



Applied Performance Arts Interventions within Justice Services

Moving 'Forward' Toward an Integrated Sustainable
Evaluative Approach



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Dr Richard McHugh and Professor Hannah Smithson

Manchester Centre for Youth Studies – Manchester Metropolitan University



Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher(s) and not necessarily those of Odd Arts

For further information please contact:

ODD ARTS
Z-Arts
335 Streford Road,
Hulme
Manchester
M15 5ZA
Tel: 0161 226 1912
Email: info@oddarts.co.uk

The authors

Professor Hannah Smithson

Hannah has worked within the field of criminology for over 15 years and she always ensures real-world relevance and impact for all research she conducts. She works collaboratively with a host of local, national and international communities/stakeholders. The majority of her work involves engagement with a number of communities in and outside of the university, including professionals, activists and the Third Sector. She has directed projects funded by the YJB, ESRC, AHRC, local authorities, police forces and charities. Her research has been instrumental in shaping agendas in research and policy across three interconnected areas: Youth Justice, Youth Gangs and Community Safety and Crime prevention. Young people's participation is at the heart of the research Hannah carries out and she is committed to developing research methods that enable this.

Dr Richard McHugh

Richard has worked in youth justice, youth and community work and education for 16 years. His experiences range from youth justice prevention, adult resettlement through to teaching across a range of social science, criminology and youth studies programmes. Richard's Doctoral research focused on how education may take place within groups that are commonly described as 'gangs', with a specific focus on the role that social space may have within such educative processes. Richard's other research interests relate to informal educative practices and processes within groups that are identified or identify their self as being 'outsiders', as well as risk within research and researcher positionality and has published across a range of disciplines including 'gangs', informal education and identity.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

The work of Odd Arts focuses on engaging vulnerable groups in arts based programmes who may experience multiple forms of exclusion. This work is largely carried out with and within organisations associated with crime and criminal justice. Much of the work of Odd Arts utilises applied theatre and related performance and creative arts as a mechanism in exploring a range of issues relevant to the lives of beneficiaries.

Odd Arts contracted the Manchester Centre for Youth Studies (Manchester Metropolitan University) to carry out a small scale study of the Forward programme within two criminal justice service settings. These two sites included a secure children's home and an adult supported housing project for ex-offenders.

1.2 Methodology

The research required a multi-method approach, which consisted of the following four strands: i) literature review ii) interviews with young people who participated in the Forward programme within the youth secure estate iii) interviews with youth justice professionals who supported the interventions within the secure estate iv) interviews with adults living in supported accommodation for ex-offenders who participated in the Forward programme v) ethnographic observations of the Forward programme within one youth secure estate venue (secure children's home 1).

1.3 Literature review

A literature review was conducted to provide a theoretical basis for the research and this assisted in the development of the research instruments used (interview schedules and ethnographic observation). The literature review examined English language literature published between 1994 and 2017, which focused on: applied theatre within the secure estate; forum theatre; applied arts provision within justice services.

1.4 Interviews - beneficiaries: young people

The young people who were available to take part and chose to be involved in the follow up interviews (n. 9) presented a range of opinions about their experiences and perceptions of engaging with the Forward programme. Most prevalent amongst these opinions were themes including:

- Appreciating the game elements of the programme
- Having a sense of choice and agency within the programme
- Opportunity to engage with a larger group of young people beyond the scope of everyday contacts

It is important to note that all of the young people had some previous experience of engaging with Odd Arts interventions in some way. Likewise, it is noteworthy that in the follow up interviews, it was apparent that the young people had appeared, to varying degrees, to lose some enthusiasm for the programme. This latter point was a stark contrast to the observed levels of enthusiasm during the delivery of the intervention.

1.5 Interviews - beneficiaries: adult supported housing

Interview responses from the adult service users living in the supported housing project closely aligned with those of the young people. Predominantly, respondents from the supported housing project described how they felt that the Forward programme had generally been a positive experience. However, more specifically, the participants described how the programme had significantly raised their confidence levels and provided a meaningful activity, which gave them something to look forward to. Moreover, the participants from the supported housing project explained that engaging in the Forward programme had provided a space in which the residents (who took part) could gain deeper mutual understanding, empathy and mutual peer support.

1.6 Interviews - practitioners: youth justice, resettlement and arts professionals

Practitioner interviews yielded some similar themes to those of the beneficiaries. However, practitioners specifically referred to the Odd Arts approach as being unique and highly professional. Without exception supporting staff from within host organisations had complete confidence in Odd Arts and specifically the delivery staff. Additionally, supporting staff (as

indicated earlier) were very keen to outline how they perceived huge value and potential in the idea of having an embedded and integrated planning and evaluation process which would be carried out collaboratively between Odd Arts and the host organisation(s). This, they felt, has the potential to further generate positive outcomes for beneficiaries in future interventions.

1.7 Background

This study aimed to explore processes and the potential impact of the work of Odd Arts. In particular, the study particularly focused on examining the processes and potential impact of Odd Arts applied theatre and related performance arts as interventions within justice services. The research concentrated on the Forward programme delivered by Odd Arts in two key sites. These two sites included a secure children's home and an adult supported housing project for ex-offenders.

Odd Arts is an arts organisation focusing on engaging vulnerable and excluded groups in creative programmes of work. Odd Arts work predominantly with organisations within criminal justice organisations. Predominantly the work of Odd Arts draws on applied theatre and related performance and creative arts as a means of exploring, challenging and provoking critical thinking and behavioural change in relation to topics relevant to the lives of those they work with.

1.8 Methodology

The nature of the research questions called for a multi method approach to the study. The first stage of the research involved a review of the research and practice literature regarding relevant aspects of applied theatre / arts provision with young people and adults within justice services focusing on resettlement. The report reviewed articles and documents published between 1994 and 2017. The search terms that were utilised included:

- Forum theatre secure estate
- Applied theatre secure estate
- Forum theatre resettlement
- Applied theatre resettlement
- Forum theatre secure estate evaluation
- Applied theatre secure estate evaluation

The review focussed on English language literature. Studies were included which contributed to the following:

- Background to applied theatre with oppressed groups
- Range of applications
- Forum theatre and arts based practice within justice / resettlement settings
- Issues within evaluation of applied theatre

Interviews

Following completion of both of the Forward programme delivery stages, semi-structured interviews were carried out with three distinct sets of participants.

Participants in the follow up interviews were grouped into the following sets:

- Beneficiaries – Young people (secure children’s home)
- Beneficiaries – Adult service users (supported housing project)
- Supporting staff from host organisations and Odd Arts staff

Initially, the research team intended to have a fourth distinct set of participants.

This fourth set would have comprised of Odd Arts staff and free-lance artists contracted by Odd Arts in the delivery of the Forward programme. However, due to lack of availability and the inherent constraints and costs associated with work commitments of free-lance artists, it was only possible to interview one member of the Odd Arts delivery team. Fortunately, the member of the team who was available for interview had worked on both of the Forward programmes under examination herein.

Supporting staff interviews at the secure children’s home were carried out as a group interview due to the rigid time constraints associated with internal

regimes of a secure setting. Interviews with supporting staff at the supported housing project were carried out individually. Again, the format here was dictated by time constraints and the need for at least one member of staff to be available to service users and visitors at all times.

Observations

Observation sessions were arranged with one of the host organisations (the secure children's home) in order to gather *light* ethnographic data and to enable a clearer understanding of Odd Arts approach and the Forward programme. However, upon arrival on the first day of observation, informed consent was not able to be provided in loco parentis in order for the observations to take place. As such, the researcher had to abandon the first session due to clear ethical restrictions which were presented by the host organisation.

Following this initial barrier, the research team were able to gain access for the subsequently planned observational sessions. However, this access was only granted by the host organisation on the grounds that the observations would only be concerned with the work of Odd Arts and must not account for any of the actions or responses presented by the young people.

Whilst the subsequent observations, which took place under these restrictive conditions, did provide a solid context and understanding of the programme and Odd Arts approach, it was not possible to gain much in the way of meaningful or rich ethnographic data. This was an unfortunate restriction, which was only partially remedied much later in the study when a different

senior member of staff within the secure children's home granted informed consent for the interviews in loco parentis.

Barriers

Other issues which restricted the flow and impacted on the timeline of the research solely related to access. Initially the research team were due to carry out data collection at another host organisation / venue in addition to the secure children's home. This aspect of the data collection was due to take place in an adult male category A prison. However, due to administration issues, the prison were not able to gain security clearance for members of the research team in time for the delivery of the programme. Similarly, corresponding officers from the prison raised concerns and questions regarding the nature of the research and the type of data expected to be gathered. Whilst these questions and concerns did not prohibit access, it is noteworthy from a methodological perspective to consider such issues for future research projects of a similar nature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this literature review is to provide an overview of applied theatre and related performance arts practice within youth and adult justice settings. In particular, this review, in line with the core focus of Odd Arts' 'Forward' project, will have a specific focus on the theme of resettlement in relation to applied performance arts interventions within justice services.

