

The Impact of Prison Arts Foundation Artist in Residence Programme on Inmate Attitudes and Behaviour: A Quantitative Evaluation

Prisoners have access to a range of activities that encourage their engagement with the regime and the offender management process and tackle self-esteem, behavioural and safer custody issues.

Acceptable activities should be constructive and contribute to one or more of the following:

- positive social interaction between prisoners or between prisoners and others
- offering prisoners the opportunity to make constructive use of their time
- development of interpersonal skills, e.g. communication skills
- the prisoner's physical, mental or emotional well-being
- pro-social behaviour
- maintenance or rebuilding of family ties

Methodology

This study measures attitudinal and behavioural changes in inmates who participated in PAF's residency programme funded by the Northern Ireland Prison Service. This includes visual arts, ceramics, music, woodcraft, poetry and writing workshops offered in HMP Magilligan, HMP Maghaberry and Hydebank Wood College and Women's prison. Table 1 shows where prisoners have engaged with PAF workshops by prison facility. Some of the prisoners have engaged in more than one prison establishment which explains why the percentages exceed 100%.

Table 1 Where have you engaged in PAF workshops? (N = 79)

Prison establishment	Percent
HMP Maghaberry	70
HMP Magilligan	19
Hydebank Wood Secure College and Women's Prison	20

Three male and one female inmate populations participated in the study. One group consisted of men who had taken PAF classes in HM Prison Maghaberry (N = 51). Classes offered include music, visual arts, ceramics and woodcraft. One group consisted of men who had taken PAF classes in HM Prison Magilligan (N = 15). Classes offered include music and creative writing. Finally two groups consisted of young males and females who had taken PAF classes in Hydebank Wood Secure College (N = 13). Classes offered include visual art only.

Approximately one-fifth of inmates studied music or took writing and/or poetry class, and three-quarters were involved in visual arts. Many of the men and women studied more than one form of art which explains why the percentages exceed 100% (Table 2).

Two thirds of inmates said it was “very important” to be able to share their creative work with other (Table 3), which is probably why 64% of them submitted work to prison based awards/competitions such as Koestler, Listowel Writers and Prison Reform. The remaining inmates (32%) said ‘Other’, the most common response was that they intend/hope to submit work next year. (Table 4)

The inmates were asked if PAF’s artist-in-residence had supported them to exhibit or showcase their artwork, writing or music. Some of the prisoners had gave more than one response which explains why the percentages exceed 100%; 86% had been supported to exhibit either in the prison or community setting whilst 11% answered ‘Other’, and included responses such as “A book”, “Arts fair and craft markets”, “Making a CD for family” and “Davis House sculpture”. (Table 5)

When asked what encourages them to enter awards, exhibit or showcase their work a significant majority said they wanted “to take part” (67%) and nearly half said it was “to get feedback on my work” and “to get my work seen”. Some of the prisoners had gave more than one response which explains why the percentages exceed 100%; (Table 6)

Table 2 What PAF Participants Studied

Area of study	Percent
Written work (Poetry, Fiction, Timeln)	20
Music (Instrumental, Singer/Songwriter)	19
Visual artwork (Painting/ Drawing/Ceramics/Woodwork)	76

Table 3 How important is it for you to be able to share your creative work with others?

Responses	Percent
Very important	66
Quite important	28
Not important	6

Table 4 Has PAF’s artist-in-residence supported you to enter any awards or competitions?

Responses	Percent
Koestler Arts	43
Listowel Writers	10
Prison Reform Trust	11
Other	32

Table 5 Has PAF’s artist-in-residence supported you to exhibit or showcase your artwork, writing or music?

Responses	Percent
Yes, in the prison (visits, events, awards ceremony etc.)	59
Yes, in the community (PAF or Koestler exhibition/anthology)	27
No	11
Other	14

Table 6 What encourages you to enter awards, exhibit or showcase your work?

