I'm gradually just starting to...you can't always do it at once, it takes time doesn't it? I'd like to have my own shoe company, learn customs and stuff." (Young Person 5)

Two participants spoke about a desire to return to education:

"I'd carry on and go uni. And then take off from there." (Young Person 1)

"Next year, I'm going to finish my level-3 course, I'm doing sports level 3. I finished this year, got another year next year, after I do that I'm going to be a personal trainer. The plan is then just to get a house, buy a house, buy a car, settle down and carry on making music and everything." (Young Person 8)

There are many factors that may affect the decision to return to education. Participants spoke of some challenges faced by them in that regard. One participant spoke of the need to work on Maths and English in order to be able to return to education:

"I'm trying to get into education, going to college, I'm in my second year when I go back. (...) Maths and English. I need to do them, as I've got none." (Young Person 6)

Three participants spoke about employment, two outlining how much they valued work (one was in work, one was struggling to secure a job). One participant viewed participation in the creative activities as giving him experience that can be used while looking for employment:

"Yeah, if you like doing the activity and want to take it up as a job, then you've got it on your record, innit, to say that you've done it before, you've got some experience." (Young Person 6)

Three participants spoke of the creative activities providing a focus away from re-offending and helping them to reflect on their past behaviours:

"Yeah, because obviously, it's occupying your brain, so obviously, instead of doing stupid shit when you're bored, at least then you're doing something with your whole day, you get me. So you're not offending, you're not doing stupid shit." (Young Person 6)

Overall, most of the participants would like to continue to engage in arts activities beyond the duration of the project and felt hopeful and optimistic in regards to their future:

"Everything just to go well, I want to keep on the videos and everything, I'm still going to do that. I hope I can make a couple of films in the future. I don't really like acting, but I know I'm going to get into it, it's just something, I've always done videos so I know it's going to go into that kind of thing, I'm not hoping that it doesn't, I'm hoping that it does, I'm hoping to get like as far as possible as I can, but I've just got to put in the work." (Young Person 7)

It appeared that the parents did not always fully understand or remember all the activities that were taking place at the YOT, *"I don't know what they are doing there, if it is working or not"* but nonetheless were glad that their children were engaged. Both parents were supportive of the use of creative arts within their child's engagement with the YOT and encouraged them to take part in

sessions that were available and that they enjoyed. One parent explained how this opened up options for her son who struggled with school work:

“when [staff member] was talking about how he could use his art to make money and he could sell it and stuff like that, I think that did make his ears stand up a bit, it did get him thinking about it. Even if school ain’t an option because he struggles, he could still use art or something like that to do well.” (Parent 1)

At a basic level, one parent explained how she thought the arts programme was successful in providing something for the young people to do.

“It’s because of the timetable. If they set something up for them it will keep them busy. That’s what I think, sometimes it will help them in the sense of talking to them.” (Parent 2)

Key findings - **Impact**

- There have been improvements in confidence, including confidence in creative skill and ability, confidence in communicating with other people (both staff and peers), and the confidence to try new things.
- Young people’s aspirations for education and work are being raised.
- There have been improvements in well-being, reported both during and after the creative activities.
- There is some evidence of higher levels of engagement with creative activities, compared to traditional YOS activities.
- Young people have enjoyed the activities, which is likely to have a positive impact on levels of engagement as some of the barriers to engagement have been removed.
- From a staff perspective, there is clear evidence of impact on the young people. However, the interviews for this evaluation were conducted early in the process and staff will need more time to observe the impact.
- Young people valued having choice about the activities on offer.
- Young people have developed a range of new skills, including both practical skills and personal skills (such as increased patience).
- Staff reported improved relationships with young people, facilitated by the creative activities.
- There has been an impact of staff, with some staff reporting their own development through engagement with creative activities. In particular some staff have enjoyed learning new skills and seeing a different way of working.

6. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

6.1 Summary and discussion

Summary of findings

The introduction of a new approach to working with young people is already showing evidence of success. The energy, vision, and innovation of Mike Botham and Chad Smith should be commended.

The findings from this evaluation demonstrate an increase in the percentage of contacts attended by young people and a reduction in breach of orders by young people when taking part in creative arts activities. However, the limited amount of data available for comparison over time means that these findings should not be relied upon. With such a small data set it is entirely possible that one or two additional cases could have a large impact on the overall figures. More data are also needed to be able to conduct robust statistical analysis to test for the significance of any findings.

