

'It's not just music, it helps you from inside': Mixing methods to understand the impact of music on young people in contact with the criminal justice system

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‘It’s not just music, it helps you from inside’: Mixing methods to understand the impact of music on young people in contact with the criminal justice system

Abstract

In response to some of the criticisms of previous research into the arts in criminal justice, this paper presents findings from research with a music programme run by a Youth Offending team (YOT). Data was collected on the attendance of 42 participants at YOT appointments - matched against a comparison group - and measures of change over time in musical development, attitudes and behaviour, and well-being. Participants who completed the music programme were statistically more likely to attend YOT appointments than a comparison group. There were statistically significant improvements in participants’ self-reported well-being and musical ability over the course of the project. Effect sizes reached the minimum important difference for quantitative measures. To understand not just if, but how, any impact was achieved, and to ensure the voice of the young people was heard, the quantitative elements of the research were complemented and extended by in-depth interviews with 23 participants.

Keywords

Music, Youth Offending team, mixed-methods, well-being

Introduction

Within the criminal justice system in England and Wales, Youth Offending teams (YOTs) work with children aged 10-17 years who find themselves in trouble with the law. YOTs are statutory, multi-agency, community based teams aiming to work with children to stay away from crime. Statutory YOT partners include local authorities, police, probation, and health. YOTs operate at a local level with national oversight, standards, and monitoring through Youth Justice Board (YJB).

YOT practitioners work with children to understand their needs and risk and create individualised plans that seek to address their offending behaviour. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 lays out statutory requirements for YOTs, and the YJB (2019) emphasises that YOTs must take a strengths-based and pro-social approach to youth justice with dynamic and on-going review of a child’s needs. Children are allocated a single case manager and individualised sentence plans involve a range of statutory and non-statutory activity, depending on the needs, risk, and interests of the child. This might include offence-related programmes, one-to-one caseworker meetings, educational classes, community activities, and attendance at these sessions is electronically recorded by YOT caseworkers. Attendance and compliance are monitored and, if appropriate,

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3 action taken for non-compliance¹. Staff and activities are expected to encourage and support
4 compliance.
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7 Birmingham YOT runs a music programme for children aged 10-17 years in contact with their
8 service. The project is open to any child in contact with the YOT. Referrals are made by a child's
9 YOT caseworker, where a child is seen to have a musical talent and/or interest in music. The
10 music programme then forms part of the child's individualised sentence plan. The aims of the
11 programme are to: develop the creative, expressive and musical ability of children and young
12 people; improve children and young people's confidence and well-being; and improve the level
13 of compliance and successful completion of court orders amongst project participants.
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17 Sessions run on a one-to-one basis between the music leader and child - with their caseworker
18 present where appropriate - typically in one two-hour session per week over a twelve week
19 period. The programme is run in a professional studio space near central Birmingham and
20 children can work on a variety of music-making activities, ranging from production skills and
21 composition to performance skills and music tuition.
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24 25 26 **Research Context** 27

