



THE ARTS OF DESISTANCE

Evaluation of the Koestler Trust Arts Mentoring Programme for Former Prisoners
Dr Leonidas Cheliotis

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*“Now I see myself as an artist, as opposed to an offender”
- a Koestler arts mentee*

October 2014

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FOREWORD

Despite what many people think, ‘doing time’ isn’t easy. Prison is quite properly and necessarily a punishment but once their ‘time is served’ we want prisoners to leave custody and become good citizens. Arts in prison provide purposeful activity and help offenders to cope with custody but they also provide positive opportunities to help individuals to change.

In NOMS we are always looking for innovative and evidence-based ways to help reduce re-offending. The Koestler mentoring programme provides Through the Gate support, which aims to build on positive engagement with art in prison and to transfer learning and benefits into the community

We already know that the Koestler Awards and exhibitions mean a great deal to offenders and the staff who work with them – and I very much welcome the way the Trust is building on this by giving specific support to some offenders through the mentoring scheme.

It’s particularly welcoming to see robust, long term research (over 6 years) with carefully selected control groups. This should enable us to evaluate whether the scheme is supporting offenders to desist from crime.

I very much look forward to seeing the outcome from this research and hope the Koestler mentoring programme continues to be a huge success.

Thank you to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and to others who have funded the scheme. It is an exciting project and your support is much appreciated.

Michael Spurr
Chief Executive
National Offender Management Service

October 2014

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Research assistance during the evaluation project was also provided by:

Ivana Cosic
(University of Cambridge)
Aylwyn Walsh
(University of Lincoln)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Koestler Trust and Dr Leonidas Cheliotis would like to express our gratitude to all the parties who have provided ongoing support for the mentoring programme including colleagues working within prisons and probation, with special thanks to the staff at HMP YOI Parc and HMP Peterborough who facilitated the control group elements of the research.

The input of the multi-agency advisory group was integral to the development of the mentoring programme and we thank all those who contributed their time and expertise. Thank you also to all the mentees and their mentors who cooperated with session observations and spent time being interviewed by the researchers.

Finally, we would like to thank The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, who provided the major funding for the project's first 6 years, including funding this evaluation. We are also grateful to the anonymous charitable trust and philanthropic donors who have supported individual mentoring relationships as named scholarships.

Some of the names of mentees in the case studies have been changed to protect the identities of the participants.

Artwork

Just Another Day, Shearman Bowen Gold Award for Pastels 2012 and Evelyn Plesch Scholarship Award, HM Prison Lindholme, South Yorkshire, 12K6352
Release Day, Gold Award for Painting 2012 and William Arthur Rudd Scholarship Award, HM Prison North Sea Camp, 12K7537
Fields, Oil or Acrylic entry 2009, HM Prison Shepton Mallet, Somerset, 09K4724
Pride, Mixed Media entry, Barrow Cadbury Scholarship Award 2014, HM Prison and Young Offenders Institution Low Newton, County Durham (women) 14K3051
The Same Hymn Sheet, Yet Loggerheads, Commended Award for Oil or Acrylic 2009, HM Prison Elmley, Kent, 09K3112
They Still Wear Suits Like This, Don't They? Victor Roberts Highly Commended Award for Portraits 2011 and Monument Trust Scholarship Award for Fine Art, HM Prison Shepton Mallet, Somerset 11K7030

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents and discusses the findings of an evaluation of an arts-based mentoring scheme that is aimed at prolonging and enhancing desistance from crime through providing former prisoners with opportunities to continue engaging with the arts after release. The evaluation focused both on the implementation and effectiveness of the scheme as the former influenced the latter. Different yet complementary research techniques (observation of mentoring sessions, interviews with mentors and mentees, analysis of mentor reports, and a survey-based quasi-experimental design incorporating control groups) were employed to strengthen the validity of the data and improve their interpretation.
- Past evaluation research suggests that arts-based programmes in custodial and post-release (or ‘aftercare’) settings cannot alone lead to desistance from crime. What arts-based programmes can realistically do is to help create ‘soft’ conditions whose emergence in turn makes the ‘hard’ outcome of abstinence from crime more likely. Such ‘soft’ conditions span psychological and attitudinal changes, increased learning capacity and motivations, and social skills building.
- Yet evaluations of arts-based interventions in the fields of criminal justice and ‘aftercare’ have rarely employed control groups, and quasi-experimental designs incorporating both pre- and post-test measurements have remained infrequent. These are significant threats to the validity of causal inferences; namely, they cannot but undermine any conclusions as to whether particular arts-based interventions actually led to particular outcomes.
- Also, post-test measurements have usually only been taken at the point of completion of the programme under evaluation, or far too shortly thereafter, which disallows ascertaining whether programme effects were sustained over longer periods. The relatively few follow-up studies available have generally concluded that participation in arts-based programmes can have lasting positive effects. But these studies, too, commonly suffer from key methodological problems, including, notably, the lack of a control group.
- The evaluation presented in this report showed a range of benefits for participants during the course of the mentoring scheme, including, amongst others, enhanced self-esteem, a greater sense of achievement and empowerment, improved learning capacity and motivation, and improved social skills. Psychological and attitudinal benefits required that mentees held and

sustained realistic expectations about life after release from prison, including about developing a professional career in the field of art.

- Two factors proved especially crucial to the success of the mentoring scheme: the contributions made by mentors, and the structure of the mentoring scheme itself. Alongside offering pastoral care as necessary, mentors provided training and support in developing skills in the arts and beyond, as well as support in the process of trying to secure access to formal education and employment. In so doing, mentors used their professional experience and status as established artists, and employed such interpersonal skills as being constructively critical but non-judgmental, and airing accessibility. The relatively informal and ‘open’ structure of the scheme itself, meanwhile, allowed mentors to utilise their experience and expertise according to mentees’ specific needs and wishes.
- By extension, the matching of mentees with appropriate mentors was a crucial component of the effectiveness of the scheme. As regards the pastoral side of mentors’ role, successful matching could mean that mentors in some respects resembled significant others in mentees’ personal lives. On the artistic side of mentoring, successful matching did not necessarily imply that mentors and mentees shared similar backgrounds or even interests, and there were cases where differences were highlighted as positive elements in the mentoring relationship.
- The survey component of the evaluation showed an impressive improvement in mentees’ mean scores for most variables that were tested at the end of the mentoring scheme (especially in mentees’ levels of conscientiousness and their having a legal self-concept and non-criminal reference groups).
- Some scores (particularly those on agreeableness, self-esteem, perceived legitimate opportunity, and outlook on employability) dropped in the period following the completion of the scheme. It is likely that although participation in the mentoring scheme played an important positive role in mentees’ post-release lives, once the support structures of the scheme were naturally removed following its completion, there were fewer forces in place to counteract or counterbalance the broader difficulties of post-release life in the community (e.g., lack of employment).
- Nevertheless, mentees’ overall scores –that is, the differences between their pre-test scores and final post-test scores six to nine months after completing the scheme– remained positive on almost all variables. In other words, the mentoring scheme

appears to have had long-term positive effects on mentees' lives despite the adverse influence of the difficulties of post-release life in the community.

- Comparisons with control groups also yielded positive results: by the end of the scheme, mentees were more likely to fare better than their control counterparts on almost all variables tested. Statistical regression analyses were performed to reduce the effect of selection bias, and the result was that mentees still fared significantly better than their control counterparts with regard to certain variables (openness, extraversion).
- The findings of this evaluation imply that the positive effects of arts-based interventions can endure only if programme provision is sustained, both within criminal justice settings and in the community. This is because the process of desistance is typically fraught with difficult and persistent challenges that can work to undermine the positive effects of arts-based interventions.
- There follow important implications for the design of arts-based programmes in the fields of criminal justice and 'aftercare'. Most crucially, programmes should be assigned goals they can actually fulfill, which practically means privileging the 'soft' effects of 'secondary desistance' over the 'hard' outcome of recidivism reduction as such. Also, programmes should be planned in ways that facilitate success, including securing financial resources for their extension as necessary and forging partnerships between organisations that offer cognate and/or complementary services (e.g., on the fronts of housing, employment, psychological needs).

CHAPTER 1



ARTS-BASED PROGRAMMES FOR OFFENDERS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE

Over recent decades, practitioner-run programmes based on the arts –the latter spanning the visual, design, performing, media, musical and literary genres– have expanded within criminal justice and ‘aftercare’ systems across various jurisdictions in the Western world and beyond. The expressed aim of such programmes has increasingly been to promote desistance from crime. Although research that is meant to evaluate arts-based interventions has undergone growth as well, important questions concerning their actual effectiveness are still left open. In this section of our report, we provide a brief overview of pertinent evaluation literature, focusing in particular on the extant evidence regarding two key issues: how, and the degree to which, desistance from crime can be facilitated through practitioner-run programmes that are based on the arts.

Arts-based programmes and the concept of ‘secondary desistance’

There is growing appreciation in pertinent scholarship that arts-based programmes are unlikely to lead to desistance by themselves, and that their respective contributions to desistance take indirect forms (see, e.g., Hughes 2005; Miles and Clark 2006; Wilson, Caulfield and Atherton 2008; Cheliotis, 2010; Cox and Gelsthorpe 2012). At least in part, these indirect contributions are captured by the concept of ‘secondary desistance’, which refers to changes in self-perception that function to challenge and disrupt prior offending behaviour (itself termed ‘primary desistance’; see further Maruna and Farrall 2004).

The concept of ‘secondary desistance’, however, can be extended to incorporate an array of other ways in which arts-based programmes may indirectly contribute to desistance from crime, from motivating participants to take up basic literacy education that they may lack, to equipping them with vocational skills, to helping them improve their social skills and make amends with their families and communities (see, e.g., McNeill et al. 2011). ‘Secondary desistance’, in other words, may be said to involve any ‘soft’ conditions whose emergence may in turn assist in the production of the ‘hard’ outcome of abstinence from crime.

Below we offer a critical review of the empirical research literature on the ‘secondary’ or ‘soft’ contributions arts-based programmes may make to the process of desistance from crime. Albeit not fully exhaustive,¹ the review reveals a substantial amount of hitherto missed evidence. We begin by focusing on evaluations of arts-based programmes run by practitioners inside prisons, and their effects in terms of three sets of developments that, according to previous literature reviews on this topic (e.g., Hughes 2005; Johnson 2008; Djurichkovich 2011), are thought to advance ‘primary desistance’: psychological and attitudinal changes; increased learning capacity and motivations; and social skills building. Our review then proceeds to address the effects of arts-based prison programmes after participants’ release into the community; a theme that has received very limited research

¹ A useful database of research evaluations of the effectiveness of arts-based programmes in the field of criminal justice, including some studies not reviewed in this report, has been developed in the UK by the Arts Alliance and is available online at: <http://www.artsevidence.org.uk>.

attention to date. Our review will thus set the background against which we will subsequently present and discuss our own evaluation of an arts-based programme that is aimed at prolonging and enhancing ‘secondary desistance’ through providing former prisoners with opportunities to continue engaging with the arts after release.

Psychological and Attitudinal Changes

It has been suggested that participation in artistic projects in general, and the process of creating artistic products in particular, can serve a transformative function for prisoners, acting as a ‘catalyst’ for positive psychological and attitudinal changes (see, e.g., Ezell & Levy, 2003; Hughes, 2004; Williams, 2004; Smeijsters & Cleven, 2006; Argue et al., 2009; Caulfield et al., 2009). This function assumes particular significance when one considers that rates of psychological conditions (e.g., depression) and associated problems (e.g., self-harm) amongst prisoners have repeatedly been found to exceed the respective rates reported for the general population (see, e.g., Fazel & Baillargeon, 2010).

Research has credited positive results both to therapeutic interventions involving a professionally trained therapist using arts to generate insights for diagnostic purposes or treatment, and to programmes run by professional artists without any special training in dealing with at-risk populations. These positive results include a range of benefits for prisoners’ psychological and physical well-being whilst in custody:

- enhanced self-esteem (Brewster, 1983; Dawes, 1999; The Unit for the Arts and Offenders, 1999; Wilson & Logan, 2006; Caulfield et al., 2009; Cox and Gelsthorpe, 2008);
- a greater sense of achievement (Dawes, 1999; The Unit for the Arts and Offenders, 1999; Ezell & Levy, 2003; Lazzari et al., 2005; Caulfield et al., 2009); empowerment (Digard & Liebling, 2012);
- higher levels of self-efficacy (i.e., a greater belief in one’s capacity to organise and execute courses of action directed at particular outcomes; Brewster, 1983; Lazzari et al., 2005; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; De Viggiani et al., 2008);
- increased internal locus of control (i.e., a greater feeling of control over one’s environment; Gussak, 2009; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2012);
- reduced levels of depression (The Unit for the Arts and Offenders, 1999; Gussak, 2006, 2007, 2009);
- reduced levels of anger (Blacker et al., 2008; Breiner et al., 2008; Wilson et al., 2008, Caulfield et al., 2009); and
- a lower risk of self-harm (Goddard, 2004; Wilson & Logan, 2006; Caulfield et al., 2009; Nugent & Loucks, 2011; Digard & Liebling, 2012).

An important yet often overlooked caveat here is that the effectiveness of arts-in-prisons programmes may well vary with their duration, longer programmes being more likely to deliver their intended outcomes (see, e.g., Ezell & Levy, 2003).

As such, arts-in-prisons programmes have been further associated with ‘primary

desistance’ from crime. It has been found, for example, that art therapy can support ‘primary desistance’ by inciting introspection, confrontation with one’s offending, and communication of hitherto suppressed cognitive and emotional states. This is especially the case with art therapy interventions that utilise non-verbal forms of artistic expression (e.g., painting, music). The opportunities afforded to participants for non-verbal expression can help remove the conscious and unconscious defences they might otherwise employ in relation to their past offending conduct and the harm thereby inflicted upon others (Daveson & Edwards, 2001; Gussak, 2004, 2012; Johnson, 2008; Smeijsters & Cleven, 2006; see also Gerber, 1994; Williams, 2004; Meekums & Daniel, 2011; O’Grady, 2011).

It has similarly been found that by enhancing self-efficacy, arts-in-prisons programmes help offenders explore and develop pro-social identities and positive relationships with others by exercising responsible choice (Lazzari et al., 2005). Finally, there is some evidence to suggest that arts-based programmes can contribute to the process of ‘primary desistance’ by enhancing prisoners’ internal locus of control and, within this context, encouraging them to take responsibility of their past criminal behaviour (Gussak, 2009).

Learning Capacity and Motivation

As is well known, learning difficulties and educational deficiencies are particularly prevalent amongst socially disadvantaged groups such as prisoner populations (see, e.g., Prison Reform Trust, 2012; NAAL, 2003). Against this background, arts-based programmes have commonly been employed to improve prisoners’ overall learning capacity and motivation.

It has been found, for instance, that participation in arts-in-prisons schemes helps to develop general skills such as:

- listening (Wilson et al., 2008; Caulfield et al, 2009; Cox and Geslthorpe, 2012);
- an ability for experiential learning with an emphasis on searching for solutions to real issues (Ezell & Levy, 2003);
- self-confidence in terms of educational achievement; and
- a positive attitude towards learning as such (McNeill et al., 2011; Tett et al., 2012).

This, in turn, facilitates not just further engagement in arts-related activities, but also successful participation in other, more ‘traditional’ programmes that are focused on literacy and numeracy skills (The Unit for the Arts and Offenders, 1999; Hughes, 2004; Wilson & Logan, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Caulfield et al., 2009; McNeill et al., 2011; Nugent & Loucks, 2011). Indeed, there is some evidence that participants in arts-based prison schemes perform better than non-participants on mainstream educational prison programmes (Duguid, 2000).

Research suggests that the capacity of arts-based programmes to deliver these benefits inside prisons is largely due to the immediate learning environment that they cultivate and in which they operate; an environment that is democratic (Duguid, 2000; Tett et al., 2012), supportive (Williams, 2004; Lazzari et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2008; Caulfield et al., 2009) and attentive to emotions (Digard & Liebling, 2012). More specifically, unlike conventional forms of prison education (and unlike the prison institution itself, for that

matter), arts-based programmes promote constant dialogue between participants, create a platform for the provision of constructive criticism to each one of them, and enable self-reflection and emotional openness.

Arts-based programmes may be said to promote ‘secondary desistance’ insofar as they enhance prisoners’ commitment to learning in contravention of previously internalised identities (McNeill et al., 2011; Tett et al., 2012). To the extent that by boosting prisoners’ learning capacity and motivation arts-based programmes also facilitate engagement in other schemes that directly address prisoners’ needs in terms of literacy and numeracy, they arguably make a further ‘secondary’ contribution to desistance from crime (Hughes, 2004). This is because learning difficulties and educational deficiencies are significant predictors of reoffending (Duguid, 2000; Wilson et al., 2008).

Similarly, arts-based programmes have been credited with advancing desistance by way of providing prisoners with concrete vocational skills (Ezell & Levy, 2003) and inspiring a positive outlook as to one’s vocational success upon release (ITT, 2004; Goddard, 2005; Lazzari et al., 2005; Cox and Gelsthorpe; 2008; De Viggiani et al., 2008; Ezell & Levy, 2003). Particular as concerns the acquisition of vocational skills, it has repeatedly been found to constitute a crucial step towards securing and maintaining regular employment after release, itself a strong predictor of ‘primary desistance’ from crime (Uggen et al., 2005).

Building Social Skills

Participation in arts-in-prisons schemes can help prisoners learn or develop social skills. This is especially so when arts-based schemes entail teamwork (Gussak, 2004; Argue et al., 2009). Research has shown that participation in arts-in-prisons schemes can:

- increase individual prisoners’ capacity to communicate effectively with other participants (Dawes, 1999; Ezell & Levy, 2003; Wilson et al., 2008);
- to socialise within the prison (The Unit for the Arts and Offenders, 1999; Dawes, 1999; Gussak, 2004; Goddard 2005; Lazzari et al., 2005; De Viggiani et al., 2008);
- to exercise empathy towards fellow participants and other prisoners (Caulfield et al., 2009; Tett et al., 2012); and
- to collaborate with others in the context of groups (Dawes, 1999; The Unit for the Arts and Offenders, 1999; ITT, 2004; Moller, 2004; Wilson & Logan, 2006; Digard & Liebling, 2012).

It has also been demonstrated that teamwork can contribute to the development of self-regulation and a spirit of reconciliation amongst participants, even as initial stages may be fraught with disagreement and conflict (Digard & Liebling, 2012; see also Dawes, 1999; Goddard, 2005; Nugent & Loucks, 2011; Grant & Crossan, 2012). All these effects, and particularly empathy, self-regulation and reconciliatory attitude, can be said to contribute towards ‘primary desistance’ from crime, given research that associates them with lower rates of recidivism (see, e.g., Ross & Ross, 1995; Day, 2009).

Another aspect of various arts-based programmes that may indirectly contribute to ‘primary

desistance’ are prisoners’ public performances and exhibitions (Ezell & Levy, 2003; Lazzari et al., 2005; Johnson, 2008; Tett et al., 2012), whether within the prison (see, e.g., Moller, 2004; Goddard, 2005; Tett et al., 2012) or in community settings (ITT, 2004). On one hand, such activities have been found to encourage prisoners to reassess the way in which they view themselves, in the sense of growing to feel more confident and optimistic about life after release (ITT, 2004; Wilson et al., 2008; Tett et al., 2012). On the other hand, public performances and exhibitions have been shown to have a positive effect on how prisoners are perceived by their families and the broader community, the latter feeling reassured that prisoner artists are undergoing ‘behavioural change’ (Dawes, 1999; Wilson et al., 2008) and preparing themselves constructively for release (Tett et al., 2012; see also Brewster, 1983).