It is important to highlight that young people had around double the number of contacts scheduled during the creative arts sentence (an average of 46 contacts in the previous sentence, and an average of 90 contacts scheduled during the sentence that included creative arts). It is unclear if this is likely to be a typical situation, or if this is skewed by the small number of young people with data available on previous sentences for comparison. Nonetheless, it is impressive that young people's engagement increased even with such an increase in scheduled contacts. This represents a significant investment of time from the young people and the YOS.

The qualitative interview findings demonstrate that young people and staff have observed improvements in young people's engagement, confidence, well-being, and aspirations. Young people and staff have developed new skills. Relationships between young people and staff have become more open. The YOS have taken the time to ensure the activities are young-person led, and take account of practical concerns that can have a large impact on engagement. The findings of the process evaluation element of this report are intended to help the YOS build upon the successes achieved so far and have been translated into recommendations in the sections below.

Discussion of findings

These results build upon previous research on the impact of music in criminal justice. For example, that young people are engaging with the creative activities more than with traditional YOS activities (Caulfield et al., under review). As some of the young people noted, this is in part because the activities do not resemble formal school environments. Many young people and adults involved in the criminal justice system have had negative experiences of formal educational and traditional programmes can be too similar to these experiences, and therefore limit meaningful engagement (Caulfield, 2014).

The finding that there have been improvements in young people's self-reported well-being adds to the research evidence-base by addressing Daykin et al.'s (2013: 207) point that "Further research is warranted in relation to music outcomes, particularly personal growth, education and mental well-being for young people in specific justice settings." There is a wide literature exploring the link between mental health and well-being and offending behaviour. Problems with mental health and well-being are associated with increased risk of reoffending in those in contact with the criminal

justice system (Caulfield, 2016; Ministry of Justice, 2009). The positive regulation of emotions has been linked to increased well-being and decreases in anger and aggression through participation in arts-based projects (Wilson et al., 2009; Miles & Strauss, 2008). The calming effect of participating in arts and creative programmes has been reported in previous research (Caulfield, 2014) and is thought to be – at least in part – attributable to the absorbing nature of the work (Wilson et al., 2009). Nugent and Loucks (2011) and Blacker and Watson (2008) suggest that the arts can provide an effective way of dealing with anger and aggression, a trait often linked with antisocial and criminal behaviour. Participation in creative programmes has been shown to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for mental health and well-being, including social support (Cursley & Maruna, 2015).

Previous research has suggested that for many people in contact with the criminal justice system, taking part in a creative programme in prison may be the first time they have felt a sense of achievement, and that this is related to increases in confidence (Caulfield et al., 2016). Aspiring to achieve, and succeeding, is also associated with well-being (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). Having aspirations treated seriously and supported is particularly important as it is viewed as central to achieving lasting change in offender populations (HMI Probation, 2016). However, when aspirations are increased, it is important to ensure that opportunities to realise these aspirations are available. Nugent and Schinkel (2016: 575) warn that ‘In the face of the strain created by their inability to achieve their aspirations, they (ex-offenders) might also return to....crime.’

This evaluation has identified that positive and mutually respectful relationships have formed through the creative arts. This supports existing evidence that relationships forged between programme facilitators and participants increase participants’ social supports (Caulfield et al., under review; Cursley & Maruna, 2015) and provide participants with new positive role models (Viggiani et al., 2013). The literature generally makes note of the importance of how participants view the facilitators, with professionalism and personality of the facilitators highlighted as important (Eagle, 2008). Increased confidence is linked with a more positive, constructive use of time and associated with integration into education (Adams, 2012; Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016; Viggiani et al., 2013). It is interesting to note that staff were generally very conscious of the improved relationships and having a better understanding of young people, but the young people were less focused on this. This adds support to previous research about the use of creative activities a tool/process by which staff can engage with young people better (Meaby, 2019).