2.2 A Brief Background

Much of contemporary applied theatre and related performance arts interventions rest on the foundations laid by Augusto Boal and his 'theatre of the oppressed'. Theatre of the oppressed, as initially created by Augusto Boal, has always intended to generate emancipatory and critically conscious thought and action. Boal's ideas conceptualisation of Forum Theatre draws heavily on the work of Paulo Freire, as is clear even in the similarity of the titles of their respective well-known publications. In order to appreciate Boal it is important firstly to understand Freire's work on popular education. For Freire, education must begin at the point where the people involved in the educative process are, not at a predetermined and normatively anticipated point. In this sense, the educative process must begin at a culturally relevant point for those involved, rather than being culturally abstract (Freire, 2007). In beginning from such a position, importantly, those involved in the educative process as learners are positioned as equal to the educator and the education is then able to take place through critical dialogue *with* the learners (Freire, 2007). The difference between Freire's method and the dominant systems of education is

that; Freire describes the dominant educational systems as the 'banking system' (op cit) as it operates by *pouring* information from the teacher to the *empty* learner.

Like Freire, Boal's method begins from a culturally relevant and equitable stance. Much like Freire, Boal's work engenders revolutionary democratic principles, which emblemise political landscape of the time and place in which forum theatre emerged (cf. Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, 1994). The importance of drawing on the experiences of those affected by the dictatorial political landscape of the time, was in itself a revolutionary act. By engaging the audiences (initially) in dialogue with the actors and the production, Boal's method not only removed the inauthenticity of middle-class interpretation of the social problems of the poor, but also enabled those living in poverty to 'rehearse for social change' (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, 1994: 3). Critical dialogue focusing on oppressive experiences (Dwyer, 2004) and drawing on the experiences and opinions of those involved and engaging with audiences as a means of breaking through the critical distance between participant – actor – audience, forum theatre is reflective of the revolutionary ideology Boal purported. In creating the critical fracture and moving beyond the *fourth wall* between spectator and actor power dynamics between the two are diffused. Thus creating the democratic positionality of the 'spect-actor' (Boal, 2002) and initiating a space for critical thinking through problem posing (cf. Freire, 2007) and problem solving dramaturgical dialogue. This democratic and equitable perspective of arts based intervention is widely utilised across a range of oppressed and marginalised groups. Boal himself developed his method in

working with factory workers in Latin America (Boal, 2000). Others have replicated similar work, which has utilised experienced actors carrying out forum theatre within factories for health awareness raising purposes (Durden and Nduhura, 2007).

2.3 Applications

Broadly, arts based interventions have been widely utilised in a variety of settings, in particular in relation to social and economic concerns and barriers (Matarasso, 1997). Such interventions are diverse in approach and methods. However of specific concern to this report, some have replicated similar work to that of Boal; for example some have utilised experienced actors in carrying out forum theatre within factories for health awareness raising purposes (Durden and Nduhura, 2007). In other settings forum theatre has been carried out with people with experiences of homelessness (Cardboard Citizens website, 2017); people with cognitive disabilities (Mind The Gap website, 2017); as a means of consultation with older people (Rice, Newell and Morgan, 2007); peace building processes in communities of conflict (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010); schools and in relation to young refugees (Day, 2002); prison (cf. Mitchel, 2001). It is the latter application, which is of most pertinence here. The specific applications and debates focusing on forum theatre and related arts based practice within the secure estate are outlined and critically assessed in the following section.

2.4 Forum Theatre and Arts Based Practice Within the Secure Estate

As noted earlier, forum theatre has a strong genealogy, which is closely linked with not only Freireian educational programmes but also a radical emancipatory politics of the time and place of its origins. As such, forum theatre has traditionally held democratic and participant led practice and praxis in high esteem. However, in engaging in such participant led practice within the secure estate it has been noted that several contradictions may manifest. On the most fundamental level there is the stark contrast between an emancipatory ethos of forum theatre against the back drop of the literal constraint of incarceration and continued subtle and overt forms of objectification of offenders through rehabilitative treatment paradigms (Bottoms and Williams, 1979 cited in McNeil, 2006). Likewise, typically within prisons there are restrictive regimes, which run contra to emancipatory ideologies, not least in the essentially hierarchically founded forms of power inherent in prisoner and staff relations (Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001). Yet, these power relations are not static, and within the hinter-spaces within such restrictive regimes, power can shift (Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001).

This stark contrast is, in some ways, reflected in the development and publication of manuals for applied theatre within the secure estate by organisations such as TiPP¹ (Davey, Day and Balfour, 2014), against the emancipatory ethos of Boal and his theoretical foundations of Freire. The

¹ Theatre in Prisons and Probation.

contrasts further develop in considering the balance and negotiation in practice between meeting evidence based, risk management and accreditation criteria in delivery (and associated funding opportunities) with artistry, aesthetics and affect (Davey, Day and Balfour, 2014).

Forum theatre and other arts based approaches, through dialogical and therefore arguably more level power relationships have been argued having potential to create spaces of shift from oppressive structures within the secure estate (cf. Young-Jahangeer, 2017). This concept not only aligns with Freireian thinking but also approaches to desistance, which attempt to dispense with 'treatment' paradigms of offender management. Such approaches incorporate fuller participation in negotiation of opportunity through ongoing dialogue and informed consent (Raynor and Vanstone, 1994). Applied theatre within the secure estate has also been cited as having potential to stimulate those living within prisons to develop stronger adaptive traits within their personal identity, which in turn has potential to positively impact on future and continued desistance (Davey, Day and Balfour, 2014).

More broadly, arts based practice within the secure estate has been demonstrated as having potential to improve interpersonal relationships amongst prisoners, prisoners and prison staff and prisoners and their families (Sparks *et al*, 2012). In a similar vein, arts based interventions have been cited as having positive impact on offender outcomes, in particular in relation to issues such desistance from crime and rehabilitation (Sparks *et al*, 2012).

Applied arts based practice focusing on resettlement has been highlighted as having therapeutic potential in changing lives for the better through developing self-esteem and a more positive wider prison environment (Cursley and Maruna, 2015).

Maruna (2011), drawing on Durkheim (1995), suggests the role of ritual in transitions and pivotal points in an individual's life course are of importance. Likewise, Maruna (2011) draws attention to the lasting effects of 'labelling' rituals of incarceration post release. Whilst the mutual focus (op cit) of arts based practice within the secure estate could be described as having the potential to form the basis of a ritual of reintegration, it is the validity and involvement of the wider community in such rituals, which is of importance:

'To be meaningful, then, reintegration rituals would not take place in secret, behind closed doors [...] reintegration is something that happens between the returning prisoner and the wider community.'
(Maruna, 2011)

It is possible to understand from this how the barriers to wider community involvement in arts based interventions identified by Mitchel (2001) may have detrimental impact, or at least delimit, the effectiveness of applied theatre focusing on reintegration within the secure estate. Maruna (2011) also points out that effective reintegration rituals would include elements of challenge and achievement. Forum theatre would appear well placed to be able to provide challenge, yet without opportunity for wider community involvement, the

possibility of achievement is potentially diminished. Likewise, Maruna (2011) points to the crucial role of 'acting out' the positional changes being experienced in classical rites of passage. Again, forum theatre would appear well placed to provide opportunity to provide this.

2.5 Issues Within Evaluation of Applied Theatre

Whilst there are well-established applications of forum theatre with not only those living within the secure estate but also people who are in various ways *othered* or marginalised, there are challenges in evaluating the effectiveness of such programmes. Practitioner led administration of evaluation has been described as negatively impacting on artistic activity (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010). Similarly it has been suggested practitioner led evaluation does not always yield rich and beneficial information (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010), with some going further in suggesting the subtleties of applied arts based practice cannot be fully evaluated at all (cf. Matarasso, 1997). Likewise, external academic or commercial evaluation is not always well placed to apprehend the unanticipated and micro successes, reflective practices and responses of facilitators, or the longitudinal impacts of applied theatre and arts based interventions (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010).

