

# [Community music workshops for offender rehabiliation](https://assignbuster.com/community-music-workshops-for-offender-rehabiliation/)

Today’s society faces many varied challenges which it has to deal with as best it can. One of these is how to deal with its members who commit crimes. Although criminals are sent to prison, it is not a permanent solution as the government openly admits that the proven reoffending rate for adult and juvenile offenders, over the period from April 2017 to June 2017, is approximately thirty per cent (1Ministry of Justice, 2019). Obviously society needs to come up with a method of keeping offenders out of prison for as long as possible and, as with everything in this day and age, it has to be evaluated and cost effective. To be effective community music projects need to develop the skills to help the prisoners to cope with their confinement, help them to have an identity whilst in prison and to help with their rehabilitation (2 Bilby, Caulfield, Ridley, 2013). Musical projects in prisons not only have an effect on the prisoners themselves but also on the prison staff and the musicians delivering the projects. These effects can be either negative or positive and have an impact on the challenges faced by community music practitioners within prisons and similar institutions.

The main purpose and level of success of community music workshops varies from prison to prison and depends on the inmates engaging in the sessions.  They include giving inmates the freedom to choose what to do with some of their time in prison. This can be done within music programmes by giving them the opportunity of learning to play a musical instrument and regularly playing music individually and with peers and also by allowing them to be creative in performances and sometimes even to compose pieces themselves. This gives them the opportunity for self-evaluation and to express themselves as individuals and as a group. All these actions help the inmates develop their ‘…individual ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming…’ (3 Markus H, Nurius P, 1987). Inmates develop hopes, ambitions and visions of their ‘ selves’ (personalities) that they would like to become in the future. By drawing on knowledge of their past selves and their current selves, this can be highlighted and enforced through their music making and this gives the inmates the opportunity to be creative and share their stories if they wish to. All of these experiences could prompt them to open up about their personal life experiences and perhaps their past as well. They can come to terms with their past and present ‘ real life’ situations and this will support their rehabilitation. Successfully taking part in music workshops can also help inmates reduce anger, worry and levels of unhappiness and improve social skills (4 Caulfield, 2015).

There are many different problems which can occur when delivering music in prison and, depending on their context, can result in some complex issues. For example, young males may not consider music making as a way of release and sometimes see the experience as a joke, whereas women seem to love it (5 Interview with Reverend Paul Hagg P, Chaplain at HMP Frankland, 2019). Institutional issues can have an effect, events such as last-minute changes in sentences or indiscipline or a ‘ lock down’, can impact on a prisoner’s availability to attend community music projects. Sometimes inmates can miss sessions if there are not enough staff on a wing to escort prisoners across to the Education Department (6 Interview with Pam Walker, Associate Lay Minister, 2019). Sometimes inmates did not continue with courses due to them being released from prison or because they were transferred to different prisons (7 Ascenso S, 2018). This can be frustrating when planning a session as the tutor will not know if everyone will attend, which can become an issue for both the tutor and participants due to the lack of continuity from one session to the next. It can sometimes be a challenge for tutors and musicians to gain permission to get into the prisons to run the workshops.

Community music workshops can help improve public awareness and knowledge of issues related to imprisonment due to the publicity generated by public performances and charity fund raising. Inmates may be given the opportunity to perform within prison as well as outside the prison, in some cases, which will help promote what happens even further. This will benefit everyone as the public will be able to see the benefits of the prison system and the opportunities inmates can have while serving their sentences. This includes the opportunity to rehabilitate themselves to facilitate a successful and permanent freedom from prison. It also gives the inmates the chance to form social relationships with the other participants, both people within their prison and audience members. This is beneficial for them, the prison officers and the prison service as a whole. It could give them the skills needed to start a better life after their release from prison.

