Accompanying Document

What Matters to SPS?

This document outlines in detail the relevance of the arts in context of SPS’ Organisational Review *Unlocking Potential Transforming Lives*, and within the *Purposeful Activity Review*. It explores the arts in relation to the Nine Offender Outcomes and the Curriculum for Excellence. It outlines the needs identified amongst the prison population and how the arts relate to these needs. This supporting document is recommended for people who need to create a business case for arts provision, or evidence how the arts can be used to support transformational change within the organisation.

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The Organisational Review

Within the Organisational Review *Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives*, there are key areas for consideration which should inform the development of improved arts provision. These are areas of priority that arts provision can assist with meeting:

**Desistance**

In order to meet the overriding aims of the criminal justice system - to ‘reduce reoffending’ - the prison service aims to work with people to develop the skills, attributes and attitudes which will enable them to choose a different way of life on release from prison.

“The evidence from desistance and asset-based approaches champions the importance of relationships, self-determination of goals, hope, building on individual and community strengths, recognising the individual potential and the development of new personal identities as factors which contribute towards an individual leading a more productive and positive life” ²

**To nurture human health and wellbeing**

The organisational review recognises the need for a different approach to health and wellbeing in the prison population:

“This approach, aiming to harness and develop what’s already good within communities, stems from the public health concept of Salutogenesis. Salutogenesis differs from traditional approaches to health which are mostly concerned with the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease. Instead, it focuses on those factors which support and nurture human health and wellbeing” ²

**Asset-based Service Design**

These developments will see SPS moving towards an asset-based approach; a shift from a deficit-based approach to working with prisoners on their strengths. This is described in the Organisational Review thus:

“Asset-based approaches could complement traditional models of delivery. Although expressed in different terms, the underpinning ideas – developing strengths, empowering individuals and communities to improve their life chances, focusing on potential rather than solely on deficits, working with people as opposed to just delivering services to them and promoting wellbeing” ³

This approach includes physical assets and the recognition that SPS establishments have many assets that are not fully utilised, including learning assets and spaces that could be used or shared to provide services.

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It also encompasses the human assets available to the organisation, acknowledging the many complementary skills that SPS operational staff have including, for some, arts-based skills. The Organisational Review encourages SPS staff to use these skills to “promote purposeful activity and to engage, support and assist prisoners in building new talents and interests that will help sustain them on liberation from prison”.

Evidenced-based services

An important element of the change of focus for SPS as a service provider is around ‘person-centred service design’; programmes which are able to be responsive to individuals’ needs and is based on evidence of success.

“Service provision will require to be evidence-based, centred upon prisoners rather than prisons, targeted and focused upon reducing future demand for services”

Holistic services

The recognition of the ‘human needs’ of this complex population, evident in the Organisational Review, extends to the way in which provision is designed, in order that services create fundamental change, by responding to the range of personal needs expressed by prisoners, working with the ‘whole person’ rather than working on specific deficits:

“Desistance and asset-based approaches would suggest that a more holistic approach is required to develop the motivation and hope required to move on from offending”

Recognising the role of ‘informal’ activity

As the organisation moves away from ‘people fitting into existing services’ and towards a person-centred approach, there is a growing recognition of the role of ‘informal activity’ to encouraging offenders to participate productively whilst in prison, and working with people to generate positive change.

“Learning and personal development within SPS has tended to focus on what can be classed as structured or formal activities... Such an approach fails to recognise the rich dynamic of relational and motivational work by prison officers which is so important in effecting change”

Co-design

Alongside the development of services that put the offender ‘at the centre’, SPS is embracing the role of co-design in the provision of appropriate and effective services. This is highlighted as an issue for engagement:

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“Many prisoners have had negative experiences of education and mainstream services over a sustained period of time, and effective activity design needs to be mindful of this. Whilst it is right that some activities should be designed solely by professionals, in other cases it is important that prisoners have a voice in the range and nature of activities provided, and in their design.”