The ways in which prisoners perceive themselves and their future are crucial to the process of desistance (Laub et al., 1998; Maruna, 2001), as are the ways in which prisoners are perceived by their families and broader communities (Maruna & LeBel, 2002).

Limitations of Studies

Elsewhere (in Cheliotis & Jordanoska, forthcoming) we discuss the full array of methodological limitations to the studies reviewed so far. For present purposes, it is important to note that the use of control groups is exceedingly rare, and quasi-experimental designs incorporating both pre- and post-test measurements remain infrequent. These are significant threats to the validity of causal inferences; namely, they disallow firm conclusions as to whether particular arts-based interventions actually lead to particular outcomes (for pertinent discussions see Hughes, 2005; Miles & Clark, 2006; Daykin et al., forthcoming).

In any case, post-test measurements are usually only taken upon completion of the programme under evaluation, or shortly thereafter. A comparatively small number of studies have attempted to follow-up prisoner participants and ascertain whether, and the degree to which, programme effects have been sustained over longer periods. These studies have generally concluded that participation in arts-in-prisons programmes may have lasting positive effects for prisoners, ranging from increased self-esteem and confidence, to reduced levels of anger and risk of self-harm, to enhanced learning motivation, to improved levels of tolerance of others and a greater capacity to work in teams (see further Kennedy, 1998; Reiss et al., 1998; Dawes, 1999; Goddard, 2005; Cox & Gelsthorpe, 2008; Wilson et al., 2008; Caulfield et al., 2009; Anderson & Overy, 2010; Boswell et al., 2011; compare Miles & Clark, 2006; Digard & Liebling, 2012). Whether or not these long-term positive effects can be attributed to the programmes evaluated is debatable, however, given that the evaluations in question either did not employ a control group, or, in any case, did not avoid other methodological pitfalls such as small sample size, selection bias and/or sample attrition.

Effects after Release from Prison

Even less research has been conducted on the effects of arts-in-prisons programmes beyond the period of imprisonment. Despite ever-growing scholarly interest in desistance from crime after release from custody, there is very little information on the impact, if any, that arts-in-

prisons programmes may have on participants when they are discharged from prison and faced with the multifarious challenges of re-entry into the community (on which see, e.g., Travis & Visser, 2005).

What is more, the few available studies on the post-release effectiveness of arts-in-prisons programmes have been focused on ‘primary desistance’, as measured through officially recorded recidivism rates, rather than on ‘secondary desistance’. Both the paucity of pertinent research and the preoccupation of what research there is with officially recorded recidivism rates may be due to limited funding, the long duration of sentences served by participants, or the difficulty of tracking them down once they are released.

Our searches identified three locatable studies on the post-release effectiveness of arts-in-prisons programmes. They all employed a control group, and concluded that participation in arts-in-prisons programmes is associated with lower rates of recidivism. The first study was conducted in California in the 1980s, and found that the rate of reconviction was notably lower amongst a randomly selected sample of 177 parolees who participated in an arts-based prison programme for at least six months, as compared to the reconviction rate for all parolees in the state of California during the same period. Measurements were taken at three different points (i.e., six, twelve and twenty-four months after release), and the discrepancy in terms of reconviction rates between the experimental and the control group was shown to have grown wider over time (California Department of Corrections, 1987; see also Brewster, 1983).

In the second study, conducted in the mid-1990s in Washington DC, the rate of recidivism was found to be lower six months after release amongst 24 juveniles who took part in short (e.g., two-week) arts workshops whilst in prison, as compared to the six-month recidivism rate for all juvenile prisoners released across the state of Washington in 1992 (none of whom participated in the workshops in question). In this study, recidivism was defined as commission of a criminal offence for which there was a conviction, even if conviction actually occurred after the six-month period (Ezell & Levy, 2003).

The third and most thorough study was part of a major follow-up evaluation in Canada with 654 male juvenile and adult former prisoners of varying risk levels who participated in a university-operated liberal arts degree programme whilst in custody between the early 1970s and early 1990s. This study singled out for scrutiny a group of 119 individuals belonging to the two highest risk categories, 29 of whom also took part in theatre projects that run alongside the education programme. For both theatre project participants and non-participants, the study used as benchmarks predicted scores of recidivism within three years of release, recidivism having been operationalised as reincarceration for a new indictable offence. It was found that the rate at which theatre project participants had improved on their predicted reincarceration scores three years after release was nearly three times as high the rate at which the non-theatre subsample had improved on theirs. Two factors, likely interrelated to one another, which appear to have played a crucial mediating role between participation in theatre projects and a greater degree of improvement on predicted recidivism scores are higher academic achievement on the prison education programme and increased participation in post-release education (see further Duguid, 1998, 2000; Duguid & Pawson 1998).

CHAPTER 2

Some notes of caution are due here. First of all, the number of the studies reviewed above is obviously too small for them to allow firm conclusions. They are also outdated, focused solely on North-American samples, and concerned with measures of recidivism that are neither fully comparable as such nor do they cover the same follow-up periods. It is therefore debatable whether, and to what extent, the reported effects of these studies would apply across different spans, populations or contexts. At a more basic level, there is a shortage of information on measures of effect size and statistical significance, which makes it difficult to assess the degree to which the programmes in question delivered given outcomes. Similarly, given the lack of information on sample matching and/or statistical controls for pre-existing differences between study groups, it is even debatable whether the observed outcomes reflect the actual effectiveness of the programmes under evaluation, and not some pre-existing differences between the experimental and control groups (the Canadian study tries to deal with this issue through the use of a recidivism prediction device based on such variables as marital status, type of conviction offence, and age at first offence). The problem is compounded by the lack of detailed information on key background characteristics of the units surveyed (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity, family status, number of prior convictions), and this may pertain to insufficient attention to programme implementation procedures as they might relate to programme effects (see further Cheliotis & Jordanoska, forthcoming).

The relationship between the arts-based prison programmes in question and recidivism reduction is made no less unclear by the absence of data on the immediate contribution of these programmes to ‘secondary desistance’ as this in turn specifically relates to actual levels of reoffending. What remains ambiguous, in other words, is the degree to which, and the ways in which, the ‘hard’ prospective outcome of abstinence from crime is mediated through the ‘soft’ conditions arts-based programmes are thought to generate during imprisonment; conditions which are themselves not always explored in adequate scope or depth. To complicate things further, such research would have had to disentangle the effects of arts-based prison programmes from the effects of developments in participants’ lives after their release from prison (including, for that matter, the effects of other programmes in which they may now be participating). Indeed, even if one were to grant that the arts-based prison programmes in question succeeded in creating or promoting ‘secondary’ conditions necessary for ‘primary’ desistance from crime, one could hardly ascertain whether these effects endured after release, and if so, for how long. In light of the nature, intensity, and persistence of challenges commonly faced by ex-prisoners upon release (in terms, for example, of employment and housing), it is doubtful whether such effects can last beyond the period of imprisonment without support in the community, including sustained programme provision.

In the remainder of this report, we discuss our evaluation of an arts-based programme that is precisely aimed at prolonging and enhancing ‘secondary desistance’ through providing ex-prisoners with opportunities to continue engaging with the arts after release.



THE PROJECT

The mentoring scheme in question is run in England and Wales by the Koestler Trust, a charity which has operated awards for and exhibitions of arts by prisoners since 1962. The Trust introduced mentoring in 2008, aiming ‘to innovate a model of arts input, shaped to the needs of individual offenders, that empowers them through the transition from prison to community’ (Koestler Trust 2011, p.6).

Funding

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, an independent grant-making organisation focusing on the arts, education and social justice, provided the major funding for the project’s first 6 years, including funding this evaluation. The mentoring has also been funded by an anonymous charitable trust and by philanthropic donors supporting individual mentoring relationships as named scholarships. In 2013 funding from the Cabinet Office’s Rehabilitation Social Action Fund enabled the scheme to extend to a wider range of participants and needs.

The mentees

In the original mentoring scheme as evaluated here, the target group of participants is offenders who are either approaching release from prison or have been released within the last six months. Participants must be serving or have served a custodial sentence of at least twelve months, and may be or have been imprisoned in any of the following institutions: adult prisons, Young Offender Institutions, Secure Units, and High Security Psychiatric Hospitals. All participants need to have previously won a Koestler Award or Awards for artworks created during their incarceration, which is taken to indicate a strong likelihood of their continued engagement in arts activities in the community. Potential mentees express an interest in the scheme through the Koestler Awards process, and the Koestler Trust obtains permission and further information from prison and probation staff before accepting them. E.g., mentees need to have sufficient social support from family, friends or welfare services to enable the mentoring to focus specifically on their artistic development. Matching to a mentor is then based on artistic needs and goals, geographical location and the availability of an appropriate mentor, as well as fitting with any parole conditions or other supervisory requirements.

The mentors

The Koestler Trust recruits experienced artists as volunteer mentors. They come from a variety of artistic fields (e.g., creative writing, visual arts, music), and some are ex-offenders themselves. Following assessment at interview, each mentor must pass three days of introductory training, following a training course designed in collaboration with S.O.V.A. (Supporting Others through Volunteer Action). The Koestler Trust’s mentoring staff then provide ongoing support through monthly group supervision meetings, telephone contact and submission of a written report on each mentoring session. Mentor-mentee

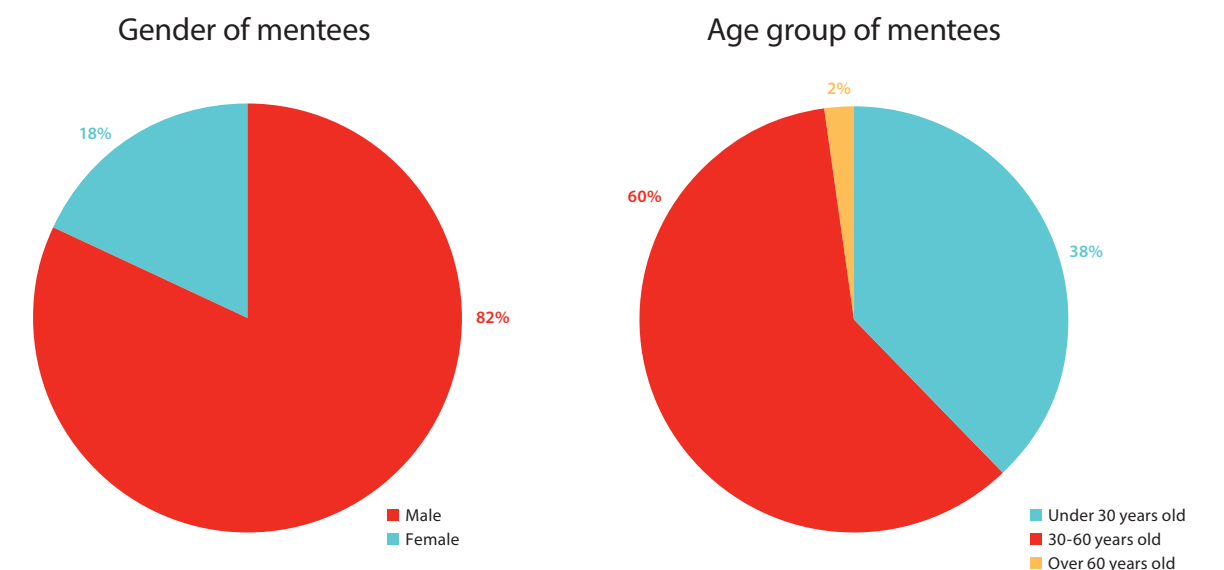
boundaries are carefully maintained, so as to make the scheme accessible to ex-prisoners with serious offences and high levels of need – e.g. mentoring sessions happen in public places, each mentor has a Koestler email address and phone for contacting their mentee, and mentors are discouraged from maintaining contact with their mentee after the mentoring ends.

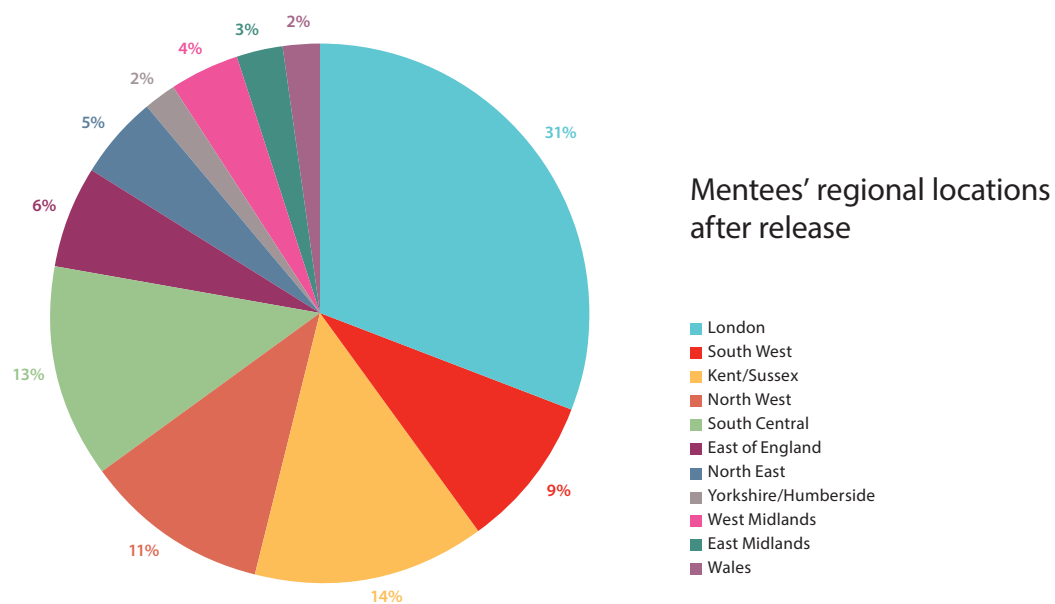
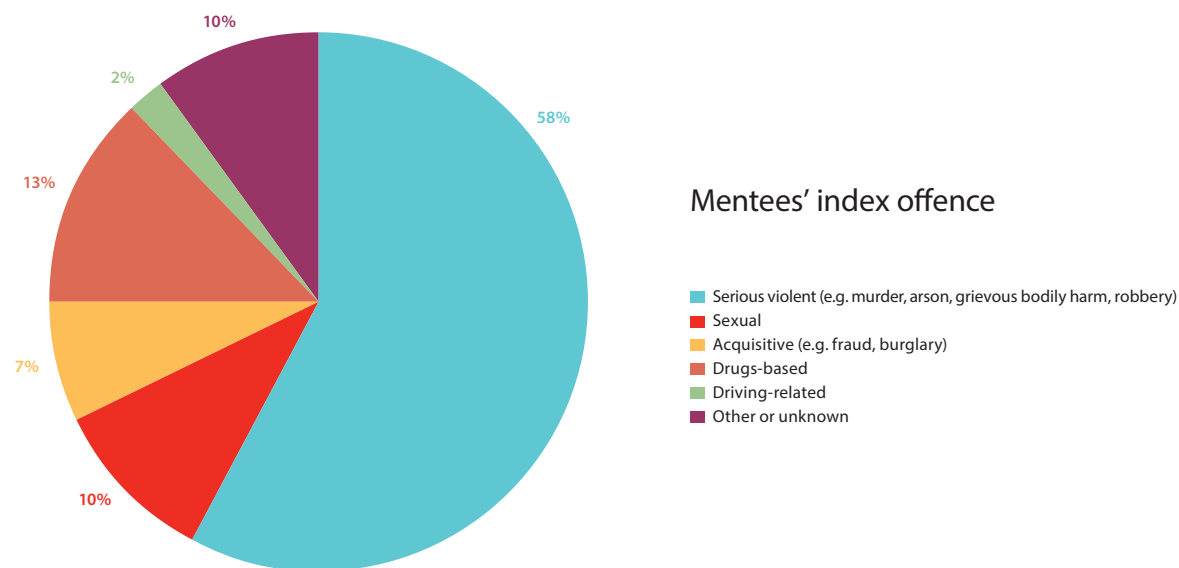
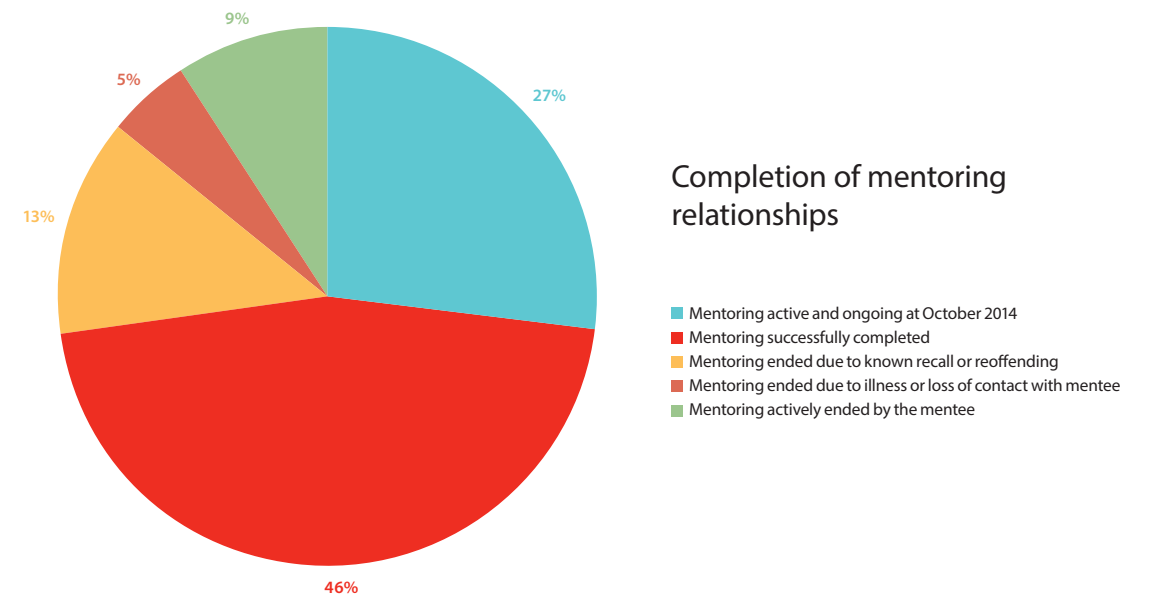
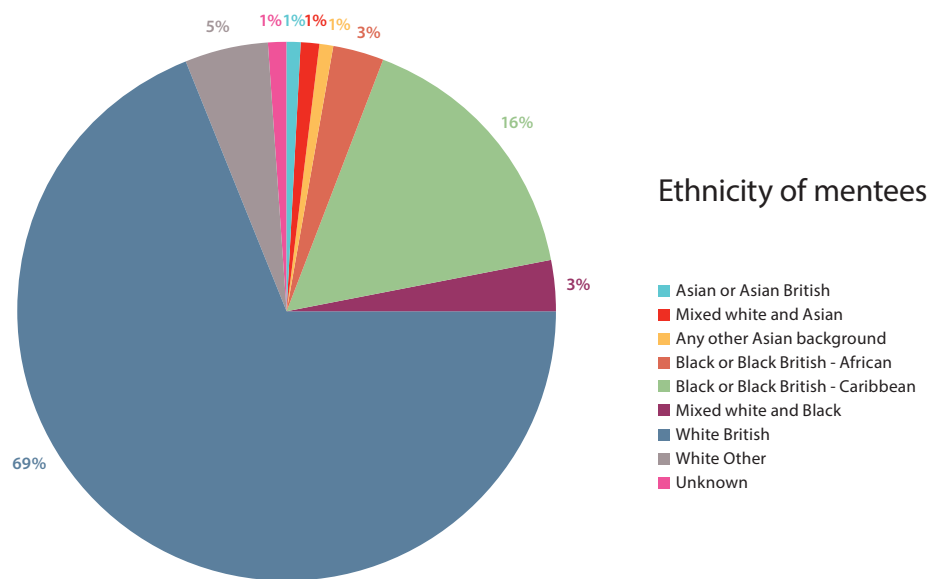
The mentoring

Participation in the scheme entails between seven and ten mentoring sessions for up to twelve months following mentees’ release from prison. For several mentees, their first session takes place in prison briefly before their final discharge. In the first session, mentors support mentees in setting realistic goals for themselves within the context of the scheme, for example visiting a specified number of arts exhibitions or preparing artwork for submission to a local art competition. Post-release mentoring sessions last up to half a day each, but generally around two hours, and take place at a mutually agreed meeting place such as a community centre or an arts venue. The content of sessions is planned by mentors and mentees in collaboration with one another, and mentors are given a small budget to pay for certain joint activities such as attending an exhibition or a theatre play. Mentors also perform an array of other tasks, from giving feedback on mentees’ artistic creations and working with them on given exercises, to suggesting new sources of inspiration, introducing mentees to other local artists or groups, or providing practical help applying to college courses or jobs or setting up as a freelance arts business (see further Koestler Trust 2011).