A successful long term community music course available is the Good Vibrations Project.  Good Vibrations is an award-winning national charity using communal music making to support people, with additional needs, in challenging circumstances. This involves people from prisoners to hospital patients and helps them to develop crucial work and life skills. Since 2003, Good Vibrations has worked with more than 3, 200 individuals in around 49 different secure institutions (8 South Bank Gamelan Players, 2019). For example, they have run sessions within prisons which consist of intensive gamelan courses or a week-long series of workshops. Each course typically is for a group of fifteen to twenty participants and at the end of the course the individuals put on an informal performance. During the course the members learn how to improvise and compose music, put on a performance and also understand some elements of traditional Javanese culture (9 Winder B, et al, 2015). The programme is carefully designed so that participants gradually improve their music making skills whilst boosting their social development through team building and group work activities. (10 Henley, 2015). More recent research has shown that participants who successfully completed the course improved their sense of community within the group and so improved relationships with fellow inmates (11 Cohen M, Henley J, 2017). However, this charity has itself faced some challenges within the projects such as participants being taken out of sessions for various reasons last minute, with no prior warning. This can disrupt a group’s mood and rhythm as prisoners don’t always cope well with things taking a different turn and this can interfere with the progress within the group.

Another example of a music making opportunity in prisons is the Oakdale Community Choir and Songwriters’ workshop. The main belief of community music within these programmes is that participant’s personal and social growth are as important as, and linked with, their musical growth and that all people have the right to make and enjoy their own music (12 Higgins, 2012). The choir began in 2009 offering men serving sentences in a medium security prison in the Midwest of the United States an opportunity to sing (‘ inside singers’) in a choir alongside other men and women from the outer community (‘ outside singers’). This joining of the ‘ inner’ and ‘ outer’ communities helps to improve public awareness as to what happens in institutions and the issues related to imprisonment. It gives the prisoners the opportunity to show off and to prove to other people they can be worth something despite what might have happened in their past and this will hopefully give them more confidence to continue on a better way of life and so have a greater chance of staying out of prison after their release. These sessions also have a reflective writing element to them and a song writing component which gives the participants the chance to express themselves as well as developing their musical skills. Each season the choir concludes their rehearsals with two performances, one for a prison audience and the second for an audience of people from outside the prison. As of May 2017, 107 outside singers and 133 inside singers have performed in one or more of the eighteen themed concerts inside the prisons gymnasium. To enhance the enjoyment and feeling of achievement of the prisoners the family members or friends of the inside singers were sent CDs as memories of the performances.

There were some challenges that had to be faced within the Oakdale Community Choir. Some participants were given solos to sing or were having the pieces they had written performed in the concerts. This made them think they had a higher status within the group than some of the other members. This obviously had a negative impact on the whole choir as it made everyone feel like they had different positions within the choir and that some were more important than others. Another challenge similar to that experienced by the Good Vibrations charity, is that inmates were sometimes moved before rehearsals and performances which created problems especially if an individual was singing a solo or their composed piece was being performed in the final concerts (13 Cohen M, 2015).

Organisers of community music groups have tried to introduce inventive and constructive ways of combatting all these challenges and these can include changing the tasks that the inmates are given and by giving them more variety within their daily routines. For example, in the Oakdale Community Choir the Songwriters Workshops were a new way of including more of the prisoners own creative work which gave them a sense of ownership over what they were rehearsing and subsequently performing. As of August 2017, 123 original songs have been created and performed by the choir and the song-writing participants. An analysis of some of the themes of the songs and their lyrics was carried out and it was found that they included everyday emotions such as being happy, sad and how the songwriters coped with these things while being interned. The men in the study expressed a sense of personal identity, an idea of their own potential and that they have a degree of control over their own lives. It allowed these men to be introspective, analyse their past behaviour, and make reasoned judgements and to opt for positive decisions for their future (15a Wilson, 2013). The song writing gave the authors many benefits but they especially gained a lot of satisfaction when others in the group and the audience members understood and appreciated the ideas and sentiments portrayed in their songs. However, as with everything, there were also some negative aspects such as some of the men found they could not express themselves successfully and others got very frustrated as it typically took three to six months to write a good song. There were also the usual problems, with some members being absent, for a variety of reasons including things such as the sessions clashing with a popular TV series or with members participating in sports activities (e. g. baseball and basketball matches) (15b Wilson, 2013).