Applied theatre has been credited as an enabler of instigating spaces conducive to developing authentic and resilient personal development through means of voluntary participation (Hanrahan and Banerjee, 2017). Similarly, Hanrahan and Banerjee (2017) report that their study demonstrates the therapeutic opportunities applied theatre presents for critical self-reflection. Applied arts based interventions have also been posited as holding strong potential for socio-economic change, yet as noted above, evaluation is limited

and limiting (Matarasso, 1997; Jennings and Baldwin, 2010). Other considerations in evaluating applied arts based interventions include the complexity of temporal and peripheral impact not only within but also beyond the life course of the intervention and associated evaluation. Matarasso (1997) points out that initial positive response and perception from beneficiaries may fade or disband where there is a perceived lack of follow up work or longitudinal relationship and intervention building.

Another perspective, which critically explores the essentiality of evaluation of applied arts interventions, is that of Balfour (2009). Balfour (2009) points out that funding bodies lead in setting the objective discourse of applied theatre, and in turn, applied theatre adopts the ideology and language of the commissionable context in order to be awarded funding. Utilitarian specific issue based foci are favoured in funding of applied theatre, for instance within the secure estate targeting issues such as anger management or substance use (Balfour, 2009). Through such utilitarian funding leverage, what is evaluated is funnelled into clearly defined measurable output, which often will be narrow in scope and practitioner led meaning outcomes, longitudinal and difficult to measure reflective change are unlikely to be accounted for and therefore will not inform future practice and intervention (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010). Arguably, this perspective demarks a paradigm shift from aesthetic theatre form toward cognitive therapeutic form, thus potentially losing some of the less *measurable* positive aspects of applied theatre within *social problem* contexts (Balfour, 2009).

Difficult to measure outcomes, longitudinal and reflexive change generated through applied theatre and wider arts interventions has been described as

change in constant flux (McDonald, 2005). In order to enable the measurement of the *unmeasurable*, it is first important to identify the conflicts and points of negotiation between funder imperatives (Balfour, 2009) practice from the socio-cultural starting point of the people participating in the processes (cf. Freire, 2007). In doing so, more well-defined and equitable learning and development could be enabled across the spectrum of stakeholders (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010). This may be achieved not only in acknowledging and responding to such frictions and points of negotiation but also in bridging knowledge gaps between higher education, applied theatre (and arts) practitioners, NGOs and government (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010). Likewise, incorporation of multiple perspectives and methods, inclusive of practitioner reflective and reflexive modalities (cf. Taylor, 2003) and qualitative longitudinal approaches (cf. Hanrahan and Banerjee, 2017), could be put to use in generating more robust and less 'donor' (Balfour, 2009) focused evaluation of applied theatre and wider arts practice in such contexts.

3 INTERVIEWS

3.1 Introduction

The research team set out to examine the effectiveness of Odd Arts' Forward programme within two secure settings. The initial secure settings included a secure children's home and an adult male prison. Due to unforeseen barriers to access and the untimeliness of the intervention timetabled for the adult prison, it was not possible to draw data from that particular venue. Odd Arts were able to organise a second option' this was an adult supported housing project for ex-offenders. The research team interviewed: 9 young people within the secure children's home; 3 adult males from the supported housing project; 3 members of staff from the secure children's home; 2 members of staff from the supported housing project; 1 member of staff from Odd Arts. All participants in the interviews had taken part in, supported or facilitated the Forward programme. Along with this, the research team carried out 5 days of ethnographic observation during the course of the Forward programme within the secure children's home in order to generate a rich understanding of the programme, style of facilitation, potential impact and how evaluation and continuity of Odd Arts interventions may best be facilitated in the future. Both of the research sites are located in the North of England. The secure children's home, although based in the North of England, houses young people from a large geographic area meaning that respondents from this setting come from a range of locations nationally. All participants in the Forward programme across both locations were selected and self-elected through internal referral and selection processes within the host organisation. Not all Forward

programme participants took part in the interviews. Reasons for not taking part in the interviews included: not being available; choosing to not take part; non-completion of the programme. The total number who participated in the Forward programme but did not take part in the interviews was six; inclusive of four young people and two adults from the supported housing project. Participants were under no obligation to talk to us, and some declined to take part in interviews, or failed to turn up to interviews. However, the participants interviewed represented a broad demography; however, the ratio of male to female respondents was low with only four female respondents, all of whom were support staff from the host organisations. The young people and adults living in the supported accommodation who participated in the research had a diverse range of backgrounds and offending behaviours. Due to the relatively small sample, the findings must be understood as exploratory rather than definitive.

In order to elicit as deep an understanding as possible of the beneficiaries and staff's experiences of the Forward programme as possible the research team drew on a semi-structured interview approach in order to permit flexibility and elaboration in responses. The questions within the interviews were aimed at eliciting direct experiences, understandings and perceived outcomes of engagement with the Forward programme and the work of Odd Arts (see Appendix 1 and 2 for interview schedules). The following sections of this chapter will outline the key themes and most common responses from participants and subsequently explore these in relation to the core research question.

3.2 Core responses

Table 1 below illustrates the key themes, which emerged from the interviews, as well as number of respondents and references.

Table 1

Key Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of confidence (beneficiaries)• Increased ability to work in diverse groups (beneficiaries)• Development of peer support / education / empathy (beneficiaries)• Expertise and professionalism of Odd Arts staff• Odd Arts approach (gamification in applied arts based intervention / quasi-covert theme embedded in programme)• Importance of integrated planning and evaluation with host organisation

4 Young People

4.1 Prior Experiences of Odd Arts

It is important to note that all of the young people interviewed who engaged with the Forward programme had previously been involved in other Odd Arts interventions. This notable point was initially highlighted in interviews with practitioners at the secure children's home but was also reiterated in interviews with the young people. Within the interviews the young people identified several previous pieces of work they had participated in with Odd Arts; these included issues such as Mentoring and leadership and cyberbullying, and incorporated artistic mediums including music and screen printing. This point is notable in considering not only participant and support staff perceptions and experiences of the Forward programme but also the following section focusing on observations.

4.2 Experiences and Perceptions of 'Forward'

Most commonly, young people indicated within the interviews that they felt they had a positive experience in engaging with the Forward programme facilitated by Odd Arts. In particular, young people who had participated in the programme expressed two core points relating to their positive experience during the time working on the programme. These key points were the role of games within the programme and the approaches of Odd Arts. The former is viewed through both the lens of informal education and gamification of experiential learning.

As will be detailed in the following section on session observations, the research team very clearly noted the high levels of active participation in the

sessions and equally clear enthusiasm during the sessions. However, across all of the interviews this level of enthusiasm did not appear to have carried through the eight weeks between the Forward programme and the follow up interviews. This contrast however cannot be interpreted as a change of opinion but could be considered in the context of the young people being back in the routine of the academic year. This point is indicative of and leads into the aspects of the programme that the young people reflected positively on. The first of which being the games. When asked about which aspects of the Forward programme the young people found to be interesting, their responses consistently maintained this focus, yet often cited that they liked the sessions generally:

“playing the games and stuff, you know, and learning new games. [...] Just all of it, really. The game was decent.”

(YP7)

This point was reiterated by many of the young people. However, beyond the initial general positive recollection of the sessions and the gamified aspects, the young people described the positive affective impact of having opportunity for peer and carer feedback and recognition:

“Like, the end, where we were, like, all acting and that, and receiving feedback from the audience. That was, like, alright.”

(YP1)

Recognition of the positive impact of peer interaction in a structured setting was widespread. This point is particularly pertinent as it was also widely acknowledged that many of the young people who participated in the Forward

programme would not typically have worked with each other in any other circumstances and some had difficulties working with others at all prior to the Odd Arts intervention:

“I don’t really work with people. But obviously, in ODD Arts, it was different to work with new people or, obviously, other people who you don’t really work with. And then [...] It’s alright to work with them”

(YP4)

Moreover, not only would they not have typically worked together prior to the Forward programme, they usually would not work in groups larger than five. Support staff from the host organisation also noted that the composition and associated dynamic of the group would not have worked in any other educational or extracurricular setting. This latter point will be discussed in detail later (see support staff section), however, the germane point being that the young people themselves recognised the contrast and value of the group dynamic and composition:

“We had to all sit down in groups and stuff and evaluate our performances with each other. I thought that was really good. [...] Because we had to do it with everyone. I think that worked really well, and that helped us, because we took bits from everyone’s things and stuff, and we shared our views on the resettlement [...]”

(YP2)

Upon probing the question of the extent and effectiveness of working with others, the young people emphasised the scope of new interpersonal working and their perceptions of the success:

“there were people that were in my school group, and then there were other people that were in a different group to me. But I worked with both parts [...]

(I) And do you think you all worked well together as a team?

(YP1) Yes.”

