

“I’ll live better, stay away from crime”: Exploring the reintegration of former prisoners into the community through a music programme

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TITLE: "I live better, stay away from crime": Exploring the reintegration of former prisoners into the community through a music programme

ABSTRACT:

There is evidence that music programmes can have a positive impact on people in contact with the criminal justice system. However, little attention has been paid to the potential role of music programmes as people leave prison and re-enter the community. Providing support for former prisoners "through-the-gate" is important to aid resettlement and reduce risk of reoffending. This paper presents research on a programme called Sounding Out: a two year, London-based programme, providing ex-prisoners with longer-term rehabilitative opportunities upon their release to bridge the gap between life inside and outside of prison.

The study aimed to understand the impact of the Sounding Out programme on ex-prisoners from the perspective of participants, staff and family members. Semi-structured interviews took place with 17 people: 10 participants across two Sounding Out projects; six members of staff - three from the Irene Taylor Trust, two musicians, and one former prison worker; and one family member of a participant.

The research provides an understanding of the impact of involvement in a carefully designed programme of music creation, skills development, and work placements. Thematic analysis of the data resulted in three key themes: personal impact; focus and direction; interpersonal relationships. The findings are consistent with the body of research that demonstrates the impact of music programmes on prisoners.

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The current study adds to the relatively limited body of evidence on the role of music programmes in the reintegration of former prisoners into the community.

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Abstract

- Purpose

There is evidence that music programmes can have a positive impact on people in contact with the criminal justice system. However, little attention has been paid to the potential role of music programmes as people leave prison and re-enter the community. Providing support for former prisoners 'through-the-gate' is important to aid resettlement and reduce risk of reoffending. This paper presents research on a programme called Sounding Out: a two year, London-based programme, providing ex-prisoners with longer-term rehabilitative opportunities upon their release to bridge the gap between life inside and outside of prison.

- Design/methodology/approach

The study aimed to understand the impact of the Sounding Out programme on ex-prisoners from the perspective of participants, staff and family members. Semi-structured interviews took place with 17 people: 10 participants across two Sounding Out projects; six members of staff - three from the Irene Taylor Trust, two musicians, and one former prison worker; and one family member of a participant.

- Findings

The research provides an understanding of the impact of involvement in a carefully designed programme of music creation, skills development, and work placements. Thematic analysis of the data resulted in three key themes: personal impact; focus and direction; interpersonal relationships. The findings are consistent with the body of research that demonstrates the impact of music programmes on prisoners.

- Originality

The current study adds to the relatively limited body of evidence on the role of music programmes in the reintegration of former prisoners into the community.

Keywords

Resettlement; Well-being; Social Support; Rehabilitation; Music programme

Introduction

This article presents findings from research with a music programme that works with people as they leave prison and re-enter the community. There is a substantial evidence base concerning the impact of creative arts programmes in criminal justice (see Caulfield, 2021, for an overview), and in particular music, but limited research on the impact of music programmes as people make the transition from prison to the community. The research presented here builds upon the very limited evidence base, seeking to understand the impact of the programme from the perspective of participants, staff, and family members through qualitative interviews.

Research Context

Music in criminal justice

There is evidence to suggest that music programmes can have a positive impact on people in contact with the criminal justice system. Writing and performing music has been found to enable individuals to redefine and change their thinking about themselves (Bilby et al., 2013). This can be viewed as contributing to secondary desistance (Maruna and Farrall, 2004), where 'desistance is the process by which people who have offended stop offending (primary desistance) and then take on a personal narrative (Maruna, 2001) that supports a continuing non-offending lifestyle (secondary desistance)' (Bilby et al., 2013: p13). A number of small-scale studies have found that music programmes in prisons can foster a process of self-evaluation (Caulfield et al., 2016), which has been found to positively improve self-concept (Henley et al., 2012).

A 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 et al., 2017: p1). It is thought that this is mostly due to increased protective factors, including social support, that music programmes can provide (Cursley and Maruna, 2015). The new role models found in participant's peers and programme facilitators can be a particularly important protective factor (De Viggiani et al., 2013). Henley et al. (2012) report the high level of trust and respect observed between participants and the music facilitator, with social barriers broken in the spaces created (Abrahams et al., 2012).

Numerous studies have shown that participation in music programmes improves the confidence of those with experience of the criminal justice system (Caulfield et al., 2016; Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2008; De Viggiani et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2009). Improved proficiency with a musical instrument in particular has been found to improve self-confidence in performance and rehearsals (Cursley and Maruna, 2015).

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3 Increased confidence is linked with a more positive, constructive use of time and associated with
4 integration into education (Cheliotis et al., 2014; De Viggiani et al., 2013; Tarling and Adams, 2012).
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6 Indeed, a number of studies have found that participation in music programmes while in contact with
7 the criminal justice system directly increases motivation and engagement with education and other
8 constructive activities (Anderson and Overy, 2010; Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2008; Wilson et al., 2009).
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13 While the amount of research concerning the role and impact of music in criminal justice has increased,
14 criticism has been levelled against the body of evidence. For example, in 2013 Burrowes et al. noted a
15 particular lack of robust quantitative data in arts in criminal justice research more widely with most
16 studies lacking a control group. Historically it has been relatively rare for studies to include pre- post-
17 test measures meaning it has been difficult to clearly establish outcomes. Acknowledging the need for
18 robust understanding of outcomes, it is important to emphasise the value of in-depth qualitative
19 evidence to understand participant experiences and explore how any change in outcomes might occur
20 (Bilby et al., 2013). For example, Winder et al. (2015), in their research with a prison-based music
21 programme, combined a control group design using pre- and post- test measures of motivation and
22 readiness to change with a small number of qualitative interviews exploring participant's experiences of
23 the programme. Non-intellectually disabled participants learnt to foster their emotions in a safe way
24 and became ready for more formal treatment programmes in prison.
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35 Recent research with children in youth justice settings has sought to directly respond to previous
36 criticism of research in this area (Caulfield et al., 2022). Using a comparison group design, extended and
37 completed by in-depth interviews, the researchers found that a music programmes for children in
38 contact with a Youth Offending Service had a positive impact on participants' sentence engagement
39 compared to children who did not participate in the music programme. This study - and a follow-up
40 study expanded to include children identified as being at-risk of involvement with the criminal justice
41 system - found improvements in self-reported wellbeing, engagement with education, and educational
42 aspirations (Caulfield et al., 2022; Caulfield and Sojka, 2023). Similarly, Daykin et al. (2017) took a mixed-
43 methods approach - including pre- post-test and follow up measurement of well-being – to exploring the
44 role of music with young people in community justice settings, suggesting that 'music-making led by
45 professional musicians can serve as a personal and collective resource' (p955).
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3 What is clear from the evidence base – particularly research that might be more readily viewed as
4 ‘robust’ in the terms set out by Burrowes et al. – is that music in criminal justice programmes have a
5 clear and measurable impact on well-being and sentence engagement. Qualitatively there is much
6 discussion of engagement with the creative arts supporting a non-offending lifestyle. It is perhaps useful
7 here to draw on evidence from other areas, such as the impact of music and the arts in education. As
8 Caulfield and Sojka (2023: 3) set out, music and the arts have been used to promote school engagement
9 on the basis of both educational achievement, ‘but also successes in life beyond school, including work
10 (Finn and Zimmer, 2012), avoidance of anti-social and delinquent behaviours (Li and Lerner, 2011;
11 Morrison, et al., 2002) and improved health outcomes (Allen and Bowles, 2012).
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20 While some research has focused on young people’s participation in music programmes while serving
21 community sentences, little research has focused on the experience of adults in the community,
22 especially as they leave prison. The transition from the prison regime to resettling in the community can
23 be fraught. Former prisoners can often find themselves isolated, without money, job opportunities or
24 clear prospects, and struggling to find a direction in life (Chui and Cheng, 2013; Pękala-Wojciechowska
25 et al., 2021; Ramakers et al., 2016). Providing support for former prisoners ‘through-the-gate’ is
26 important to aid resettlement and reduce risk of reoffending. However, a 2017 inspection of statutory
27 ‘through-the-gate’ services¹ in England and Wales identified that they were not working (HMIP and
28 HMIP, 2017). In response, more funding was directed to infrastructure and staffing to support these
29 services, although since then the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda that through-the-gate sat within
30 was deemed unworkable and abolished. Providing a programme as a continuation of relationships that
31 have been developed in prison allows for continuity of support, aiding resettlement and rehabilitation
32 and this has been lacking through statutory services in recent years.
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44 ***Sounding Out***

45 The Irene Taylor Trust is a UK-based charity that supports vulnerable and excluded individuals (including
46 prisoners, ex-prisoners and young people) to rebuild their lives in, and upon release from, prison by
47 inspiring them through the creation of new music. In 2012, The Irene Taylor Trust piloted a ‘through-the-
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52 ¹ ‘Through-the-gate’ resettlement services were launched in 2014 by the UK government to bridge the gap between prison and
53 the community. They were intended to provide a more joined up approach to helping prisoners maintain or find
54 accommodation, provide assistance with finance, benefits and debt, and to support them to enter education, training and
55 employment.
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3 gate' project to provide extended support for individuals upon release from prison. An independent
4 evaluation of the pilot highlighted the successes and made recommendations that have influenced the
5 delivery of the current Sounding Out programme (Cartwright, 2013). Sounding Out is a London-based
6 programme, providing ex-prisoners with longer-term rehabilitative opportunities upon their release, to
7 bridge the gap between life inside and outside of prison. Programme participants are supported by
8 Sounding Out for a period of two years from beginning to end, and participants are expected to engage
9 with the programme for the duration of the two years. The programme is delivered on a continuous,
10 rolling basis. The programme consists of: creative music projects; live performance opportunities; one to
11 one pastoral support; training; workshop delivery; mentoring; and work placements. Programme
12 participants are allocated an individual support worker from the Irene Taylor Trust, who is their main
13 point of contact with the programme, and also engage with professional musicians as part of the
14 programme activities who support with the practical music workshops.