Motivation

Motivation is deemed to be a key factor in an individual’s move towards changing their behaviour, and SPS acknowledges that individuals’ motivation should not simply be seen as a criterion for participation in purposeful activity or programmes, but should instead be seen as an area for development in itself:

“In reality working more proactively with prisoners to motivate and support them to bring about change is not a ‘soft’ option. This way of working is about challenging people to be the best that they can and in many respects this is a far tougher approach than settling for one which allows people to live up to fairly low expectations and then simply seeks to contain and manage their needs.”

Recognising the role of the third sector

SPS works with third sector and statutory partner organisations to deliver purposeful activities; this collaboration enhances the range of options available to the prison population. Increasing recognition of the role of the third sector has been evident in SPS’ work over the last seven years, since the wide-scale Partnership Development Initiative (2008-2012) which aimed to improve the quality and effectiveness of service provision delivered in partnership, across sectors. It encourages SPS staff to recognise the role of the third sector, and to approach working with partners in a facilitative, supportive way:

“Whilst traditional forms of delivery will remain important, they should be viewed as one of a possible range of options for learning and personal development, which might be combined along with pro-social modelling, brief interventions and alternative forms of delivery, e.g. youth work, creative arts, restorative practice, opportunities for volunteering and peer mentoring.”

A report of the Justice Committee in 2013 recognises the valuable role that a range of third sector organisations play in reducing reoffending. It advises SPS to issue guidelines to assist individual prisons to manage their relationships with third sector organisations to maximise the benefits of such partnership working.

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Building bridges between prison and community: changing attitudes

A recent symposium on prisoner re-integration, held by the SPS and its Multi-faith team (‘Creating Space for Change’, February 2015) explored the role of the organisation in changing attitudes to prison leavers held by wider community.

“We recognise that people can change and we wish to support them by changing the prison environment - its culture and ethos - into a place of learning, person-centred care and opportunity. We want to take this debate to our communities and to assert that we need a society which accepts that people have changed and helps them to live out that change when they return from prison into our communities”12

Purposeful Activity Review

Alongside the process of transformational change which SPS is undertaking as a result of the Organisational Review, the organisation is also in the process of researching and redesigning provision of ‘Purposeful Activity’. The underpinning aims of purposeful activity are to increase the participation and productivity of prisoners, but also to improve social connectedness. At its core, purposeful activity is about investing in people as citizens, supporting offenders to take responsibility and agency for transforming their lives, by developing resilience and independence.

“Research suggests that successful desisters from offending don’t necessarily face fewer social problems than persisters, but that they tend to be more resilient and hopeful. Approaches that address the full range of criminogenic, personal and social issues that prisoners may face are therefore more likely to reduce reoffending... Activities that promote citizenship can also be extremely beneficial as they enable prisoners to contribute something more positive to society, and to build skills and experience through developing strengths”13

A new ‘holistic approach to Purposeful Activities’ lists the following priorities. These are clearly areas which good arts practice can support:

- **Wellbeing**
  - Contact with family
  - Hobbies and personal interests
  - Creative arts
  - Spiritual activities
  - Activities that provide opportunity for social interaction and give someone a reason to get out of bed in the morning

- **Citizenship**
  - Peer support
  - Equality and diversity

- **Life skills and Resilience**
  - Practical life skills
  - Communication needs
  - Services to improve mental health
  - Assertiveness and self-esteem

- **Offending Behaviour**
  - Accredited programmes and approved activities
  - Motivational work

- **Learning and Employability**
  - Education
  - Literacy and numeracy
  - Embedded learning opportunities

We will explore the relevance of the arts to these areas of priority in Section 2: Benefits of the Arts for Offenders.

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12 Scottish Prison Service (2015), Creating Space for Change Symposium
Embedding Arts-based Learning

Ultimately, SPS recognises the need for learning services to be focused around prisoners’ interests, in order to reach the hardest to reach. This includes embedding core skills (literacy, numeracy) within wider provision, including arts provision, and working on themed learning across a range of subject areas.