(YP1)

As noted above (and discussed further later) the limitations of the group of young people working together prior to the Forward programme were evident. However, previous limitations were transcended through the approach of Odd Arts and their staff delivery team. Whilst the young people found it difficult to fully articulate this, they did nonetheless recognise the fact that Odd Arts staff had achieved the coming together of what was at best a disparate group with some shy individuals and at worst a group of individuals who would otherwise have been divided into factions:

“they got everybody involved. So, say, from, like, being shy, say, like, a person was shy – it got them to not be shy at the end. [...] Just bringing everyone together. [...] teamwork and stuff like that [...] like, on the unit and stuff like that, there’d be only, like, a couple of us to a, so either two of us or maybe three. And I’ll just be on my own some of the time. [...] But, like, with ODD Arts, everyone got together, and there was no arguing and stuff like that. Everyone worked together.”

(YP3)

Upon being asked if YP3 could elaborate on what it was about Odd Arts that might enable this out of the ordinary interpersonal positive collaboration, it was noted that the active nature of the programme and relative spatial openness aided the positive creative process without conflict and exclusion:

“It’s just that we are *doing* something, so we are not all crammed together in one unit or location, because we are in the secure unit. [...] So we were doing activities and stuff like that, keeping our minds occupied. [...] So then we just all got on, yes”

(YP3)

The ability of Odd Arts staff and their approach to bring the young people together and enable participation in the constructive and creative process of the Forward programme was generated through two central components. The first of these components being the fundamental Freirean approach. As noted earlier in the literature section of the current report, the essential aspect of a Freirean approach is the concept of a problem posing educative experience which draws on the knowledge and experiences of the learner (Freire, 2007). This was not only clear in the observational aspect of the data but also in the interviews with young people:

“I suppose they, they put it on us, like. When we made the show or we did, like, an activity, they asked us, “What do you want to put in to make it better?” So then we said, and then they’ve done it. [...] So they’ve asked us first before they have done it themselves.”

(YP3)

A problem posing approach, which drew on the knowledge and experiences of the young people, provided a sense of release in enabling the opinions and creativity of the participants to be acknowledged and utilised in a more horizontal and collaborative power relationship with adults:

“It released a bit of pressure – let’s just say that. [...] it felt good. Obviously, they [Odd Arts] were just listening to young people

and, like, how their views and comments can help. [...] So I found it really good.”

(YP3)

The consensus, overall, from the young people was that the Forward programme was a positive experiential learning experience, which engaged them through the means of participatory approaches and gamified creative personal challenge. However, as the following section will demonstrate there was not such clear consensus from the young people with regard to the relevance of the overarching theme within the Forward programme.

4.3 Relevance of Resettlement Theme

Whilst some of the young people indicated that the theme of resettlement had some positive impact on thinking about their future release from the secure estate, others expressed a sentiment of finding the topic as being personally challenging or of little interest. For the latter the core reason for feeling the theme was not of interest or relevance was that release was not imminent and therefore not something that was worth consideration. An example of this was presented upon asking YP7 if he thought the theme during the two weeks of the Forward programme had caused him in any way to reflect on or think differently about resettlement:

“No. Because, obviously, I’m not going to be getting close to being released for a while, isn’t it? So I didn’t think about stuff like that, no.”

(YP7)

In other instances, a sense of unease was presented in relation to the theme of resettlement due to imminent rather than distant release. Uncertainty of the

future and a developed sense of security within the secure children's home factored as to why this was so. The theme of resettlement in this particular instance brought forth a set of thoughts and feelings, which the young person did not feel ready to encounter. In response to the question about resettlement YP6 appeared to become reticent, this reticence was confirmed in the supporting member of staff from the secure children's home interjecting in the interview with a supportive and explanatory comment:

"I: has it made you think about resettlement, personally?

R1: A bit, isn't it? [...] But not too much.

R2: You're trying not to think about it, are you?

R1: [Laughter] yes.

R2: [...] goes out in January and you just don't want to leave, do you? [...] Probably, for you, it was hard, wasn't it?

R1: Yes, yes."

4.4 Negative Perceptions

The two most common negative perceptions presented by young people in the interviews were that the Forward programme was delivered during the Summer holidays and not liking the written aspects of the programme which were essential for the completion of the Arts Award. However, it must be noted that during the programme the research team did note that whilst there was a small amount of short-lived resistance to the written aspects of the programme, the young people engaged with it with relative ease and enthusiasm.

5 Beneficiaries – Adult: Supported Housing Project

5.1 Experiences and Perceptions of ‘Forward’

Prior to exploring the responses of the adult service users living in the supported housing project it must be noted that only three members of the group completed the programme and only two of those chose to participate in the follow up interview as part of the evaluation process. However, as with the other key delivery site, the secure children’s home, two members of staff from the host organisation who supported the programme were also interviewed.

Due to the low numbers of participants, which were diminished further by none completion of the programme and declining participation in the follow up interviews, the range of responses are limited to three themes. These themes include:

- Positive experiences of the Forward Programme
- Forward programme providing a space for developing interpersonal relationships, understanding and empathy
- How the delivery of the programme could be improved

5.2 Positive Experiences

Similar to the young people who participated in the Forward programme, the adult service users expressed a sense of having positive experiences of the intervention:

“I enjoyed all of it, to be honest”
(AM 2, white male, 40 - 45 years)

“You know, thinking back, realistically speaking, I can’t really say anything that was a negative”

(AM5, white male, 45 – 50 years)

This general positive reception of the programme was supplemented by the service users with recognition of how the intervention provided inspiration and was something that they looked forward to taking part in, as well as providing an opportunity for experiential learning in a fun environment:

“It was inspiring, really. [...] in the sense that every time they were coming, I was saying to [staff name], when we were going down, like, “It was good.” [...] I think it gave everybody within this establishment something to look forward to, because we all had a laugh when we were down there – it was funny”

(AM5, white male, 45 – 50 years)

Many of the men living in the supported housing project had previous substance and alcohol use issues and longstanding relationships with criminal behaviours, which had impacted on their lives in various negative ways. In particular, it was noted that self-confidence was an issue for some of the service users:

“[...] when I came here and, like... I won’t go into it, but I was a patch on the person that I am now. I had no confidence.”

(AM4, white male 45 – 50 years)

Along with more general mention of how the supported housing project had helped raise self-confidence over time, it was also emphasised how the Forward programme facilitated further development of confidence and self-esteem:

“I think it gave me my self-worth back, more than anything – my self-worth [...] It just gave me my confidence back, a lot of my confidence. Because, like, when you get... say, like, when you do drugs [...] But when you get into drugs and you’ve been into drugs, like, and say your partner is into drugs, you just [...] You just become a different being, sort of thing [...] And you just become like a robot, I think. You’re just doing that thing, just getting that oil inside your robot mechanism [...] and you’re just not a person, I don’t think, when you’re taking drugs. You’re just living for that drug. That drug has got a hold over you, and you’ve got to get up in the morning, and you’ve got to give your body that drug to feel normal. And it’s not living, for me, and it’s not life at all. It’s just having another ruler [...] **But the Odd Arts and this place, it has done wonders for me**”

(AM4, white male 45 – 50 years)

This point was reiterated by another participant:

“[...] gaining your confidence back as well [...]. Yes, it helped me a hell of a lot”

(AM5, white male, 45 – 50 years)

5.3 Interpersonal Relationships, Understanding and Empathy

Along with the sentiment of the Forward programme having facilitated regaining self-confidence and self-esteem, some of the participants reflected on how they felt that the programme had permitted a space for the participating residents to gain a better understanding of each other. Whilst the supported housing project has communal spaces and inevitable opportunities for day-to-day social contact and interaction between residents. Likewise, service users drew attention to how they usually do not engage well with others in group situations, however, it was acknowledged that the Forward programme was a catalyst for positive social interaction and developing empathy through the process:

“I don’t want to speak to people in general. I’ve got problems [...]. And he said, “Look, we’ve all got our own problems in here, right? We’ve all come from something that we’ve done wrong or whatever,” he said. “But don’t beat yourself up about it. We’re all here to sort ourselves out again.” [...] it has made me more, how can I say, a bit more caring. [...] because you get a lot of them in here who think, “Woe is me. I’ve got the weight of the world on my shoulders.” We’ve all got problems. [...] But, like, I think it’s easier here, because if you have a group that’s together, and you all look after each other, you can offload your problems to other people. And it makes it easier, I think. [...] showing us, as individuals, that we are part of a group and part of, well, not part of a group but part of a community, and you can either be within that community or not within that community. [...] at first I didn’t want to do anything, and they’ve kind of said, “Come on, you don’t know what it’s like. If you don’t try something, you’re not going to know what it’s like.””