Whole-project data

The mentees who are the subject of the present evaluation represent a sample of the 94 offenders who have been mentored by the Koestler Trust since the inception of the project in 2008, of whom 69 have finished their mentoring. The following data refers to this whole-project group, which itself represents a small proportion of the demand for the scheme: e.g. in 2014, 563 Koestler Awards entrants expressed an interest in being mentored.





Reoffending data

Once 60 offenders have completed the mentoring programme, with at least 12 months having elapsed since their release, the project will meet the criteria for the Ministry of Justice's Justice Data Lab. The Koestler Trust will then submit the names of the mentees to the Data Lab to learn their rate of re-offending compared with a statistically calculated control group. The resulting data will be published by the Ministry of Justice. The Trust anticipates that this will be in summer 2015.

The Evaluation: Research Methods

Commissioned and supported by the Koestler Trust, our evaluation of the mentoring scheme concerned both its implementation and effectiveness as the former influenced the latter. To this end, we employed methodological triangulation; that is, the use of different yet complementary research techniques to study the same questions with the aim of strengthening the validity of the data and improving their interpretation.

The evaluation involved direct observation of mentoring sessions and face-to-face interviews with mentees and their mentors, both separately and together, after the end of individual sessions. We aimed to observe and interview mentee-mentor at their first and/or last sessions (as mentioned earlier, first sessions at times took place in prison settings), so that the effects of the scheme could be better assessed. We observed 26 mentoring sessions, and conducted 26 in-depth face-to-face interviews with mentees (on her own initiative, one mentee wrote down her answers to several of our questions), and 26 with mentors (an interview with a mentor was conducted over the phone).

Interviews were detailed and focused on such themes as the process of the mentoring scheme and its perceived effects, but also any problems faced by mentees in their post-release lives, which helped to control for the impact of any interfering events (e.g., unexpected illness or death of a family member). Interviews were also flexible enough

to allow room for further questions in response to what might be seen as significant replies. To avoid making mentees feel defensive, but rather with a view to assessing the effects of the scheme in view of the complexities of coping with life after release, interviews incorporated what is termed ‘appreciative inquiry’. This is an inductive technique which ‘seeks to supplement “problem-oriented” methodology with a search for “affirming” knowledge and positive imagery’, involving conversation about peak experiences (Liebling, Elliott and Price 1999, p.75). The evaluation also included collection and analysis of any pertinent documentation, particularly completed mentor reports, in order to enrich the data from observations and interviews. We analysed 45 reports produced by mentors on particular mentoring sessions they had had with mentees.

At the end of their first mentoring session, mentees were administered a self-completion questionnaire that measured such factors as their emotional well-being (e.g., self-esteem), achievement motivation, community ties, access to employment, and expectation that future difficulties with the law can be avoided. The aim was to compare these ‘baseline’ measurements with post-test data gathered through the same questionnaire upon completion of the scheme, but also six to nine months thereafter, so as to evaluate the longer-term effects of the scheme. In the case of the last wave of post-test data collection, questionnaires were sent to, and returned by, mentees through pre-paid post.

To further facilitate causal inference (i.e., the attribution of given outcomes to particular interventions), the evaluation project also involved two control groups. The first was a group of prisoners who had no engagement with the arts, and the second a group of prisoners who had some active involvement in the arts (e.g., painted in their cells, as opposed to just listening to music), but had not been placed onto the mentoring scheme run by the Koestler Trust. The aim was for both groups to consist of prisoners approaching release. Control group respondents were surveyed in two prisons, one for men (Parc) and the other for women (Peterborough), before being subsequently divided into control sub-groups according to their involvement in the arts.

Control groups were administered self-completion questionnaires at two different stages: a pre-test questionnaire whilst they were still in prison, and a post-test questionnaire six to nine months thereafter, by which time a number of control group members had been released. To reduce attrition, control group members were offered a monetary incentive (£20) upon completion and return of the post-test questionnaire. Except for a few necessary adjustments, control group questionnaires were the same as those completed by mentees. The goal was to compare pre- and post-test measurements for control groups to the respective measurements taken for the group of mentees at the beginning of the mentoring scheme and upon its completion.

CASE STUDY ROHAN & ALISON

Rohan first entered the Koestler Awards in 2010 with a single drawing entry entitled Cry of a Caged Bird which he created whilst at HMP Stanford Hill. The work received a Bronze Award from the Koestler judges and was selected by the curators for the UK Exhibition of Art by Offenders at Royal Festival Hall.

The drawing was popular with exhibition visitors and it received the highest number of votes in the Visitors Choice Awards entitling the artist to an additional prize.

Following his interaction with the Koestler Trust, Rohan applied to the mentoring scheme and in February 2011 was matched with one of our fine arts mentors - Alison.

As Rohan had received no academic training or formal tuition in the arts, Alison agreed to structure some of their mentoring sessions around technical development of his style. Rohan had previously only created work using paper and an HB pencil, so Alison was keen for Rohan to experiment in using different materials such as graphite and charcoal and introduce colour into his work.

Rohan had already started working on his second large-scale drawing and Alison helped him critique this work and gave suggestions about the composition. Rohan then submitted this drawing - Out of Darkness, Growth, to the Koestler Awards 2011 whilst on probation.

The piece received a Platinum Award from the Koestler judges and was selected by the curators for the 2011 Koestler exhibition. Once again, the artwork was a resounding favourite amongst visitors to the exhibition and Rohan received the Visitors Choice Platinum Award for a second time.

Throughout the mentoring, Alison encouraged Rohan to promote his work to a wider audience. She assisted his entry to the Threadneedle Prize where he was shortlisted. Since the completion of his mentoring, Rohan has continued to create work and has been involved in several group exhibitions.

CHAPTER 3



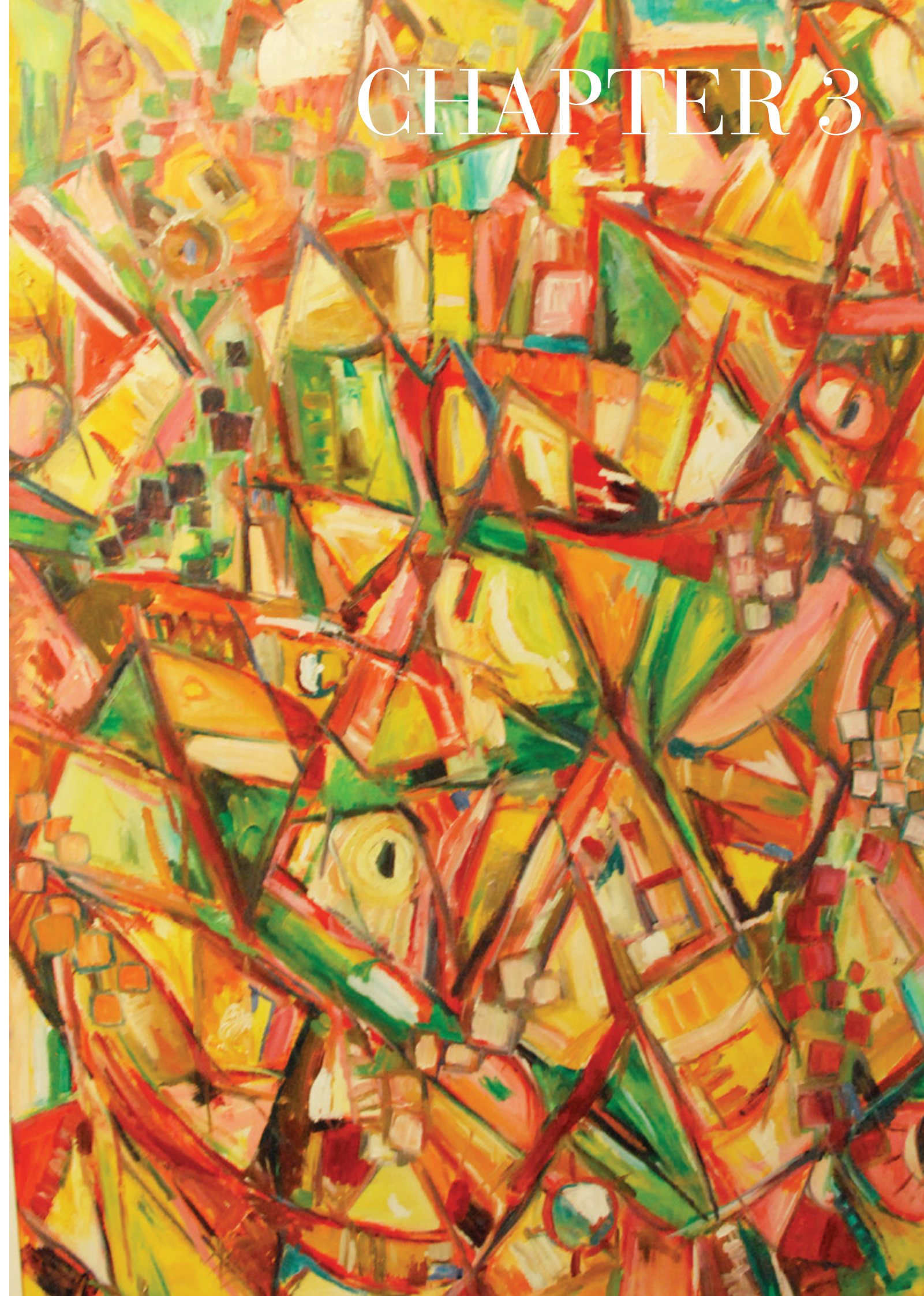
Cry of a Caged Bird
Platinum Audience Choice Award
2010
(10K4197)



Out of Darkness, Growth
Platinum Audience Choice Award
2011
(11K3813)



Unrepressed but Pensive
Work produced whilst being
mentored



THE PROCESS AND EFFECTS OF THE MENTORING SCHEME: MENTORS' PERSPECTIVES

This chapter sets out to explore the process and effects of the mentoring scheme as these relate to one another. In so doing, the chapter draws on our interviews with mentors and our observations of mentoring sessions. Importantly, the chapter also provides an analysis of the reports completed by mentors after each mentoring session, as well as other accompanying documentation (e.g., the mentee's application form and the goals assessment form). Mentors were required to fill out mentoring session reports and assessment forms in order to address the need of keeping track of the development of the mentoring relationship, and in order to be able to assess how mentoring was progressing against the activities and plans set out in the Action Plan at the start of the relationship. The analysis and the quotes used below therefore mostly reflect mentors' perspective.

Mentoring reports had a standardised form and consisted of:

- Description of the mentoring activity (What did we do?) and why it was undertaken (Why did we do it?);
- Description of the skills that the mentor used;
- Assessment of the meeting (What went well? What could have been done better?);
- Discussion of any concerns; and
- Plans concerning the place and proposed activity of the next meeting.

The structure of the questions and issues raised and addressed in mentoring session reports provided an opportunity for the mentor to reflect on, and critically engage with, the mentoring activities, the mentee's progress, and the overall relationship. Furthermore, it encouraged mentors to think about potential problems in the relationship, including mentees' level of engagement with the mentoring scheme.

For the purposes of our evaluation, both our interviews with mentors and our analysis of mentoring reports allowed for distinct retrospective observations of the content and progress of the mentoring relationship, tracking it as it developed over time. Furthermore, both sources of data (though especially mentoring reports) provided close details on mentors' perceptions of mentees' commitment to the scheme and to their art more generally, as well as documenting the benefits of the scheme for mentees, at least as seen through the eyes of mentors. Finally, our direct observations of mentoring sessions, combined with our interviews with mentors and mentors' reports, afforded insights into the actual operations of the scheme on the ground, the mechanisms through which it aimed to give rise to 'soft' conditions that may decrease the likelihood of reoffending, and the interpersonal and other skills employed by mentors in eliciting and fostering some of the changes in mentees' behaviour that will be discussed below.

Below we discuss our data by reference to the key 'secondary' or 'soft' contributions arts-based interventions may make to the process of desistance from crime: increased learning capacity and motivation; psychological and attitudinal changes; and development of social skills. We also discuss management of one's expectations as an additional dimension that proved vital to the effectiveness of the mentoring scheme, and offer some observations as to the importance of the structure of the scheme and the skills mentors brought to the process of mentoring.

Learning capacity and motivation

As discussed in Chapter 1, past evaluation research has found that participation in arts-based programmes in prison settings helps to develop general skills such as listening, an ability for experiential learning with an emphasis on searching for solutions to real issues, self-confidence in terms of educational achievement, and a positive attitude towards learning as such. In the course of our evaluation, mentors reported some of these effects as having been achieved, and identified two different ways in which they aided mentees in achieving them:

- Training and support in developing skills in the arts and beyond; and
- Support in securing access to formal education and employment.

Mentors' primary function was to provide training and support in developing skills connected to some form of art. Based on our data from direct observations of mentoring sessions and on our review of mentors' reports, this function spanned a range of activities, organised by mentors themselves and tailored according to mentees' needs and the Action Plan as previously agreed. Although mentees had a range of artistic interests (e.g., painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, writing, and music), the role of mentors generally entailed providing constructive criticism of mentees' work, teaching or otherwise exposing mentees to new artistic forms and skills, providing basic art history education, and bringing mentees in contact with the broader arts community.

Mentors were significantly engaged in assessing and providing comments for improvement of mentees' artwork. Crucially, thanks to the supportive and constructive tone they adopted, as was also evident in their reports, mentors were usually successful in providing critical feedback without triggering antagonistic reactions on the part of mentees. In fact, mentors' comments were typically welcomed and actively taken up by mentees. This was not in the least because constructive criticism was taken to be reflective of serious, committed, and non-condescending treatment, and thereby functioned to boost mentees' self-esteem, but also to instill a more realistic outlook, before they would even act on the criticism they had received.

Mentors achieved this level of cooperation through utilising their professional experience and status as established artists, but also, and importantly, through employing more interpersonal skills. This meant taking a non-judgmental stance, showing enthusiasm and encouragement for the mentee's work, and airing accessibility and support. More

delicate handling was required in certain cases, such as the one described in an interview by a mentor:

‘I think [this mentee] is very receptive to compliments and slightly defensive towards criticism. But I know he’s got the ability to take criticism on board later. So I know compliments need to come first, and criticism must kind of come later in his case. So I think he might become more confident in what he’s doing, especially if learns to accept that he’s not always going to get straight praise, but that he will also have to look at ways in which to make things better.’ (Mentor – Interview)

Further key factors in securing mentees’ collaboration were the relative informality of the scheme, as well as the democratic interactions and mutual respect that typically developed within the mentor-mentee relationship. Taken singly or together, these factors represent an important advantage of the scheme in comparison to other, more formal and structured arts-based courses.

Below are two indicative excerpts from mentors’ reports regarding pertinent practices and skills they employed in the course of mentoring:

‘[My contribution entailed] providing positive feedback on the work [the mentee] had undertaken and the directions that she would like to explore, acknowledging her achievements to date in her art and encouraging her to continue her practice and identify new support groups.’ (Mentor’s report)

‘I think the most important thing is that [the mentee] feels she has support for her work, which will enable her to keep going. [She] responds very well to feedback, and has proved this by managing to keep creating, even though I know she is finding it hard. I’m trying to find a balance myself between positive instruction and encouragement, and not outing undue amounts of pressure on [her]. She has recently set up her own business and this is taking up a lot of time, and whilst I think it’s really important that she keeps creating, I don’t want her to feel torn between this and her professional work, which might make her stop creating altogether.’ (Mentor’s report)

Importantly, mentors were willing to provide support in between sessions, and this included contact and feedback through emails or phone calls. As one mentor explained, for example:

‘We have talked on the phone in between this session and our last meeting, and I think these talks help [the mentee] feel she is supported and has access to encouragement and feedback at key moments in her artwork.’ (Mentor’s report)

In some cases, mentors’ efforts to increase the artistic capacity of mentees included identifying and addressing lack of motivation in the latter. Mentors here employed

techniques to help mentees overcome this blockage, and many of these techniques assumed the form of transferable skills. As one mentor reported, for example:

‘One of the major concerns [the mentee] expressed is their degree of motivation and sustaining their motivation when there is no immediate support network or group environment. I think that once [she] had identified motivation as her biggest challenge, it was almost as if a weight had been lifted off her shoulders. We agreed that our next meetings would aim to help her be “self-motivated” in her practice.’ (Mentor’s report)

On occasion, whether consciously or otherwise, the process of mentoring itself would serve as a ‘transferable’ model for mentees’ own development.

‘[I]n prison [the mentee] was working with a Samaritans-type group, which is called the Listeners, and things he’s done from that have meant that now he has the possibility of working to advise other ex-offenders coming out. [...] [H]e’s gained insights from the process of mentoring itself and that has interested him more in giving that sort of help to others. So, that’s that, there’s certainly a lot of activities where he can use the skills he has developed.’ (Mentor – Interview)

Mentors’ constant support had a significant impact on sustaining mentees’ motivation to continue with their artwork. At the outset of the mentoring relationship, of course, both the fact that mentees had applied for participation in the scheme and their stated reasons for doing so implied willingness and determination to foster their artistic skills. To take a couple of examples from mentees’ application forms:

‘The Koestler Trust has been an absolute lifeline for me over the past few years. I volunteered for them whilst I was out and want to play a fuller part in the life of the Koestler awards, with the use of my paintings to encourage others in prison. I have to be able to show prisoners what they can achieve by pursuing of an interest, and that they can have real aims and objectives working with the Trust.’ (Mentee)

‘Developing my skills through input from a professional and enhancing my knowledge and ability within art would help with my resettlement in the community. Having a mentor would also give me support, advice, and guidance to progress onto having my own exhibition later on in the future.’ (Mentee)

However, further down the line, and especially after release back into the community, several mentees encountered difficulties that affected their motivation to engage with art. Mentees’ motivation and commitment to their artwork was influenced by several factors: dealing with what was often the shocking experience of release in itself; finding employment; financial struggles; and re-establishing connections with the family on the

outside. It is important to note here that those mentees who found themselves facing these and related issues had previously been imprisoned for different crimes and different lengths of time. For example, a few of those mentees had been convicted of a violent crime and served more than a decade in prison; others had been convicted of property offences and had served 3-5 years. Regardless, then, of the time spent in prison, personal and/or professional connections with the outside world had been severed or strained, and this impacted negatively on mentees' motivation to continue with their artwork.