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23 Prison Musicians in Residence are responsible for referring individuals to Sounding Out during strategic
24 work inside prisons. They select beneficiaries based on a number of factors, including: level of
25 skill/aptitude; reliability; commitment; whether improvement has been made/interest maintained
26 during the time projects ran inside prison. The Sounding Out programme responds to the challenges
27 faced by ex-prisoners as they attempt to resettle in the community, supporting individuals to develop
28 the 'skills, attitude, and self-belief' to live positive and independent lives in the community (Nacro, no
29 date). An evaluation of the Sounding Out pilot found that the programme provided valuable support for
30 participants (Cartwright, 2013). Recent research by Bensimon (2021) is one of the few peer-reviewed
31 studies to explore music programmes for people on release from prison and is focused on the Sounding
32 Out programme. Bensimon presents findings from interviews with five participants and three members
33 of staff, identifying four central themes focused on the impact of the programme: improved social
34 bonding, a sense of hope and life purpose, a sense of achievement, and transformation. Bensimon takes
35 the analysis further by discussing the findings in light of the Good Lives Model (GLM: Ward, 2002),
36 proposing that Sounding Out 'assisted both formerly incarcerated individuals and programme staff
37 members, in attaining the following GLM primary goods in life: community, relatedness, knowledge,
38 spirituality, excellence in work and play, excellence in agency, and creativity.' (Bensimon, 2021: p1).
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The current study aimed, first, to understand the impact of the Sounding Out programme on ex-
prisoners from the perspective of participants, staff and family members through qualitative interviews.
Second, it aimed to extend the relatively limited body of evidence on the role of music programmes in
the reintegration of former prisoners into the community.

Methods

The researchers approached the study from a standpoint that the criminal justice system is poorly equipped to support people as they leave prison and try to reintegrate into society. This, combined with the substantial challenges around accommodation, work, and social ties, means there is a clear need for programmes that support individuals who – we believe – fundamentally wish to live better lives.

Twenty-two semi-structured interviews took place with seventeen participants over a three-month period. At the time the data were collected, one iteration of the Sounding Out programme had recently been completed, and one was ongoing (with a four month gap between the cohorts). All 13 participants from these two cohorts were invited to take part in the research. Five participants from the recent cohort and five participants from the current cohort agreed to take part. Eight participants were White British and two Black British. Attempts were made to contact members of the recent cohort who had lost touch with the Irene Taylor Trust (n=3), but these were unsuccessful. Participants from the current cohort were interviewed twice, once at the beginning of the programme, and again six weeks into the programme. This temporal dimension was to capture perspectives as participants progressed through the programme and allow for greater rapport building with the researchers, although interviews with programme participants did not reveal a difference in perspective between interviews. Six members of staff were also interviewed, three from the Irene Taylor Trust (including both support workers on the programme), two musicians, and one former prison worker. Family members of three participants agreed to have their contact details shared by programme staff, and one family member of a participant agreed to be interviewed.

Topic guides for programme participants contained questions on: experiences of the programme; perceived gains from the programme; key success factors; how the programme could be amended to further support participant needs. Staff interview topic guides contained questions on: key partners involved in the programme and their role; challenges faced and how these were addressed; impact of the programme on participants.

Interviews lasted an average of 51 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Transcripts were analysed using a process of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2012), and the process managed on NVivo software. The iterative analysis consisted of initial familiarisation with the data through transcription of the recordings into a Word document and a thorough reading of the transcripts. Second, the transcripts were analysed line by line and coded inductively. Coded data was

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3 grouped together into themes, which were then reviewed against the data and literature and amended
4 accordingly. The authors acknowledge the influence of researcher's subjective experience and
5 reflectivity in analysis of data, and generation of meaning. Transcripts were therefore analysed
6 independently by two researchers, before provisional themes were discussed, allowing opportunity for
7 iterative development of themes, and for disagreements to be aired and consensus reached.
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11 12 13 **Ethics**

14 Ethical approval was received from the University of NAME REMOVED FOR ANONYMOUS REVIEW Ethics
15 Committee. Informed consent was received from all participants and participants were given a
16 participant information sheet with information about their right to withdraw from the research.
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23 **Discussion of Findings**

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26 The data analysis generated three overarching themes and eight sub-themes, as outlined in Table 1. The
27 themes combine findings from the participants, staff, and family members, allowing the findings to be
28 considered from multiple perspectives. Anonymised illustrative quotes are provided within the themes
29 and pseudonyms have been used. Each theme is discussed in the context of relevant literature. In
30 keeping with the creativity of the music project, song lyrics have been weaved into the findings section,
31 composed by participants as part of the programme, for illustrative purposes to 'bring to life' themes
32 identified.
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43 **Personal Impact**

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45 Programme participants and staff reported improvements in participant confidence, wellbeing and
46 musical ability, which they attributed to taking part in Sounding Out.
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50 Confidence. *Lyrics from Make it One Day: 'I thank you all for helping me; To be the man that's flying free;*
51 *I made it today'*
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53 Nine out of ten participants spoke about increases in confidence, both their own and witnessing the
54 confidence of others in the group improve. Some participants spoke about increases in their confidence
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3 as a musician, whilst others spoke more broadly about how the programme had increased their
4 confidence in their everyday lives:

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7 *“At the moment I have no problem playing in front of ten people or thousands of people. They gave*
8 *me that confidence. Whereas in my first gig after so many years, I was literally shaking when I was*
9 *playing the guitar.”* (Mark, Recent Participant)

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13 *“I’ve had an increase in confidence, not just from my ability as a musician, and my ability to be more*
14 *involved in that as a professional, but in my day-to-day life.”* (Jack, Recent Participant)

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17 Sounding Out staff also witnessed increases in participants’ confidence through the way participants
18 presented themselves and their ability to facilitate projects:

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21 *“I think he really embraced this idea of hey, I can facilitate this stuff. He’s going out on his own and*
22 *doing it now. So clearly he made a bit of a discovery in himself, actually.”* (Gareth, Musician)

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25 One of the staff members related increases in confidence in participants to the value other people were
26 now seeing in them:

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30 *“He just couldn’t believe that someone of that sort of musical talent would want to do something like*
31 *this, would want to help these guys, that was really powerful watching that and that was quite a*
32 *turning point for him.”* (Tom, Staff)

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37 Wellbeing Lyrics from Secret: ‘You feel so lost, you feel so lonely, you’re walking on your own; It’s time for
38 healing, we need loving for the secrets to unfold’

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41 Seven out of ten participants spoke about the positive impact of Sounding Out on their feelings and
42 wellbeing:

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45 *“Sounding Out brought me to a space of sanity and to cope emotionally and psychologically.”* (Ed,
46 Current Participant)

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49 Aaron spoke about how depressed he had been since he came out of prison, but that through taking
50 part in Sounding Out *“it’s the first time I’ve felt positive about my life for months”* (Aaron, Current
51 Participant). This was echoed in the interview with a family member and by two of the staff:
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3 *"Aaron said to me yesterday how depressed he'd been lately, and then told me how happy he was to*
4 *be doing this."* (Gareth, Musician)

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7 *"I really should thank the Irene Taylor Trust because that's what he needed, he needed something*
8 *positive, and he needed someone to bring out the best in him."* (Anne, Parent)

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11 Two participants spoke about making music and lyric writing as an outlet for their emotions:

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14 *"The only way I could express myself at the time was while I was making music ... the lyrics of all our*
15 *songs say it all. From devastation, to happy moments, to depressing moments, everything is in there.*
16 *The regrets, the things we've done in the past, where we ended up, what we want to do in the future,*
17 *it all reflects in our songs."* (Mark, Recent Participant)

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23 Musical Ability. Whilst it was common for participants to have some musical experience prior to the
24 programme, eight participants reported an improvement in their musical abilities:

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27 *"Definitely holding the bass is getting better. Holding it further up the neck and my speed is starting*
28 *to get back up again."* (Roger, Current Participant)

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31 *"Learned a lot about writing music, it's ignited my passion for the keyboard again, the piano, that's*
32 *helped me as well with my music production."* (Peter, Recent Participant)

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35 For Mark, the impact of Sounding Out was that *"they took us to a next level"* musically:

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38 *"I've learned a lot from them musically even though I come from a musical background but with*
39 *music you always learn ... you have to keep up with the new technology, the new era music and what*
40 *not, so I've learned a lot from them."* (Mark, Recent Participant)

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44 Staff noticed how the process of writing and playing together had helped the musicians improve
45 throughout the programme, even for those with previous experience. They also mentioned the impact
46 of leadership and tutoring. Ellie and Gareth talked about how they trained participants to be music
47 instructors and how this developed them as musicians:

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51 *"...our project team works with and gives these new musicians, the former prisoners, the skill to assist*
52 *the project team in helping the group create music. ... They're now not being instructed, they're doing*
53 *the instructing."* (Ellie, Staff)