Responses	Percent
To get feedback on my work	48
The chance to sell work	19
The chance to win prize money	20
To get my work seen	41
To receive a certificate	33
To take part	67
Other	10

When asked why they had participated in PAF’s workshops, a significant majority said they "wanted to learn new skills" (78%) and they liked "to be creative" (61%). Also, approximately a third were motivated by a desire to "change their lives", and they wanted to have something to share with their families. Some of the prisoners had gave more than one response which explains why the percentages exceed 100% (Table 7).

Regardless of the length of engagement, nearly everyone said that art helps them to “express themselves”, “relieve stress”, “feel happier”, “be more creative”, and “work with others”. Approximately a third also reported that art helps them to better understand themselves connect with family and make better choices. Some of the prisoners had gave more than one response which explains why the percentages exceed 100% (Table 8).

A majority of PAF participants (66%) reported that they got along better with other inmates while pursuing their art (Table 9). Likewise, nearly half said they liked themselves and got along better with prison staff, compared with only 11% who said they didn’t change that much. About a fifth of inmates acknowledged they had fewer disciplinary records and got along better with their family. Some of the prisoners had gave more than one response which explains why the percentages exceed 100% (Table 9).

Interestingly just over half said they had not studied or practiced art in the past (56%; Table 10).

Table 7 Why inmates chose to take part in creative classes in prison (N = 79)

Responses	Percent
Wanted to learn new skills	78
A good way to pass time	52
Always enjoyed art, music, writing	51
Like to be creative	61
Was curious	23
Something to share with my family	39
Wanted to change my life	33
Other	3

Table 8 How arts education and practice helps inmates (N = 79)

Responses	Percent
Express yourself	65
Relive stress	57
Feel happier	51
Be more creative	85
Make better choices	27
Connect with family	33
Work with others	52
Better understand yourself	35
Other	1

Table 9 Changes in Behaviour While Taking PAF Classes (N = 79)

Responses	Percent
Got along with other inmates	66
Like myself more	42
Fewer disciplinary records	20
Got along with staff	46
Got along with my family	23
Didn't change that much	11
Other	3

Table 10 PAF participants who had studied or practiced art in the past (N = 79)

Responses	Percent
Studied	13
Practiced	16
Both studies and practiced	10
No	56

Inmates were asked in the survey what they hoped to learn through the art classes. Three-quarters (77%) wanted to be open to new ideas, compared with just 33% who said they wanted to “change how interact with other”. Some of the prisoners had gave more than one response which explains why the percentages exceed 100% (Table 11).

A significant majority of both those with previous arts education and those without think that being an artist requires hard work, self-discipline, self-confidence, determination and talent. Some of the prisoners had gave more than one response which explains why the percentages exceed 100% (Table 12).

Nearly everyone enjoyed their art classes (90%; Table 13), and want the opportunity to take additional ones (94%; Table 14). When asked if their behaviour changed while taking the classes, 63% said that they got along better with other inmates, and 44% got along better with the prison staff. Nearly half liked themselves better (46%) and a third (33%) self-reported that they received fewer disciplinary reports (Table 15).

Table 11 What PAF participants hope to learn in our arts programme (N = 79)

Responses	Percent
Be open to new ideas	77
Discover change about self	34
Express inner feelings	42
Change how interact with others	33
Not sure	8
Other	3

Table 12 What PAF participants believe is required to be an artist (N = 79)

Responses	Percent
Self-discipline	61
Talent	62
Self-confidence	66
Training	53
Hard work	72
Determination	66
Persistence	57
Other	1

Table 13 Did the inmates enjoy PAF's classes? (N = 79)

Responses	Percent
Enjoyed very much	90
Enjoyed some what	5
Enjoyed a little	0
Did not enjoy at all	0

Table 14 Would the inmates like to take other PAF art classes (N = 79)

Responses	Percent
Yes, definitely	78
Yes, probably	16
No, probably	1
No, definitely	0

Pursuit of Other Educational and Vocational Programmes

Researchers have found a strong correlation between arts education and practice, and the pursuit of knowledge through other educational and vocational programs. Arts and the creative process help to develop the "right brain", and to build confidence and self-esteem, all of which prepares and encourages individuals to expand their learning in other disciplines. Studies have shown this relationship is particularly powerful for those who are alienated from the formal education system-- often the case with inmates. As we previously reported, prison arts programmes have served as a gateway to further learning. Participants were asked if they had enrolled in other educational or vocational programs. Table 15 shows that those with previous art experience are more likely to pursue other educational opportunities either currently (62%) or have pursued educational opportunities in the past (25%).