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29 There is significant evidence that participation in the arts increases the confidence and social
30 skills of those in contact with the criminal justice system (Anderson et al, 2011; Baker & Homan,
31 2007; Bilby et al, 2013; Bruce, 2015; Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008;
32 Loucks & Nugent, 2009; van Maanen, 2010). The improvement of proficiency with a musical
33 instrument in particular has been found to improve self-confidence in performance and rehearsals
34 (Cursley & Maruna, 2015). Increased confidence is linked with a more positive, constructive use
35 of time and associated with integration into education (Adams, 2012; Cheliotis & Jordanoska,
36 2016; Viggiani et al, 2013). Indeed, a number of studies have found that participation in arts
37 programmes while in contact with the criminal justice system directly increases motivation and
38 engagement with education (Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; Wilson et al, 2009; Anderson & Overy,
39 2010). Winner & Cooper (2000) suggest that participating in the arts uses cognitive processes
40 such as problem solving and close observation, which then make it easier to apply these skills in
41 other areas of learning in the future, such as formal education. Miles & Strauss (2008) argue that
42 the mechanisms and processes behind participating in the arts can increase capability to learn and
43 can therefore help develop important life skills for use after release.
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49 ¹ When a child fails to attend a statutory appointment, without an acceptable reason, they are given a written warning,
50 which 'should be followed by the convening of a Compliance Panel chaired by a manager within the YOT, with the
51 case manager, child, parent or carer and any other relevant people invited. Compliance Panels aim to address any
52 barriers to engagement and assist the child to meet the requirements of their court order. Where two formal warnings
53 are given within a twelve-month period and a further unacceptable failure to attend takes place, breach action should be
54 initiated within five working days, or two working days in the case of a child assessed as posing a high risk of serious
55 harm to others...Breach action can also be initiated after only one or two incidences of failure to comply, if this is a
56 serious breach of the requirements of the order such as an act of violence (Youth Justice Board, 2019: Section 2.25).
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4 There is evidence that arts based intervention within criminal justice settings can foster a process
5 of self-evaluation (Caulfield & Wilkinson, 2016; Davey et al, 2015; Silbler, 2005), which has
6 been found to have a positive impact on self-concept (Baker & Homan, 2007; Berson, 2008;
7 Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016; Henley, 2012). This process of self-evaluation can be viewed as
8 contributing to secondary desistance (Maruna & Farrall, 2004) where “Desistance is the process
9 by which people who have offended stop offending (primary desistance) and then taken on a
10 personal narrative (Maruna, 2001) that supports a continuing non-offending lifestyle (secondary
11 desistance)” (Bilby, Caulfield, & Ridley, 2013:13). For example, the Changing Tunes music
12 project for ex-prisoners was found to enable participants to see themselves primarily as musicians
13 and individuals who have responsibility and a voice in their own future, and not solely ex-
14 offenders (Cursley & Maruna, 2015). Anderson et al (2011) also found evidence that involvement
15 in arts-based programmes enables participants to redefine their self-image. The literature suggests
16 that arts-based interventions create a sense of personal agency which has a direct influence on
17 desistance. As a result of processes of self-evaluation and change in self-concept, attitudinal and
18 behavioural changes often arise (Bruce, 2015).
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24 Winder et al. (2015) suggest that through arts based programmes participants learn to support
25 their emotions in a safe way and Cartwright (2013) highlights that participation also provides a
26 safe outlet for any negative emotions. A number of studies have found that this positive
27 regulation of emotions through arts participation is linked with increased well-being and
28 decreased anger and aggression (Wilson et al, 2009; Miles and Strauss, 2008; Caulfield, 2015).
29 Henley (2015) also found that music based projects have other positive impacts, including
30 lowering anxiety levels, reduction in incidents of self-harm, and greater ability for self-
31 expression. The building and maintenance of positive emotions is thought to be crucial in
32 countering stressful experiences (Rutten, 2013). The existing literature suggests that arts-based
33 programmes increase a participants’ ability to deal with personal problems and improve coping
34 mechanisms (Wilson et al, 2009; Henley, 2012; Viggiani et al, 2013; Miles & Strauss, 2008).
35 Newman (2002) also suggests that participation in the arts increases protective factors and
36 reduces risk factors.
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41 The relationships forged between programmes facilitators and participants have been discussed
42 by Cursley and Maruna (2015), who found that these relationships increase participants’ social
43 supports. These relationships also provide the participants with new positive role models in their
44 peers and the facilitators (Viggiani et al, 2013). Henley (2012) remarked on the high levels of
45 trust that were built between facilitators and staff. In a similar vein Abrahams et al (2012) noted
46 that the spaces created within the programmes allowed for social barriers to be broken down. The
47 literature generally makes note of the importance of how participants view the facilitators, with
48 professionalism and personality of the facilitators highlighted as important (Eagle, 2008). The
49 skills shown by facilitators has been argued to be essential in the successful delivery of the
50 programme (McLewin, 2006), with these skills modelling positive leadership to participants
51 (Frogett et al, 2017). Daykin et al (2014) found that young people’s levels of engagement were
52 linked with how relevant they deemed the project to be, who seemed to be behind the process,
53 and whether they felt they belonged there for any purposeful reason. When young people had the
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3 chance to take ownership of a programme and set their own ground rules then levels of
4 engagement were good (Eagle, 2008).
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7 Daykin et al (2017: 955) suggest that “music-making led by professional musicians can serve as a
8 personal and collective resource for young people in justice settings”. Daykin et al.'s (2013)
9 systematic review of 63 papers exploring music projects with youth people in contact with the
10 criminal justice system sought to explore the evidence for the impact of music making on well-
11 being and behaviour. They concluded that: “Further research is warranted in relation to music
12 outcomes, particularly personal growth, education and mental well-being for young people in
13 specific justice settings.” (Daykin et al.: 207).
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17 Burrowes et al. (2013) note that there is a lack of good quality research into the arts in criminal
18 justice, citing a particular lack of robust quantitative data. Even when research has taken a mixed-
19 method approach, Burrowes et al. note methodological issues with most research in the area
20 lacking any control group to compare results to. It is rare to see evaluations that use pre-test and
21 post-test scores (Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016; Miles & Clarke, 2006), meaning it is hard to
22 clearly establish outcomes in most of the current literature. Hughes (2005) and Meekums and
23 Daniel (2011) note a lack of studies that include follow-up measures, and this remains true today.
24 Bilby et al (2013: 7) note ‘there is a clear need for longitudinal research, combining both
25 qualitative and quantitative methods’.
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29 The research presented here sought to begin to address some of the criticisms outlined above by:
30 investigating whether children and young people taking part in the project achieve improvements
31 in attendance at YOT sessions compared to non-participants; measuring change over time in
32 children and young people’s self-reported musical ability, well-being, and attitudes and
33 behaviour; foregrounding the voice and experience of the young people through in-depth
34 qualitative interviews.
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37 38 39 **Methods**