Here mentors were crucial in detecting changes in mentees' mood, and in reacting to them by providing or suggesting solutions to overcome the blockage. In one mentor-mentee relationship, for instance, the mentee had entered the scheme with a high degree of motivation to finish and publicly exhibit an art piece she had been working on. This is an excerpt from her mentor's report on their first mentoring session:

'[She] is very enthusiastic and has a lot of energy, so I feel that she will be able to self-motivate very well. This is a head start as far as our work together goes. Finally, the structural plan we talked about seemed to click with [her] and make her feel as though finishing her [art piece] is manageable by giving her a rough blueprint.' (Mentor's report)

However, the positive outlook of the mentee subsequently changed as she struggled with several post-release difficulties: starting a business from scratch, dealing with the stigma associated with her past imprisonment, and the inability to discuss these issues within her family. The mentor was crucial in shifting the focus of the mentee's artwork to another theme, away from these issues, and thus sustaining her motivation to continue creating.

In sum, mentees felt supported and exposed to positive feedback throughout the process, which both improved and further motivated their work. This created a sense of having constant support that at least some mentees were lacking in the post-release period from other sources. Though there are a number of organisations that keep contact with, and seek to provide support to, former prisoners (most notably the Probation Service), they are not always easily accessible, interactions with them follow a more formalised and inflexible pattern, and former prisoners may feel disconnected from them. The mentoring programme therefore has the distinct advantage of offering continuous support that is tailored to participants' needs.

Further activities undertaken by mentors for the purposes of enhancing mentees' artistic skills included teaching them new techniques, different artistic styles, or arts history. These were an important part of the mentoring process as in many cases mentees had indicated both in their application to the scheme and in their Action Plan that they needed help with further training and education (which on occasion also meant securing access to formal education), and with technique development. Most mentees were generally self-taught and therefore the lack of technical expertise was a barrier to their future development.

In practice, the activities catered to the individual needs of the mentee, and reflected the goals set out in the Action Plan. Mentors focused, for example, on fostering mentees'

artistic skills through introducing them to new techniques and exercises that were helpful in the creative process, or teaching them arts history so that they could develop further as artists and find, sustain or boost their motivation. The following excerpts give some examples of the types of skills that were transferred to mentees by their mentors:

'Practical help is always a big part of our sessions. When I met [the mentee], his "tools" were very few, now he works with other materials. I have made suggestions to him on how to finish the work.' (Mentor's report)

'The plan is for me to show [the mentee] new methods of drawing and together we worked with pastel colours for three hours. The reality is that his response is immediate! He picks everything up! The perfect student!' (Mentor's report)

Aside from teaching new techniques or skills, some mentors provided support by establishing and following through a relatively specific plan of monitoring the mentee's progress at regular intervals, thereby enhancing mentees' focus on specific goals and their motivation to complete their artwork.

'I think it's just great to have that, you know, sort of framework for once [the mentee] is being released. And I think that's what I am trying to set up for him—that there is some sort of focus going on while he is in that period of just being released after spending such a long time inside. And that's my main aim—to set up something which gives him a focus and something which becomes a habit every six weeks or so.' (Mentor – Interview)

'We keep following the pattern of our previous sessions, based on [the mentee's] desire to keep moving forward with the piece. Her priority is to complete as much of it as possible within our mentoring time together, and she is making good progress, so I think it's important to keep her anchored and with a clear plan and focus.' (Mentor's report)

Finally, mentors often encouraged and practically helped mentees to submit their work to competitions, or to contact and negotiate with galleries and other venues about doing exhibitions where they could promote their work.

'This time is a turning point for the mentee. He has entered, at my suggestion, two pieces of work into an exhibition. Both pieces have been accepted and both shortlisted. He also has prints of his work in a gallery.' (Mentor's report)

Over time, mentees showed significant responsiveness to their mentors' efforts to introduce them to new skills and new styles of creative work. For example, this is an excerpt of a report compiled for a session that took place in the middle of the mentoring relationship:

‘I am really pleased we did some drawing together. [He] has been very negative about doing this before, and I think it was a significant step for him to draw in front of me and to learn something about drawing being part of the process of developing ideas. I wanted to get [him] drawing so that he would feel less inhibited about drawing in front of someone else[.] By drawing we train ourselves to see.’ (Mentor’s report)

Below we provide excerpts from mentor reports on different mentoring sessions of the same mentor-mentee couple, which provide an insight into the attitude instilled into the mentee in order for her eventually to grow more knowledgeable in the field of art history, itself a goal set in the Action Plan:

Session 2: ‘[The mentee] has little knowledge of art history and if she is serious about art, she must broaden her outlook. She will need to sit down and make notes and research these artists so they don’t all slip from her mind. I think there is a good connection between us and that we have a good basis to continue.’ (Mentor’s report)

Session 4: ‘I asked her to bring a sketchpad to the exhibition and to make notes and sketches. Having a sketchpad –as opposed to loose pieces of paper– makes her more likely to return to her notes and add to them. She was very studious I felt.’ (Mentor’s report)

Session 10: ‘It was nice to think about the year gone and start to consolidate all the things we have done. [The mentee] now has a notebook and is starting to record what we do. As always, she found lots of inspiration in the works she saw during the course of the day.’ (Mentor’s report)

Arts-related activities also commonly included trips to galleries, exhibition shows, workshops in progress, poetry readings, or similar venues and events, depending on the particular field of art that interested the mentee. On many occasions, in fact, the mentoring session took place at an art venue, and included discussion about the artwork exhibited there.

‘[The mentee] and I met at the [gallery]. We sat at the café and discussed how the start of his course was going. [...] [H]e showed me his sketchbook and latest entries. We talked more in depth about a current project he was working on. [...] We talked some more on how he was approaching the project and his sketchbooks so far in relation to the nature of his prior work and maybe how to consider this in future projects. After these discussions, we walked around parts of the [gallery’s] permanent collections. We noticed a current exhibition, as it seemed to suit our discussions, and decided to attend it as well.’ (Mentor’s report)

In addition to exposing mentees to new works, styles and approaches, mentors commonly also used their own contacts to bring mentees in touch with the arts community as such, thereby

facilitating the creation or extension of valuable networks that mentees could use and rely upon at a later stage, including for the purposes of potential employment after completion of the mentoring relationship. This was especially important given that most mentees lacked connections to the arts world. In many cases, in fact, mentees had not even visited a gallery in the past, nor did they possess basic information about how to access different arts events or communities; a point often also highlighted in their Action Plan. Indeed, under the encouragement of mentors, several mentees also proceeded to visit arts venues independently and on their own accord.

‘I also wanted to encourage and support [the mentee] to see as much “art” as possible—for visual stimulation, critical analysis, and as a way to possibly meet like-minded people, as well as being an activity she could share with her partner. She took the initiative and visited the general collection with her partner a few weeks prior to our meeting.’ (Mentor’s report)

Mentoring activities frequently included training and support in developing skills that were not so much directly connected to learning about or creating art, but mostly concerned employability. Although actual employment and employability should not be confused, the former is obviously more likely to occur when the latter increases. Here the focus was both on networking, as discussed above, but also on transferable practical skills, such as familiarising oneself with new computer technologies and basic software, creating a budget, creating a portfolio of one’s artwork, and approaching publishers or galleries in order to publish or exhibit one’s work. According to mentors, mentees very often managed to develop a more professional outlook and profile.

‘We also planned to discuss the development of his portfolio. This is the first time that [the mentee] has ever put a portfolio together, and he is making good progress. This is certainly enabling him to build up a good record of his work, which will help when approaching galleries in the future. In the past, he has simply “popped in” to galleries with the odd photo in a plastic bag, so we are working towards a more professional approach.’ (Mentor’s report)

Mentors’ advice and encouragement also focused on, and often facilitated, the development of other attitudinal changes beneficial to mentees’ employability. These included encouraging a work ethic; a higher level of commitment; improved time management; and improved organisational and planning skills.

‘I am very aware that having a website doesn’t mean that you will automatically get the web hits. It is important that [the mentee] works hard to promote the site and make sure to get the website address onto other sites with links through to his site.’ (Mentor’s report)

Mentors’ guidance was not always followed, and persistence was sometimes necessary.

‘[The mentee] needs to understand the importance of getting to places on time. I was not at all happy and whilst I tried to be understanding, I felt angry that we had let [a professional contact] down. I had a firm talk with him about this and said that he must get organised. I can only continue to work with [him] if he is professional and committed.’ (Mentor’s report)

[After our fourth session] I am still encouraging [the mentee] to learn to use the computer, it is important that he does not rely on my computer skills to manage his website in the future. [...] [After our eight session] I am still keen to help him purchase a laptop as much of his future ability to enter competitions, apply for funding etc. will rely on being able to have access to other facilities. [At our ninth session] I was impressed to see quite a change in him, he had bought a laptop and a digital camera, and seemed to have overcome his resistance to modern technology [...] and in fact was enthusiastically engaging with it. When I arrived he was already there and had logged onto the internet and was using his laptop to do emails.’ (Mentor’s report)

In a few cases, mentors assisted mentees in their efforts to secure access to additional arts education, whether in the sense of suggesting suitable and affordable programmes or by reviewing and helping to revise mentees’ portfolios and their applications for access to programmes of this type.

Occasionally, mentors assisted mentees in their efforts to enter the labour market, if not necessarily to acquire arts-related jobs. In one case, for example, the mentor arranged some paid work for the mentee to help alleviate his financial difficulties. On another occasion, the mentor actively encouraged and offered to practically help the mentee to apply for a monotonous but nonetheless paid job:

‘Whilst working on budgeting, we discussed options regarding opportunities for work. In [the mentee’s] hometown there is a sandwich factory and he could clear approximately £180 a week there. He plans to fill in an application this week. I have offered to read through it before he submits it.’ (Mentor’s report)

It should be noted here that such assistance stretched beyond the remit of mentors’ duties as there were prescribed by the scheme. That is to say, mentoring did not formally entail assistance with general employment issues. As the mentoring relationship developed and strengthened over time, however, it appears that mentors assumed an additional caring function in mentees’ lives, without ignoring or undermining the fact that artistic skills and general employability were linked to one another in a mutually reinforcing manner. On the one hand, helping mentees to secure income and overcome financial difficulties implied that they were more likely to remain focused on, and continue with, their artistic endeavours. On the other hand, arts-related skills could be evoked and used in professional fields beyond the arts as such:

‘I think he is being realistic about what he can achieve professionally, but he is still

inspired and wants to use arts. This, of course, can be done in youth work and drugs work. He is now trained as a Drugs and Alcohol Advisor and looking for work in this area, but there is very little and he worries about his past history.’ (Mentor’s report)

Psychological and Attitudinal Changes

As mentioned in our review of the literature, previous research suggests that participation in artistic projects in general, and the process of creating artistic products in particular, can serve a transformative function for offenders, triggering or at least facilitating positive psychological and attitudinal changes. Below we examine the extent to which the mentoring scheme contributed towards such changes for mentees, and what the process that led to such changes was in practice. Combined with our observations of mentoring sessions and our interviews with mentors, mentor reports provided rich data on the skills mentors employed to incite or facilitate attitudinal and psychological changes in mentees. It should be noted that mentors typically were professional artists, and apart from the training they received from the Koestler Trust before the mentoring began, they did not have any special skills in dealing with at-risk populations such as former prisoners. In that sense, mentors did not perform the role of a professionally trained therapist using arts for diagnostic or therapeutic treatment. However, mentors often offered a form of pastoral care to mentees, in addition to teaching them arts-related skills and helping them build a more employable profile, a combination which enhanced their psychological well-being.

According to mentors, participation in the mentoring scheme and the variety of activities it entailed had the effect of increasing mentees’ self-esteem, as well as their sense of achievement and empowerment. Mentors’ reports also showed that, at least in a few cases, the positive effects of the scheme also included higher levels of self-efficacy and an increase in the mentee’s internal locus of control. In one relationship, the mentor’s intervention contributed towards reducing the mentee’s level of depression.

It is not surprising that mentors worked to support mentees’ self-esteem and their sense of achievement and empowerment, not least because the majority of mentees themselves had indicated these factors in their applications to the mentoring scheme as needs they were hoping to address. Indeed, various external circumstances commonly affected mentees’ confidence and perceptions of self-worth throughout the mentoring process. Former prisoners often struggle with such issues after release, and mentors were able to recognise this—both in mentees’ artwork and through the discussions they had with mentees in the context of a mutually trusting, respectful and friendly relationship that frequently developed in the process of mentoring. Indeed, mentoring sessions would sometimes start by discussing mentees’ personal concerns as such. As described by a mentor, for example:

‘We’d typically spend around 20 minutes at the start talking about the issues in his life since we last met, and then we’d go on sort of to the writing. But these things would slip into it, we’d be talking about the experiences and then we’d sometimes go into how that can be used in writing or how I can help approach that in writing. That came across all the time.’ (Mentor - Interview)

Some mentees only struggled with issues of confidence concerning their artistic skills and output, whilst for others confidence was a more general problem. In both cases, mentors reported that mentees gradually came to feel more confident as a result of their participation in the mentoring scheme.

‘I find [the mentee] to be calmer and more settled in himself, in his circumstances. Increasing self-confidence enabled him to tackle and complete ambitious projects.’
(Mentor’s report)

‘I feel [the mentee] is doing well. He is positive about the future and the new addition of the laptop and digital camera will really help him to organise his paintings and manage his website.’ (Mentor’s report)

‘I felt [the mentee] was able to express herself more confidently. This was evidenced at the end of the exhibition with her critical analysis and during our discussion about the Action Plan. This is encouraging as it demonstrates [her] willingness to experiment, explore and undertake new challenges.’ (Mentor’s report)

‘I think [the mentoring scheme] has given him confidence, a lot of confidence, as is witnessed by the fact that when I first met him, he felt tremendously guilty, it was very difficult to make eye contact with him, he was very, very shy. By the end of our time together he was confident enough to be in a short film and face the camera, which is something that he’d never thought of before. Because he didn’t want anybody to see his face or know his name.’ (Mentor – Interview)

As is so often the case with former prisoners, some mentees’ confidence was undermined by the social stigma attached to imprisonment and the related difficulties in finding work after release, which implied that mentors needed to address this, directly or indirectly, in the context of mentoring.

‘[The mentee] had been rejected seventeen times for different job applications. I praised his work, we discussed how he might finish it in time to enter the competition. We discussed the work content. It was very dark and I asked him if that was a reflection of how he now felt. I used my skills of giving him confidence, and encouraged him to include “hope” into his picture.’ (Mentor’s report)

Problems of confidence also arose due to other external factors, from family issues, to persisting traumas of past imprisonment, to new problems with the criminal justice system. On one occasion, for example, a mentee’s confidence and his subsequent productivity were ‘knocked’ ‘as a result of [him] being detained without being charged for 28 days’ (Mentor’s report). *On another occasion, the trauma of part imprisonment was so strong and persistent that the mentee decided to shift the focus of her artistic work away from the prison experience.*

‘She has come to a difficult decision, which is to stop [focusing her artwork on the prison experience], and concentrate on other work. We have kept a dialogue going throughout this process, and I am aware how much anxiety she has experienced over the [artwork]. Whilst I think she knows how much potential the [artwork] has, she just isn’t emotionally ready to relive her experiences in prison, and feels she lacks the objectivity to make the creative process bearable. [...] [Later on in our mentoring relationship] [i]t was great to spend a session with her, in which I could feel that her anxiety had lifted and also feel her excitement about the material we were discussing, and her sense of relief to be working on something that she is invested in as an artist, but without the same “heaviness” as she had experienced before. The conversation ended on a real high, and she seemed positive, inspired and excited.’ (Mentor’s report)

Indeed, the case above suggests that using art as a means of conveying the experiences and ‘acting out’ the frustrations of the time spent in prison may not be as therapeutic for former prisoners as for current ones.

Participation in the mentoring scheme also contributed to higher levels of self-efficacy amongst mentees –that is, several mentees appeared to have developed a greater belief in their capacity to organise and execute courses of action directed at particular outcomes–, although this achievement sometimes seemed to require close attention and constant encouragement on the part of mentors. Two mentors reported, for example:

‘I also understand more about the pattern of our sessions now. [The mentee] generally begins the session very worried, downhearted, and full of doubts about her own ability, as well as the question of whether she should just put the work to one side until she has more perspective on the experiences she is writing about. She tends to end the sessions fired up, enthusiastic, positive and full of ideas about how to proceed with the artwork. This is great to see—and reconfirms my belief that at this point, helping [her] produce more material and keeping her anchored to a solid plan is the most helpful thing I can do as her mentor.’ (Mentor’s report)

‘On this occasion, the phone call prior to our meeting was significant because I could sense a degree of anxiety in her voice when I asked her how she had got on with the work. I was able to reassure her over the phone and ease her concerns and get her to focus on what she had accomplished. She understands the present reality of her situation. I believe it is good to dream as it motivates action. She has also started to note take during our discussions, writing information for her own reference. This is really a positive and encouraging sign and demonstrates her willingness to take on board suggestions to help herself in the long term.’ (Mentor’s report)

As the quotes above also suggest, mentors’ feedback and support additionally contributed to an increase in several mentees’ internal locus of control; namely, to a greater feeling of control over their environment and living in it. This is yet another important function of the

scheme, given that at least some mentees often felt anxious and powerless in view of the predicaments of life after release.

‘I felt it was important to provide some reassurance to [the mentee] and for her to see that continuing with her art practice is worthwhile and that it has value, giving her credit for identifying her financial predicament as the main priority and how this does not undermine her commitment to continue with art practice.’ (Mentor’s report)

Similarly, although the mentoring scheme was not designed with therapeutic goals in mind, it also practically served to incite introspection and make it easier for mentees to confront their past involvement in crime through art; a point which we revisit later. Consistent with other research, introspection was practiced mostly by those mentees who chose non-verbal forms of artistic expression (e.g., painting).

In sum, the findings reported in this section so far are in line with previous research on the psychological effects of arts-based programmes in criminal justice settings. To this extent, it may be argued that arts-based programmes have similar effects for both current and former prisoners, not least because psychological states such as a reduced sense of self-worth or feelings of social isolation are not necessarily resolved, and may in fact be exacerbated, once one is released from prison back into the community. This underlines the importance of sustaining arts-based programmes and similar interventions both inside prisons and after release.

Our evaluation revealed that the psychological and attitudinal changes described above also required that mentees held and sustained realistic expectations about life after release from prison, including about developing a professional career in the field of art. The latter prospect frequently arose during mentoring sessions, and mentors were required to share their own experiences of building a successful career as an artist without sounding unsupportive or condescending to mentees. This kind of guidance was meant, and usually worked, as a healthy ‘reality check’ for mentees in that they were forewarned or reminded that earning a living from one’s art is generally fraught with uncertainty, regardless of the quality of one’s artwork—not to mention the additional symbolic and practical difficulties typically faced by people who have been released from prison just recently.