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3 *“So I did see in that, watching these guys then lead projects, and over a few projects with us, began to*
4 *step more and more into the mantle of being a leader, as opposed to just awaiting instructions from*
5 *us. Taking the initiative and going and doing these things, proposing ideas.”* (Gareth, Musician)
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11 The first theme highlights benefits specifically within music but also within their everyday lives of
12 participants. These findings support existing research that shows participation in music programmes can
13 increase confidence and social skills for those in detention (Baker and Homan, 2007; Bruce, 2015;
14 Cheliotis, 2014; Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2008) and the community (Caulfield and Sojka, 2023). Increased
15 confidence has been linked with a more positive, constructive use of time (Adams, 2012; Cheliotis and
16 Jordanoska, 2016; Viggiani et al., 2013).
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20 The current findings support previous research that suggests that wellbeing is enhanced through
21 participation in music programmes in the community for those with experience of the criminal justice
22 system (e.g. Caulfield et al., 2022). Participants described the programme as an opportunity to express
23 themselves and their emotions, feel positive about themselves and help them cope emotionally. It is
24 interesting that improvements in wellbeing were not documented in previous research with former
25 Sounding Out participants (five years after participation: Bensimon, 2021) suggesting this might be a
26 short-term impact. Numerous studies suggest that participation in creative programmes can provide an
27 effective way of dealing with challenging emotions (cf Nugent and Loucks, 2011; Blacker et al. 2008).
28 Atherton, Knight, and van Barthold (2022) for example, note that for participants in prison and
29 community settings a key outcome was hope, whereby “hope was clearly important (Begley &
30 Blackwood, 2000) in counteracting overwhelming emotions and feelings of depression, anxiety, and
31 hopelessness about the future.” (p.233). While emotional wellbeing and regulation of emotions are
32 associated with reduced risk of offending (Ministry of Justice, 2010; Social Exclusion Taskforce, 2009).
33 However, evidence concerning the impact on well-being of music programmes in criminal justice
34 wellbeing is largely limited to short-term impacts.
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50 ***Focus and Direction***

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53 One member of staff summarised her hopes for each participant that engaged in the programme:
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3 *“Ideally, having every one of them not reoffend is a key factor, supporting every one of them into*
4 *some sort of employment, training and education stuff, seeing them flourish and getting something*
5 *out of it, having a sense of community, that’s the ideal, that’s always the aim really.” (Natalie, Staff)*
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9 The following two subthemes provide further examples of how participants avoided reoffending, sought
10 new employment opportunities, took on a new identity, and overall had a more positive outlook for the
11 future.
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15 *Focus for the future. Lyrics from One Day: ‘Forget the past, it’s done and dusted; The future is in the*
16 *world of hope and see.’*
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18 All ten participants spoke about how Sounding Out provided a focus and direction towards a positive
19 future and opened up opportunities that they may not have otherwise encountered:
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22 *“Yeah, it’s given me that focus again; it’s given me that purpose and the realisation that this is what I*
23 *wanted to [do].” (Colin, Current Participant)*
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26 *“With Sounding Out, it gave me hope for a better future. Not necessarily in music, but in*
27 *understanding that there are parts of the system that are actually there to support you, to care for*
28 *you.” (Ed, Current Participant)*
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32 Five participants spoke about how music can provide a positive and productive activity for any down
33 time. Participants, staff and family members all spoke about the importance of having a positive pastime
34 to focus on when faced by the challenges of reintegrating into society upon release:
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38 *“I think it’s really hard for a lot of ex-prisoners to have goals when they come out ... I think having*
39 *something that they can work towards, and work on and feel a part of outside, post-gate, I think*
40 *that’s really important.” (Sophie, Musician)*
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44 *“Once they come out, they need direction, positive direction, and the Irene Taylor Trust is giving them*
45 *that positive direction.” (Anne, Parent)*
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48 For two participants, in particular, the focus on the future developed through the Sounding Out
49 programme helped them to make different, less risky choicesSounding Out gave them a positive identity
50 away from risky behaviours:
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3 *"Being able to look forward to something as well ... You think differently. I'm not taking all those mad*
4 *risks I used to take, you get offers to do things and that, and I say no, no I'm in a band..."* (Peter,
5 Recent Participant)
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9 *"It gives me a substitute for drugs, for something to focus on."* (Jack, Recent Participant)
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11 Two participants from the recent cohort spoke specifically about employment opportunities that arose,
12 in part, through their involvement with Sounding Out and the Irene Taylor Trust, and one of the
13 musicians gave the example of a cohort member who had accessed a music related apprenticeship after
14 completing the programme-:
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17 *"He's gone on to do the apprenticeship which is brilliant and he possibly would not have had access*
18 *to that had he not taken part in Sounding Out, and was aware of his talents as a mentor and a*
19 *musician in that context."* (Sophie, Musician)
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25 Jack explained how Sounding Out has supported him with his career development:
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27 *"[The position will] further my professional credibility within this field and hopefully by the end of it I'll*
28 *be employable, that's a massive thing for me. ... I wouldn't have that determination and focus had I*
29 *not been part of this project [Sounding Out], I wouldn't have known how to apply it, I think that's the*
30 *best help."* (Jack, Recent Participant)
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36 *Desistance from Crime. Lyrics from Getting Out: 'I'll live better, stay away from crime; If I live better, this*
37 *whole world is mine'*
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39 In addition to looking forward towards positive pursuits, seven participants also spoke of the
40 programme as a positive distraction and providing a focus away from reoffending. At the time
41 interviews were conducted, recent participants had been out of prison for two years and current
42 participants for up to six months.
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47 *"Well look I've been out of jail for two years. That's a record in itself, usually I'm not even out for six*
48 *months, and that's over twenty years, that's a long time."* (Peter, Recent Participant)
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51 *"These people [Sounding Out staff] can help you to make more music and in exchange, actually it*
52 *stops you from re-offending as well because if your focus has changed now, that stops you from re-*
53 *offending as well."* (Mark, Recent Participant)
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3 All ten participants interviewed were able to point to examples of positive reintegration into the
4 community including reengagement with family members, voluntary work, paid employment and
5 training, and development of hobbies and interests, contributing to secondary desistance (Bilby et al.,
6 2013: p13). One staff member explained his view on why the programme reduces re-offending rates.
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10 *“Our rate of re-offending is really, really low, much lower than the normal average. ... I think it’s being*
11 *there at a very turbulent difficult time which is when someone’s been released. Giving them the*
12 *confidence and self-esteem to feel proud of themselves and belief that there are other things they*
13 *could be doing. Giving them support to get work and that might be work with other people, or*
14 *working with us. Because, a big reason for committing crime is not having money, so if you can*
15 *provide that, it is going to be a deterrent.”* (Tom, Staff)
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24 Although the remit of this current study did not involve review or analysis of proven reoffending, the
25 findings illuminate participants having a new focus in their life and adopting an ‘anti-stigmatic identity’
26 (Bensimon, 2021:p10) as a musician or band member. This adds to previous findings that arts-based
27 programmes can support secondary desistance through participants creating new identities and
28 refocusing their lives (Anderson et al., 2011; Bilby et al., 2013; Cartwright, 2013; Caulfield et al., 2016;
29 Cursley and Maruna, 2015). Participants described how, through the workshops, performances, tutoring
30 and personal development within Sounding Out, they had hope for a better future and a positive
31 direction in life. Importantly, the purpose of performing in a band was prosocial and reported to replace
32 previous anti-social and risky behaviours, such as taking drugs. Furthermore, the liberating process of
33 creating and playing music has previously been found to support engagement in rehabilitation
34 programmes and personal development (Kougiali et al., 2017).
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46 Succeeding in gaining meaningful employment was attributed to involvement in Sounding Out.
47 Supporting participants to gain transferable skills and identify and navigate employment opportunities is
48 key for participants to lead positive lives; particularly in light of the multitude of challenges former
49 prisoners face to securing employment and thus economic independence, for example stigma of having
50 a criminal record and lack of employment history (Sheppard and Ricciardelli, 2020). There is also
51 evidence to support the notion that employment (and the associated benefits of friendships and
52 financial security) supports desistance from crime for former offenders (Maruna 2001; Oswald, 2020).
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Interpersonal relationships

Participants and staff made frequent reference to the development of relationships with peers, family, staff, and musicians. Participants discussed how the group work of Sounding Out helped them develop patience, and that the interactions with staff were positive and non-judgemental.

Relationships between peers. Lyrics from The Day it Began: 'The music we made, The words we sang, The songs we played, Was the day it began.'

Working as a group is a key aspect of the Sounding Out programme, as expressed by four staff and nine participants. When participants were asked to describe their favourite part of the programme, all participants from the current cohort mentioned working as a team, sharing experiences and meeting other musically minded peers:

"...make you automatically feel like you're part of the family. That bit's very important for me, it's being around these people, good vibes, good people." (Roger, Current Participant)

The recent cohort differed as they had met, and formed a band, whilst in prison on the Irene Taylor Trust's Music in Prison Programme. They explained how the through-the-gate programme of Sounding Out helped to keep the group together:

"It's kept me friends with the people I was inside with and with this band, which helps all of us make sense of coming out and starting again." (Jack, Recent Participant)

Four participants described how the programme had helped them become more patient, particularly through working in a group setting, learning new techniques to remain calm when trying to develop new skills, and learning to compromise in certain situations:

"Working as a team. I was so used to being on my own music wise; integrating into a band was quite difficult because of musical differences and things. It taught me to work around that and come to compromises." (Scott, Recent Participant)

Liam had become involved in tutoring young people through Sounding Out and reflected on how this required both patience and a willingness to overcome challenges, but also that the patience he had

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3 developed was a transferable skill for everyday interactions. Similarly, Jack explained why he felt the
4 group work through music is important:

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7 *“It’s probably better than other arts for that, because it’s more of a group process, it involves*
8 *conversations as part of the process, verbal as well as musical conversation. Which other arts are*
9 *more insular, painting and sculpture and stuff, you don’t require any sort of networking or*
10 *communication, music specifically there’s a communicative aspect to it that would benefit a lot of*
11 *prisoners.”* (Jack, Recent Participant)
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18 Family Connections. *Lyrics from Getting Out: ‘My family they help me, I’m pleased they are mine; I’ll have*
19 *my friends around me, I’ll be just fine’*