It is clear that a significant amount of energy in developing this programme has come from the YOS manager and the ISS case worker. The impact of this is apparent in this report. However, the team now need to consider sustainability, in terms of funding but also in terms of support to drive the creative arts programme. The new creative arts approach represents significant change in working practices, and this takes time to embed. It is clear from the findings here that the approach is developing well, and many staff are engaged. To develop further, continued thought should be given to staff training and engagement to manage this cultural shift: this might be in the form of confidence building; and/or focus on developing a clear understanding of the evidence and success stories to support the approach so that staff understand the rationale and reasoning. Changing the practice and culture of an organisation takes time – some individuals will champion that change, while others will take longer to adapt. This is normal, but a focus on change management is important to maintain team cohesion and continue to drive change forward. We recommend

producing a change management plan, following an appropriate change management model (for example, the ADKAR model of change management: Hiatt, 2006). This does not need to be time consuming, but will help consolidate the energy already driving the change. As staff across the YOS become more engaged with the creative arts approach, it would be useful to consider appointing a deputy-lead for creative arts, or perhaps different leads for the various strands of this work, with clear responsibilities. Providing staff with this level of ownership around the work will have multiple benefits: it will reduce some of the reliance on the existing leads for this work; it will help engage staff more fully in the approach; and it will ensure that enough expertise is held within the team should any staff changes or staff absences occur.

Related to staff engagement with - and ownership of - the creative approach, it would be useful to develop and share a clear calendar of activities. It may be useful for subsequent versions of this calendar to be developed by other members of the team to develop their sense of ownership.

The young person-led approach to designing the creative arts offer was apparent in this evaluation and the value of this is supported by previous research by Eagle (2008) who identified that when young people had the chance to take ownership of a programme and set their own ground rules then levels of engagement were good. Indeed, it is vital to ensure that programmes targeted at those involved in the criminal justice system are able to engage the different groups they may be working with, by matching the style of programme delivery to the participants' needs – this concept is termed 'responsivity' (Antonowicz & Ross, 1994). There is clear evidence of this here, and this could be further developed by planning possible progression routes through the creative arts for young people. The next stages of development of the work should therefore review the creative arts offered and potentially refine the offer to accommodate progression. We recommend that progression routes are thought of both in terms of contact with the YOS, but also beyond that. This latter point will need continued work to further develop (local) relationships with external organisations, and the YOS team should be mindful about the demands of this, the boundaries of their remit, and what other organisations might be able to offer to support this. There is evidence that some thought has already been given to this, and we encourage it to be a continued focus with multiagency partnerships considered.

A final point relates to the factors over which the YOS may not have control. If, for example, a change in policy meant that the numbers of young people in contact with the YOS rose significantly, the YOS may struggle to continue to develop and deliver this innovative creative approach. We urge key decision makers in the Youth Justice Partnership Board and the Youth Justice Board to consider how this work could be supported in that eventuality, so that the progress to date is not lost.

Notes on the data

Attendance at YOT appointments was measured as a proxy for sentence compliance and engagement. Although attendance is not an exact proxy for compliance, non-attendance at YOT appointments has been linked to a high risk of reoffending (Hart, 2011). However, it is important to note that attendance does not necessarily imply full compliance. Robinson and McNeill (2008) distinguish between 'formal' and 'substantive' compliance, with examples of formal compliance being attendance at appointments or placements, and substantive compliance being active engagement and cooperation. While the quantitative findings presented in this current research look at 'formal' compliance - as attendance data are routinely collected by the YOT and were

available to the research team - the qualitative findings do provide some insight into 'substantive' compliance.

The general level of attendance at contacts is higher than we have seen in our research with other YOSs (Caulfield et al., under review). This is likely to be due to the work that Sandwell YOS has done over the last three years focused on increasing engagement. As noted in the most recent inspection report 'The YOS had focused a lot of its work on engaging the child or young person and giving them every opportunity to comply' (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2018:19).

It is important to highlight the limitations of the quantitative data presented here. The data were collected on young people who had a wide variety of creative experiences, both in terms of type of experience and the number of sessions they were offered/they requested. It would be unrealistic to suppose that engagement with a one-off creative arts activity would have a lasting impact on an individual. Therefore, the analysis focused on those young people taking part in a more sustained programme of creative arts activity. There may also be some inaccuracies with the quantitative data presented for analysis in this evaluation and it may therefore be useful for the evaluation team to do some focused work with the YOS around the recording of young people's engagement with creative activities. At this stage in the development of the approach this means that there is not enough data to utilise robust statistical techniques to demonstrate whether any changes are statistically significant, but the trend is a positive one.