40 41 42 **Research design**

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44 This research sought to provide robust measurement of impact and also elicit an understanding of
45 the mechanisms by which change occurs. Consequently, the researchers took a mixed-methods
46 approach, using quantitative measures of the primary outcomes (compliance, wellbeing, musical
47 development, & attitudes & behaviour), complemented and extended by semi-structured
48 interviews with participants.
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52 Attendance at YOT appointments was measured as a proxy for sentence compliance (statutory
53 and non-statutory appointments: including the music programme, Offending Behaviour
54 Programmes, one-to-one caseworker meetings, educational classes). As Ugwudike (2013) notes,
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3 for criminal justice practitioners, concepts of compliance are strongly associated with attendance.
4 Although attendance is not an exact proxy for compliance, non-attendance at YOT appointments
5 has been linked to a high risk of reoffending (Hart 2011).
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8 Attendance data was also collected from a comparison group of children in contact with
9 Birmingham YOT. In this instance, the comparison group – who did not attend the music
10 programme – provides a basis for comparison, allowing for testing whether participation in the
11 programme has any influence on attendance. In an ideal research design, individuals would be
12 randomly allocated to either a participant or control group. However, in this study participants
13 were referred to the programme by their YOT caseworker and so the research team could not
14 exert any control over the selection and allocation of programme participants. When
15 randomisation is not feasible, comparison-group studies are recognised as a suitable alternative
16 (Coalition for Evidence Based Policy, 2007). Comparison group designs are most likely to
17 produce valid results when programme and comparison groups are highly similar in key
18 demographics (e.g. age, gender), key relevant factors (e.g. convictions, sentence length) and
19 geographic location (e.g. from the same city), and when outcome data are collected in the same
20 way for both groups (Coalition for Evidence Based Policy, 2014).
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24 A questionnaire, using validated indicators of wellbeing, musical development, & attitudes &
25 behaviour, was completed by music programme participants at the start and end of their
26 participation in the programme. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with music
27 programme participants at the end of their participation in the programme to investigate their
28 experiences.
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34 **Data collection measures**

35 **A. Pre- and post- programme scales**

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38 The scales measured change over time in: musical development; attitudes and behaviour; and
39 well-being. The research used the scales from Youth Music's 'evaluation builder' (Youth Music,
40 2018). The tools in the evaluation builder have been designed specifically to explore the impact
41 of work with children and young people, and have been designed to be appropriate for use with
42 children and young people. Three scales were chosen to map onto the project aims. All are scored
43 on a Likert scale from 1-5 (strongly disagree-strongly agree).
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46 *Musical Ability Scale:* This scale measures self-reported musical ability, based on work by
47 Hallam and Prince (2003). There is a lack of consensus about the concept of musical ability,
48 although it is now more likely to be viewed as a social construct rather than the historic view of a
49 specific aural ability (Hallam, 2006). Hallam and Prince (2003) proposed 77 items under 21
50 themes to measure musical ability, which Youth Music developed into the six item Musical
51 Ability Scale for children and young people. While there is no validated measure of musical
52 ability with young people, this scale provides an indicator of perceived musical ability.
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3 *Attitude and Behaviour Scale:* The Youth Music Attitude and Behaviour Scale measures whether
4 children and young people aged 11-18 feel they have developed skills such as working with
5 others, punctuality, respect towards others, contribution to their community, and commitment.
6 The scale includes six questions, with answers on a Likert scale (1, disagree - 5, strongly agree).
7 The validity of this scale has not been established, it is much shorter than most validated attitude
8 and behavior scales (that typically look at attitudes & behaviours towards specific phenomenon),
9 but it provides an indicator that can be considered alongside qualitative exploration of young
10 people's attitudes and behaviours.
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14 *Well-being Scale:* The Youth Music Well-being Scale is based on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental
15 Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS: Tennant *et al.*, 2007). The WEMWBS is designed to monitor well-
16 being in the general population and measures elements of positive affect, satisfying interpersonal
17 relationships and positive functioning. We have successfully used the WEMWBS with young
18 adults in previous research (AUTHORS). Youth Music have adapted the WEMWBS for use with
19 children and young people, for example by including a ladder measure (Cantril's ladder) and this
20 has successfully been used in other studies with young people taking part in music programmes
21 (cf. Hudson, 2017).
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24 Music programme participants completed the scales at their first session at the music studio and
25 again approximately 12 weeks later. For practical reasons (the rolling nature of the programme,
26 and funding restraints), the scales were introduced to participants by the programme leader who
27 had been trained by the research team.
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30 **B. Attendance data**