Such warnings or reminders were deemed to be especially important in the context of the mentoring scheme. This is because selection onto the scheme presupposed having previously distinguished oneself in one of Koestler Trust’s annual competitions for prisoner art. In other words, the perceived risk here was that, if left unchecked, prior success as a prisoner artist might lead mentees to undermine the difficulties involved in sustaining success in the free community, thereby eventually, and paradoxically, functioning in a counterproductive manner in terms of their self-esteem.

‘[The mentee] would like to get paid work, but first, it’s the recession, and second, he has a criminal record and feels very, very dragged down by that criminal record[.] [...] [H]e feels that quite a lot of employment opportunities are closed to him[.] [...] I

think one of the things this scheme has done is encourage [him] to take on much more realistic goals. The prison environment is very different from the real world, isn’t it. You get quite a lot of kudos if you win a Koestler award in prison. Then you get asked to do a lot of portraits, you know if you are good in portraiture, it’s quite likely that other prisoners will pay you in tobacco or something, favours, to do paintings of their families. And you know you can make quite a name for yourself in prison, but coming out of prison is wholly different world. [...] If you want to be really successful portrait painter in the UK, you got to be exposed to so much more, and abstract work and lots of other artists and influence and materials that there is no way you can get in prison. So yeah, [the mentoring scheme] is just making things a bit more realistic. [...] [Y]ou’ve got to explain this stuff to mentees in the nicest possible way. But often you have to explain it in very clear terms.’ (Mentor – Interview)

‘I was slightly anxious when [the mentee] asked me to honestly tell her whether the book might get published, but I managed to explain that it was impossible for me to give her any guarantees. The most important thing was to convey my trust in her developing abilities as a writer and to make her understand that all her fears and anxieties are part of any writer’s process. [She] seemed to accept this without any problem.’ (Mentor’s report)

‘I hope that [the mentee] does understand the complexities of being a full time, PAID artist. I must ensure that I do not make it seem all so easy. He is getting to meet folk that he has not had contact with before and they are all so enthusiastic and encouraging. He leaves them on such a high and I dread the day that he gets his first shock about the real arts world. It will be good for him to experience what we in the business call the “let down”.’ (Mentor’s report)

‘Last time we met I was concerned that [the mentee] was taking on too much and being over ambitious. Although he is painting every day, he is also being more realistic about what he will achieve within a given time. He is also becoming more savvy about what it takes to be an artist full-time, and whether this is good for him, financially.’ (Mentor’s report)

‘I think I have to be careful about raising [the mentee’s] expectations too much. He is very talented, but it is not easy to get established as a full-time artist. It is tricky to encourage [the mentee] to aim high, as he should, given his talent, and at the same time warn him as to how difficult it is to make a living as an artist and prepare him to deal with inevitable rejections.’ (Mentor’s report)

Instilling realism into mentees required that mentors themselves were conscious of the inevitable limitations of the mentoring scheme and of the contributions they might be able to make in this context. As one mentor put the point:

‘[The mentoring scheme] cannot do everything, because [the mentee] still has problems with housing and employment, but it has given him the tools, it has helped him cope with some of those difficulties.’ (Mentor – Interview)

Interestingly, one mentor suggested that the very idea of realistic expectations is not easy to materialise in practice, especially in circumstances where persistence against repeated failure is the only way forward.

‘When you apply to exhibitions, you get a lot of rejections, so you don’t want to be too negative. On the other hand, you have to understand that it is not easy to do that. To have realistic aims and expectations.’ (Mentor – Interview)

The trick here, as another mentor explained, is to distinguish between realism (e.g., recognising the scope and seriousness of existing difficulties in the process of transition from prison back into the community) and cynicism (e.g., treating ‘society’ as invariably or irreversibly hostile to formerly imprisoned individuals), and to cultivate realism whilst doing away with cynicism.

To the extent that the mentoring scheme and mentors in particular helped mentees develop or sustain balanced and realistic expectations as to what they might be able to achieve professionally through and after completion of the scheme, it also helped them to avoid experiencing a wide discrepancy between their aspirations and actual chances for success; a source of strain that could not only jeopardise any positive effects of the mentoring scheme as such, but also one that criminological theory has identified as a key contributor to engagement in crime (see further Merton, 1968; also Agnew, 1992, 2009).

Building Social Skills

As with arts-in-prisons programmes, so too with the mentoring scheme, involvement with the arts was found to help participants build or further develop particular social skills; skills that the inherently harsh and often isolating experience of imprisonment typically undermines or otherwise distorts. In the main, these skills included a capacity to overcome one’s boundaries and communicate effectively with others, and collaboration with others in the context of group work. Mentors tried to boost or instill these skills through encouraging mentees to experiment with new forms and styles of art, as well as to engage in joint work with them.

Nowhere were mentees’ social skills most needed or visible, but often also reaffirmed and enhanced, than in public exhibitions of their artwork. In this context, mentees felt proud of their achievements and the recognition they received, which functioned as an additional incentive for sustained engagement with the arts.

‘[The mentee] was very proud that he had been selected amongst a number of local artists and he was also keen for me to see his work framed in the style that we had discussed during our first mentoring session. We also planned a training session

for him to learn how to write up a project plan. I was also keen to teach him how to prepare a budget for the project. [...] The exhibition was extremely impressive. I thought they did him proud. He seemed very pleased with the event. He listened and was anxious to get it right.’ (Mentor’s report)

‘I do believe that most people respond positively in every effort a person makes to better their life. Also, through the public exhibitions the Koestler Trust organises, I can see people responding with an amazing understanding and acceptance of the ex-offenders, which they probably communicate to their further cycle of friends, influencing positively other people who are not so aware of these movements’. (Mentor – Interview)

Although public exhibitions of mentees’ artwork provided a platform for them to transfer and test their skills in other, wider contexts, beyond the immediate and intimate environment of the mentoring relationship, mentors still remained a significant audience for mentees. Thus far research has reflected on the importance of how family members or the broader community view former prisoners for the ways in which the latter view themselves and, relatedly, for their efforts to desist from crime after release (e.g., Dawes 1999; Wilson, Caulfield and Atherton 2008). In our evaluation, mentors’ views were found to be just as important for the ways in which mentees constructed their identity, not just during the mentoring scheme but also once this was completed.

It is important to note here that some mentees expressed reservations regarding public exposure of their artwork when its content related openly to their previous prison experience. What appeared to be at issue in such cases was either fear that social alienation might be reproduced through allowing one’s stigmatised past to resurface in public, or guilt related to one’s prior offending and the harm caused to others. Mentors’ response usually consisted in encouraging mentees to shift their substantive focus to other themes so that the process of mentoring and its intended effects would not be impeded.

The mentoring environment: Interactions and mentors’ skills

The relatively ‘open’ and flexible structure of the mentoring scheme and the nature the mentoring relationship could thus assume were in line with findings from previous research on arts-based programmes in criminal justice settings and ‘aftercare’. In terms of facilitating learning capacity and motivation, the relationship both reflected and reproduced an environment that was democratic, supportive, and attentive to emotions. The role of mentors was crucial in this regard, in that they made sure to employ skills such as sympathy, patience, and approachability in their interactions with mentees. Whilst, in other words, mentors openly evoked and practically utilised their professional experience, they also presented themselves as fellow artists and peers, rather than as representatives of a more formalised authority structure (e.g., as teachers).

‘From the beginning, [...] I wanted to convey myself as someone who was approachable and keen to listen and assist. I was alert and sensitive of the information

that [the mentee] relayed, asking questions where necessary but also being respectful of her private life. The discussions were focused upon her art whilst acknowledging the impact of contributing factors. [I was] demonstrating awareness and recognising from the tone of mentee's voice the essence of her main and immediate concerns.' (Mentor's report)

'It was important to break the ice and create a strong foundation where discussion could take place freely and I think creating an atmosphere of trust at this first meeting was critical. I felt it was important to create a relationship based on mutual trust and to really convey that our partnership was going to be about working together and not one of "tutor/student".' (Mentor's report)

In a similar vein, mentors frequently adopted an enthusiastic approach to the mentee's ideas and work, as well as acknowledging their advancement. For example, the following is an excerpt of a report on a session midway through the mentoring scheme:

'[The skills I used included] providing positive feedback, acknowledging her achievements to date in her art and encouraging [the mentee] to continue her practice and identify new support groups. Acknowledging that [the mentee's] circumstances can impact upon her daily life. My role is thus to provide direction, encouragement and strategies/mechanisms by which she can move forward in all aspects of her life—to be non-judgmental and get her to focus on her achievements.' (Mentor's report)

'Overall I think the first meeting went well. I wanted to put [the mentee] at ease and try to make her feel that I was a non-judgmental source for her to talk about her work which will obviously incorporate her talking about her experiences in and out of prison. I felt that by the end of the session we had bonded and had each other's trust, which is important.' (Mentor's report)

In some cases, the alertness shown by mentors to mentees' post-release difficulties led to the former actively seeking to help the latter recognise and overcome certain psychological problems that had been caused as a result—without 'medicalising' them. In one case, for example, the mentor had communicated to the Koestler Trust that the mentee was suffering from post-release depression, itself caused by employment difficulties, and this was preventing her from focusing on her artwork. The mentor was asking whether any professional support could be offered to the mentee. However, she was also employing limited 'counselling' skills herself as she was providing the mentee with reassurance on her artistic achievements—which, under the pressure of the circumstances, the mentee was unable to recognise.

'[The mentee] is really low. She says that every time she tries to [do art] she actually feels ill, and upset, and can't face it. She was very honest and said that it's just hit her

that it's a year since she was released and she feels she's made no real progress in [her artwork] or with her career. I understand she's very frustrated by not being able to earn any money from her new business, and she is just depressed about everything. [...] I just feel that she doesn't really talk about her feelings to her family or friends, and thus bottles it up. I am there to talk to her when [she] needs it, but I feel more specific support about her general wellbeing would be really useful. [...] I tried to reassure her today that she's under no pressure to finish her [artwork]—she must do it when she feels able, and if it's too painful right now, then that's absolutely understandable.' (Mentor's report)

This is an important finding on how the mentoring relationship developed and operated in practice, but also on the scope of its effects, given that rates of depression tend to be high both amongst current and former prisoners. Research has also suggested that feelings of depression and the disruption such feelings cause to the transition from prison back into the community may contribute to high rates of recidivism, especially among repeat offenders (Petersilia, 2003; Wikoff et al., 2012).

In the caring context of the mentoring relationship, mentees were by no means pressured to discuss and reflect on their offending past or the time they had spent in prison, though they usually felt sufficiently comfortable to do so if they wished. Whilst our interviews with mentees themselves highlighted the importance they attributed to the fact that their previous involvement in crime was not brought up by mentors during sessions, we also came across occasions where mentees themselves actually made the 'liberating' choice to start discussions about their offending past and their prison experiences with their respective mentors.

'[The mentee] chatted easily about his work, life, and he was able to talk about his experiences in prison and how this has changed him as a person, and his attitude to those less fortunate than himself. He expressed a desire to help others, and wishes he could do more. He would like to work for the Samaritans again.' (Mentor's report)

'We caught up on all that had gone wrong with his job (which he no longer has) and his mother's failing health plus the strain on his father. [He] loved the giant golden cages inhabited by two peacocks prompting reflections on works within worlds, on freedom and its limitations. This led to a discussion about prison.' (Mentor's report)

Sometimes mentees' past offending behaviour would be addressed indirectly, through discussions of personal and social circumstances that led to it in the first instance.

'Yes, [past offending behaviour] is addressed, but not directly in terms of the offences, but in terms of some of the things that led up to them and some of the relationships. So, that's been there, there is a series of poems [the mentee] wrote about coming out of prison, you know, some of that comes in there. So, it's there at an angle.' (Mentor – Interview).

The benefits that flew from the relatively ‘open’ and flexible structure of the mentoring scheme and from the humanely warm nature mentoring relationships could thus assume are arguably more difficult to achieve through arts-based programmes that operate in prison settings, not least due to the physical and regulatory constraints such settings typically impose. The length of the mentoring scheme, both in terms of the number of sessions and the period over which sessions took place, also facilitated the development of mentor-mentee relationships, and we became aware of cases where mentees and their mentors stayed in touch after completion of their ten prescribed mentoring sessions (e.g., via email or phone calls).

Finally, the matching of mentees with appropriate mentors was a crucial component of the effectiveness of the scheme. As regards the pastoral side of mentors’ role, successful matching could mean that mentors in some respects resembled significant others in mentees’ personal lives. As one mentor explained, for example:

‘He obviously felt that he could tell me anything, I suppose. Well, maybe because I was similar age to his mother. I’ve got children of a similar age. I mean I did think he might have initially thought “How can I possibly connect with her?”, but I don’t think he has this problem.’ (Mentor – Interview)

On the artistic side of mentoring, however, successful matching did not necessarily imply that mentors and mentees shared similar backgrounds or even interests, and there were cases where differences were highlighted my mentors (but also by mentees, as we shall see later) as positive elements in the mentoring relationship. One mentor, for example, argued:

‘I think my contribution so far has been in the fact that I am not in the same practice, I don’t practice in the same medium as a lot of the other artists who I did my [mentoring] training with. A lot of them come from a fine arts background and have very definite fine arts skills. And then a lot of them come from criminal justice and also have an artistic practice. [...] Whereas I come from a completely different, very multidisciplinary, very sort of life-style orientated background. And I think for [this mentee] and for other potential mentees, I think that kind of approach is very useful, would be very useful.’ (Mentor – Interview)

A Note on Attrition

The majority of mentees who successfully completed the scheme had between seven and the maximum of ten sessions with their respective mentors. One mentor-mentee couple had eleven sessions, whilst eight mentees completed the scheme in less than seven sessions (e.g., four or five), given that the goal originally set in the Action Plan (e.g., acquisition of specific technical skills necessary for their art work) had already been met. Despite the variety of possible benefits of arts mentoring, not all mentees completed the

scheme. There were various reasons for this. The table below provides a summary of these reasons according to the number of couples and number of meetings.

Reason for the termination of the mentoring	Number of meetings	Number of couples
Male No recent contact with the mentee/mentee dropped out N=6	5	1
	4	2
	3	1
	1	2
Mentee re-offended N=3	4	1
	3	1
	0	1
Mentee fell ill N=3	4	1
	3	1
	2	1
No reason provided N=3	3	3
Incompatible match N=1	1	1
Suspended after difficulties with the prison establishment N=1	3	1
Mentee’s personal circumstances N=1	0	1
Mentor moved away N=1	2	1
Mentee could no longer commit N=1	2	1

CASE STUDY

JOHN & JOHANNA

John was recommended to apply to the Koestler Mentoring scheme by an art tutor at HM Prison Latchmere House. He was sentenced to five years in prison for robbery in 2007.

John: “I started off in Feltham, where I spent nearly eighteen months. I was feeling pretty down one day when my mum visited. She spoke to a prison visitor who knew a bit about art and got me talking about what I liked to paint. That conversation led to me being asked to do six paintings for the healthcare wing – four of which were graffiti style which was particularly appealing to the other inmates.

When I was at HMP Hollesley Bay, I did some paintings for their visitors’ room but there was no art room and so I put in a transfer request. I then moved to HMP Latchmere House where I started a Higher National Certificate in Fine Art at Kensington and Chelsea College which I passed with distinction.

I saw that art could be a viable option for me as a career path, Through education and study, I gained belief as without that I would have come home to nothing. The course gave me focus and so I came out and straight into doing my degree”

He was matched with a Johanna, who met with him after his release from prison and supported him through his degree in Fine Art at Central St Martins.

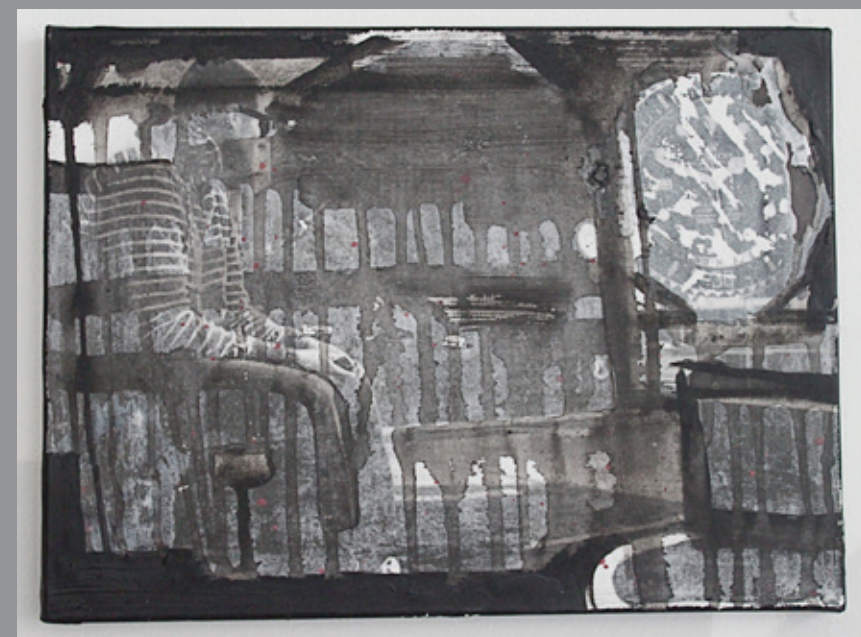
Johanna knows a vast amount about art. We have been to galleries together and not only has supported me, she has helped me understand things that tutors and other people might not. She has been a huge help. I look forward to my mentoring meetings so much – it’s so nice to have someone that is just there for me and my art, she’s my lifeline. Without Joanna, I don’t really have anyone who takes a serious interest in my art and so I don’t know if I would have continued.

Johanna: I felt my experiences as an artist and a teacher could be useful in inspiring and supporting a young mentee. I also hoped the relationship would be reciprocal, that I would not only be teaching, but learning too.

Although at the beginning John seemed hesitant, as we spent more time together he became increasingly open to new experiences and suggestions. I was lucky: he was an extremely receptive mentee. Together we sat and drew the Assyrian friezes in the British Museum, and I introduced him to the work of Italo Calvino and Philip Pullman. We visited current exhibitions: John’s end of year show at Chelsea, his interim show at St. Martin’s, Miro at the Tate, British modern sculpture at the Camden Arts Centre, Louise Bourgeois at Hauser and Worth, Ernesto Neto and Tracy Emin at the Hayward Gallery and finally the R.C.A painting and sculpture show in Battersea. Over cakes and coffee in cafes all over London we had animated discussions about the art we’d seen, it’s cultural context and its relevance to John’s own work.

Such experiences complimented those on his art degree course, developed his already eloquent articulacy, stimulated his artistic thinking and broadened his outlook. Throughout the year his confidence and commitment grew, until by the last session my support was superfluous. He is highly motivated, his work much in demand: an inspiring example to other young offenders who may feel ambivalent about their futures.

John and Johanna held their tenth and final mentoring sessions in June 2011. John graduated with a first class honours degree in July 2013 and continues to create artworks based on his experiences.





CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS AND EFFECTS OF THE MENTORING SCHEME: MENTEES' PERSPECTIVES

This chapter proceeds to examine the process and effects of the mentoring scheme, and the ways in which these related to one another, through the lens of mentees. To this end, we draw on our interviews with mentees and our direct observations of mentoring sessions. Our findings suggest a remarkable degree of overlap and complementarity between the views expressed by mentors and these held by mentees. Whilst this may be in part due to the effects of selection and matching processes, it cannot but also reflect the quality of the mentoring scheme as such.