(AM4, white male 45 – 50 years)

This was supported and elaborated on further by others who suggested the Forward programme assisted developing positive interpersonal experiences:

“how they got us to, like, all work together as a unit, like, rather than being individuals within that unit. And we did *all* work together and come together, didn’t we, as a unit, rather than looking upon people as, like, say, “Oh, that’s [name], and I know she’s like this and that,” [...]. We were just all gelling together, and we all worked together very well, and we all had a really good laugh, and it was good.”

(AM5, white male, 45 – 50 years)

Similarly, the opportunity for positive interpersonal experiences increased empathetic understanding of other participants engaged in the programme:

“[...] the aspect was to get you down there and to start doing, rather than feeling sorry for yourself, start coming together as a communal group and all helping each other out. It has done wonders for me, I think, anyway. [...] It made me think more about individual people, and their needs, and how they’ve come to arrive in this position, which is the odd position, which we find ourselves in. And, like, we’ve all got our own different stories.”

(AM5, white male, 45 – 50 years)

6 Staff Perceptions

6.1 Planning and Evaluation

It was noted within the interview with staff at the secure children’s home that greater scope for embedded planning and evaluation would potentially enhance the already positive working relationship between Odd Arts and the host organisation. As indicated in the interviews with young people and was apparent in the observational fieldwork, supporting staff at the secure children’s home had significant prior experience working with Odd Arts on other interventions. However, the supporting staff presented a strong sense of the potential value of developing these positive working relationships further, in particular in relation to planning and evaluation. This point initially manifested in a discussion between supporting staff about how the young people had initially presented a level of resistance to participation due to lack

of understanding about the programme. This issue was compounded by the fact that the Forward programme was being delivered during the Summer holiday and the young people felt that they were missing out on other extracurricular activity for a programme they did not have much knowledge about. However, upon gaining knowledge of the programme as it unfolded, the young people became more positive about it:

“At the beginning, I think they were quite negative, because they thought ‘oh, it’s two weeks in one room’ and things like that. They didn’t know what to expect. [...] But as the week [...] At the end, it *certainly* was. [...] They were quite buzzing about it, *buzzing*.”

(StaffCH3)

Had the young people had a greater detail of information about the programme in advance, initial resistance could have been mitigated. As is noted in the existing literature, unequal power relationships are prevalent within the secure estate (Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001) and lack of knowledge regarding the intervention is reflective of power imbalance, which acts as a means of emphasising feelings of oppression rather than aligning with the emancipatory paradigm of a Freirean (Freire, 2007) approach. It was also noted that future work could be spread over a prolonged period of time in order to mitigate feelings of missing out on valuable activity time during holiday periods (StaffCH3).

Again this latter point lends itself to having a more integrated planning and evaluation process between the host organisation and Odd Arts. Whilst it is clear that there is an existing degree of planning with the host organisation, the specific issue appears to relate to planning on a more practical level with

staff who support the programme and who have regular frontline contact with the beneficiaries. This point was also acknowledged by Odd Arts staff as being important, although was discussed in relation to other host organisations rather than the secure children's home:

“there have been projects [...] if I'm honest, that, kind of, you're not on the same wavelength. And that means that we are going into somebody else's place of work, and we are there to do our job, and sometimes we can't because things *do* go awry. They do mess up a little bit. But actually, when you are not on that wavelength, it means that the overall project suffers. [...] I think making it clear *why* we are going, what we are there to do, what we expect from that organisation and what they expect from us is one of the most important things. [...] So then the young people know as well, because there have been projects where [...] they don't know what we are doing, and they have just been told, “You have to come here for this time,” and they don't necessarily want to. And then it affects them, because they don't want to do this, so then some young people get a bit annoyed at that. But then they *have* to stay, and if they don't, then they lose out on actual rewards away from vocational stuff or educational stuff, which then means that the overall group is affected because there are young people in there who don't want to be there. So we don't get the amount of work that we could do done.”

(StaffOA1)

Support staff from the secure children's home reverberated this but also acknowledged this as a mutual process that would require investment from the host organisation as well:

“I think there is also a value, from our point of view, that [secure children's home] recognises the value of what the kids have achieved. And, if we were going to do this again, to actually allocate proper time for us to sit, and plan, and meet with ODD Arts, rather than ODD Arts as an external agency

coming in. And we, kind of, facilitate what they are doing. [...] If we could sit and talk to them. And that's before it happens. And that's *our* organisation's, I don't want to use the word 'fault', but our organisation doesn't take responsibility for the amount of time, the amount of planning, and the amount of running round. And I think, you know, if we just got how many kids through the Silver Arts Award, it would add value if we could give the proper amount of time to it. [...] then we can work closer with ODD Arts. [...] A joint partnership."

(StaffCH3)

Having a greater level of integrated planning was also raised in relation to evaluation. Supporting staff at the secure children's home suggested that, although they have a sound working relationship with Odd Arts and value the work greatly, they felt upon completion of the programme there is not scope for exploring the efficacy and challenges with Odd Arts in order to critically reflect on and refine practice:

"[...] in a sense, we haven't evaluated it, other than the fact that the kids have, you know, all got the Silver. It would be nice if we could spend time to, [...] I think it would be nice if we could spend time together with ODD Arts and say, "Well, what went well? What can we do differently next time, if there is a next time?" [...] It's just like, you know, "Oh, it's finished." The performance has finished, the curtains have closed, "Thanks very much. We're all off back to doing what we normally do," you know. [...] maybe an evaluation with regards to the activity might be a good idea."

(StaffCH3)

Importantly, staff from both of the host organisations fervently referred to positive outcomes from the Forward programme. Some of which including the

way the programme and Odd Arts staff facilitated peer mutual support, and a space in which beneficiaries who would not typically be able to work together due to conflict or group dynamics, were able to work with each other. However, support staff were very keen that these significant outcomes should be better and more widely recognised through an integrated evaluation processes:

“For me, it’s about value – how can what went on over the last two weeks be valued by the people that recognise value. [...] Our head teacher will be really pleased that so many kids got the Silver Award.

(StaffCH3)”

“But they don’t see the process. Do you know what I mean? [...] How can you record that? [...] How do you capture that?”

(StaffCH1)

“So that comes back to evaluation. [...] We’ve got kids in that group, if you see them in school during the academic year, their relationships with other kids who were in that group are not positive. Do you know what I mean? [...] And yet that kind of negativity was put on one side. [...] I think it has got to be, because these kids have seen each other in a different light because of this project. [...] And that is not going to disappear.”

(StaffCH3)

The member of Odd Arts staff who was interviewed following the Forward programme reiterated both the positive outcomes and the potential gap in the evaluative processes:

“The two types of feedback I have received myself are from both, so actually from young people themselves. I’m currently still working with one of the young people that were on the project. And the way he reflects on it, which we have been doing quite a bit, it’s very positive. [...] But then also through

staff, and a lot of staff have actually been reflecting upon the project and saying, making their own personal judgements, but then also voicing what young people have said as well. [...] the staff have been saying is [...] the main thing from the last project was, “We can’t get these young people to work together. We can’t. They won’t...” if we were in a maths class, they refused to work with each other. And *you* managed to get them to do that for nine days [...] It’s difficult because, so that type of feedback that I’ve given there, I have also received some via e-mail, from some of the staff, which will be going into our evaluation. However, sometimes I personally feel like, when you request feedback, they feel like they have got to give a positive kind of response. [...] Or they are not going to be as honest or truthful maybe as if it was just in person. So that’s kind of difficult because, actually, how honest is it if you *request* feedback? So when we get feedback in the moment, that’s great, but then also the downfall to that is it’s not recorded. And it is, kind of, anecdotal [...] So there has to be a middle ground of if we request feedback from them at the end, and obviously we ask staff to fill out questionnaires and to give feedback. But personally, the best feedback, I think, is after a project, when we have a performance, or a showcase, or a presentation, whatever it is. And *external* staff who come to that leave their feedback when we always ask for it. The young people ask for it. And reading that, actually, is great. But again, another downfall to that is it’s feedback about the young people and not about the work we do.”

(StaffOA1)

This long extract from the data underscores some of the complexities of the current evaluative processes and inherent flaws. Similarly, it also highlights that there is a perceptual blurring between evaluation and feedback. The latter being indicative of recognising positive work in the immediate sense as in the example of the performance, with the former actually being a more robust and substantive process which interrogates the process and outcomes. Likewise, this passage recognises the inherent problem of managing expectation in

feedback in the member of Odd Arts staff expressing that a greater degree of authenticity could be generated from embedded face to face evaluative processes.