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32 Data on attendance at appointments (statutory and non-statutory: including the music programme,
33 Offending Behaviour Programmes, one-to-one caseworker meetings, educational classes) were
34 obtained from the YOT Careworks system. Programme participants' attendance data were
35 compared to attendance data from a comparison group of children. The start point for the
36 matching process was all children serving sentences with Birmingham YOT, but not taking part
37 in this, or any other, music programme as part of their sentence. The participant and comparison
38 groups were matched as far as possible on gender, age, and average sentence length. Sentence
39 length was identified as the most potentially significant confounding variable, using sentence
40 length as a proxy for offence seriousness/risk. Cases were removed from the comparison group
41 where their total number of scheduled appointments was lower than 30 as the average number of
42 appointments scheduled for the comparison group was lower than the participant group and so
43 this skewed the data.
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47 **C. Interview data**

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49 The semi-structured interviews asked participants to discuss: their introduction to and experience
50 of the project; creative developments; relationship between the project and other areas of life;
51 change over time in skills. Interviews were conducted by the research team, in person, at the
52 music studio. The music programme leader was not present. Children were randomly selected
53 from the participant group and contacted by the music leader to arrange the interview, as the
54 research team could not have contact details for participants.
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Data analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the quantitative scale data. Paired samples T-tests were used to identify whether there were any statistically significant differences between participants' scores on the scales before and after taking part in the music programme. An independent samples T-test was used to analyse data on attendance at appointments compared to a comparison group of children who had not taken part in this, or any other, music programme. Absolute standardised effect sizes (ES) were calculated for between- and within-measures comparisons to supplement important findings. An ES of 0.2 was considered the minimum important difference for all outcome measures, 0.5 to < 0.8 moderate, and ≥ 0.8 large (Cohen, 1988).

The qualitative data was analysed through a process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Caulfield & Hill, 2018). Analysis began with a coding process involving working line-by-line through the entire body of data, initially led by themes identified through the literature. Subsequent to this, a data led approach was applied to the transcripts. The initial themes acted as a basis for coding, supplemented by new themes emerging during the in-depth coding process.

Participants

Pre- and post- programme scale data was collected with 42 children who participated in the project. They ranged in age from 13 to 20 years old (mean 15.93 years). Three participants were female and 39 were male.²

Data on attendance were received for the 42 young people and a comparison group of 145 children (one female & 144 male).

Interviews were conducted with 23 of the children at the end of their participation in the programme (two female, 21 male, age 13 to 20 years old).

Children who take part in the music programme represent a range of ages, gender, backgrounds, and offence/sentence type in-line with the broader Birmingham YOT population.

Findings

The findings are presented below under three key headings: change over time; attendance data; and interview data.

² While a typical rule of thumb is to have treatment and control/comparison groups of broadly equal size, where the treatment (participant) group is relatively small a larger control/comparison group 'increases the probability that the control/comparison group will provide an accurate benchmark for statistical comparison and is recommended as a method to increase statistical precision (Rinido, 1990:75).

Change over time: pre- and post- programme data

Musical Development

At the beginning of the project, participants scored between 2.50 and 5.53 on the Musical Development scale. The average score was 3.98. At the end of the project the average score was 4.27. A paired-samples t-test showed that there was a significant difference between musical development scores before and after completing the intervention, $t(38) = -2.81$, $ES = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$.

Attitudes and Behaviour

At the beginning of the project, participants scored between 2.80 and 5.00 on the Attitude and Behaviour scale. The average score was 3.93. At the end of the project the average score was 4.06. Although there was a slight improvement, a paired-samples t-test showed that there was no significant difference between attitude and behaviour scores before and after completing the intervention, $t(41) = -1.78$, $ES = 0.23$, $p > 0.05$.

Well-being

At the beginning of the project, participants scored between 1.50 and 5.66 on the Well-being scale. The average score was 4.07. At the end of the project the average score was 4.34. A paired-samples t-test showed that there was a significant difference between well-being scores before and after completing the intervention, $t(41) = -2.32$, $ES = 0.32$, $p < 0.05$.

Attendance data

The participant group had an average length of sentence 339 days (min. 55 days, max. 1098 days), and an average of 119 appointments scheduled (min. 16, max. 548). 54.31% of appointments were attended. The comparison group included one female and 144 males, with an average length of sentence of 357 days (min. 74 days, max 732 days), and an average of 97 appointments scheduled (min. 30, max. 360). 50.46% of appointments were attended.

The data was calculated as a percentage of appointments attended.³ An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the participant and comparison groups on attendance, finding a

³ Given issues working with percentages, and to allow parametric tests to be conducted (and hence to improve the generalisability of the findings), the data was transformed prior to analysis. As percentage data are not free to vary widely from the mean and so this data is normally distributed, the data on percentages of appointment attendance were

statistically significant higher level of attendance in those who have completed the music project ($t_{(190)} = 2.226$, $ES = 0.39$, $p = < 0.05$).