There is a strong argument for embedding all arts provision within a wider learning context “to create an active learning environment in which practical exploration, experimentation and collaborative working is encouraged. For participants in a prison context this can often be a radical shift in their relationship to ‘learning’ as negative past experiences of formal education have left them with a feeling of ‘failure’, with no belief in their wider ability”\(^\text{14}\)

The Nine Offender Outcomes

The nine offender outcomes are a framework for criminal justice services which outlines offenders’ needs and the key areas of service delivery.

Research to date suggests that the outcomes most likely to be addressed by an arts intervention are:

1. Sustained or improved physical and mental wellbeing
2. Improved literacy skills
3. Employability prospects increased
4. Improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending and greater acceptance of responsibility in managing their own behaviour and understanding of the impact of their offending on victims and on their own families\(^\text{15}\)

Understanding the wider context

Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence is a framework that aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum. It outlines the role of the arts in supporting the planning of challenging, inspirational and enjoyable learning activities which will enable people to become:

- Successful Learners
- Confident Individuals
- Responsible Citizens


Effective Contributors

Work by SPS to embed the arts within prison provision, to offer a new approach to cross-subject learning, partnership working, skills development and emotional and personal development, aligns with the Curriculum for Excellence in four key ways:

- Encouraging teachers and educators to look for opportunities within their own teaching approaches for interdisciplinary learning and to foster partnerships with professional arts companies, creative adults and cultural organisations.

- Recognising that learning in, through and about the expressive arts enables people to develop important skills, both specific to the expressive arts and those which are transferable.

- Outlining the value of personal development through engagement with the arts, whereby participants “will recognise and represent feelings and emotions, both their own and others’. The expressive arts play a central role in shaping our sense of personal, social and cultural identity.”

- Acknowledging the power of the arts to engage people “in what were formerly seen as extra-curricular activities”\(^\text{16}\)

Understanding the prison population

In Scotland, there are currently 8000 people in 15 prisons and on Home Detention Curfew. Thirteen public sector prisons and two private prisons, including specialist provision for women and young offenders, are tasked with the care and rehabilitation of people with some of the most challenging needs in society.

The prison population: a snapshot

The prison population continues to grow while the crime rate continues to fall, leading expert organisations to suggest that “there is no clear link between crime rates and prison population; the most important factor appears to be sentencing behaviour”\(^\text{17}\). Scotland has a worryingly high prison population in comparison to other EU countries, which aligns with sentencing rates in England, Moldavia, Bulgaria and Slovakia. It is vastly higher than Scandinavian countries, where progressive criminal justice policy has served to reduce reoffending, through innovative programmes of rehabilitative work.

The most common offences for which people go to prison are assault, shop-lifting and alcohol and drug-related crime. Reoffending rates amongst this group are high, with many people serving several sentences, leading to the notion of ‘life in instalments’, otherwise known as the ‘churn’.

There are around 830 people serving life sentences (between 12-14 years on average), at any one time.

Since 2006, more people go to prison on remand than to serve a sentence, which has a significant impact on the type of services needed, access to and availability of services for this particular group of prisoners, and a need for attractive, engaging programmes of work that can be delivered to people who may be in prison for a short period of time and who are under no statutory obligation to engage with services provided by the prison.

\(^\text{16}\) Curriculum For Excellence: *Principles and Practice*, p.4

\(^\text{17}\) New College Lanarkshire (2015): *Writers Working in Scottish Prisons*, p. 4
Inspiring Change, a large arts project run by a consortium of providers in Scotland outlines the wider needs of the prison population as follows:

There is a wealth of research evidence which confirms that offenders tend to have faced and continue to face serious and chronic disadvantage and social exclusion. The Social Exclusion Unit’s 2002 report, ‘Reducing Re-offending by Ex-Offenders’ revealed that, compared to the general population, offenders were

- 13 times more likely to have been in care as a child
- 10 times more likely to have been a regular truant from school
- 13 times more likely to be unemployed
- 2.5 times more likely to have a family member who has been convicted of a criminal offence
- 6 times more likely to have been a young father

The Cost of Offending

The estimated cost of imprisonment in Scotland is £35,000 - £40,000 per year, per prisoner. This does not take into account the considerable cost of the sentencing process, and of follow-up services after the prisoner is released.