6.2 Odd Arts Staff and Approach

As has already been noted in the sections above, it was widely recognised that the Odd Arts approach and staff were highly rated by both beneficiaries and supporting staff alike. Again, as indicated above, the way in which Odd Arts staff were able to facilitate an educative developmental space in which participants were able to work together and support each other was of particular merit. Moreover, supporting staff were extremely impressed with the way Odd Arts staff were able to manage challenging behaviours in line with host organisation's existing ways of working:

“Everyone who came in, I thought, worked really well with regards to our policies and procedures as well. So, obviously, with confidentiality issues, and different issues that [...] are unique to us. They follow and respect it. [...] And also there were behaviours that might have arose in the sessions, and they were also managed very well by ODD Arts, really. Which I was a bit shocked about, because normally it's us who will manage behaviour and jump in before anybody else gets, you know. [...] it was really well managed, so we could take a step back as well [...] I think that's why we have them back, time and time again, because they understand how it works.”

(StaffCH1)

It must be emphasised that supporting staff also recognised that Odd Arts staff were not merely an extension of the existing regime of behaviour management, that more their role was one of facilitator of a developmental creative processes which permitted mutual understanding and respect:

“the way it was run, I thought it was quite unique. I’ve never actually done anything like this myself. [...] they did ice-breakers at the beginning of every session, which I thought was brilliant, because everyone was in the same boat, even staff. We were quite, sort of, you know, “What’s going on?” [...] and they asked questions. So that got everybody opening up.”

(StaffSH2)

The manner in which Odd Arts facilitated the programme as a means of creating a level playing field with more horizontal power relationships was also evident in the observational aspects of the fieldwork. Likewise, it was also very clear across all aspects of the data that the Odd Arts approach of gamification of arts based personal development and education was highly effective:

“[...] the way that they delivered the, they had different games that led into, like, discussions and debates. And a lot of the questions they asked, they were quite generic, but a lot of the clients ended up giving away a bit of themselves – quite a lot of themselves – in a lot of sessions.”

(StaffSH2)

In turn this approach enabled greater understanding and peer support:

“I found out a lot more about the clients, working with them in that session, in the sessions we had. It was quite amazing [...] I think because it was a group, that helped. [...] I think it helped that they listened to other clients being honest. So once one starts opening up, another one feels that they can. [...] And also, us staff, we had an involvement as well. And I think they saw us on their, you know, we came down. [...] We were all on the same level, and I think that really helped them.”

As noted, this sentiment was clearly resonant across all aspects of the data, particularly in relation to generating a creative space in which beneficiaries could attain personal growth:

“The fact that they are working together as well, for an end, and then when they see the end happen, it’s like a relief, and they are full of adrenaline and things like that, because of how well they have done. [...] we have had young people there who would *never* ever get on stage if you asked them to. [...] at the beginning of the week, they were like, “No, I’m not going on stage. I’ll just be in the background doing directing or something like that.” But by the end of the week, every single one of them was on stage, and they were all *happy* to be on stage.”

(StaffSC1)

This, again was attributed to the manner in which Odd Arts staff enabled an environment for mutual peer support, which was widely acknowledged as being attributable to the lead member of Odd Arts staff:

“[...] the others seemed to follow and enjoy that, being sort of shepherded by their own peers. [...] But [StaffOA1] did it in a very professional sort of... in a ‘back of the room’ way, you know.”

(StaffSC2)

“I think it’s the leadership of [StaffOA1] and the other ODD Arts people. They will not give up on kids. They will work with them to [...] motivate them and have fun. [...] That’s what we saw a lot of – our kids having fun, rather than learning.”

(StaffSC3)

The level of confidence that supporting staff within the host organisations had in Odd Arts staff and their expertise and professionalism was very apparent. This was supported by the observational aspect of the work; all of Odd Arts staff conducted themselves in a highly professional manner throughout the observations and it was of particular note that the lead member of staff was highly attentive to the dynamics and needs of the beneficiaries, yet was also

able to balance host organisation needs with those of the young people. It is apparent that the informal creative personal development process and perceived positive outcomes were attainable due to the balance between the process / approach and the attentive / professional conduct of Odd Arts staff.

6.3 Perceived Outcomes

Without question supporting staff identified that they felt there were significant positive outcomes for beneficiaries. Again, this reflected the positive reception of the programme within the observational aspects of the data. During the observational fieldwork, it was apparent that as the programme unfolded the beneficiaries grew in confidence and felt increasingly able to discuss topics relevant to the theme of resettlement:

“I’ve actually had people saying to me, “I miss that. I wish we could do something like that again” – so very positive feedback, actually. [...] I think it has been a confidence thing. I have noticed their confidence just, it has just genuinely lifted them. And it helped them to engage, I think, and open up discussion with clients [...] Sort of, communication, and things like that, I think it really helped as well.”

(StaffSH2)

This was reiterated across all supporting staff in various ways, not only in relation to building confidence but also in more general and specific terms such as ‘enjoyment’ and ‘accreditation’:

“We’ve had lots of positive feedback from the staff *and* the young people. They have all gained a qualification from it. And it was really enjoyable [...]”

(StaffSC1)

As noted earlier, in particular in the secure children's home, beneficiaries do not work well together and usually only work in very small groups. However, beyond the secure estate and post-release circumstances are likely to demand of the beneficiaries that they are able to operate in diverse groups of various sizes and composition. From the interviews with supporting staff and the observations, it was very clear that the Forward programme enabled this positive level of peer interaction and support:

“I find that we struggle to get kids working together, particularly in a classroom setting.”

(StaffSC3)

“We don't normally have that many working together at one time, really.”

(StaffSC1)

This was understood by supporting staff to be a significant positive outcome in its own right. However, it should also be considered a positive outcome in a much broader sense. Such a broader view of this is twofold in that the Forward programme and Odd Arts approach can be understood as an effective mechanism for preparing beneficiaries for future peer interaction within and beyond periods of resettlement, as well as a powerful method of engaging them in mutual peer experiential learning, which has an added value to existing support and guidance mechanisms:

“We have a programmes team here, and a case working team here, and they *do* work individually with the young people. So they will have aired their worries in a private setting. [...] And those people will then try their very best to help, sort of, that to not happen again, or to make their worries not as negative.

But it's whether the other young people know about these pitfalls. And in the group setting, the other young people will have been listening to what might happen. [...] Or, you know, what could happen. And they were given a little bit of advice about how to handle worries or [...]"

(StaffSC2)

"[...] It's because it's from their peers as well; it's not from an adult saying it to the young person. [...] It was because they are hearing it from their peers, so they might be a bit more reflective [...]"

(StaffSC1)

It is not only the power of mutual peer support but also an increased mutual understanding between the beneficiaries that was deemed to be a positive outcome from the Forward programme:

"And it's okay to be worried, because other young people are worried as well, yes."

(StaffSC1)

It should also be noted that the overall focus of the final performance was represented as significant to the positive reception of the Forward programme. However, equally it is important to recognise that the performance (along with the gamification of the preparatory processes) served as a vehicle for the theme of resettlement to be deconstructed in a non-hierarchical and supportive space. This was evident in the observational aspect of the fieldwork, in that beneficiaries consistently proclaimed that they would not be "doing acting", yet through the means of the 'game' were doing acting. Likewise, it was also evident that the young people were really only conscious of the theme being resettlement at rare moments. From the limiting data collection

opportunities available, it would appear that it was this quasi-covert thematic application was a central aspect of the positive outcomes achieved. To put a finer point on this, it could be understood that without this quasi-covert insertion of the theme of resettlement, the levels of engagement and meaningful participation may not have been achieved, particularly within such a large group.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This report, which has been generated via a limiting and limited data set indicates that the Forward programme delivered by Odd Arts has significant value to both beneficiaries and supporting staff within host organisations. The data demonstrates several key points, which were valued. The key points relating to beneficiaries include:

- Development of confidence (beneficiaries)
- Increased ability to work in diverse groups
- Development of peer support / education / empathy

In addition other emergent points, which were prevalent, include:

- Expertise and professionalism of Odd Arts staff
- Odd Arts approach (gamification in applied arts based intervention / quasi-covert theme embedded in programme)
- Importance of integrated planning and evaluation with host organisation

7.2 Overview of Core Findings

7.2.1 Self Confidence

Across the data available, it is evident that both beneficiaries and supporting staff view the Forward programme as having positive impact, and importantly for working in challenging environments with vulnerable groups the programme was also understood to be 'enjoyable'. All participants in the research process, in various ways, described how the programme had impacted positively on self-confidence. This development of self-confidence was apparent within the observational aspects of the fieldwork, especially for the members of the group who presented as not being typically outgoing. It was in those particular instances, for those who began the process appearing to be happy to take a backseat, that the scope of personal development was most apparent.