Interview data

The thematic analysis of the interview data from 23 children identified five themes: confidence, professional and social skills; achievements, engagement, and aspirations; wellbeing; and relationships with staff. Each theme is discussed in turn with illustrative quotes provided throughout the discussion.

Confidence, professional and social skills

Fifteen children spoke about a lack of confidence on initial involvement with the programme. Most often, this was a feeling of shyness in working with new people.

“Before I didn't really talk....because I was shy....The studio made me more confident to do stuff”

(Participant 11)

Twelve children spoke about developments in their confidence, social and communication skills as a direct result of taking part in the programme.

“It's also helped with my people skills, it's easier talking to new people discussing new things.... Before I used to come here, I didn't really engage with many people, just my friends and then I'd go home. But since this, I've done shows at colleges, met new people, it's taught me how to communicate with new people, stuff like that.”

(Participant 5)

These participants were able to link increases in confidence and improved communication skills to areas of their life beyond the music programme:

“It helps you communicate with people. Especially I'm not around big people all the time, just in school, just a bunch of kids around, just one teacher? And now it's just me around a lot of big staff. So it helps me a lot to communicate with older people.”

(Participant 2)

“I don't argue with my family anymore”

(Participant 19)

transformed to arcsine values in Excel using the formula =ASIN(SQRT(A2/100))*180/PI(). The arcsin transformation moves very low or very high values towards the centre, giving them more theoretical freedom to vary and thus making the data more generalisable.

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3 All the children interviewed spoke about professional skills they had developed and learned
4 through the programme, from developing their singing and writing, to learning completely new
5 skills in music production.
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8 “Before I came here, I never knew how to wire in a mic, use logic, or Final Cut Pro”.
9 *(Participant 1)*

10
11 “I feel like I have achieved more of an understanding of music as a whole really
12 because with music you only see what they present to you which is the singing,
13 maybe the booth and getting famous. This shows you behind the scenes about how
14 to get to those points, how the music is actually made, how the beats are actually
15 produced”
16 *(Participant 9)*

17
18 “It’s different every session, sometimes I’ll just record my vocals onto a track,
19 sometimes they’ll teach me to mix a track, or make beats, I learn something new
20 every lesson. My knowledge of music has expanded a lot, I’ve learnt a lot more than
21 I used to do.”
22 *(Participant 5)*

23 24 25 **Achievements, engagement, aspirations**

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27
28 Nineteen children spoke about coming to recognise their own achievements and personal
29 developments through the programme.
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31 “It’s made me think more about planning, I never used to do it, but now I plan what
32 I’m going to do, make sure I’m not wasting my time”
33 *(Participant 5)*

34
35
36 “Helped me realise who I am and who I want to be are not the same person.”
37 *(Participant 15)*

38
39 “Every session...I feel like I’ve achieved something new”
40 *(Participant 21)*

41
42 Most participants were able to relate positive changes in their attitude and ambitions to the
43 project:
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46 “This has changed me”
47 *(Participant 19)*

48 “makes me think that I have a good talent for it and that it’s something I should go
49 hard on”
50 *(Participant 5)*

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53 Seventeen children spoke about becoming motivated and engaged through participation in the
54 project. While this often began with viewing the project simply as something to pass the time, the
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3 participants expressed the impact that taking-part had on their motivation to improve, to work on
4 their music outside the sessions, and engage with other things.
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7 Yeah, when I do something I don't really enjoy, I never give it my all. I'd go into it
8 half-hearted because I don't really care about it, but since I've been coming here,
9 they've been showing me how to stay committed and to finish after starting stuff.
10 It's made me work harder.

11 *(Participant 5)*

12
13 "If I didn't have this (The Studio) I wouldn't have much motivation." The Studio
14 "re-motivates you in other things." "It makes you take on other challenges with more
15 motivation."

16 *(Participant 14)*

17
18 "I write every day. I literally write every day, in class everywhere, when I get the
19 time I just write."

20 *(Participant 20)*

21
22 Notably, several participants were able to articulate how their increased confidence had an impact
23 beyond the music programme, beginning to raise their aspirations:
24

25
26 "encouraged me to do an access and a degree."

27 *(Participant 17)*

28
29 "I felt more active. I wanted to do more things."

30 *(Participant 22)*

31
32 "Since I've been listening at studio I feel like I've been listening at school and taking
33 part."

34
35 *(Participant 20)*

36
37 Four children spoke about how their own developments through the programme could change
38 people's perceptions of them:
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41 "It shows people that, you are capable of something. Like you are capable of much
42 more than we thought you were capable of. It lets people know that, 'Ah so you want
43 to do something with your life' which hopefully gets people to see, 'Ok then we can
44 try and help you.'"