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21 Four participants referred to the positive impact that engaging with the programme had on their
22 relationships with friends and family. Jack particularly noticed the impact on his relationship with his
23 children:
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27 *“My children feel definitely proud of the fact I’m doing it, they’re musical themselves. ... My son’s*
28 *trying to pursue a life musical too, so it’s a good way for us, it’s opened a new channel for us to bond*
29 *through.”* (Jack, Recent Participant)
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33 The opportunity for family members to come to gigs and see the band perform was a particular source
34 of pride for Peter and his family, and was in itself a catalyst for his family to come together:

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37 *“It made an impact on all of us, to see Peter there and to see how happy he was and confident. Yeah,*
38 *we know it was all because of this [Sounding Out].”* (Anne, Parent)
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42 Peter’s mother, Anne, also described the positive difference in communication she had observed in his
43 communication skills since with her son, Peter, since he had started ~~eding~~ the programme:
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46 *“During this time, it’s been lovely, it’s helped our relationship a great deal because we’ve got more to*
47 *speak about because it’s more positive.”* (Anne, Parent)
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52 Professional Relationships. The feeling of working with experienced musicians and having the support of
53 the project staff were an important part of Sounding Out. Eight of the ten participants expressed their
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3 appreciation of the wider pastoral support provided, often stating that the staff go *'above and beyond'*
4 to support them. This was also recognised by three of the staff.
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7 *"They go above and beyond just teaching you music. They become more someone you can reach out*
8 *to, someone neutral that doesn't know your family or friends and you can get a load off your chest."*

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10 (Liam, Recent Participant)
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13 *"From what I've heard and I always hear it, everyone loves [Natalie] and her role and the interaction*
14 *that she has with them is invaluable, because you've got someone on your side."* (Sophie, Musician)
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17 Another aspect of Sounding Out raised by four participants and three staff was importance of the non-
18 judgemental environment in participants' continued engagement.
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21 *"It's quite liberating, you're part of a community that's free of judgement."* (Ed, Current Participant)
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24 *"We don't have any judgments of any of the participants who come along, as I said we start from a*
25 *clean state."* (Sophie, Musician)
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28 The opportunity to work with experienced musicians was highly valued and discussed by five
29 participants:
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32 *"I'm living my dream because we got to work with really, really experienced musicians ... the best*
33 *thing for me is to be able to work with professional musicians who are our mentors."* (Mark, Recent
34 Participant)
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37 *"They could be playing anywhere in the world, but they take their time out to go into prisons. It takes*
38 *a special kind of person to do things like that."* (Liam, Recent Participant)
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42 Similarly, the staff musicians highlighted how they valued the relationships that developed with
43 participants during the programme. For example, Gareth explained a valuable moment he shared with
44 Mark on a Making Tracks project:
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47 *"I told him this, 'it's great having you here, your input is so valuable, you're a real asset to the team on*
48 *this project, I'm grateful and I thank you for it'."* (Gareth, Musician)
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51 The networking opportunities that Sounding Out afforded them were also appreciated by three
52 participants:
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3 *“That was pretty cool networking amongst different criminal justice sector, third sector staff everyone*
4 *was so impressed.”* (Brian, Current Participant)
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7 *“There will be a lot of people from the charity industry today and from the Ministry of Justice, they’ll*
8 *be coming in and asking us some questions, so it’s all great. I didn’t think before my imprisonment I’d*
9 *have the chance to do these things, I feel very lucky and privileged.”* (Mark, Recent Participant)
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16 Developing new and existing relationships has been suggested to be hugely influential in supporting
17 participant behaviour and attitudinal changes (Anderson et al., 2011; Bilby et al., 2013; Cursley, 2012;
18 Cursley and Maruna, 2015). Through learning to work with new people, the programme participants
19 developed transferable life skills of patience, compromise and communication. The relationships built
20 through Sounding Out are a vital component of the programme. The immediate social network formed
21 between peers was found to be important in these findings with current cohorts, but importantly still
22 evident five years later as discussed by Bensimon (2021). The participant facilitator relationship is also
23 particularly powerful and provides new role models (De Viggiani et al., 2013). The professional
24 relationship and bonds between staff, musicians and participants builds on previous findings with
25 Sounding Out (Bensimon, 2021) and other research in criminal justice settings. Cursley and Maruna
26 (2015), for example, found that relationships between facilitators and participants increased social
27 support, while Viggiani et al. (2013) have noted the new positive role models found in peers and
28 facilitators. There is considerable evidence that increased social support is associated with successful
29 reentry in the community (e.g. Dockery, 2019) and although a variety of individual and structural factors
30 will come into play, interventions that support the development of prosocial networks may be effective
31 in reducing recidivism (Scottish Government, 2015). Furthermore, reconnecting with family over a
32 positive activity can build up their relationships to provide further social support, with supporting family
33 ties a key part of most reducing reoffending strategies. Future research could usefully explore the longer
34 term impact on social support and family ties of music in criminal justice programmes.
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51 **Concluding Discussion**

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54 Through a series of semi-structured interviews with 17 people (former prisoners, staff, and a family
55 member) this study identified the positive impact of a music programme for former prisoners as they
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3 left prison and re-entered the community. The interviews identified benefits in the development of
4 personal attributes associated with a sense of achievement and wellbeing; identifying focus and
5 direction towards employment and away from reoffending; and the development of social skills and
6 personal and professional relationships. The research provides evidence for the impact of involvement
7 in a carefully designed programme of music creation, skills development and work placements. The
8 findings are consistent with the body of research that demonstrates the impact of music programmes
9 on prisoners (e.g., Bilby et al., 2013; Caulfield et al., 2016; Kougiali et al., 2017), helping to address the
10 gap in the evidence base on the role of music programmes as people leave prison and re-enter the
11 community.
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19 The themes identified here build on previous research with Sounding Out participants five years after
20 their involvement with the programme (Bensimon, 2021). This research captured the experiences of
21 two cohorts of participants, collecting data with both staff and participants during and shortly after the
22 Sounding Out programme. These cohorts differed in that one group had met in prison and Sounding Out
23 supported them to continue playing together as a band, while the second cohort did not know each
24 other beforehand. The impact of being involved in the programme was similar for both cohorts.
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30 There were a number of aspects of the programme that participants and facilitators felt were
31 particularly important to its success, which could be useful learning for those designing or implementing
32 resettlement based/community transition activities for people in prison. First, the fact that it provided
33 participants with an opportunity to engage in an activity that they found interesting and purposeful.
34 Second, Sounding Out enabled contact with professionals who could teach valued skills and provided
35 employment opportunities. Third, the duration and nature of support was made explicit and was
36 boundaried, which helped structure expectations and helped avoid a cliff edge as a result of sudden
37 withdrawal of support. Fourth, the positive, supportive and boundaried relationships between staff and
38 participants. Finally, the setting up of contacts and networks beyond the programme, enabling
39 participants to build on the social and professional support available to them. As well as evidencing the
40 experience and impacts of the programme on participants, the research has identified five factors that
41 participants thought made the programme more or less impactful depending on the context. Although
42 far from conclusive, these findings open up interesting future lines of inquiry that may be of use in
43 assisting future programmes to identify supportive processes which could maximise the impact of the
44 programme. These include: first, the engagement of participants, such as whether they had an existing
45 passion for music; second, the professionalism of the programme and the availability of paid
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3 opportunities; third, the expectations of the participants, including managing boundaries and
4 expectations of what happened after the programme ended; fourth, the importance of positive
5 relationships with staff, the musicians and peers; and fifth, partnerships beyond the programme,
6 including with criminal justice staff.
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13 The research presented here has built on previous research to illuminate the experience of people taking
14 part in a Sounding Out music programme as they leave prison and reenter the community. However, the
15 research is not without limitation. Previous research suggests a potential for people involved with the
16 criminal justice system to respond to researchers in what they perceive to be a socially desirable manner
17 (Murray, 2001), and the findings should be read with that in mind. Sounding Out participants are
18 selected on the basis of reliability, commitment and evidence of improvement over the course of the
19 programme in prison. The selection of participants in the programme is therefore biased towards
20 participants who are already motivated and likely to benefit from the Sounding Out Programme. Despite
21 attempts to contact participants who had lost contact with the programme, the sample was not able to
22 include the perspectives of people who were no longer in contact with Irene Taylor Trust. This is another
23 key limitation of the study, which meant that the authors were not able to comment on the reasons why
24 people disengaged from the programme, which would have enabled a more comprehensive
25 understanding of people's experiences of the programme, and of how to improve the intervention.
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36 While criticism has been levelled against small scale, qualitative work in the area of music and the arts in
37 criminal justice (Burrowes et al., 2013), this exploratory study adds to a very limited amount of research
38 focused on adult's participation in music programmes in the community as they leave prison. The
39 findings shine a light on participant's experiences at a transitional point that is often very fraught (Chui
40 and Cheng, 2013; Pękala-Wojciechowska et al., 2021; Ramakers et al., 2016). As the current research has
41 only involved men, future research could begin to consider the potential impact on women leaving
42 prison who often have different needs as they reenter the community.
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Table 1. Themes

Theme	Sub themes
1. Personal Impact	a. Confidence b. Wellbeing c. Musical ability
2. Focus and Direction	a. Focus for the future b. Desistance from crime
3. Interpersonal Relationships	a. Relationships between peers b. Family connections c. Professional relationships

"I'll live better, stay away from crime": Exploring the reintegration of former prisoners into the community through a music programme

Abstract

- Purpose

There is evidence that music programmes can have a positive impact on people in contact with the criminal justice system. However, little attention has been paid to the potential role of music programmes as people leave prison and re-enter the community. Providing support for former prisoners 'through-the-gate' is important to aid resettlement and reduce risk of reoffending. This paper presents research on a programme called Sounding Out: a two year, London-based programme, providing ex-prisoners with longer-term rehabilitative opportunities upon their release to bridge the gap between life inside and outside of prison.