7.2.2 Peer Mutual Aid and Learning

In the same manner, it was also clear in observations and the interviews that during the course of the programme, a process of mutual aid, support and learning unfolded very rapidly. The benefits to this outcome may appear at first glance superficial and obvious. However, upon closer inspection, this aspect actually has multiple facets. As noted earlier, these facets include the obvious and immediate recognition of enabling a space in which 'teamwork' is generated; however, it also establishes previously unachievable circumstances in which people who would typically be deemed inappropriate and 'risky' to work together are able to work together. Moreover, they were able to work together in a mutually respectful, beneficial, supportive and creative manner. These components, which were enabled by the Forward programme subtly, yet directly link to useful practical skills, which are important to successful resettlement.

7.2.3 Integrated and Embedded Planning and Evaluation

This links neatly with the core finding of there being a strong appetite for the development of a more integrated approach to planning and evaluation of the interventions with host organisations. In potentially further developing the already positive working relationships between Odd Arts and host organisations, the more subtle and hidden, yet highly relevant positive outcomes such as those indicated herein could be more readily recognised. Likewise, issues which may impact on initial negative perceptions such as lack of information available to prospective participants, or managing / planning time in order to allow participation in other extracurricular activity, could be mitigated through on-going and integrated planning and evaluation between Odd Arts and host organisations.

7.2.4 Professionalism and Expertise

The professionalism and expertise of Odd Arts staff was widely recognised and it is clear from all of the data that this is valued. Particularly, this value was recognised in relation to Odd Arts ability to fit in with institutional ethos and regimes. Yet, despite this clear ability to adhere to these, Odd Arts were able to manage the delicate balance between meeting the beneficiaries at a culturally and emotionally relevant foundational point (cf. Freire, 2007). Likewise, the Odd Arts team were also able to maintain equilibrium between host institutional parameters and regimes and a none hierarchical arts based pedagogy. Again, the recognition of Odd Arts professionalism and expertise is a readily observable factor. However, the less obvious, yet equally important issue of balancing this with the application of an approach which is both reliant

on and develops horizontal power relationships and mutual support requires more robust evaluative tools to be fully understood.

7.2.5 Approach

The means through which these core outcomes are achieved is quite clearly founded on the quasi-covert gamification of the process and integral theme (resettlement). The success of the programme relies on this aspect, particularly in the example of the young people who initially thought they were missing out on leisure time because of their participation on the programme. Whilst this experiential approach is by no means new to applied theatre practitioners and other informal educators, it is, as indicated in the data, new terrain to justice service and resettlement practitioners. This aspect appears, as novel to supporting staff, yet is 'normal' to Odd Arts staff, as such development of integrated planning and evaluation has the potential to develop greater confidence in supporting staff for future collaborative work with Odd Arts.

7.3 Recommendations

Whilst this study, due to external constraints, was able to draw on a limited and limiting data set, it has still been able to ascertain some important and indicative findings which may aid Odd Arts in developing and expanding their range of practice. Based on the findings outlined above and throughout, a number of recommendations have been drawn by the research team. Primarily these recommendations lend themselves to informing a business development strategy which diverges from Odd Arts existing model of shorter-term interventions with well-established host organisations. These recommendations, which are listed below, may also aid in mitigating the

potential barrier of gaining access to host organisations for external evaluation teams. In turn, the recommendations also lead toward a paradigm of more robust self-sustainable in-house evaluation.

Recommendation 1

It would be beneficial for Odd Arts to develop an integrated and on-going planning and evaluation model with host organisations. The appetite from supporting staff for this was strong and in acting on this Odd Arts could generate a robust self-sustainable evaluation model and eliminate potential for resistance in participation pre-intervention. This would require investment from both Odd Arts and host organisations; both investment of time and money. This may initially appear impractical due to capacity and potential knowledge deficit particular to robust evaluation skills. However, recommendation 2 and three outline how this may become practical.

Recommendation 2

Odd Arts could target joint funding opportunities with host organisations which focus on developing a conduit role of a Odd Arts facilitator who could be placed on a fractional basis within the host organisation. This new level of integration would allow an embedded planning and evaluation process to be executed. Likewise, it would also permit on-going applied arts practice to take place within the host organisation, which would also serve as a means of further developing supporting staff confidence in working with applied arts techniques. As such, this would facilitate knowledge transfer and staff development

opportunities within the host organisation, adding further value to Odd Arts interventions.

Recommendation 3

Odd Arts may wish to account for appropriate evaluation training from experts in evaluation and participatory action research in order to develop capacity to engage in robust and integrated evaluation. In procuring such training, Odd Arts staff would be up-skilled to an appropriate level commensurate with engaging in on-going and self-sustainable evaluation of interventions. The inherent cost of this could be inbuilt to any joint funding application between Odd Arts and host organisations and could be presented as a means of adding value to existing interventions.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1
INTERVIEW GUIDE: PROFESSIONALS



[Semi-structured interview guide: Professionals](#)

This is semi-structured interview topic guide. It will be used to guide the discussion. As it is semi-structured not all questions will be directly asked or relevant to each consultee.

The Manchester Centre for Youth Studies (MCYS) at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) has received funding from Odd Arts to carry out evaluative research on Odd Arts arts based interventions within the secure estate.

The aim of the research is to explore the effectiveness of a range of arts based interventions with people living within the custody of the secure estate, particularly on how the interventions may impact on attitudes towards re-offending, positive resettlement outcomes and personal relationships. This research will be based on data gathered through participant observation, informal discussion with beneficiaries within the sessions and semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders.

The evaluation team is now in the process of conducting participant observation sessions, discussions with beneficiaries and stakeholder interviews across two secure estate sites.

The purpose of these interviews and informal conversations with the participant observation sessions is to explore your experiences, understanding, feelings and reflections of the effectiveness and personal impact experienced of the interventions delivered by Odd Arts. The interviews will take between forty-five minutes and one hour. Your responses will be anonymous and treated in the strictest confidence. More detailed information on this can be found in the participant information sheet; should you want to please ask the researcher to answer any questions you have about this. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer any questions. You can also withdraw from the research at

any point during the interview and within two weeks of participating. After this time, your responses will be inputted for analysis. If you wish to withdraw, please contact either Richard McHugh or Professor Hannah Smithson using the contact details on the information sheet.

The information you provide will be used, alongside the other research participants, to inform the final project report, related publications and most importantly to inform the future work of Odd Arts.

Are you happy for the discussion to be recorded to assist the process of analysing the responses? All responses will be confidential and you will not be personally identified in the report. All data will be securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act and only members of the research team will be able to access your data. The information will be kept for up to two years after completion of the project in case of any queries or challenges that may arise. After that time, it will be securely destroyed.

Do you have any questions about the research or your participation?

Complete separate consent form before starting the interview

and check participant is willing to proceed

Background

1. Please could you describe your age, gender and ethnicity?
2. How would you describe your status / role within the secure estate? – i.e. sentenced remanded staff role
3. Have you ever worked with Odd Arts or other arts based organisations previously? If you have please describe?

Observed and perceived outcomes

4. Have you had any positive feedback on the sessions from beneficiaries? If so please specify?
5. Have you had any negative or critical feedback on the sessions from beneficiaries? If so please specify?
6. Are you aware of any other outcomes, which may have resulted from the interventions delivered by Odd Arts? If so please specify?

Future work utilising arts based interventions

7. Would you work with Odd Arts in the future?
8. What are the key features of the interventions which helped you decide you would – would not want to work with them in the future?
9. Would you feel confident in delivering or co-delivering arts based interventions yourself in the future as a result of the sessions delivered by Odd Arts in the future? Please specify?

10. If answer is no to previous question – What would make you feel more confident in delivering or co-delivering arts based interventions yourself in the future as a result of the sessions delivered by Odd Arts in the future? Please specify?
11. Do you think arts based interventions are effective in working with people living within the secure estate? Please specify?

Other points to consider

12. What could improve the sessions delivered by Odd Arts?
13. Have you noticed or been told about any changes or outcomes related to resettlement for beneficiaries? If so please specify?
14. Is there anything, which you think we may have missed or not considered? If so please specify?
15. Do you have any questions or points you would like to mention?

Appendix 2
INTERVIEW GUIDE: YOUNG PEOPLE



[Semi-structured interview guide: Service Users](#)

This is semi-structured interview topic guide. It will be used to guide the discussion. As it is semi-structured not all questions will be directly asked or relevant to each consultee.