Table 15 Percentage of inmates enrolled in other educational or vocational programmes.

Responses	Percent
I am pursuing education currently	62
I pursued education in the past	25
No	16

We asked PAF participants if the residency programme had helped them to decide to take courses in other academic or vocational programs. Table 16 shows that a significant majority were motivated by PAF to pursue other programmes, and that their arts education and practice gave them the confidence to engage in other learning opportunities. Developing self-discipline through the programmes also was an important factor, especially for those who studied art for a long period.

Table 16 How PAF’s workshops helped inmates to take other education or vocational programmes

Responses	Percent
Gave me confidence	61
Helped to motivate me	51
Helped me to develop self-confidence	46
Made me want to work harder	42
Showed me to complete projects	42
No	11
Other	5

Finally we asked our participants if they had any ideas about how we could make our residency programme better, the vast majority of responses were that they wanted more classes, more time with their artist in residence and the chance to take part in more diverse projects.

Impact and engagement after inmate’s release from prison

We asked inmates to think ahead to a time when they are back in the community;

- 65% said it would be useful to stay in touch with PAF (Table 18a).
- 64% said it would be easy to continue being creative (Table 18b)
- Only 26% said it would be hard to continue an arts practice; whilst the majority 40% said it wouldn’t (Table 18c)
- 61% said it would be good to talk to other people about their creativity (Table 18d)
- Just under half (41%) felt it would be expensive to go to an art exhibition or live performance (Table 18e)
- Likewise just under half (45%) said it would be difficult to source affordable art materials
- Approximately a third (36%) said it would be easy to find out about local arts projects
- 59% of inmates said it would be good to be invited to PAF exhibitions and events
- Just over half (56%) said it would be useful to be in touch with other people who have been to prison and who are interested in creativity
- Finally 51% said it would be uncomfortable to stay involved with PAF because of its association with prisons, whilst approximately a third (31%) said it wouldn’t.

In summary 76 out of the 79 inmates questioned (96%) said they wish to continue being creative once they are back in the community (Table 19) and 77% said PAF could have a role in helping them stay creative once they are back in the community (Table 20). What role could that be and inmate’s responses was vast and varied:

“PAF has made my time in prison more productive. I feel that anyone who could continue anything as positive as what the foundation offer will have a better chance of becoming and remaining a valuable member of any community”

“Opportunities to earn a living in arts rather than falling back into a life of crime. For those individuals who would like to make a living from creative art it could be also giving them opportunities to do so.”

“I would love to learn to write my own book, and also have the knowhow to start up my own business”

“I am currently working on a 1st draft of my 1st novel 'The Beauty of Ibiza'. I would really like help with this and advice on how to go forward upon my release, even grants to help me would be much appreciated. I had really enjoyed the help of Pamela Brown in HMP Magilligan. She honestly was the light at the end of the tunnel in this place. Her caring nature was so welcomed and received by all not just myself she is truly 1 in 1 million.”

“It could help me stay creative and get me into a healthier routine and to make better live choices. I am not sure whether there's the same layout for creative writing outside or not.”

“I would like to explore the possibility of gaining a career in sports journalism. Therefore I would like to continue creative writing, achieve my Level 3 then start a new chapter in my life”

“I would like to visit art galleries and other professional artists”

“I'd like to engage in classes outside etc. But also I think we need a computer facility for art class in Maghaberry in order to progress and get images etc. this would take stress & time off our facilitator”

“It could be used to keep the mind preoccupied and influence on how your creative skills evolve whilst continuing using the scheme. It also helps us (prisoners) to establish ourselves within the creative/exhibitions community than rather being linked to our offending pasts.”