- Design/methodology/approach

The study aimed to understand the impact of the Sounding Out programme on ex-prisoners from the perspective of participants, staff and family members. Semi-structured interviews took place with 17 people: 10 participants across two Sounding Out projects; six members of staff - three from the Irene Taylor Trust, two musicians, and one former prison worker; and one family member of a participant.

- Findings

The research provides an understanding of the impact of involvement in a carefully designed programme of music creation, skills development, and work placements. Thematic analysis of the data resulted in three key themes: personal impact; focus and direction; interpersonal relationships. The findings are consistent with the body of research that demonstrates the impact of music programmes on prisoners.

- Originality

The current study adds to the relatively limited body of evidence on the role of music programmes in the reintegration of former prisoners into the community.

Keywords

Resettlement; Well-being; Social Support; Rehabilitation; Music programme

Introduction

This article presents findings from research with a music programme that works with people as they leave prison and re-enter the community. There is a substantial evidence base concerning the impact of creative arts programmes in criminal justice (see Caulfield, 2021, for an overview), and in particular music, but limited research on the impact of music programmes as people make the transition from prison to the community. The research presented here builds upon the very limited evidence base, seeking to understand the impact of the programme from the perspective of participants, staff, and family members through qualitative interviews.

Research Context

Music in criminal justice

There is evidence to suggest that music programmes can have a positive impact on people in contact with the criminal justice system. Writing and performing music has been found to enable individuals to redefine and change their thinking about themselves (Bilby et al., 2013). This can be viewed as contributing to secondary desistance (Maruna and Farrall, 2004), where 'desistance is the process by which people who have offended stop offending (primary desistance) and then take on a personal narrative (Maruna, 2001) that supports a continuing non-offending lifestyle (secondary desistance)' (Bilby et al., 2013: p13). A number of small-scale studies have found that music programmes in prisons can foster a process of self-evaluation (Caulfield et al., 2016), which has been found to positively improve self-concept (Henley et al., 2012).

A 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 et al., 2017: p1). It is thought that this is mostly due to increased protective factors, including social support, that music programmes can provide (Cursley and Maruna, 2015). The new role models found in participant's peers and programme facilitators can be a particularly important protective factor (De Viggiani et al., 2013). Henley et al. (2012) report the high level of trust and respect observed between participants and the music facilitator, with social barriers broken in the spaces created (Abrahams et al., 2012).

Numerous studies have shown that participation in music programmes improves the confidence of those with experience of the criminal justice system (Caulfield et al., 2016; Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2008; De Viggiani et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2009). Improved proficiency with a musical instrument in particular has been found to improve self-confidence in performance and rehearsals (Cursley and Maruna, 2015).

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3 Increased confidence is linked with a more positive, constructive use of time and associated with
4 integration into education (Cheliotis et al., 2014; De Viggiani et al., 2013; Tarling and Adams, 2012).
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6 Indeed, a number of studies have found that participation in music programmes while in contact with
7 the criminal justice system directly increases motivation and engagement with education and other
8 constructive activities (Anderson and Overy, 2010; Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2008; Wilson et al., 2009).
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13 While the amount of research concerning the role and impact of music in criminal justice has increased,
14 criticism has been levelled against the body of evidence. For example, in 2013 Burrowes et al. noted a
15 particular lack of robust quantitative data in arts in criminal justice research more widely with most
16 studies lacking a control group. Historically it has been relatively rare for studies to include pre- post-
17 test measures meaning it has been difficult to clearly establish outcomes. Acknowledging the need for
18 robust understanding of outcomes, it is important to emphasise the value of in-depth qualitative
19 evidence to understand participant experiences and explore how any change in outcomes might occur
20 (Bilby et al., 2013). For example, Winder et al. (2015), in their research with a prison-based music
21 programme, combined a control group design using pre- and post- test measures of motivation and
22 readiness to change with a small number of qualitative interviews exploring participant's experiences of
23 the programme. Non-intellectually disabled participants learnt to foster their emotions in a safe way
24 and became ready for more formal treatment programmes in prison.
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35 Recent research with children in youth justice settings has sought to directly respond to previous
36 criticism of research in this area (Caulfield et al., 2022). Using a comparison group design, extended and
37 completed by in-depth interviews, the researchers found that a music programmes for children in
38 contact with a Youth Offending Service had a positive impact on participants' sentence engagement
39 compared to children who did not participate in the music programme. This study - and a follow-up
40 study expanded to include children identified as being at-risk of involvement with the criminal justice
41 system - found improvements in self-reported wellbeing, engagement with education, and educational
42 aspirations (Caulfield et al., 2022; Caulfield and Sojka, 2023). Similarly, Daykin et al. (2017) took a mixed-
43 methods approach - including pre- post-test and follow up measurement of well-being - to exploring the
44 role of music with young people in community justice settings, suggesting that 'music-making led by
45 professional musicians can serve as a personal and collective resource' (p955).
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3 What is clear from the evidence base – particularly research that might be more readily viewed as
4 ‘robust’ in the terms set out by Burrowes et al. – is that music in criminal justice programmes have a
5 clear and measurable impact on well-being and sentence engagement. Qualitatively there is much
6 discussion of engagement with the creative arts supporting a non-offending lifestyle. It is perhaps useful
7 here to draw on evidence from other areas, such as the impact of music and the arts in education. As
8 Caulfield and Sojka (2023: 3) set out, music and the arts have been used to promote school engagement
9 on the basis of both educational achievement, ‘but also successes in life beyond school, including work
10 (Finn and Zimmer, 2012), avoidance of anti-social and delinquent behaviours (Li and Lerner, 2011;
11 Morrison, et al., 2002) and improved health outcomes (Allen and Bowles, 2012).
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20 While some research has focused on young people’s participation in music programmes while serving
21 community sentences, little research has focused on the experience of adults in the community,
22 especially as they leave prison. The transition from the prison regime to resettling in the community can
23 be fraught. Former prisoners can often find themselves isolated, without money, job opportunities or
24 clear prospects, and struggling to find a direction in life (Chui and Cheng, 2013; Pękala-Wojciechowska
25 et al., 2021; Ramakers et al., 2016). Providing support for former prisoners ‘through-the-gate’ is
26 important to aid resettlement and reduce risk of reoffending. However, a 2017 inspection of statutory
27 ‘through-the-gate’ services¹ in England and Wales identified that they were not working (HMIP and
28 HMIP, 2017). In response, more funding was directed to infrastructure and staffing to support these
29 services, although since then the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda that through-the-gate sat within
30 was deemed unworkable and abolished. Providing a programme as a continuation of relationships that
31 have been developed in prison allows for continuity of support, aiding resettlement and rehabilitation
32 and this has been lacking through statutory services in recent years.
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44 ***Sounding Out***

45 The Irene Taylor Trust is a UK-based charity that supports vulnerable and excluded individuals (including
46 prisoners, ex-prisoners and young people) to rebuild their lives in, and upon release from, prison by
47 inspiring them through the creation of new music. In 2012, The Irene Taylor Trust piloted a ‘through-the-
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52 ¹ ‘Through-the-gate’ resettlement services were launched in 2014 by the UK government to bridge the gap between prison and
53 the community. They were intended to provide a more joined up approach to helping prisoners maintain or find
54 accommodation, provide assistance with finance, benefits and debt, and to support them to enter education, training and
55 employment.
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3 gate' project to provide extended support for individuals upon release from prison. An independent
4 evaluation of the pilot highlighted the successes and made recommendations that have influenced the
5 delivery of the current Sounding Out programme (Cartwright, 2013). Sounding Out is a London-based
6 programme, providing ex-prisoners with longer-term rehabilitative opportunities upon their release, to
7 bridge the gap between life inside and outside of prison. Programme participants are supported by
8 Sounding Out for a period of two years from beginning to end, and participants are expected to engage
9 with the programme for the duration of the two years. The programme is delivered on a continuous,
10 rolling basis. The programme consists of: creative music projects; live performance opportunities; one to
11 one pastoral support; training; workshop delivery; mentoring; and work placements. Programme
12 participants are allocated an individual support worker from the Irene Taylor Trust, who is their main
13 point of contact with the programme, and also engage with professional musicians as part of the
14 programme activities who support with the practical music workshops.

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23 Prison Musicians in Residence are responsible for referring individuals to Sounding Out during strategic
24 work inside prisons. They select beneficiaries based on a number of factors, including: level of
25 skill/aptitude; reliability; commitment; whether improvement has been made/interest maintained
26 during the time projects ran inside prison. The Sounding Out programme responds to the challenges
27 faced by ex-prisoners as they attempt to resettle in the community, supporting individuals to develop
28 the 'skills, attitude, and self-belief' to live positive and independent lives in the community (Nacro, no
29 date). An evaluation of the Sounding Out pilot found that the programme provided valuable support for
30 participants (Cartwright, 2013). Recent research by Bensimon (2021) is one of the few peer-reviewed
31 studies to explore music programmes for people on release from prison and is focused on the Sounding
32 Out programme. Bensimon presents findings from interviews with five participants and three members
33 of staff, identifying four central themes focused on the impact of the programme: improved social
34 bonding, a sense of hope and life purpose, a sense of achievement, and transformation. Bensimon takes
35 the analysis further by discussing the findings in light of the Good Lives Model (GLM: Ward, 2002),
36 proposing that Sounding Out 'assisted both formerly incarcerated individuals and programme staff
37 members, in attaining the following GLM primary goods in life: community, relatedness, knowledge,
38 spirituality, excellence in work and play, excellence in agency, and creativity.' (Bensimon, 2021: p1).
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The current study aimed, first, to understand the impact of the Sounding Out programme on ex-
prisoners from the perspective of participants, staff and family members through qualitative interviews.
Second, it aimed to extend the relatively limited body of evidence on the role of music programmes in
the reintegration of former prisoners into the community.