45 *(Participant 9)*

50 **Wellbeing**

51 Sixteen participants spoke about feeling calmer and more positive during music sessions:
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54 "Music is a good way to cope. When I started to write, because a lot of things were
55 bothering me. It helps you express things...and it takes your mind off things."

56 *(Participant 14)*

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4 “They taught me that if I’ve got any problems outside of the studio, maybe I can use
5 that in my music to release stress and stuff like that...There’s certain stuff that
6 maybe sometimes I don’t wanna talk about. But I can express that through my
7 music, and get it off my shoulders.”

8
9 *(Participant 5)*

10
11 “It’s about discipline and control. Music is about how to get your feelings out in a
12 song.” “It’s not just music, it helps you from inside...releasing stress....Getting it
13 out. Like a sigh of relief.”

14
15 *(Participant 23)*

16
17 The positive regulation of emotions was expressed by six of the children.

18
19 “Sometimes it’d be like everyone’s your worst enemy. I was angry. Now I’m more
20 calm.”

21
22 *(Participant 18)*

23
24 “I got to see that I can control my anger thing through music. Every time I get angry
25 I just listen to music or start writing. Before studio? I’d be fighting.”

26
27 *(Participant 20)*

28
29 Some of the children noted that these positive feelings persisted between sessions.

30
31 “For the rest of today my mood will be stable. It gives me something to focus on.
32 Whatever I feel, I can write it down and next Thursday the process starts again”

33
34 *(Participant 12)*

35
36 “I always feel happy here and it lasts all day. Sometimes it can last all week”

37
38 *(Participant 10)*

39
40 The data presented here suggest that the programme provided an effective way of dealing with
41 anger and aggression. However, it is important to note the realities of normal life outside the
42 project. While all participants experienced the project positively, it would be unrealistic to expect
43 that participation in the programme would result in a complete removal of challenging feelings
44 and emotions:

45
46 “Even today I’m the same as I was when I was 14. I’m angry. Sometimes confused.
47 There’s things that hide it, music’s one of them. I don’t know why I’m angry.”

48
49 *(Participant 15)*

50
51 It is clear that the majority of children engaged in the project experience it in a way that is
52 beneficial for their wellbeing. One of the factors likely to explain the reported improvement in
53 well-being is that the children are using and developing their skills and abilities, which results in
54 greater mental wellbeing..

Relationships with staff

All the children were positive about the support and approach of the project staff. The importance placed on the development of these relationships was evidenced by the passion apparent in the interviews with the children, and how they spoke at length about the programme team.

“They’re good, they're helpful. (Programme Leader) is a good person....the music project, to be honest, it's helped me, when he can, he's a good teacher....everyone’s helpful in the group really.”

(Participant 3)

“We talk about a lot of things, you know, like life, what's going on, what you can do in the future, things like that.”

(Participant 2)

“Use their experience to teach us. Suggest new things for us to do... They don’t make us do stuff, give us a good opportunity.” “he expects more, pushes you to your target.”

(Participant 18)

Participants identified and placed value on the support they received from the programme staff.

“I have an issue with people telling me what to do but from (Programme Leader) I listen because he knows what he’s talking about and he wants you to be the best you can’.

(Participant 12)

“They care. They support and encourage. They challenge you if you mess up. They’re not only music producers, they constantly support you.”

(Participant 23)

The children spoke about the respectful relationships developed with the programme staff.

“I’ve got respect for them. I respect what they’re doing....Just how patient they’ve been with me. Their attitude towards me never changes”

(Participant 17)

“there’s mutual respect”

(Participant 12)

Of note is that the children spoke about not only the support, but the importance of constructive critical feedback from the programme team. The children placed significant value on the professional feedback from the programme team and this appears to be crucial in developing mutually respectful relationships. Participants reported valuing the skills and experience of the project staff, as well as respecting their opinion and feedback.

“So if he knows something’s half-hearted or not good, he’ll be like ‘you need to do this, you need to do that’, it’s not that it’s criticism, he just knows what he could do

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3 to make me better as an artist... Yeah, I don't even care if it was criticism, because I
4 know he's saying it for a reason, I know he's not saying it to put me down, he's
5 saying it to make me up."

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7 *(Participant 1)*

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9 "if I've been slacking they'll tell my mum I've been slacking, they won't stick up for
10 me cos like I always tell them say how it is, there's no point trying to present, if I'm
11 not really improving, then she'd say he's not improving like. But it's not, it's the
12 opposite."