The Manchester Centre for Youth Studies (MCYS) at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) has received funding from Odd Arts to carry out evaluative research on Odd Arts arts based interventions within the secure estate.

The aim of the research is to explore the effectiveness of a range of arts based interventions with people living within the custody of the secure estate, particularly on how the interventions may impact on attitudes towards re-offending, positive resettlement outcomes and personal relationships. This research will be based on data gathered through participant observation,

informal discussion with beneficiaries within the sessions and semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders.

The evaluation team is now in the process of conducting participant observation sessions, discussions with beneficiaries and stakeholder interviews across two secure estate sites.

The purpose of these interviews and informal conversations with the participant observation sessions is to explore your experiences, understanding, feelings and reflections of the effectiveness and personal impact experienced of the interventions delivered by Odd Arts. The interviews will take between forty-five minutes and one hour. Your responses will be anonymous and treated in the strictest confidence. More detailed information on this can be found in the participant information sheet; should you want to please ask the researcher to answer any questions you have about this. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer any questions. You can also withdraw from the research at any point during the interview and within two weeks of participating. After this time, your responses will be inputted for analysis. If you wish to withdraw, please contact either Richard McHugh or Professor Hannah Smithson using the contact details on the information sheet.

The information you provide will be used, alongside the other research participants, to inform the final project report, related publications and most importantly to inform the future work of Odd Arts.

Are you happy for the discussion to be recorded to assist the process of analysing the responses? All responses will be confidential and you will not be personally identified in the report. All data will be securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act and only members of the research team will be able to access your data. The information will be kept for up to two years after completion of the project in case of any queries or challenges that may arise. After that time, it will be securely destroyed.

Do you have any questions about the research or your participation?

Complete separate consent form before starting the interview

and check participant is willing to proceed

Background

16. Please could you describe your age, gender and ethnicity?
17. Have you ever worked with Odd Arts or other arts based organisations previously? If you have please describe?
18. How many different projects have you worked on with ODD Arts?

Observed and perceived outcomes

19. How did you find the (Forward) sessions? Please explain why?
20. Did you have a positive / negative experience / outcomes within the sessions? Please specify?

21. Are you aware of any other outcomes, which may have resulted from the interventions delivered by Odd Arts? If so please specify?

Future work utilising arts based interventions

22. Would you work with Odd Arts in the future?
23. What are the key features of the interventions which helped you decide you would – would not want to work with them in the future?
24. Do you think arts based interventions are effective in working with people living within the secure estate? Please specify?

Other points to consider

25. What could improve the sessions delivered by Odd Arts?
26. Have you noticed any changes or outcomes related to resettlement or have you thought any differently about resettlement? If so please specify?
27. Is there anything, which you think we may have missed or not considered? If so please specify?
28. Do you have any questions or points you would like to mention?

Appendix 3
Information Sheet



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

INFORMATION SHEET- Participants – Professionals / Stakeholders

STUDY TITLE: Evaluation of Odd Arts

Manchester Metropolitan University, Room 419 Geoffrey Manton Building,
Rosamond Street West, Manchester, M15 6LL.

Principal Investigator: Professor Hannah Smithson

Researcher: Richard McHugh

Hello,

My name is Richard and I work at Manchester Metropolitan University. I want to invite you to take part in a research study. The aim of the study is to share your experiences and how much impact you feel the work of Odd Arts has had within your organisation. I would like to hear your thoughts on how and in what ways the work of Odd Arts may have made an impact; particularly I would be interested to hear if you think this work has impacted on aspirations of service users now and upon release. This research will help Odd Arts better understand yours and your organisations experiences of the work they do and how to best work with others in the future.

Before you decide if you want to take part, you need to understand what I would be asking you to do. This information sheet explains this.

Ask questions if you don't understand anything, or if anything is not clear. Feel free to ask for more information, and take your time to decide whether you want to take part or not.

ABOUT THE STUDY:

The study will involve you participating in a discussion session or interview. I hope you will find this interesting and it should give you a chance to express your views and ideas about your experience of Odd Arts and their work.

I want to meet with you because I think it is important for your voice to be heard. Learning from your experiences can allow Odd Arts and those who obtain their services to help other people in the future. My role is to help Odd Arts and other professionals listen to you. I will be contacting others who have worked with Odd Arts and asking them to participate too.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

It is entirely up to you to decide if you want to take part. You don't have to do it if you don't want to. This is voluntary.

If you decide that you want to take part, I will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. Even after you have signed this you are free to change your mind at any time, even if the study has started, without having to give me a reason.

If you change your mind after the study has started, any information you had already given me would be destroyed and your name would be removed from all study files.

Your participation or otherwise in this research will have no effect on your conditions, parole, or progression.

WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO DO?

If you choose to take part, I would come to some of the sessions carried out by Odd Arts, and observe, and participate in the sessions. I would also like to discuss what you think about the sessions whilst they are taking place and / or at a follow up interview to help you tell me about your experiences of the work with Odd Arts. Whilst I am observing the sessions, I will only be interested in understanding the work of Odd Arts, as such I will not be there to observe you or others within the session; more precisely, I will be observing the work of Odd Arts and its effectiveness.

WHY SHOULD I TAKE PART?

I think that your experience and opinions are important, and I want to help you express them through this research. The research is part of a piece of work that will inform Odd Arts on how effective their work is, so the opinions and experiences that I get from you have the potential to make a real impact for the future and for other people and organisations that Odd Art work with.

I cannot promise that the study will be helpful for you personally, but we do hope the research will have positive impacts for others who Odd Arts work with in the future.

I don't expect this to be a negative experience, but it is worth thinking about whether anything we talk about might be upsetting for you. If at any point during the discussion you feel uncomfortable or upset, let the researcher know.

WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH MY INFORMATION?

The information given by you and others will be used to write a report for Odd Arts. There will be nothing in there that identifies you, or anyone else who participated in the finished report.

WILL MY INVOLVEMENT BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Your organisation will know that you are taking part in this research, but they will not have access to the information you give us.

No other organisations or agencies will be told that you are taking part in the study.

All of your information will have your name removed by me, so it will be anonymous. I will keep all data securely on my laptop (protected by encryption and passwords) and will never hand any information about you over to anyone else. At the end of the study all of the information you have provided will be destroyed.

You should be aware, however, that if anything you tell me during the workshops raises any concerns about the welfare of yourself or others, then I have to inform someone. If any concerns arise, I would always speak to you first and explain the reason for my concern.

About the research:

This research is being conducted by Manchester Metropolitan University

The research is funded by Odd Arts.

All researchers are suitably qualified and adhere to relevant regulatory standards and safeguards.

Appendix 4
Consent Form: Professionals



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

CONSENT FORM- professional / stakeholders

STUDY TITLE: Evaluation of Odd Arts

Principal Investigator: Professor Hannah Smithson e mail:
h.l.smithson@mmu.ac.uk, Tel: 0161 247 3442

Researcher: Richard McHugh e mail:
Richard.Mchugh@mmu.ac.uk. Tel: 0161 247 1759

Please

1. I have read and understood the information sheet for the this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research procedure
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to change my mind at any time without giving any reason to the researcher
3. I understand that the research will be audio recorded or recorded through hand written notes and used as part of the project, and I consent to this
4. I give permission for these audio recordings or hand written notes to be used as part of the research process
5. I understand that I will remain anonymous

6. I consent to take part in the above research project

7. I understand that, at my request, the data collected on me can be made available to me

MY NAME
SIGNATURE

DATE

RESEARCHER
SIGNATURE

DATE

Appendix 5
Consent Form: Young People / Service Users



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

CONSENT FORM- young person / service user

STUDY TITLE: EVALUATION OF THE PROCESSES OF ODD ARTS WELLBEING INTERVENTIONS

RESEARCHER:

Professor Hannah Smithson

H.L.Smithson@mmu.ac.uk

0161 247 3442

Richard McHugh

Richard.Mchugh@mmu.ac.uk

0161 247 1759

Please

- 2. I have read and understood the information sheet for the this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research procedure
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am
- 2. free to change my mind at any time without giving any reason
- to the researcher
- I understand that the research will be audio recorded and
- 3. hand written notes taken and used as part of the project, and
- I consent to this
- I give permission for these audio recordings and hand written
- 4. notes to be used as part of the research process
- 5. I understand that I will remain anonymous

6. I agree to take part in the above research project

7. I understand that, at my request, the data collected on me
can be made available to me

MY NAME
SIGNATURE

DATE

RESEARCHER
SIGNATURE

DATE