Methods

The researchers approached the study from a standpoint that the criminal justice system is poorly equipped to support people as they leave prison and try to reintegrate into society. This, combined with the substantial challenges around accommodation, work, and social ties, means there is a clear need for programmes that support individuals who – we believe – fundamentally wish to live better lives.

Twenty-two semi-structured interviews took place with seventeen participants over a three-month period. At the time the data were collected, one iteration of the Sounding Out programme had recently been completed, and one was ongoing (with a four month gap between the cohorts). All 13 participants from these two cohorts were invited to take part in the research. Five participants from the recent cohort and five participants from the current cohort agreed to take part. Eight participants were White British and two Black British. Attempts were made to contact members of the recent cohort who had lost touch with the Irene Taylor Trust (n=3), but these were unsuccessful. Participants from the current cohort were interviewed twice, once at the beginning of the programme, and again six weeks into the programme. This temporal dimension was to capture perspectives as participants progressed through the programme and allow for greater rapport building with the researchers, although interviews with programme participants did not reveal a difference in perspective between interviews. Six members of staff were also interviewed, three from the Irene Taylor Trust (including both support workers on the programme), two musicians, and one former prison worker. Family members of three participants agreed to have their contact details shared by programme staff, and one family member of a participant agreed to be interviewed.

Topic guides for programme participants contained questions on: experiences of the programme; perceived gains from the programme; key success factors; how the programme could be amended to further support participant needs. Staff interview topic guides contained questions on: key partners involved in the programme and their role; challenges faced and how these were addressed; impact of the programme on participants.

Interviews lasted an average of 51 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were analysed using a process of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2012), and the process managed on NVivo software. The iterative analysis consisted of initial familiarisation with the data through transcription of the recordings into a Word document and a thorough reading of the transcripts. Second, the transcripts were analysed line by line and coded inductively. Coded data was

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3 grouped together into themes, which were then reviewed against the data and literature and amended
4 accordingly. The authors acknowledge the influence of researcher's subjective experience and
5 reflectivity in analysis of data, and generation of meaning. Transcripts were therefore analysed
6 independently by two researchers, before provisional themes were discussed, allowing opportunity for
7 iterative development of themes, and for disagreements to be aired and consensus reached.
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11 12 13 **Ethics**

14 Ethical approval was received from the University of NAME REMOVED FOR ANONYMOUS REVIEW Ethics
15 Committee. Informed consent was received from all participants and participants were given a
16 participant information sheet with information about their right to withdraw from the research.
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23 **Discussion of Findings**

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26 The data analysis generated three overarching themes and eight sub-themes, as outlined in Table 1. The
27 themes combine findings from the participants, staff, and family members, allowing the findings to be
28 considered from multiple perspectives. Anonymised illustrative quotes are provided within the themes
29 and pseudonyms have been used. Each theme is discussed in the context of relevant literature. In
30 keeping with the creativity of the music project, song lyrics have been weaved into the findings section,
31 composed by participants as part of the programme, for illustrative purposes to 'bring to life' themes
32 identified.
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39 (Table 1 here)
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43 **Personal Impact**

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45 Programme participants and staff reported improvements in participant confidence, wellbeing and
46 musical ability, which they attributed to taking part in Sounding Out.
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50 Confidence. *Lyrics from Make it One Day: 'I thank you all for helping me; To be the man that's flying free;*
51 *I made it today'*
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53 Nine out of ten participants spoke about increases in confidence, both their own and witnessing the
54 confidence of others in the group improve. Some participants spoke about increases in their confidence
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3 as a musician, whilst others spoke more broadly about how the programme had increased their
4 confidence in their everyday lives:
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7 *“At the moment I have no problem playing in front of ten people or thousands of people. They gave*
8 *me that confidence. Whereas in my first gig after so many years, I was literally shaking when I was*
9 *playing the guitar.”* (Mark, Recent Participant)
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13 *“I’ve had an increase in confidence, not just from my ability as a musician, and my ability to be more*
14 *involved in that as a professional, but in my day-to-day life.”* (Jack, Recent Participant)
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17 Sounding Out staff also witnessed increases in participants’ confidence through the way participants
18 presented themselves and their ability to facilitate projects:
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21 *“I think he really embraced this idea of hey, I can facilitate this stuff. He’s going out on his own and*
22 *doing it now. So clearly he made a bit of a discovery in himself, actually.”* (Gareth, Musician)
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26 One of the staff members related increases in confidence in participants to the value other people were
27 now seeing in them:
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30 *“He just couldn’t believe that someone of that sort of musical talent would want to do something like*
31 *this, would want to help these guys, that was really powerful watching that and that was quite a*
32 *turning point for him.”* (Tom, Staff)
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37 Wellbeing Lyrics from Secret: ‘You feel so lost, you feel so lonely, you’re walking on your own; It’s time for
38 healing, we need loving for the secrets to unfold’
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41 Seven out of ten participants spoke about the positive impact of Sounding Out on their feelings and
42 wellbeing:
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45 *“Sounding Out brought me to a space of sanity and to cope emotionally and psychologically.”* (Ed,
46 Current Participant)
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50 Aaron spoke about how depressed he had been since he came out of prison, but that through taking
51 part in Sounding Out *“it’s the first time I’ve felt positive about my life for months”* (Aaron, Current
52 Participant). This was echoed in the interview with a family member and by two of the staff:
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3 *"Aaron said to me yesterday how depressed he'd been lately, and then told me how happy he was to*
4 *be doing this."* (Gareth, Musician)

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7 *"I really should thank the Irene Taylor Trust because that's what he needed, he needed something*
8 *positive, and he needed someone to bring out the best in him."* (Anne, Parent)

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11 Two participants spoke about making music and lyric writing as an outlet for their emotions:

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14 *"The only way I could express myself at the time was while I was making music ... the lyrics of all our*
15 *songs say it all. From devastation, to happy moments, to depressing moments, everything is in there.*
16 *The regrets, the things we've done in the past, where we ended up, what we want to do in the future,*
17 *it all reflects in our songs."* (Mark, Recent Participant)

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23 Musical Ability. Whilst it was common for participants to have some musical experience prior to the
24 programme, eight participants reported an improvement in their musical abilities:

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27 *"Definitely holding the bass is getting better. Holding it further up the neck and my speed is starting*
28 *to get back up again."* (Roger, Current Participant)

29
30
31 *"Learned a lot about writing music, it's ignited my passion for the keyboard again, the piano, that's*
32 *helped me as well with my music production."* (Peter, Recent Participant)

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35 For Mark, the impact of Sounding Out was that *"they took us to a next level"* musically:

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37
38 *"I've learned a lot from them musically even though I come from a musical background but with*
39 *music you always learn ... you have to keep up with the new technology, the new era music and what*
40 *not, so I've learned a lot from them."* (Mark, Recent Participant)

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44 Staff noticed how the process of writing and playing together had helped the musicians improve
45 throughout the programme, even for those with previous experience. They also mentioned the impact
46 of leadership and tutoring. Ellie and Gareth talked about how they trained participants to be music
47 instructors and how this developed them as musicians:

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51 *"...our project team works with and gives these new musicians, the former prisoners, the skill to assist*
52 *the project team in helping the group create music. ... They're now not being instructed, they're doing*
53 *the instructing."* (Ellie, Staff)

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3 *“So I did see in that, watching these guys then lead projects, and over a few projects with us, began to*
4 *step more and more into the mantle of being a leader, as opposed to just awaiting instructions from*
5 *us. Taking the initiative and going and doing these things, proposing ideas.”* (Gareth, Musician)
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11 The first theme highlights benefits specifically within music but also within their everyday lives of
12 participants. These findings support existing research that shows participation in music programmes can
13 increase confidence and social skills for those in detention (Baker and Homan, 2007; Bruce, 2015;
14 Cheliotis, 2014; Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2008) and the community (Caulfield and Sojka, 2023). Increased
15 confidence has been linked with a more positive, constructive use of time (Adams, 2012; Cheliotis and
16 Jordanoska, 2016; Viggiani et al., 2013).
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22 The current findings support previous research that suggests that wellbeing is enhanced through
23 participation in music programmes in the community for those with experience of the criminal justice
24 system (e.g. Caulfield et al., 2022). Participants described the programme as an opportunity to express
25 themselves and their emotions, feel positive about themselves and help them cope emotionally. It is
26 interesting that improvements in wellbeing were not documented in previous research with former
27 Sounding Out participants (five years after participation: Bensimon, 2021) suggesting this might be a
28 short-term impact. Numerous studies suggest that participation in creative programmes can provide an
29 effective way of dealing with challenging emotions (cf Nugent and Loucks, 2011; Blacker et al. 2008).
30 Atherton, Knight, and van Barthold (2022) for example, note that for participants in prison and
31 community settings a key outcome was hope, whereby “hope was clearly important (Begley &
32 Blackwood, 2000) in counteracting overwhelming emotions and feelings of depression, anxiety, and
33 hopelessness about the future.” (p.233). While emotional wellbeing and regulation of emotions are
34 associated with reduced risk of offending (Ministry of Justice, 2010; Social Exclusion Taskforce, 2009).
35 However, evidence concerning the impact on well-being of music programmes in criminal justice
36 wellbeing is largely limited to short-term impacts.
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50 ***Focus and Direction***