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14 *(Participant 3)*

15 "They listen to your, your point of view. If they criticise you they tell you why"

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17 *(Participant 10)*

21 Discussion

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23 The findings presented in this paper demonstrate the positive impact of the music programme on
24 participants. This study has also begun to address some of the criticisms of previous research into
25 the arts in criminal justice (Burrowes et al, 2013). The key findings are that: participants who
26 completed the music programme were statistically more likely to attend YOT appointments than
27 a comparison group. There were statistically significant improvements in participants' self-
28 reported well-being and musical ability over the course of the project and effect sizes reached the
29 minimum important difference for all of the quantitative measures. These results build upon
30 previous qualitative research on the impact of music in criminal justice. For example, that well-
31 being increased through participating in the project (Wilson et al., 2009) and the relationship
32 between participants' improvements in musical ability and increased their self-confidence
33 (Cursley & Maruna, 2015). Positive improvements were observed in participants' attitudes and
34 behaviour, but these were not statistically significant.

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36 The research presented in this paper sought to understand both if and how any impact was
37 achieved through the programme, using semi-structured interviews with participants to explore
38 the latter. Participants were highly positive about their experiences of the programme, and almost
39 all had learnt to recognise their own achievements, personal, social, and skills development, and
40 reported feeling calmer and more positive. The support and approach of the project staff appeared
41 to be the key factor responsible for childrens' engagement in the programme, supported by
42 significant differences in attendance between the participant and comparison groups, adding
43 support to previous research in this area (Cursley & Maruna, 2015; Daykin et al, 2014; Henley,
44 2012). In particular, participants' highlighted the value they placed on the status of the
45 programme team as music professionals as central to their engagement. The status and experience
46 of the programme staff engendered respect for both the development work and critical feedback
47 they provided to participants. Similar findings have been discussed in other research exploring the
48 arts in criminal justice, with adult men in prisons (Caulfield, 2014). Newman (2002) suggests that
49 participation in creative programmes reduces risk factors and increases protective factors,
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3 including social support (Cursley and Maruna, 2015) and new role models in their peers and art
4 facilitators (Viggiani et al, 2013). The findings here about positive relationships with staff add
5 support to previous literature that has begun to demonstrate that the most powerful bonds that
6 form may be between the programme facilitators and participants (Henley, 2012). The findings
7 also add support to Daykin et al's (2014) findings that when professional musicians were used as
8 facilitators, children and young people became engaged and showed respect. The data presented
9 here indicates that the core factor underpinning the engagement of the children in the programme
10 is the relationships that develop with the programme staff.
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14 The sense of achievement, engagement with the programme, and improved aspirations reported
15 by interviewees are corroborated by both the differences in attendance between the participant
16 and comparison groups and the increase in musical development scores before and after engaging
17 with the programme. Previous research has suggested that for many people in contact with the
18 criminal justice system, taking part in a creative programme in prison may be the first time they
19 have felt a sense of achievement, and that this is related to increases in confidence (Caulfield,
20 Wilkinson, & Wilson, 2016). Having aspirations developed, supported, and treated seriously is
21 particularly important as it is viewed as central to achieving lasting change in offender
22 populations (HMI Probation, 2017). Aspiring to achieve, and succeeding, is also associated with
23 well-being (Sheldon and Kasser; 1998).
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26 The improvements in positivity, feelings of calm, and the positive regulation of emotions reported
27 by interview participants align with the significant increase in well-being scale scores by
28 participants before and after the project. There is a wide literature exploring the link between
29 mental health and wellbeing and offending behaviour. Problems with mental health and wellbeing
30 are associated with increased risk of reoffending in those in contact with the criminal justice
31 system (cf. Caulfield, 2016; Ministry of Justice, 2009). The positive regulation of emotions has
32 been linked to increased well-being and decreases in anger and aggression through participation
33 in arts-based projects (Wilson et al., 2009; Miles and Strauss, 2008). The calming effect of
34 participating in arts and creative programmes has been reported in previous research (Caulfield,
35 2014) and is thought to be – at least in part – attributable to the absorbing nature of the work
36 (Wilson, Caulfield, & Atherton, 2009). Nugent and Loucks (2011) and Blacker and Watson
37 (2008) suggest that the arts can provide an effective way of dealing with anger and aggression, a
38 trait often linked with antisocial and criminal behaviour. In addition, aspiring to achieve
39 (discussed above, and succeeding, is associated with significant well-being (Sheldon and Kasser,
40 1998). Participation in creative programmes has been shown to reduce risk factors and increase
41 protective factors for mental health and well-being, including social support (Cursley and
42 Maruna, 2015), with social barriers broken down in the spaces created in arts programmes.
43 Although the improvements in the attitudes and behaviour scale before and after the programme
44 were not statistically significant, the improvements in confidence, professional and social skills
45 described by the majority of interview participants are echo previous research findings. There is
46 evidence that participation in creative activities increases confidence and social skills (Baker &
47 Homan, 2007; Bilby et al, 2013; Bruce, 2015; Cheliotis & Jordanoska, 2016; Cox & Gelsthorpe,
48 2008;). Indeed, in Cursley and Maruna's (2015) evaluation of a music programme for prisoners
49 and ex-prisoners, participants' improvements in musical ability appeared to improve their self-
50 confidence in rehearsals and performances, and increases in the confidence of those in contact
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with the criminal justice system can lead to more constructive use of their time both within and outside of programmes.