Psychological Benefits

Mentees viewed the mentoring scheme as a positive framework of intervention in their post-release lives. They often treated their very inclusion in the scheme as evidence of continuing achievement and recognition, and as a sign of trust that they need to fulfill. This helped to increase their self-esteem and motivation for further accomplishments, especially when comparisons were drawn, consciously or otherwise, with their previous experience of life in prison and beyond. As one female mentee put the point:

'[F]or a lot of people in jail, being accepted to do this [scheme] is probably the best thing in their life. It's probably the first time that someone has turned to them and said "You know what? Something you do is good." And in prison, you have thousands and thousands of women being told they are rubbish. And no good at anything. So the mere fact of them being in the programme is a major step in terms of looking at themselves differently.'

Indeed, several mentees identified with approval the element of continuity between the psychological benefits of their previous success in annual Koestler Awards and the benefits of their subsequent engagement with the scheme itself.

'[W]inning the award was a big [boost]. It helped a lot to build my confidence. I've built a lot of confidence. And getting a mentor and stuff [...], that helped me a lot[.] [...] That was the first award I've ever got, so I felt I was trusted, I was very happy. It made me start believing in what I am capable of. That I am capable of doing something with the arts.' (Mentee)

We shall return to this finding later. Further gains in terms of self-esteem and achievement motivation could be found once the mentoring scheme began. Mentees reported, for example, that they were helped to recognise and pursue personal abilities they either

ignored or thought they did not possess (e.g., inventiveness) or had simply left uncultivated.

‘I realised I am still creative, I still got talent, and that talent can be nurtured, can be directed to something else that is worthwhile, worthwhile to me and possibly to the world outside, so I hope to get some profit. And that’s been good.’ (Mentee)

‘As a designer, I started suffering from writer’s block, I lost confidence in myself as a designer, couldn’t face the drawing board, couldn’t draw, couldn’t sketch, couldn’t do anything at all like that. So, to find another outlet for my creative needs is absolutely priceless. [...] [The mentoring scheme] has not so much provided me with any skills, but it has given me reaffirmation that I have the skills in the first place that I had lost confidence in. [...] I think what [my mentor] has been able to do it not so much teach me something I didn’t know already, but enable me to bring out the talents that I had forgotten or otherwise buried. [...] [W]hat [he] has been able to do is to say “All that stuff is still there, just bring it out.” And that’s been really good.’ (Mentee)

‘When I was in school, they told me “You will never make a living out of drawing, why don’t you go to do a trade?” Because as a black child growing up in north London, I wasn’t told about college or university or anything like that. My parents are first generation [immigrants], so anything that could help you make money [...]. So I wasn’t encouraged to follow my dreams. So I stopped drawing when I left school and didn’t start again until 2010 when I went to prison. And that was the first time that I drew in all those years. Something good came out of the bad. [...] [Now] [p]eople see my work and say “You could be making lots of money”—if it makes it, fine, but that isn’t the goal.’ (Mentee)

Some mentees stated that their continued engagement in arts activities gave them a purpose in life and increased their drive for individual recognition –‘it’s given me worth, personal worth, you know, rather than feeling that one is just a cog in the wheel’, as one mentee put it–, and express their determination to remain involved, including by becoming arts tutors themselves. Such developments signified a fundamental shift in the way in which mentees came to view themselves after release from prison. One mentee explained, for example: ‘[Previously,] I didn’t really see myself as an artist, I was a criminal[.] [...] Now, I see myself as an artist, as opposed to an offender.’

Many mentees reported finding especially uplifting –indeed, ‘humanising’– the fact that their previous involvement in crime was not brought up by mentors during sessions. Such discretion, mentees argued, gave them back their individuality in that, by contrast with their period of imprisonment and even their prior expectations of life after release, they were no longer treated as belonging to an undifferentiated category of ‘criminals’.

‘Everything prior to [the mentoring scheme] has been negative. [...] In prison, everything is negative, you are just another criminal, they haven’t got time for you to listen to your story. And that’s what I expected on coming out as well. But working

with the Koestler Trust, they encourage you totally, they don’t look at you in that light, they don’t mention it at all. They don’t bring it up. If you bring it up, they will talk about it. So I think they definitely taught me to look at myself as just a human being and not as a criminal.’ (Mentee)

Participation in the scheme also afforded mentees a sense of (or, at least, a hope for) ‘redeemability’ and de-stigmatisation in the eyes of their significant others and, on occasion, the broader public.

‘I think anything that aims to help ex-offenders, anything that could rehabilitate ex-offenders, can only be seen as a positive thing. You can’t get away from it, when you’ve been in prison, you’ve got that stigma, people don’t trust you. And anything that could change that opinion I think would be important, and the fact that you are deciding to go and engage in mentoring shows that you want to change your life as well.’ (Mentee)

‘[My family] are quite surprised, pleasantly surprised, and quite impressed, which is nice. [T]hey think “Oh, dad’s found something else to do with his life.” Great, brilliant.’ (Mentee)

‘I live with my mum, and I don’t know why, but I asked her to read some of the stuff that I’ve written. So I guess [the scheme] brought me a bit closer to my mother.’ (Mentee)

Although involvement in crime was essentially, and often explicitly, the issue here, mentees at least felt that their engagement in artistic endeavours signified that they were well on their way to a life free of crime and associated problems. At the same time, there was a significant degree of concern over whether, and the extent to which, the broader public is receptive to such messages. The following two quotes are indicative:

‘I think that very few people actually understand what’s going on [in the mentoring scheme], which is sad. A few people who do understand will know what’s happened, some of my friends and family know it and respect it. [...] [B]ut the vast majority of the world doesn’t really know what the Koestler programme is really about.’ (Mentee)

‘[The mentoring scheme] is somewhat like the unsung hero. It’s a stealth programme[.] [...] The minute you got somebody that isn’t going to reoffend because they found out they could paint, or because they found out they write poetry or sculpt, it’s never getting in the papers. It will get in the papers when they have reoffended. So, you will never hear about successes[.]. [...] Our society is such that it likes to publicise the failures. To say “Oh, we have a mass murderer who hasn’t murdered anybody for 20

years, because he's now carving wooden animals." It doesn't have the same headlines factor as saying "He's just come out and killed another 20 people." And that's sad, but that's the reality.' (Mentee)

A minority of mentees reported feeling so isolated from their communities due to their past criminal behaviour that they had ceased treating them as a key reference group in their lives. As one mentee described the function of the mentoring scheme: 'It is not for other people to see me differently; it's for me to feel differently. And that's working already, it's working already.'

Nevertheless, the various exhibitions organised throughout the UK by the Koestler Trust were generally viewed as offering an exceptional opportunity for reaching out to the general public. Some mentees also expressed hopes that their exhibited artwork would attract the interest of employers, whilst a few others did not appear to find such a prospect equally important, feasible, or even appealing. The following quote is from an interview with a mentee who essentially saw the public taking over from his mentor in terms of providing valuable feedback and support:

'At the [annual Koestler Trust exhibition], visitors can make comments on the artworks they see. And I got over 500 cards. I don't know whether they took out the bad ones [laughter]. All the ones that I read, they were just so unbelievable! But that was more than monetary gain, because you win, I think, about 100 pounds for the contribution. But this will stick with me. And I read them every so often. I can always refer back to them. [...] If you can earn some money with your art, then fair enough, but when you become dependent on it, then you start commercialising what you are doing. I don't want to be dependent on it. It would be fabulous if it did work, there is only a few artists who can make a living of it.' (Mentee)

Employment and employability

As is so often the case with former prisoners, concerns about employment loomed large in mentees' lives. Indeed, a number of mentees found it difficult to sustain systematic engagement with the arts, including their participation in the mentoring scheme, whilst actively looking for a job. Even when unemployment and job-seeking did not affect participation in the scheme as such, they could work to undercut positive effects the scheme might have otherwise had on mentees' post-release lives (in terms, for example, of their self-esteem and achievement motivation). For most mentees, however, participation in the scheme supplied a significant level of support in their efforts to secure employment. Several mentees viewed the mentoring scheme as a platform for developing their artistic skills, finding or expanding suitable networks, as well as gaining a better understanding of the inner workings of the arts world ('the minefield that is the arts world', as one mentee put it), thereby ultimately managing to turn art into a living. This was despite recognising the difficulties they would still have to overcome in so doing. Self-employment was considered to be the most viable option in this regard.

'When it comes to finding work after prison, [...] I genuinely believe that there are no [employment prospects] or that they are negligible, and that training courses will only make a marginal difference. It is rarely that an employer will hire an [ex-]offender. For me, the solution has been self-employment, and for self-employment purposes, training courses can make a massive difference.' (Mentee)

'The skills that I will pick from [my mentor] and his knowledge will definitely help me to experiment in that area and perhaps start up my own job.' (Mentee)

'[The mentoring scheme] helped me turn my ideas into a product that will employ not only me, but also offer employment to others. [...] It's gone from being a "pie-in-the-sky" idea to being a viable proposition[.] And this is a lot to do with the time that I spend talking to [my mentor] and [him] actually encouraging me to look at it seriously.' (Mentee)

'When I started off [being involved in the arts world] –I was doing it by myself anyway–, I was approaching the wrong galleries, and I had one gallery that actually ripped me off for forty pictures, and so on, so I am now learning [from my mentor]. [...] I would have carried on doing it, but I would be making a lot more mistakes. I'd go to the wrong galleries, and I would probably approach it in the wrong way. [...] [T]he best thing about the programme is meeting lots of different people from the arts world, whom I wouldn't have met otherwise, and also trying to teach me to negotiate that well, which I am not used to doing.' (Mentee)

A minority of other mentees were less optimistic, and some even found the prospect of being employed altogether unrealistic, although there was recognition that the mentoring scheme still made an important, if indirect, contribution to their employability. The focus here was on such psychological and practical gains as an increased sense of professionalism, greater confidence in job interviews, knowledge of how to draft pertinent documentation (e.g., research proposals, CVs), and better time management and other, tangible skills. To give a few indicative quotes:

'I think it's very difficult for offenders to find jobs—a usual employer would not employ offenders. But anything that helps to motivate people, to persuade them to start on a new path, is bound to be good. And if that means to gain confidence to start looking for a new job, and try for jobs, to know about themselves and to be happier about themselves, then that's good. And this programme does that, definitely.' (Mentee)

'[T]he employment field is painful at the moment[.] I have less reticence now about my ability, I am quite prepared to go out much more and approach an employer. [...] I feel confident with that, and that's nice.' (Mentee)

‘I don’t know if [the scheme] will get me into employment. Obviously, working with [my mentor] has helped me build my confidence. [...] It’s given me confidence and the connections that I didn’t have in the past. And we are also working on developing my computer skills which is not something I would have done on my own.’ (Mentee)

‘[The mentoring scheme] has helped me see myself as more of an emerging professional rather than someone who [engages with the arts] as a hobby. So it’s helped me focus as a professional. I suppose it’s helped me become a little more professional as well. [...] I think not everybody [on the scheme] wants to earn a living through being an artist. Not everybody can. I think it’s an unrealistic thing.’ (Mentee)

‘In terms of technical skills, I know everything I need to know in terms of employment within [my professional field]. So I need to improve the communicating side of the story and relating it to other people.’ (Mentee)

Some mentees also reported that their inclusion and successful participation in the arts mentoring scheme had served the broader function of helping them appreciate their potential to additionally pursue training in cognate or other fields, or to volunteer to work with at-risk populations, thus building up a more ‘employable’ profile.

Staying out of trouble and crime

Similarly, mentees commonly believed that the mentoring scheme had a significant role to play in helping them to stay out of trouble, and especially crime, in their post-release lives. On one hand, mentees tried to be realistic about their prospects, often making reference to criminogenic conditions that they might have been facing (e.g., unemployment, social isolation), without, however, denying at least a certain degree of individual responsibility for desistance from crime. On the other hand, mentees attributed a variety of indirect ‘protective’ functions to the mentoring scheme, from relieving boredom and frustration, to keeping one’s attention focused on creative endeavours, to inspiring openness and collaboration with others, to providing new significant others in the eyes of whom one feels one needs to succeed by avoiding crime.

‘I think [the main aims of the mentoring scheme are] to perpetuate the positive aspects of being a better person whilst you are in prison and taking that outside and keeping that positive aspect going, so that you’ve got something positive to focus on rather than carry on with what led to offending behaviour. So, having that positive element of artwork and the possibility that I can develop it into a career or least something, you know, that I can keep going, having that support in keeping doing that kind of keeps you away from doing things that led you to offending behaviour. [...] It’s not a cure for [one’s] offending behaviour, I think that’s naïve. But at least every small positive thing helps.’ (Mentee)

‘[T]here’s a lot of obstacles. [I] think [the mentoring scheme] has given me something to look forward to. It also takes a lot of the pressure about my art off, because my work is my comfort zone[.] [...] [W]hat happens is that a lot of people go back to prison, because they are outside their comfort zone. [...] [W]hen you get out of the prison, what do you do with yourself? You used to have 23 hours a day in your cell, and all of the sudden you have 24 hours a day available when you get out, and that is why being involved in the scheme is so important.’ (Mentee)

‘I think people get in trouble mainly through boredom and frustration. Obviously, [the scheme] is going to help because I am focused now on doing well and improving my artistic skills, and that’s going to keep me away from troublesome influences.’ (Mentee)

‘I [no longer] have the [writer’s] block that caused the anger and the frustration that maybe created violence in the first place. So now I have an alternative outlet. [...] [People] offend because they have no way of expressing how they feel in themselves, be it frustration with society –apart from career criminals–, frustration with their background, whatever. [...] And what the Koestler Trust does is allowing, just what it’s done for me, it allows people to reaffirm your creativity, or in lots of cases, to discover it for the first time – at which point the person finds they have an ability to express themselves [alternatively]. Frustration starts to dissipate, and hopefully reoffending [becomes less likely as a result].’ (Mentee)

‘You cannot move forward without actually with the past, and the programme has been really, really good in helping me deal with the past. It’s given me a creative outlet for dealing with my fears and frustrations. But it’s also an outlet for hopes and dreams. And it brings it all together.’ (Mentee)

‘It’s just that kind of positive influence that gets you thinking and makes sure you keep your interest in your artwork and coming up with new ideas. You know, if you have a meeting with your mentor, you’ve got to prepare some of your thoughts for the meeting, sum everything a bit, you have to have something to show to your mentor. So, if it keeps your interest, it keeps you interested in your artwork, and being occupied by this keeps you out of trouble.’ (Mentee)

‘[H]aving something to be focused on helped my mental health. So, in that respect, yeah, it’s possible that [the mentoring scheme] can help me stay out of any future trouble.’ (Mentee)

‘If it wasn’t for the scheme, I would have probably been back to prison by now. [...] If I fall out, apart from letting myself down, I would let others down. [...] [A]ll these people around me. All the people from Koestler, as well as my family[.]’ (Mentee)

The role of mentors and the structure of the scheme

To a large extent, mentees credited the positive effects of the scheme to the mix of care and professionalism that was shown by their respective mentors. On the one hand, mentors performed crucial complementary functions such as providing a ‘listening ear’ to mentees’ expressions of personal concerns.

‘But we talk as well, about the problems I have in my family and things like that[.] [...] I know that, if I ever get into a bad state, I can always ring [my mentor] or I can send her an email or something, and I know she will be there[.]’ (Mentee)

On the other hand, mentors also lent themselves as role models, both as artists and teachers.

‘The best thing about the mentoring scheme is the personal contact, of course, with the professional. That’s something I never had before. I mean, the art tutors are professionals, but it’s like a blurred vision and the mentor comes and clears it. You know, like they advertise the eye surgery by laser and suddenly, after the surgery, the whole vision becomes clear. This is how I see the mentoring scheme. The fact that [my mentor] is a professional and has worked in the field, I think it’s just absolutely fantastic.’ (Mentee)

In the inherently interactional context of mentoring sessions, mentees welcomed and learned from the discreet guidance and constructive criticism offered by mentors, whose focus was targeted towards mentees’ strengths and the ways in which they could be taken further.

‘It’s been fantastic. [...] [My mentor] has been really good in terms of being really interested, and also objective. So she’s helped put things in perspective. Sometimes it is quite hard to be objective.’ (Mentee)

‘I get the negative critique as well, but when it’s negative, [my mentor] explains why it’s negative and opens my eyes a bit. [...] She does not beat around the bush, she always tells me how it is. She just points to the problems in my work and comes up with suggestions on how to improve it. She’ll tell me why something isn’t good.’ (Mentee)

‘The best thing about the scheme is the support. [...] [M]y mentor is a very supportive person and not in a king of unrealistic way. It wouldn’t be helpful if he was supportive but completely unrealistic, and [he] is critical in a right way, and he is realistic in a right way. And although we connect at the same level because we are both artists, he has helped me to see, you know, what the realistic goals can be, and that’s helped me keep grounded as well. I think being an artist means a tendency to drift away, so being grounded is another very helpful thing that [the mentoring scheme] does. Not in a negative way, you know. [...] [P]ositive critique is always a good thing. But having

a negative critique would be so judgmental that you would stop doing anything at all. So having that balance is nice, yes. That’s one of the most useful aspects of the scheme.’ (Mentee)

‘It’s not a case of focusing on my limitations. It’s more about focusing on my strengths, rather than on what I couldn’t do.’ (Mentee)

Indeed, for several mentees, this was the first time in their lives that they were in contact with an authority that was neither oppressive nor condescending. It is no accident that the role of mentors was described by mentees in contradistinction to what were seen as the law enforcement duties of probation officers.

Mentees willingly recognised the significance of having been matched to the appropriate mentor, and gave the Koestler Trust credit for it.

‘This scheme has found the right person to guide me in the right way. I feel that anyway. It’s as if [my mentor] has dropped down from heaven. I mean, if it was someone else, I’m sure they would have been very helpful, too, but she is the right person, at the right time, with the right knowledge to guide me where I want to go. And to inspire me.’ (Mentee)

Successful matching did not necessarily mean that mentees and their respective mentors shared similar backgrounds. Whenever applicable, background differences were, in fact, reported as a key ingredient of harmonious and fruitful collaboration.

‘[We don’t really have similar backgrounds. We both have knowledge of each other’s area, but very basic knowledge. Which is something we talk about, about what each of us does. So we are giving each other new knowledge as well. [...] That’s fine, that’s brilliant. It’s good to learn about new and different things.’ (Mentee)

‘[My mentor] and I have different interests and backgrounds, but seeing her was an opportunity to exchange ideas and learn new things, so that’s not really a problem. [...] [I]t was a bit challenging, but positively challenging.’ (Mentee)

Relatedly, the relatively ‘open’ structure of the scheme itself, which operated within a sufficiently wide surrounding belt of boundaries and restrictions, was thought by several mentees to be a crucial positive element, not least in terms of allowing mentors to utilise their experience and expertise according to mentees’ specific needs and wishes.

‘I think [the scheme] has been really flexible, which is very good. It is its biggest asset. And [my mentor] accommodated what she does to what my needs are, and she was able to stay within the programme but respond to me personally. If the programme stays this flexible, then I think it can help many people.’ (Mentee)

CHAPTER 5



THE SURVEY: MENTEES COMPARED WITH CONTROL GROUPS

As discussed in our literature review in Chapter 1, evaluations of arts-based interventions in the fields of criminal justice and ‘aftercare’ rarely employ control groups, and quasi-experimental designs incorporating both pre- and post-test measurements remain infrequent. Whether taken singly or together, these are significant threats to the validity of causal inferences; namely, they cannot but undermine any conclusions as to whether particular arts-based interventions actually lead to particular outcomes. To make matters worse, post-test measurements are usually only taken at the point of completion of the programme under evaluation, or far too shortly thereafter, which disallows ascertaining whether programme effects have been sustained over longer periods. The relatively few follow-up studies available have generally concluded that participation in arts-based programmes can have lasting positive effects. But these studies, too, commonly suffer from key methodological problems, including, notably, the lack of a control group.