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53 One member of staff summarised her hopes for each participant that engaged in the programme:
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3 *“Ideally, having every one of them not reoffend is a key factor, supporting every one of them into*
4 *some sort of employment, training and education stuff, seeing them flourish and getting something*
5 *out of it, having a sense of community, that’s the ideal, that’s always the aim really.” (Natalie, Staff)*
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9 The following two subthemes provide further examples of how participants avoided reoffending, sought
10 new employment opportunities, took on a new identity, and overall had a more positive outlook for the
11 future.
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15 *Focus for the future. Lyrics from One Day: ‘Forget the past, it’s done and dusted; The future is in the*
16 *world of hope and see.’*
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18 All ten participants spoke about how Sounding Out provided a focus and direction towards a positive
19 future and opened up opportunities that they may not have otherwise encountered:
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22 *“Yeah, it’s given me that focus again; it’s given me that purpose and the realisation that this is what I*
23 *wanted to [do].” (Colin, Current Participant)*
24
25

26 *“With Sounding Out, it gave me hope for a better future. Not necessarily in music, but in*
27 *understanding that there are parts of the system that are actually there to support you, to care for*
28 *you.” (Ed, Current Participant)*
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32 Five participants spoke about how music can provide a positive and productive activity for any down
33 time. Participants, staff and family members all spoke about the importance of having a positive pastime
34 to focus on when faced by the challenges of reintegrating into society upon release:
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38 *“I think it’s really hard for a lot of ex-prisoners to have goals when they come out ... I think having*
39 *something that they can work towards, and work on and feel a part of outside, post-gate, I think*
40 *that’s really important.” (Sophie, Musician)*
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44 *“Once they come out, they need direction, positive direction, and the Irene Taylor Trust is giving them*
45 *that positive direction.” (Anne, Parent)*
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48 For two participants in particular, the focus on the future developed through the Sounding Out
49 programme helped them to make different, less risky choices:
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52 *“Being able to look forward to something as well ... You think differently. I’m not taking all those mad*
53 *risks I used to take, you get offers to do things and that, and I say no, no I’m in a band...” (Peter,*
54 *Recent Participant)*
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3 *"It gives me a substitute for drugs, for something to focus on."* (Jack, Recent Participant)
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6 Two participants from the recent cohort spoke specifically about employment opportunities that arose,
7 in part, through their involvement with Sounding Out and the Irene Taylor Trust, and one of the
8 musicians gave the example of a cohort member who had accessed a music related apprenticeship after
9 completing the programme:
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13 *"He's gone on to do the apprenticeship which is brilliant and he possibly would not have had access*
14 *to that had he not taken part in Sounding Out, and was aware of his talents as a mentor and a*
15 *musician in that context."* (Sophie, Musician)
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21 *Desistance from Crime. Lyrics from Getting Out: 'I'll live better, stay away from crime; If I live better, this*
22 *whole world is mine'*
23

24 In addition to looking forward towards positive pursuits, seven participants also spoke of the
25 programme as a positive distraction and providing a focus away from reoffending. At the time
26 interviews were conducted, recent participants had been out of prison for two years and current
27 participants for up to six months.
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32 *"Well look I've been out of jail for two years. That's a record in itself, usually I'm not even out for six*
33 *months, and that's over twenty years, that's a long time."* (Peter, Recent Participant)
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35

36 *"These people [Sounding Out staff] can help you to make more music and in exchange, actually it*
37 *stops you from re-offending as well because if your focus has changed now, that stops you from re-*
38 *offending as well."* (Mark, Recent Participant)
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42 All ten participants interviewed were able to point to examples of positive reintegration into the
43 community including reengagement with family members, voluntary work, paid employment and
44 training, and development of hobbies and interests, contributing to secondary desistance (Bilby et al.,
45 2013: p13). One staff member explained his view on why the programme reduces re-offending rates.
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49 *"Our rate of re-offending is really, really low, much lower than the normal average. ... I think it's being*
50 *there at a very turbulent difficult time which is when someone's been released. Giving them the*
51 *confidence and self-esteem to feel proud of themselves and belief that there are other things they*
52 *could be doing. Giving them support to get work and that might be work with other people, or*
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3 *working with us. Because, a big reason for committing crime is not having money, so if you can*
4 *provide that, it is going to be a deterrent.” (Tom, Staff)*
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10 Although the remit of this current study did not involve review or analysis of proven reoffending, the
11 findings illuminate participants having a new focus in their life and adopting an ‘anti-stigmatic identity’
12 (Bensimon, 2021:p10) as a musician or band member. This adds to previous findings that arts-based
13 programmes can support secondary desistance through participants creating new identities and
14 refocusing their lives (Anderson et al., 2011; Bilby et al., 2013; Cartwright, 2013; Caulfield et al., 2016;
15 Cursley and Maruna, 2015). Participants described how, through the workshops, performances, tutoring
16 and personal development within Sounding Out, they had hope for a better future and a positive
17 direction in life. Importantly, the purpose of performing in a band was prosocial and reported to replace
18 previous anti-social and risky behaviours, such as taking drugs. Furthermore, the liberating process of
19 creating and playing music has previously been found to support engagement in rehabilitation
20 programmes and personal development (Kougiali et al., 2017).
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31 Succeeding in gaining meaningful employment was attributed to involvement in Sounding Out.
32 Supporting participants to gain transferable skills and identify and navigate employment opportunities is
33 key for participants to lead positive lives; particularly in light of the multitude of challenges former
34 prisoners face to securing employment and thus economic independence, for example stigma of having
35 a criminal record and lack of employment history (Sheppard and Ricciardelli, 2020). There is also
36 evidence to support the notion that employment (and the associated benefits of friendships and
37 financial security) supports desistance from crime for former offenders (Maruna 2001; Oswald, 2020).
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47 ***Interpersonal relationships***

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49 Participants and staff made frequent reference to the development of relationships with peers, family,
50 staff, and musicians. Participants discussed how the group work of Sounding Out helped them develop
51 patience, and that the interactions with staff were positive and non-judgemental.
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3 *Relationships between peers. Lyrics from The Day it Began: 'The music we made, The words we sang, The*
4 *songs we played, Was the day it began.'*

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6 Working as a group is a key aspect of the Sounding Out programme, as expressed by four staff and nine
7 participants. When participants were asked to describe their favourite part of the programme, all
8 participants from the current cohort mentioned working as a team, sharing experiences and meeting
9 other musically minded peers:
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14 *"...make you automatically feel like you're part of the family. That bit's very important for me, it's*
15 *being around these people, good vibes, good people."* (Roger, Current Participant)
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18 The recent cohort differed as they had met, and formed a band, whilst in prison on the Irene Taylor
19 Trust's Music in Prison Programme. They explained how the through-the-gate programme of Sounding
20 Out helped to keep the group together:
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23
24 *"It's kept me friends with the people I was inside with and with this band, which helps all of us make*
25 *sense of coming out and starting again."* (Jack, Recent Participant)
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27

28 Four participants described how the programme had helped them become more patient, particularly
29 through working in a group setting, learning new techniques to remain calm when trying to develop new
30 skills, and learning to compromise in certain situations:
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33
34 *"Working as a team. I was so used to being on my own music wise; integrating into a band was quite*
35 *difficult because of musical differences and things. It taught me to work around that and come to*
36 *compromises."* (Scott, Recent Participant)
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40 Liam had become involved in tutoring young people through Sounding Out and reflected on how this
41 required both patience and a willingness to overcome challenges, but also that the patience he had
42 developed was a transferable skill for everyday interactions. Similarly, Jack explained why he felt the
43 group work through music is important:
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47 *"It's probably better than other arts for that, because it's more of a group process, it involves*
48 *conversations as part of the process, verbal as well as musical conversation. Which other arts are*
49 *more insular, painting and sculpture and stuff, you don't require any sort of networking or*
50 *communication, music specifically there's a communicative aspect to it that would benefit a lot of*
51 *prisoners."* (Jack, Recent Participant)
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5 *Family Connections. Lyrics from Getting Out: 'My family they help me, I'm pleased they are mine; I'll have*
6 *my friends around me, I'll be just fine'*
7

8 Four participants referred to the positive impact that engaging with the programme had on their
9 relationships with friends and family. Jack particularly noticed the impact on his relationship with his
10 children:
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14 *"My children feel definitely proud of the fact I'm doing it, they're musical themselves. ... My son's*
15 *trying to pursue a life musical too, so it's a good way for us, it's opened a new channel for us to bond*
16 *through."* (Jack, Recent Participant)
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20 The opportunity for family members to come to gigs and see the band perform was a particular source
21 of pride for Peter and his family, and was in itself a catalyst for his family to come together:
22

23
24 *"It made an impact on all of us, to see Peter there and to see how happy he was and confident. Yeah,*
25 *we know it was all because of this [Sounding Out]."* (Anne, Parent)
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28 Peter's mother, Anne, also described the positive difference in communication with her son, Peter,
29 since he had started the programme:
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32 *"During this time, it's been lovely, it's helped our relationship a great deal because we've got more to*
33 *speak about because it's more positive."* (Anne, Parent)
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38 *Professional Relationships.* The feeling of working with experienced musicians and having the support of
39 the project staff were an important part of Sounding Out. Eight of the ten participants expressed their
40 appreciation of the wider pastoral support provided, often stating that the staff go 'above and beyond'
41 to support them. This was also recognised by three of the staff.
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46 *"They go above and beyond just teaching you music. They become more someone you can reach out*
47 *to, someone neutral that doesn't know your family or friends and you can get a load off your chest."*
48 (Liam, Recent Participant)
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52 *"From what I've heard and I always hear it, everyone loves [Natalie] and her role and the interaction*
53 *that she has with them is invaluable, because you've got someone on your side."* (Sophie, Musician)
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3 Another aspect of Sounding Out raised by four participants and three staff was importance of the non-
4 judgemental environment in participants' continued engagement.
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7 *"It's quite liberating, you're part of a community that's free of judgement."* (Ed, Current Participant)
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10 *"We don't have any judgments of any of the participants who come along, as I said we start from a*
11 *clean state."* (Sophie, Musician)
12