Significant work was undertaken in England and Wales in 2010-11, to look at the potential savings resulting from prisoners engaging with arts agencies whilst in custody. This was carried out in the context of UK government interest in Social Return on Investment which, fortunately, did not embed to the same extent in Scotland.

The research, carried out by The Arts Alliance (now known as the National Alliance for Arts in Criminal Justice) identifies the key benefits of arts in prisons as engagement, confidence, new skills, responsibility, positive relationships, new horizons, skills and behaviours and, interestingly, value for money. The report offers a compelling argument for the cost-effectiveness of the arts in prison:

It costs on average £47,000\(^{19}\) to keep someone in prison for a year. It costs only £20,000 to employ a writer in residence in prison. So, if one of our writers helps someone not to reoffend for a year, that’s £27,000 saved for the taxpayer\(^{20}\)

A New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) report\(^{21}\) studied three different forms of arts intervention in custodial and community settings, citing impressive savings, including £82,000 saved per individual who desists as a result of engagement in a dance programme, and £4.67 for every £1 invested (per year) for women involved in drama and performance activities. However, NPC cautions against the evaluation of arts provision using ‘return on investment’ parameters, due to the many difficulties in generating appropriate evaluation data, carrying out post-prison follow-up, and as a result of the difficulties in ascertaining the distance travelled for an individual as a result of their engagement with arts programmes (as opposed to other related programmes they may be undertaking simultaneously).

Learning Support Needs

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\(^{19}\) These costs relate to the NOMS prison system, England and Wales


The Scottish Prison Service Prisoner Survey 2011, outlines the self-reported learning support needs identified by prisoners. These include:

- 21% report that they have difficulties with writing
- 19% have difficulties with numbers
- 18% have difficulties with reading

Research carried out by Talbot and Riley\(^{22}\) suggests that between 20-30% of offenders have learning difficulties or learning disabilities that interfere with their ability to cope within the criminal justice system.

The *Inspiring Change* project cites research by Hurry et. al.\(^{23}\), which identifies that 40% of young offenders rate their experience of school as ‘awful’. Many prisoners and adults who have similar unhappy experiences of compulsory education tend to have negative attitudes to learning and can be very resistant to education that resembles ‘school’.

For many, this may be linked to their perception of themselves as learners:

> *Many adults with negative experiences of compulsory education struggle to marry their construction of themselves as capable ‘task conscious’ learners with their sense of self as able learners in structured educational contexts*\(^{24}\)

The arts can play a hugely valuable role in changing attitudes to learning. Whilst formal programmes within education focus on retention, completion and progression (along with accreditation), the arts engage people through achievement and enjoyment, leading to motivation and further engagement. The arts therefore provide accessible ways to achieve those goals for many people who lack self-belief in relation to learning.

> “I’ve always wrote stuff and that, and the English teacher encouraged me... I was writing a kids’ book and she tells me to put it into the Koestler Awards, and I actually won an award. Things like that, well, it opens doors, eh? It shows you you’ve got potential to do more than you realise. It gives you the confidence to do other things...and it gives you chances that you never expect to get in here” – Prisoner, Consultation at HMP Perth, February 2015

Increased presence of the arts, where services are well designed and co-working with Learning Providers and SPS, can change the nature of the learning environment in a prison, creating an active learning culture with a balanced programme of opportunities.

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\(^{23}\) Hurry, J. Brazier, L. Snapes, K. Wilson, A. (2005): *Improving the Literacy and Numeracy of disaffected young people in custody and in the community*

\(^{24}\) Rogers, A. (2003): *What is the Difference? A New Critique of Adult Learning and Teaching*