In order to help better assess the long-term effectiveness of arts-based interventions, this chapter presents and discusses findings from the survey component of our evaluation of Koestler Trust’s mentoring scheme. As explained in Chapter 2, mentees were administered self-completion questionnaires that measured such factors as their emotional well-being, achievement motivation, and expectation that future difficulties with the law can be avoided. Questionnaires were administered at three different points in time: a ‘pre-test’ questionnaire at the end of mentees’ first mentoring session, a first ‘post-test’ questionnaire upon completion of the mentoring scheme, and a final ‘post-test’ questionnaire six to nine months following completion of the scheme. Self-completion questionnaires were also administered to two control groups: a group of prisoners who had no engagement with the arts, and a group of prisoners who had some active involvement in the arts (e.g., painted in their cells, as opposed to just listening to music), but had not been placed onto the mentoring scheme run by the Koestler Trust. The aim was for both groups to consist of prisoners approaching release. In the case of control groups, questionnaires were administered at two different stages: a ‘pre-test’ questionnaire whilst they were still in prison, and a ‘post-test’ questionnaire six to nine months thereafter, by which time a number of control group members had been released.

Questionnaires included sets of individual items that comprised particular attitudinal dimensions. By combining respondents’ answers to individual items, we were able to measure their overall attitudes with regard to the following dimensions:

- Agreeableness: being compassionate and cooperative, rather than suspicious and antagonistic, towards others
- Extraversion: having positive emotions, being talkative, assertive and sociable, seeking stimulation in the company of others

- Conscientiousness: being organised and dependable
- Openness: being curious, creative and open to experience, appreciating unusual ideas and art
- Self-esteem: having confidence in one’s own worth and abilities, having self-respect
- Achievement motivation: being driven to achieve success or attain distinction
- Perception of legitimate opportunity: belief in the availability of sufficient legitimate opportunities for the attainment of given goals
- Criminal reference groups: using a group or groups involved in crime as a standard for evaluating oneself and one’s own behaviour
- Labeling: feeling stigmatised and socially isolated

Illegal self-concept: holding reduced expectations that future difficulties with the law can be avoided

Adapted as necessary for the purposes of our evaluation, the scales we used to measure the first four dimensions were taken from John and Srivastava (1999), and the scales used to measure the remaining dimensions were taken from Waldo et al. (1973). A further dimension named ‘outlook on employability’ was also created and tested, as explained later.

Below we report and discuss the most important survey findings. Although our findings point to a number of positive effects of the mentoring scheme, corroborating (and being corroborated by) our qualitative material in various ways, we also issue necessary caveats as to how findings should be interpreted.

Mentees’ scores

At the pre-test point, the number of surveyed mentees was 28, at the first post-test point 15 (an attrition rate of 46.4 percent), and at the final post-test point 17 (an attrition rate of 39.2 percent). The average age of mentees was 37, and 4 of the sample were women. Table 1 presents the mean scores of mentees on each of the explanatory variables (e.g., self-esteem, agreeableness etc.) at the pre-test and two post-test points.

Table 1. Mentees’ mean scores on explanatory variables (pre-test and two post-tests)

	Pre-test	1st Post-test	Final post-test
Agreeableness	34.93	39.42	35.06
Extraversion	27.11	31.77	28.82
Conscientiousness	31.03	37.83	34.82
Openness	39.92	42.23	41.29
Self-esteem	37.67	39.66	35.82
Achievement motivation	29.07	29.15	29.12
Perception of legitimate opportunity	33.74	4091	35.53
Criminal reference groups	18.32	12.69	15.12
Labeling	7.75	6.33	6.82
Illegal self concept	20.66	14.31	16.94

On the one hand, one can see an impressive improvement in mentees’ mean scores on most variables, and an overall improvement on all variables, between the pre-test and first post-test measurements. Mentees were especially likely to report higher levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and perceived legitimate opportunity, as well as of having a legal self-concept and non-criminal reference groups. These findings suggest a strong possibility that the mentoring scheme was successful in delivering many of its intended outcomes in the ways described in previous chapters.

On the other hand, one can also observe a drop between the first and final post-tests; namely, after the mentoring scheme was completed. The drop is particularly visible in terms of mentees’ agreeableness, self-esteem, and perceived legitimate opportunity. The most likely explanation for this is that whilst participation in the mentoring scheme played an important positive role in mentees’ post-release lives, once the support structures of the scheme were naturally removed following its completion, there were fewer forces in place to counteract or counterbalance the broader difficulties of post-release life in the community (e.g., lack of employment).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that mentees’ overall scores –that is, the differences between their pre-test and final post-test scores– remained positive on almost all variables (see further Figures 1 and 2). In other words, the mentoring scheme appears to have had long-term positive effects on mentees’ lives despite the adverse influence of the difficulties of post-release life in the community. By the time of the final post-test measurement (six to nine months after completing the mentoring scheme) and by comparison with their pre-test scores (when the mentoring scheme begun), mentees were more likely to report:

- Higher levels of agreeableness
- Higher levels of extraversion
- Higher levels of conscientiousness
- Higher levels of openness
- Higher levels of achievement motivation
- Higher levels of perceived legitimate opportunity
- Lower levels of having criminal reference groups
- Lower levels of feeling labeled
- Lower levels of having an illegal self-concept

–Figure 1. Mentees’ mean scores on explanatory variables (pre-test and two post-tests): Agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, achievement motivation, perceived legitimate opportunity

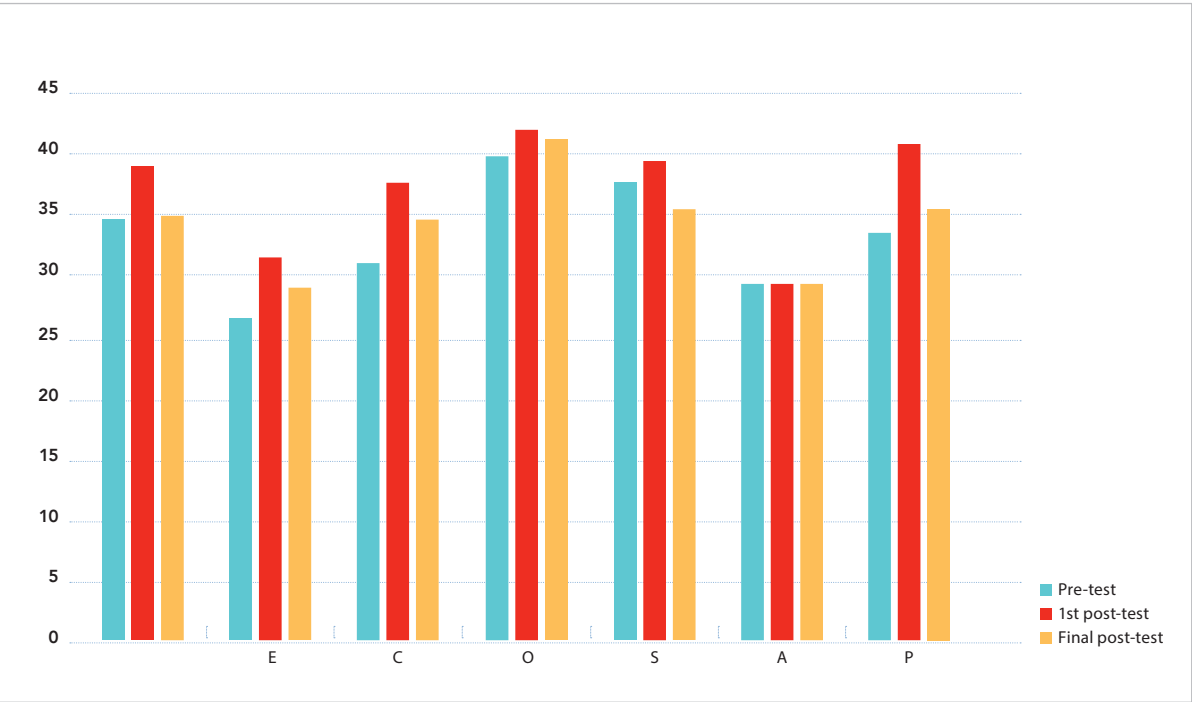
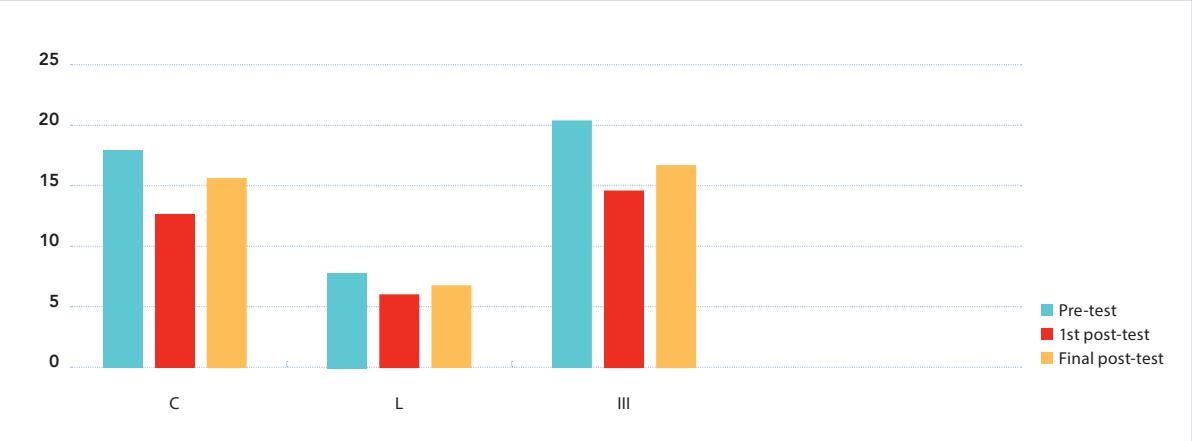


Figure 2. Mentees’ mean scores on explanatory variables (pre-test and two post-tests): Having criminal reference groups, feeling labeled, having an illegal self-concept



To what extent were the observed differences between mentees’ pre- and post-test scores significant? To examine whether there were any statistically significant differences in mentees’ mean scores on the various explanatory variables (e.g., self-esteem, achievement motivation etc.) at the pre-test and two post-test points, a series of one-way ANOVA analyses were conducted. Each ANOVA analysis was followed by an LSD post-hoc test comparing each of the three mentee groups (pre-test group, first post-test group, and final post-test group) to the remaining two. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 2. The value in the first column (F) indicates whether the overall ANOVA was significant (with significance here implying that there were significant differences between the three groups), whilst the values in the other columns indicate the mean difference (MD) between each pair of groups, as well as whether this mean difference was significant.

Table 2. Differences between mentees’ scores on explanatory variables (pre-test, first post-test, final post-test)

Overall ANOVA		LSD post-hoc tests		
	F	Pre-test vs. first post-test MD	Pre-test vs. final post-test MD	First post-test vs. final post-test MD
Agreeableness	4.78*	- 4.49**	- 1.13	4.35*
Extraversion	3.09*	- 4.66*	- 1.71	2.94
Conscientiousness	8.51***	- 6.79***	- 3.79*	3.01
Openness	1.30	- 2.30	- 1.37	0.94
Self-esteem	3.64*	- 1.99	1.85	3.84*
Achievement motivation	0.01	- 0.08	- 0.05	0.04
Perception of legitimate opportunity	7.89**	- 7.17***	- 1.78	5.38**
Criminal reference groups	8.52**	5.63***	3.20*	2.42
Labeling	1.82	1.42	0.93	- 0.49
Illegal self concept	6.86**	6.36**	3.73*	- 2.63

0.Notes: MD= mean difference; * = p < 0.05; **=p < 0.01; ***p= < 0.001.

As can be seen from Table 2, overall ANOVA analyses produced significant scores. More specifically, there were significant differences in mentees’ pre- and post-test scores on all explanatory variables except for openness, achievement motivation and labeling. Differences were most significant in the case of two variables: having criminal reference groups (F = 8.52; p < 0.01) and conscientiousness (F = 8.51, p < 0.001). The post-hoc test on criminal reference groups demonstrated that mentees were significantly more likely to have criminal reference groups in their lives at the pre-test point than both at the first post-test (MD = 5.63; p < 0.001) and final post-test (MD = 3.20; p < 0.05) points. No significant differences were found with regard to mentees’ criminal reference groups between the first and final post-tests (-2.42; n.s.). With regard to conscientiousness, the post-hoc test again demonstrated that mentees’ conscientiousness

was significantly lower at the pre-test point than at the first post-test (MD = - 6.79; $p < 0.001$) and final post-test (MD = - 3.79; $p < 0.05$) points. No significant differences were found with regard to mentees' conscientiousness between the first and final post-tests (MD = 3.01; n.s.). Here it is likely that participation in the mentoring scheme helped mentees shift their reference groups away from those associated with engagement in crime, and to grow more conscientious; a likelihood corroborated by the qualitative evidence presented in previous chapters.

The post-hoc tests also demonstrated that mentees' illegal self-concept was significantly higher at the pre-test point than both at the first post-test (MD = 6.36; $p < 0.01$) and final post-test (MD = 3.73; $p < 0.05$) points. It should be noted here that 'illegal' self-concept is the recoded version of 'legal' self-concept, so that higher scores indicate lower levels of legal self-concept; that is, a decreased expectation that future difficulties with the law can be avoided. Although mentees' illegal self-concept increased between the first and final post-tests, the difference was not found to be significant (MD = - 2.63; n.s.). Overall, then, the mentoring scheme may have contributed to mentees' reduced likelihood to view themselves as prone to trouble or running afoul of the law and its enforcers (also in light of the aforementioned finding that mentees grew more likely to shift from criminal to non-criminal reference groups).

Between the start and the end of the mentoring scheme (i.e., between pre-test and the first post-test measurements), mentees became significantly more likely to report higher levels of agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, perceived legitimate opportunity, as well lower levels of having criminal reference groups and an illegal self-concept. It is notable that whilst mentees' achievement motivation and self-esteem also increased between their pre-test and first post-test measurements, the increase was not found to be statistically significant. This may be due to enhanced levels of achievement motivation and self-esteem amongst mentees before the mentoring scheme begun as such, perhaps at least in part because of mentees' prior success (or, indeed, successes) in Koestler Trust's annual competitions. A logistic regression analysis was attempted to compare mentees' pre-test and first post-test scores, also controlling for three basic variables (i.e., respondent's age, whether or not they had been imprisoned before their current or recently served sentence, and the overall number of times they had been imprisoned in the past). The number of mentees surveyed, however, was too small to allow meaningful comparisons in this case.

Regarding the period between the end of the mentoring scheme (when the first post-test measurements were taken) and the final post-test measurement, one can observe that previous improvements recede. There was a statistically significant drop in mentees' scores on agreeableness, perceived legitimate opportunity, and self-esteem (in the latter case also below pre-test levels). This may be due to especially high and elevated scores on certain variables at the beginning and/or the end of the scheme (self-esteem being an obvious example here), but also the adverse influence of the difficulties of post-release life in the community without adequate supports of a welfarist orientation. As mentioned earlier, however, mentees' overall scores (i.e., the differences between their pre-test and final post-test scores) remained positive on almost all variables.

Comparisons with the control group

Comparisons with a control group of non-mentees were conducted in order to better assess the effectiveness of the mentoring scheme. For the purposes of these comparisons, different categories within the broader control group (e.g., respondents who were involved in the arts whilst in prison, respondents who were not involved in the arts whilst in prison) were first combined into a single control group. As we shall see later, subsequent analyses differentiated between different categories within the control group to add further nuance to the analysis. A series of t-tests were conducted to examine how mentees' scores compared with those of the control group of non-mentees. (T-tests were chosen over ANOVA here, precisely because comparisons only concerned two categories of respondents.).

Let us begin by briefly focusing on the control group as such. At the pre-test point, the number of control group respondents was 153, and the post-test point it was 68 (an attrition rate of 55 percent). The average age of control group respondents was 36, and a quarter of the sample (38, or 25 percent) were women.

A comparison of pre- and post-test measurements revealed only one variable in relation to which the control group's scores improved to a statistically significant degree. The variable in question was achievement motivation ($p < 0.05$). The control group's scores also improved in terms of labeling—that is, there was a decreased sense amongst control group respondents of being labeled—, but the difference here was only marginally significant ($p < 0.10$). When the same comparison was performed in logistic regression, controlling for three basic variables (i.e., respondent's age, whether or not they had been imprisoned before their current or recently served sentence, and the overall number of times they had been imprisoned in the past), only the difference in achievement motivation remained statistically significant.

The control group's pre-test scores were then compared to mentees' pre-test scores (i.e., when they begun the mentoring scheme), and the latter's scores were found to be significantly higher with regard to their levels of openness, conscientiousness and self-esteem. The same comparison was performed in logistic regression, controlling for three basic variables (i.e., respondent's age, whether or not they had been imprisoned before their current or recently served sentence, and the overall number of times they had been imprisoned in the past). The outcome variable was coded as 1 = mentee pre-test group and 0 = control pre-test group. All explanatory variables were entered in block 2, whilst the variables that were controlled for were entered in block 1. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Logistic regression comparing pre-test measurements for mentees and the control group

	B	SE	P
Age	0.16 (1)	0.47	0.001
Conscientiousness	-0.70 (2)	0.19	0.000
Self-esteem	0.39 (2)	0.15	0.010
Achievement motivation	0.50	0.19	0.011

Notes: The last step is reported in the regression model; numbers in parentheses after beta values indicate the order of entry in the logistic regression

The results demonstrate that low conscientiousness (B = - 0.70, SE = 0.47, p = 0.001), high self-esteem (B= 0.39, SE = 0.15, p = 0.010) and high achievement motivation (0.50, SE = 0.19, p= 0.011) predicted membership of the mentee pre-test group. Higher age (B = 0.16; SE = 0.47; p=0.001) also predicted membership of the mentee pre-test group as compared to the control pre-test group. In other words, at the pre-test point, mentees were significantly more likely to report lower levels of conscientiousness and higher levels of self-esteem and achievement motivation than the control group. It is not clear why levels of conscientiousness were found to be lower amongst mentees, especially since their levels of achievement motivation were found to be higher. On the other hand, mentees’ higher levels of self-esteem and achievement motivation could be attributed, at least partly, to their prior successful participation in Koestler Trust’s annual competitions.

Moving to the comparisons between mentees’ first post-test scores (i.e., when they completed the mentoring scheme) and the post-test scores of the control group, a series of t-tests revealed that mentees fared significantly better than the control group

Table 4. Mean scores and t-tests comparing control post-test measurements for mentees (upon completion of the scheme) and the control group

	Control post-test (M)	Mentee post-test (M)	t-test
Agreeableness	35.82	39.42	-2.91**
Extraversion	26.72	31.77	-3.82***
Conscientiousness	34.75	37.83	-2.00*
Openness	35.63	42.23	-4.10***
Self-esteem	35.28	39.67	-2.55*
Achievement motivation	29.60	29.15	0.58
Perception of legitimate opportunity	33.49	40.91	-3.40**
Criminal reference groups	17.34	12.70	2.55*
Labeling	7.60	6.33	1.34
Illegal self concept	19.40	14.31	2.39*

Notes: t-test value; * = p < 0.05; **=p < 0.01; ***p= < 0.001.