13
14 The opportunity to work with experienced musicians was highly valued and discussed by five
15 participants:
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18 *"I'm living my dream because we got to work with really, really experienced musicians ... the best*
19 *thing for me is to be able to work with professional musicians who are our mentors."* (Mark, Recent
20 Participant)
21

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23
24 *"They could be playing anywhere in the world, but they take their time out to go into prisons. It takes*
25 *a special kind of person to do things like that."* (Liam, Recent Participant)
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28 Similarly, the staff musicians highlighted how they valued the relationships that developed with
29 participants during the programme. For example, Gareth explained a valuable moment he shared with
30 Mark on a Making Tracks project:
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34 *"I told him this, 'it's great having you here, your input is so valuable, you're a real asset to the team on*
35 *this project, I'm grateful and I thank you for it'."* (Gareth, Musician)
36

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38 The networking opportunities that Sounding Out afforded them were also appreciated by three
39 participants:
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42 *"That was pretty cool networking amongst different criminal justice sector, third sector staff everyone*
43 *was so impressed."* (Brian, Current Participant)
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47 *"There will be a lot of people from the charity industry today and from the Ministry of Justice, they'll*
48 *be coming in and asking us some questions, so it's all great. I didn't think before my imprisonment I'd*
49 *have the chance to do these things, I feel very lucky and privileged."* (Mark, Recent Participant)
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3 Developing new and existing relationships has been suggested to be hugely influential in supporting
4 participant behaviour and attitudinal changes (Anderson et al., 2011; Bilby et al., 2013; Cursley, 2012;
5 Cursley and Maruna, 2015). Through learning to work with new people, the programme participants
6 developed transferable life skills of patience, compromise and communication. The relationships built
7 through Sounding Out are a vital component of the programme. The immediate social network formed
8 between peers was found to be important in these findings with current cohorts, but importantly still
9 evident five years later as discussed by Bensimon (2021). The participant facilitator relationship is also
10 particularly powerful and provides new role models (De Viggiani et al., 2013). The professional
11 relationship and bonds between staff, musicians and participants builds on previous findings with
12 Sounding Out (Bensimon, 2021) and other research in criminal justice settings. Cursley and Maruna
13 (2015), for example, found that relationships between facilitators and participants increased social
14 support, while Viggiani et al. (2013) have noted the new positive role models found in peers and
15 facilitators. There is considerable evidence that increased social support is associated with successful
16 reentry in the community (e.g. Dockery, 2019) and although a variety of individual and structural factors
17 will come into play, interventions that support the development of prosocial networks may be effective
18 in reducing recidivism (Scottish Government, 2015). Furthermore, reconnecting with family over a
19 positive activity can build up their relationships to provide further social support, with supporting family
20 ties a key part of most reducing reoffending strategies. Future research could usefully explore the longer
21 term impact on social support and family ties of music in criminal justice programmes.
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39 **Concluding Discussion**

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41 Through a series of semi-structured interviews with 17 people (former prisoners, staff, and a family
42 member) this study identified the positive impact of a music programme for former prisoners as they
43 left prison and re-entered the community. The interviews identified benefits in the development of
44 personal attributes associated with a sense of achievement and wellbeing; identifying focus and
45 direction towards employment and away from reoffending; and the development of social skills and
46 personal and professional relationships. The research provides evidence for the impact of involvement
47 in a carefully designed programme of music creation, skills development and work placements. The
48 findings are consistent with the body of research that demonstrates the impact of music programmes
49 on prisoners (e.g., Bilby et al., 2013; Caulfield et al., 2016; Kougiali et al., 2017), helping to address the
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3 gap in the evidence base on the role of music programmes as people leave prison and re-enter the
4 community.
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7 The themes identified here build on previous research with Sounding Out participants five years after
8 their involvement with the programme (Bensimon, 2021). This research captured the experiences of two
9 cohorts of participants, collecting data with both staff and participants during and shortly after the
10 Sounding Out programme. These cohorts differed in that one group had met in prison and Sounding Out
11 supported them to continue playing together as a band, while the second cohort did not know each
12 other beforehand. The impact of being involved in the programme was similar for both cohorts.
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18 There were a number of aspects of the programme that participants and facilitators felt were
19 particularly important to its success, which could be useful learning for those designing or implementing
20 resettlement based/community transition activities for people in prison. First, the fact that it provided
21 participants with an opportunity to engage in an activity that they found interesting and purposeful.
22 Second, Sounding Out enabled contact with professionals who could teach valued skills and provided
23 employment opportunities. Third, the duration and nature of support was made explicit and was
24 boundaried, which helped structure expectations and helped avoid a cliff edge as a result of sudden
25 withdrawal of support. Fourth, the positive, supportive and boundaried relationships between staff and
26 participants. Finally, the setting up of contacts and networks beyond the programme, enabling
27 participants to build on the social and professional support available to them.
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39 The research presented here has built on previous research to illuminate the experience of people taking
40 part in a Sounding Out music programme as they leave prison and reenter the community. However, the
41 research is not without limitation. Previous research suggests a potential for people involved with the
42 criminal justice system to respond to researchers in what they perceive to be a socially desirable manner
43 (Murray, 2001), and the findings should be read with that in mind. Sounding Out participants are
44 selected on the basis of reliability, commitment and evidence of improvement over the course of the
45 programme in prison. The selection of participants in the programme is therefore biased towards
46 participants who are already motivated and likely to benefit from the Sounding Out Programme. Despite
47 attempts to contact participants who had lost contact with the programme, the sample was not able to
48 include the perspectives of people who were no longer in contact with Irene Taylor Trust. This is another
49 key limitation of the study, which meant that the authors were not able to comment on the reasons why
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3 people disengaged from the programme, which would have enabled a more comprehensive
4 understanding of people's experiences of the programme, and of how to improve the intervention.
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7 While criticism has been levelled against small scale, qualitative work in the area of music and the arts in
8 criminal justice (Burrowes et al., 2013), this exploratory study adds to a very limited amount of research
9 focused on adult's participation in music programmes in the community as they leave prison. The
10 findings shine a light on participant's experiences at a transitional point that is often very fraught (Chui
11 and Cheng, 2013; Pękala-Wojciechowska et al., 2021; Ramakers et al., 2016). As the current research has
12 only involved men, future research could begin to consider the potential impact on women leaving
13 prison who often have different needs as they reenter the community.
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33 **Acknowledgments:** The authors would like to thank the staff at Irene Taylor Trust for facilitating the
34 interview arrangements and all the participants who took part in an interview.
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Table 1. Themes

Theme	Sub themes
1. Personal Impact	a. Confidence b. Wellbeing c. Musical ability
2. Focus and Direction	a. Focus for the future b. Desistance from crime
3. Interpersonal Relationships	a. Relationships between peers b. Family connections c. Professional relationships

Dear editors/reviewers,

Thank you for the constructive and positive feedback and suggestions for minor revisions. Below we outline how we have addressed the comments. We have submitted a version of the paper with the changes tracked and a 'clean' version.

Reviewer comment	Author response
<p>. The quotations provided don't always match the description or analysis. In the section on Focus for the Future:</p> <p>For two participants, in particular, Sounding Out gave them a positive identity away from risky behaviours: "Being able to look forward to something as well ... You think differently. I'm not taking all those mad risks I used to take, you get offers to do things and that, and I say no, no I'm in a band..." (Peter, Recent Participant) "It gives me a substitute for drugs, for something to focus on." (Jack, Recent Participant) The quotations provided to illustrate a change in identity aren't obvious examples of this and need some explication; they more readily speak to a change in behaviour or focus, rather providing evidence of a fundamental shift in self-view. Similarly:</p> <p>Two participants from the recent cohort spoke specifically about employment opportunities that arose, in part, through their involvement with Sounding Out and the Irene Taylor Trust. Jack explained how Sounding Out has supported him with his career development:</p> <p>"[The position will] further my professional credibility within this field and hopefully by the end of it I'll be employable, that's a massive thing for me. ... I wouldn't have that determination and focus had I not been part of this project [Sounding Out], I wouldn't have known how to apply it, I think that's the best help." (Jack, Recent Participant) Again, the quotation doesn't match the description – here Jack is talking about his hope that he will be employable, not an employment opportunity that arose through the programme. I'd recommend going through this section to ensure that the analysis is supported by the data – it may simply be a case of finding more appropriate quotations, or it may be that the analysis in the text needs to be altered to give a better account of what we're seeing in participants' response.</p>	<p>We have made the following amendments:</p> <p>Focus and Direction – We have removed the quote from 'Jack' and replaced it with a quote which specifically refers to gaining employment following completing the programme.</p> <p>We have contextualised the quotes in the focus for the future section to better match the sub theme, and reworded the section to reflect that the quotes refer to behaviour change rather than identity.</p> <p>Interpersonal Relationships – we have made minor amendments to ensure clarity</p>
<p>I see that the researchers have added a section in the discussion to highlight those elements of the programme that participants and facilitators felt were most beneficial, which is great. At the moment this reads as though it's a separate analysis by the authors. It would be better if this were more directly derived</p>	<p>Thanks for this suggestion. Actioned within the Discussion.</p>

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<p>from the findings discussed in the previous section. For example, you could say, “There were a number of aspects of the programme that participants and facilitators felt were particularly important to its success, which could be useful learning for those designing or implementing resettlement based/community transition activities for people in prison. First the fact that it provided participants with an opportunity to engage in an activity that they found interesting and purposeful. Second, Sounding Out enabled contact with professionals who could teach valued skills and provided employment opportunities. Third the duration and nature of support was made explicit and was boundaried, which helped structure expectations and helped avoid a cliff edge as a result of sudden withdrawal of support. Fourth, the positive, supportive and boundaried relationships between staff and participants and finally, the setting up of contacts and networks beyond the programme, enabling participants to build on the social and professional support available to them.”</p>	
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