6.2 Conclusion

This evaluation explored Sandwell Youth Offending Service's new creative approach to working with young people. The evaluation investigated how far the approach had an impact on:

- attendance and engagement with the YOS
- motivation and aspirations
- YOS staff openness to, and confidence with, using the arts and creativity to deliver youth justice services.

The evaluation also sought to understand:

- if there were any changes in beneficiaries' relationships outside the YOS sessions (e.g. with family members, peers, and others)
- if there was any impact on attitudes and behaviours, and well-being
- the relationship between the *impact* and the *process* of implementing this new creative way of working, and any barriers to success.

The evaluation took a mixed method approach, ensuring that the voice and experience of participants and staff were heard, in order to understand not just if the programme had an impact, but how that impact might have occurred. The findings from this evaluation demonstrate an increase in the percentage of contacts attended by young people when taking part in creative arts activities and a reduction in breaches of order by young people when taking part in creative arts

activities. However, the limited amount of data available for comparison over time means that these findings should not be relied upon.

The qualitative interview findings demonstrate that young people and staff have observed improvements in young people's engagement, confidence, well-being, and aspirations. Young people and staff have developed new skills. Relationships between young people and staff have become more open. The YOS have taken the time to ensure the activities are young-person led, and take account of practical concerns that can have a large impact on engagement. It is important to share these stories of successful engagement. The findings of the process evaluation element of this report are intended to help the YOS build upon the successes achieved so far.

There are promising signs of impact and future research should continue to measure this, and to explore the experience of developing the new creative approach, and how young people and staff experience this. Bilby et al. (2013) called for more 'longitudinal research, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods' and this need remains. Future evaluation should seek to access follow-up data from Sandwell YOS to explore whether improved attendance was sustained as well as the successful completion of court orders. It would also be beneficial to look at the longer term outcomes of the young people (for example, educational engagement and reoffending data).

6.3 Recommendations

The introduction of a new, creative approach to working with young people is already showing evidence of success. The energy, vision, and innovation of Mike Botham and Chad Smith in particular should be commended. Introducing a new way of working with young people across the YOS is a significant cultural change for the organisation and it has therefore been important to evaluate the impact and process at this stage of the journey. The recommendations below are derived from the evaluation findings and are intended to help the YOS build upon the successes achieved so far and work towards sustainability.

Sandwell Youth Offending Service

- Continue to evaluate the impact of the creative approach. In particular by quantitatively measuring young people's engagement, collecting data on longer-term outcomes, and qualitatively exploring young people's experiences
- Acknowledging that cultural change in organisations takes time, consider implementing a model of change management to build on the staff engagement achieved so far. This might include a programme of one-to-one work with YOS staff and an external creative arts facilitator to further build knowledge and skills
- Continue to share evidence of the value of creative work with staff and partners - including the findings from this report – and continue to share the good practice, and challenges faced, with the sector through a 'good practice guide'
- Consider identifying a deputy lead for this area of work and/or thematic leads to ensure the work is a) sustainable long-term; and b) to facilitate greater ownership over the approach across the organisation
- Consider the balance of creative input from YOS staff and outside organisations, and how the overall creative offer can be refined and placed into a clear calendar of activities

CASE STUDY: Lexi

Lexi (not her real name) is a 17 year old female who has been engaging in arts related activity whilst complying with her Community Order at Sandwell YOS.

Lexi is NEET and historically has struggled with pre 16 education and has never voluntarily applied for or engaged with training courses.

Lexi engaged in a photography workshop during the Easter holidays as part of the Creative Careers week. Initially she was reluctant to be involved in the workshop and could not see how photography could be used to express herself. Her only experience would have been selfies with her friends.

Lexi was clearly captivated by the workshop and instantly began following the photographer on social media. She began regularly talking about her photography experience to others. This led to becoming interested in other arts and creative activities/interventions. She participated in Sandwell YOS Summer Arts Programme, co-creating a piece of multimedia live theatre that was performed at Smethwick Police Station.

As a result of her exposure to various art forms, particularly photography, Lexi asked for support to apply for a photography course at a local college. She was excited by the thought of attending training for the first time in her life. Unfortunately, the college she applied for declined her application for the course based on the needs outlined in her Education, Health, and Care plan (EHCP).

Although Lexi views this as rejection, her determination to continue her arts journey has led to her ambition to complete the Silver Arts Award by organising a photographic exhibition showcasing work she is going to produce based on her journey within the care system.

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