“A place where you can go to paint and associate with other prisoners and share your creativity and stories”

“Helping others and telling them how it helped me in prison and good to talk”

“Make things for charity/youth clubs or interface designs/cross community work”

“Have classes tailored at inmates leaving prison”

“Become involved in exhibitions” and “Art projects in community”

Table 18 Thinking ahead to a time when you are back out in the community, would you find it...

(a) Useful to stay in touch with Prison Arts Foundation

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	10
Agree	32
Strongly agree	33

(b) Easy to continue being creative

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	9
Neither agree nor disagree	9
Agree	48
Strongly agree	16

(c) Hard to continue an arts practice

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	8
Disagree	32
Neither agree nor disagree	16
Agree	15
Strongly agree	11

(d) Good to talk to other people about my creativity

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	4
Disagree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	8
Agree	43
Strongly agree	18

(e) Expensive to go to an art exhibition or live performance

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	4
Disagree	14
Neither agree nor disagree	29
Agree	27
Strongly agree	14

(f) Difficult to source affordable art materials

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	4
Disagree	14
Neither agree nor disagree	18
Agree	30
Strongly agree	15

(g) Easy to find out about local arts projects

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	3
Disagree	20
Neither agree nor disagree	23
Agree	27
Strongly agree	9

(h) Good to be invited to PAF exhibitions and events

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	9
Agree	32
Strongly agree	27

(i) Useful to be in touch with other people who have been to prison and who are interested in creativity

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	16
Agree	32
Strongly agree	24

(j) Uncomfortable to stay involved with PAF because of its association with prisons

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	23
Disagree	28
Neither agree nor disagree	18
Agree	16
Strongly agree	15

Table 19 Do you wish to continue being creative once you are back in the community?

Response	Percent
Yes	96
No	1

Table 20 Do you think PAF could have a role in helping you stay creative once you are back in the community?

Response	Percent
Yes	77
No	11

Conclusion

Participation in the study was strictly voluntary. Inmates learned about the art classes from prison staff, flyers, and other inmates. The classes were taught by professionally recognised artists who are experienced and gifted teachers.

Research and experience suggests that prison arts programmes have significant benefits and positive outcomes for the imprisoned, their families, the prison environment, and society.

The importance of prison arts education can be understood through attitudinal and behavioural changes in inmates. This study and other researchers have found, for example, that inmate-artists discover new things about themselves and the world through the creative process. We found a very strong correlation between arts education and self-confidence, motivation to pursue other educational and vocational programs, and self-discipline to manage time more efficiently and effectively. These findings are confirmed in other prison arts programmes evaluations.

In light of these findings, it may not be surprising that inmate-artists say that their behaviour toward other inmates and prison staff is better when involved in the arts programme, evidenced by a reduction in disciplinary actions. The longer an inmate is involved in prison arts, the more likely he/she will experience positive behavioural changes, including pursuing other education and vocational programmes.

Multi-disciplinary studies, for example, show that children and adolescents are much more likely to do better in other disciplines if the arts are an integral part of their curriculum. This relationship is strongest among those from disadvantaged homes,

and for those who may have had unhappy educational experiences in their earlier life. This profile certainly fits many, if not most, inmates. For example, there is compelling evidence that art educators can play an important role to inspire inmates and guide creativity, growth, and understanding. They often are the first positive role models for imprisoned men and women, especially in an educational context.

We found that inmate-artists were more likely to pursue other educational and vocational programmes. A significant majority of the inmates who had been involved in PAF's residency programme said that their enhanced self-confidence and motivation to study in other programs was at least partially attributable to the programme.

Building on our existing programmes and activities, we have also explored how our work can impact the longer-term outcomes for our participants, their families and the staff supporting them both within establishments and upon release. The study showed that the significant majority wished to continue being creative once back in the community and felt that Prison Arts Foundation could have a key role in helping them to do so.