This research is not without limitations. As children were not referred to the programme randomly, it is possible that some selection bias exists. Children were referred by their YOT caseworker and thus the research team was not able to exert any control over the selection of programme participants. However, the inclusion of a comparison group went some way to mitigating the risk of selection bias existing and affecting the findings for attendance data. Attendance at YOT appointments was measured as a proxy for sentence compliance. 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 is routinely collected by the YOT and was available to the research team - the qualitative findings do provide some insight into 'substantive' compliance. It should also be noted that there is limited published evidence on the validity of the scale measures used in this research. The measures were used for a number of reasons: they are recommended by the funder of the programme as appropriate for the age group and were specifically developed with this in mind; the measures are concise enough to limit respondent fatigue (Lavrakas, 2008); the measures have also been designed with programme facilitators in mind, being straightforward enough for non-researchers to administer. Future research could utilise validated measures.

Conclusions

This research has built on previous research findings and has begun to address some of the methodological concerns raised about research on the arts in criminal justice (Burrowes et al., 2013). By using data routinely collected by the youth offending team to employ a comparison group design, and using pre- and post-test measures, this study has provided robust evidence of the impact of the programme. This study also ensured that the voice and experience of participants was heard, in order to understand not just if the programme had an impact, but how that impact might have occurred.

The findings presented here suggest that the Birmingham Youth offending team music programme fulfils the aims of developing the creative, expressive and musical ability of children and young people; improving children and young people's confidence and well-being; and improving the level of compliance. It was not within the remit of this current study to measure whether the music programme enhanced participants' successful completion of court orders. Future research should seek to access follow-up data from the YOT to explore whether improved attendance was sustained and completion of court orders. It would also be beneficial to look at the longer term outcomes of the participants (for example, educational engagement, & reoffending

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3 data). This would have the additional benefit of allowing for exploration of the relationship
4 between attendance, substantive compliance, and later outcomes. Future research should test and
5 refine the methodology developed here on a larger scale with other music programmes, with other
6 youth offending teams, and in other criminal justice settings. The findings concerning the
7 relationships and respect that developed between participants and programme leaders, and the
8 central role of this in engagement with the programme, is an interesting and potentially valuable
9 avenue for further exploration.
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For Peer Review

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Dear reviewers/editorial team,

Thank you for the positive comments and feedback. Below we have outlined how/where we have addressed these points.

Reviewer comment	Author response
<p>1. The wording would bear revision here and there. For example, on page 8, under 'Research Methods' we find mention that the 'research design took a mixed methods approach'. I would suggest 'the research design involved mixed methods or 'The researchers followed a mixed methods approach'. Also, elsewhere - 'The key findings are that participants who completed the music programme were statistically more likely to attend appointments than a comparison group.' Isn't this tautologous? Those who were involved in the music programme were more likely to attend and complete the programme than the comparison group? Finally, page 20 - improvement in confidence..professional and social skills described by the majority of participants are echoed by previous research findings. Surely you mean that the findings of THIS study echo those of previous research findings?</p>	<p>Wording revised. In the discussion, key finding about attendance at appointments clarified to be clear this is about all YOT appointments, not the music programme.</p>
<p>2. Check punctuation throughout - e.g. participants' (plural) - so the possessive apostrophe comes after the word (not participant's) unless you are using a definite article such as 'the participant's...' or 'a participant's....</p>	<p>Amended throughout</p>
<p>3. The music programme is never explained and the response to the earlier review was, in short, to recommend it be written up elsewhere. But without at least a summary of the project - what it involved, its aims, its content etc - it is difficult for the reader to understand its value, as documented through the research conducted.</p>	<p>Please refer to the two paragraph summary in the introduction.</p>
<p>4. also raised by the previous review - relates to the decision to replace 'compliance' with 'attendance'. Unfortunately, this is not any clearer - in fact it is arguably more opaque and generally highlights the need for the authors to help the readers contextualise for an international readership what are very</p>	<p>Contextual information added to the Introduction section of the paper</p>

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specific terms used in the context of English youth justice. Without some explanation of what engagement with YOTS (what are they, what do they do) involves (is it a sentence? are appointments mandatory? are there sanctions for noncompliance?), the international reader will not be able to fully appreciate the article's context.	
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Generally, then, for an international audience, it is important that the article include a short background/description of the context here. This will ultimately enhance the relevance of what is a really useful study in an important area.

For Peer Review