In particular, the results demonstrated that, upon completion of the mentoring scheme, mentees were significantly more likely to report higher levels of agreeableness (t = 2.91, p < 0.01), extraversion (t = 3.82, p < 0.001), conscientiousness (t = 2.00; p < 0.05), openness (t = 4.10, p < 0.001) and self-esteem (t = 2.55; p < 0.05) as compared to the post-test scores of the control group. Furthermore, mentees were significantly more likely to report higher levels of perceived legitimate opportunity (t = 3.40; p < 0.01) and lower levels of illegal self-concept (t = -2.39; p < 0.05); namely, they were less likely to view themselves as prone to running afoul with the law and its authorities.

To reduce the effect of selection bias in the comparative analysis of post-test data and the interpretation of relevant findings, logistic regression was also used, incorporating retrospective controls for certain basic variables. In particular, mentees’ first post-test scores were compared to the post-test scores of the control group in logistic regression, controlling for respondents’ age, whether or not they had been imprisoned before their current or recently served sentence, and the overall number of times they had been imprisoned in the past. The outcome variable was coded as 1 = mentee first post-test group and 0 = control post-test group. All explanatory variables were entered in block 2, whilst the variables that were controlled for were entered in block 1. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Logistic regression comparing mentees’ first post-test measurements and post-test measurements for the control group

	B	SE	P
Openness	0.28(2)	0.16	0.76

Notes: The last step is reported in the regression model; numbers in parentheses after beta values indicate the order of entry in the logistic regression

The results demonstrate that high openness (B = 0.28; SE = 0.16; p < 0.76) predicted membership of the mentee first post-test group. This means that mentees’ mean score on openness remained significantly higher than the respective score of the control group, although other differences between the two comparison groups ceased to be statistically significant in the logistic regression.

Comparisons with two control sub-groups

Comparisons with two control sub-groups of non-mentees were conducted in order to further our assessment of the effectiveness of the mentoring scheme. For the purposes of these comparisons, two different sub-groups were drawn from within the broader control group. The first sub-group included respondents who were involved in the arts whilst in prison, and the second consisted of respondents who were not involved in the arts whilst in prison. For the sub-group who were involved in the arts whilst in prison, the number of respondents was 90 at the pre-test point and 37 at the post-test point (an attrition rate of 58.8 percent). For the sub-group who were not involved in the arts whilst in prison, the number of respondents was 61 at the pre-test point and 31 at the post-test point (an

attrition rate of 49 percent). As concerns the sub-group who were involved in the arts, the average age of respondents was 38, and a quarter of the sample (24 percent) were women. Turning to the sub-group who were not involved in the arts, the average age of respondents was 33, and a quarter of the sample (26 percent) were women.

Using t-tests, we compared the pre- and post-test measurements for each of the two control sub-groups. For the control sub-group who were involved in the arts, there was only one statistically difference between their pre-test and post-test measurements, and that was a rise in their average sense of being labeled. For the control sub-group who were not involved in the arts, two statistically significant differences were found between their pre-test and post-test measurements: an improvement in terms of their mean scores on agreeableness, and higher levels of having a legal self-concept (i.e., their mean scores on illegal self-concept fell).

The same comparisons were performed using regression analysis and controlling for respondents’ age, whether or not they had been imprisoned before their current or recently served sentence, and the overall number of times they had been imprisoned in the past. As regards the control sub-group who were involved in the arts, the outcome variable was coded as 1 = involved in arts post-tests and 0 = involved in arts pre-tests. All explanatory variables were entered in block 2, whilst the variables we controlled for were entered in block 1. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Logistic regression comparing pre- and post-test measurements for the control sub-group involved in the arts

Pretest vs. post-test	B	SE	P
First time in prison	3.63(1)	1.12	0.001
Achievement motivation	0.28(2)	0.12	0.025

Notes: The last step is reported in the regression model; numbers in parentheses after beta values indicate the order of entry in the logistic regression

Achievement motivation (0.28; SE = 0.12; p = 0.025) was found to independently predict membership of the post-test group involved in the arts. That is to say, levels of achievement motivation increased to a statistically significant degree for the control sub-group who were involved in the arts whilst in prison. The same logistic regression was attempted for the control sub-group who were not involved in the arts, but numbers were too small for the purposes of this analysis.

Let us now move to the comparisons between the scores of mentees and those of the two control sub-groups. Using logistic regression and once again controlling for respondents’ age, whether or not they had been imprisoned before their current or recently served sentence, and the overall number of times they had been imprisoned in the past, we first compared mentees’ pre-test scores with the pre-test scores of the control sub-group who were involved in the arts whilst in prison. The outcome variable was coded as 1 = mentee pre-test group and 0 = control pre-test group involved in the arts. All explanatory

variables were entered in block 2, whilst the variables we controlled for were entered in block 1. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Logistic regression comparing pre-test measurements for mentees and the control sub-group involved in the arts

Mentee pre-tests vs. control pretests	B	SE	P
Age	0.15 (1)	0.05	0.004
Conscientiousness	-0.58 (2)	0.18	0.002
Self-esteem	0.29 (2)	0.15	0.057
Achievement motivation	0.65 (2)	0.27	0.2

Notes: The last step is reported in the regression model; numbers in parentheses after beta values indicate the order of entry in the logistic regression

The results demonstrate that low conscientiousness (B= - 0.58, SE=0.18, p = 0.004), high self-esteem (B= 0.29, SE= 0.15, p = 0.057) and high achievement motivation (0.65, SE=0.27, p= 0.02) predicted membership of the mentee pre-test group. Higher age (B= 0.15; SE=0.05; p=0.004) also predicted membership of the mentee pre-test group as compared to the control pre-test group involved in the arts. In other words, at the pre-test point, mentees were significantly more likely to report lower levels of conscientiousness and higher levels of self-esteem and achievement motivation than the control sub-group involved in the arts. The reason why levels of conscientiousness were found to be lower amongst mentees is unclear, particularly since their levels of achievement motivation were found to be higher. On the other hand, as also mentioned earlier, mentees’ higher levels of self-esteem and achievement motivation could be attributed, at least in part, to their prior successful participation in Koestler Trust’s annual competitions.

The same pre-test comparison was performed between mentees and the control sub-group who were not involved in the arts whilst in prison. The outcome variable was coded as 1 = mentee pre-test group and 0 = control pre-test group not involved in the arts. All explanatory variables were entered in block 2, whilst the variables we controlled for were entered in block 1. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Logistic regression comparing pre-test measurements for mentees and the control sub-group not involved in the arts

Experimental pre-tests vs. control pretests not involved	B	SE	P
Conscientiousness	-2.95 (2)	1.73	0.088
Openness	1.50 (2)	0.87	0.085

Notes: the last step is reported in the regression model; numbers in parentheses after beta values indicate the order of entry in the logistic regression.

The results demonstrate that low conscientiousness ($B = -2.95$; $SE = 1.73$; $p = 0.088$) and high openness ($B = 1.50$; $SE = 0.87$; $p = 0.085$) predicted membership of the mentee pre-test group. In other words, at the pre-test point, mentees were more likely to report lower levels of conscientiousness and higher levels of openness than the control group who were not involved in the arts. The differences, however, were only marginally significant ($p < 0.10$).

Turning to post-test comparisons, a series of t-tests were conducted to examine the differences on explanatory variables between the mean scores of mentees at their first post-test measurements (i.e., upon completion of the mentoring scheme) and the mean post-test scores of each of the two control sub-groups. The results of the comparison between mentees' scores and the scores of the control sub-group involved in the arts whilst in prison are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Mean scores and t-tests comparing mentees and control sub-group involved in the arts at post-test point

	Control post-test (M)	Mentee post-test (M)	t-test
Agreeableness	39.47	35.65	2.62*
Extraversion	31.77	27.03	3.49**
Conscientiousness	37.83	34.72	1.78
Openness	42.23	37.32	3.03**
Self-esteem	39.67	34.95	2.50*
Achievement motivation	29.15	29.50	-0.43
Perception of legitimate opportunity	40.90	33.00	3.30**
Criminal reference groups	12.69	16.89	-2.08*
Labeling	6.33	7.86	-1.55
Illegal self concept	14.31	19.66	-2.16*

Notes: t-test value; * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$.

The results demonstrate that mentees were significantly more likely to be agreeable ($t = 2.62$; $p < 0.05$), extraverted ($t = 3.49$; $p < 0.01$) and open ($t = 3.03$, $p < 0.01$) than the control sub-group involved in the arts. Mentees were also significantly more likely to report higher levels of self-esteem ($t = 2.50$; $p < 0.05$) and perceived legitimate opportunity ($t = 3.30$; $p < 0.01$), as well as lower levels of having criminal reference groups ($t = -2.08$; $p < 0.05$) and an illegal self-concept ($t = -2.16$; $p < 0.05$); that is, mentees' were significantly less likely to view themselves as trouble-prone as compared to their control counterparts. A series of t-tests were then conducted to examine the differences on explanatory variables between the mean scores of mentees at their first post-test measurements (i.e., upon completion of the mentoring scheme) and the mean post-test scores of the control sub-group

who were not involved in the arts whilst in prison. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Mean scores and t-tests comparing mentees and control sub-group not involved in the arts at post-test point

	Control post-test (M)	Mentee post-test (M)	t-test
Agreeableness	39.47	36.03	2.67*
Extraversion	31.77	26.36	3.75**
Conscientiousness	37.83	34.77	1.87
Openness	42.23	33.53	5.66***
Self-esteem	39.67	35.67	2.49*
Achievement motivation	29.15	29.71	-0.74
Perception of legitimate opportunity	40.91	34.07	3.37***
Criminal reference groups	12.69	17.87	-2.78**
Labeling	6.33	7.29	-0.98
Illegal self concept	14.31	19.10	-2.68*

Notes: t-test value; * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$.

Again, the results demonstrate that mentees were significantly more likely to be agreeable ($t = 2.62$; $p < 0.05$), extraverted ($t = 3.75$; $p < 0.01$) and open ($t = 5.66$, $p < 0.001$) than the control sub-group not involved in the arts. Mentees were also significantly more likely to report higher levels of self-esteem ($t = 2.49$; $p < 0.05$) and perceived legitimate opportunity ($t = 3.37$; $p < 0.001$), as well as lower levels of having criminal reference groups ($t = -2.78$; $p < 0.01$) and an illegal self-concept ($t = -2.68$; $p < 0.05$); that is, mentees were significantly less likely to view themselves as trouble-prone as compared to their control counterparts.

As previously, with a view to reducing the effect of selection bias in the comparative analysis of post-test data and the interpretation of relevant findings, logistic regression was also used, incorporating retrospective controls for certain basic variables. In particular, mentees' first post-test scores were compared to the post-test scores of the control sub-group who were involved in the arts, controlling for respondents' age, whether or not they had been imprisoned before their current or recently served sentence, and the overall number of times they had been imprisoned in the past. The outcome variable was coded as 1 = control post-test group involved in the arts and 0 = mentee pre-test group. All explanatory variables were entered in block 2, whilst the variables we controlled for were entered in block 1. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Logistic regression comparing post-test measurements for mentees and the control sub-group involved in the arts

Post-test mentees vs. post-test controls involved in the arts	B	SE	p
Extraversion	-4.61	0.27	0.08

Notes: The last step is reported in the regression model; numbers in parentheses after beta values indicate the order of entry in the logistic regression

The results demonstrate that membership of the control post-test sub-group who were involved in the arts was independently predicted by low extraversion (B= - 4.61; SE = 0.27; p = 0.08). In other words, upon completion of the mentoring scheme, mentees were significantly more likely to report higher levels of extraversion than their control counterparts did at their post-test measurements, although other differences between the two comparison groups ceased to be statistically significant in the regression analysis.

The same type of logistic regression was attempted to compare first post-test measurements for mentees and post-test measurements for the control sub-group who were not involved in the arts, but numbers were too small for the purposes of this analysis.

Mentees’ outlook on employability: Comparisons with the control group

Comparisons between mentees and the whole control group of non-mentees (i.e., both those respondents who were involved in the arts whilst in prison, and those who were not) were conducted in order to assess the degree to which participation in the mentoring scheme might have helped to improve mentees’ outlook on employability and their related prospects (e.g., job promotion).

For the purposes of measuring respondents’ outlook on employability, we combined their responses to the following four questions: ‘There are plenty of good jobs around today for people like me’; ‘Once you’ve been to prison, coursework won’t help you get a good job’; ‘Even if you find a job as an ex-prisoner, there is never any chance for promotion’; and ‘There are no places that an ex-prisoner can find work’. A series of t-tests were conducted to examine variation in mentees’ own scores and to assess how they compared to those of the control group of non-mentees.

Mentees’ own scores increased between the pre-test (M = 13.48) and the first post-test (M = 14.60). In other words, by the end of the mentoring scheme, mentees had grown more likely to believe that their employment prospects were good. This difference, however, was not found to be statistically significant (t = -1.42; n.s.). Between the first and the final post-tests –namely, between the end of the mentoring scheme and six to nine months thereafter–, mentees’ outlook on employability had decreased, falling below pre-test levels, although the difference between pre-test and final post-test scores was not found to have been significant (M = 13.48 vs. M = 12.88; t = 0.63; n.s.). As with other variables, it is likely that the mentoring scheme had lent itself as an important source of practical as well as psychological support in the process of addressing one’s employment-related concerns. Yet the fact that such concerns typically persisted after the mentoring

scheme was completed and its support structures were consequently removed could not but result in a drop in mentees’ mean outlook on employability.

As concerns the control group, its mean scores at the pre-test point were only slightly lower than the pre-test scores of mentees; indeed, the difference between the two groups’ mean scores was not found to be significant (M = 13.36 vs. M = 13.48; t = - 0.20; n.s.). Unlike with mentees, however, the control group’s post-test scores revealed a notable (if not statistically significant) drop compared to the group’s pre-test scores (M = 13.36 vs. M = 12.67; t = 1.50; n.s.). Moreover, the control group’s post-test scores were significantly lower than mentees’ first post-test scores (t = 2.10; p < 0.05). This corroborates the suggestion that participation in the mentoring scheme played an important role in helping to improve participants’ outlook on employability, at least during the course of the scheme. Logistic regression was attempted in order to test this result by controlling for certain variables (e.g., respondent’s age, whether or not they had been imprisoned before their current or recently served sentence, the overall number of times they had been imprisoned in the past, the types and number of jobs they had held in the past), but numbers were too small for the purposes of this analysis.

Mentees’ post-scheme employment rate

Mentees’ actual employment rate in the period following completion of the mentoring scheme paints a more positive picture as to the possible long-term effects of the mentoring scheme with regard to finding a job after release from prison. To capture variation over time in mentees’ actual employment rate, we compared their pre- and final post-test scores on self-reported employment.

In particular, in their pre-test surveys, half of mentee respondents reported not having had a job, including self-employment, in the six-month period prior to their last sentence. By the time of their post-test surveys, mentees’ self-reported unemployment rate had fallen, with one in three respondents reporting not having had a job, including self-employment, in the last six months (counting from the date of the final post-test survey, itself taken six to nine months after completion of the arts mentoring scheme). Whilst, in other words, mentees’ mean outlook on employability dropped (below pre-test levels) after they completed the mentoring scheme, their actual employment rate around the same period was found to be substantially increased compared to pre-test measurements. This discrepancy is likely to be because here self-reported employment is a dichotomous variable that reflects whether respondents had a job or not, and not respondents’ perceptions of the quality of their respective jobs or their levels of job satisfaction.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To the extent that desistance from crime is an internal process of personal reform, it is important that programmes operating in the fields of criminal justice and ‘aftercare’ create the practical and other conditions that allow participants to exclude problems with crime and law enforcement authorities from the autobiographical narratives by which they think and talk about themselves at present and in the future. This is because, as Maruna (2001) argues, subjective autobiographies can actually shape future choices and behaviour.

The Koestler Trust’s arts mentoring scheme constitutes a good example of such an intervention. Both the qualitative and quantitative evidence from our evaluation of the scheme showed that mentees were helped to develop greater confidence in themselves and their abilities, to become more driven to achieve success, to conceptualise their present and future in ways unrelated –indeed, opposed– to crime, and to increase their expectations that future difficulties with the law could actually be avoided.

As our evaluation also showed, the setting where programmes are delivered and the boundaries within which they operate are of great importance. Less formal and more flexible programmes that discreetly attend to participants’ specific needs and wishes may well be more appropriate for the purposes of promoting personal reform. In the context of such programmes, moreover, it may be easier for practitioners to adopt and enact the constructively critical but non-judgmental attitude that is known to be beneficial for participants.

Insofar as programmes seek to promote desistance through bringing about changes in participants’ self-narratives, they need to incorporate what Maruna and LeBel (2002) refer to as a ‘strengths-based’ model of ex-offender integration into the community. According to this model, ex-offenders are encouraged and supported to practically demonstrate their value and potential in ways that reflect and reaffirm positive individual change in itself, but also symbolically de-stigmatise them in the eyes of the broader public. The suggestion here is that ex-offender integration is not only a matter of coming to embody positive changes in the ways in which one narrates one’s present and future to oneself. Ex-offender integration is also, and just as importantly, a ‘relational’ matter insofar as it requires that one communicates the fact of (or, at least, one’s efforts towards) personal reform to one’s community.

These messages typically assume the form of undertaking commonly valued tasks in public; for example, active parental responsibility. But the scope of these messages can be extended to include engagement in artistic production and related activities. The high level and welcoming nature of public interest in Koestler Trust’s annual exhibitions suggests that an important and increasing segment of the public in the UK is receptive to ‘relational’ social integration efforts based on the arts.

The process of desistance, however, is still commonly fraught with difficult and persistent challenges, from unemployment and poverty to lack of housing. These challenges can work

to prevent or undermine the positive effects of intervention programmes, such as those based on the arts, whose primary mission is to tackle other and ‘softer’ contributors to offending. In our evaluation of the Koestler Trust’s arts mentoring scheme, many mentees and mentors openly expressed related concerns in our interviews with them, and mentors also included references to those concerns in their session reports. As our quantitative evidence showed, such concerns are not unfounded; for example, some of the positive effects of the scheme (e.g., on mentees’ self-esteem and perceived legitimate opportunity) waned (even though they were to some degree retained) after its completion. There follow important implications for the design of arts-based programmes in the fields of criminal justice and ‘aftercare’.

- First, programmes should be assigned goals they can actually fulfill. This practically means privileging the ‘soft’ effects of ‘secondary desistance’ over the ‘hard’ outcome of recidivism reduction as such.
- Second, programmes should be planned in ways that practically facilitate success. The positive effects of arts-based interventions can only endure if:
- deliverers’ and participants’ own expectations are kept appropriate and realistic;

programme provision is sustained, both within criminal justice settings and in the community, whether through securing financial resources or based on contributions from volunteers; and

- partnerships are simultaneously forged with organisations that offer cognate and/or complementary services (e.g., on the fronts of housing, employment) so as to address participants’ broader needs in a more direct, stable and holistic manner.

The findings of this evaluation, however, also have serious implications for the ways in which crime can be prevented in the first instance. There needs to be an expansion of non-stigmatising social welfare interventions, including interventions incorporating access to the arts, that help to satisfy disadvantaged groups’ basic material and psychological needs before the emergence or intensification of those needs enhance one’s likelihood of involvement in crime.

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ISBN 978-0-9574101-4-5