An innovative idea was that within this choir they included both singers from inside and outside prisons. This combining of different groups has improved the relationships between both parties over time. The inside singers have repeatedly indicated that weekly visits from the outside singers for rehearsals gave them a sense of self-worthiness, with one particular inmate adding ‘ at first I was scared thinking I might not be good enough or maybe looked down upon. But as the practices went on, I felt more confident in myself’ (16 Cohen, 2012). These interactions with members from outside of prison shows that choral singing provides a social network for the inmates which is an important component in their rehabilitation (16 Cohen, 2012). It also gives them motivation to develop their present and future selves.

In various different prison institutions around the country, choirs and music making sessions have been started through the education systems which has given the biggest opportunity to the inmates to engage in the extracurricular sessions. These sessions are led by outside forces but funded by the education facilities within the prisons themselves. Similarly in some institutions choirs are run through the chaplaincy services in the prison. For example, in Low Newton female prison and young offenders institution in County Durham, there are Catholic and Christian services run through the chaplaincy department which include singing and they also have a choir organised for all the prisoners and this is especially appreciated and enjoyed by those serving the longer sentences. (5 Interview with Reverend Paul Hagg, Chaplain at HMP Frankland, 2019).

Overall, community music making in prisons is beneficial. The music charity ‘ Changing Tunes’ found that their programme not only challenged the inmates to learn the music skills necessary but also the social skills necessary to work harmoniously with others in the programme. This led to their developing levels of self-confidence and self-worth and this helped them improve their levels of personal control and helped them to have a hopeful vision for their future. The unique approach by the charity ‘ Changing Tunes’ is that the prisoners can continue with the programme after they are released as the charity offers opportunities for members to choose to take part in delivering the programme and participating in further opportunities and concerts outside of prison. This helped them feel more valued and accepted by society and so helped them not to reoffend and to stay out of prison (18 Cursley J, Maruna S, 2015).

In conclusion, there are many different challenges to community music in prison institutions which vary between the different settings due to the context of the situation, the individuals involved and the institutional issues. Prisoners often feel angry and alone and that they have a very restricted and boring life inside prison. However, community music programmes help inmates to improve their lives and they give them something enjoyable to do in the day which is out of their daily routine. Life in prison is unstimulating and the prison system expects inmates to conform whereas community music programmes help them to express themselves and to develop a sense of individuality and to prepare themselves for a successful release from prison (19 Henley et al, 2012).

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(Ministry of Justice, 2019)

Proven Reoffending Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, April 2017 to June 2017https://assets. publishing. service. gov. uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/797439/proven\_reoffending\_bulletin\_April\_to\_June\_17. pdf

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(Bilby C, Caulfield L, Ridley L, 2013)          p37 – 39

Re-imagining futures: Exploring arts interventions and the process of desistance

http://www. artsevidence. org. uk/media/uploads/re-imagining-futures-research-report-final. pdf

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(Markus H, Nurius P, 1987)

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Exploring Good Vibrations projects with vulnerable and challenging women in prison

http://www. artsevidence. org. uk/media/uploads/goodvibrationsprojectswithvulnerableandchallengingwomenfinal. pdf

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(Interview with Reverend Paul Hagg, Chaplain at HMP Frankland, 2019).

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(Interview with Pam Walker, Associate Lay Minister who works for a voluntary restorative justice project in a privately run prison in the North East, 2019).

7

(Ascenso S, 2018)             The Lullaby Project.    p 21

Either of these web addresses. They both seem to go to the same document, so look to see which one you think is best or easiest and use that one. https://irenetaylortrust. files. wordpress. com/2018/06/the-lullaby-project\_areas-of-change-and-mechanisms-of-impact-\_research-by-sara-ascenso. pdf)

http://www. artsevidence. org. uk/media/uploads/180403-irene-taylor-trust-lullaby-project. compressed. pdf

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(South Bank Gamelan Players, 2019)          no page as magazine type article                                                  7

https://sbgp. org. uk/biography/friends/

Or you could use the following one from the reference below. It’s the Good vibrations website for 2019 … its just different numbers but if you use this one you will need to alter the figures in the essay.

(Good Vibrations, 2019)

Since 2003, Good Vibrations has worked with more than 2400 individuals in 33 different secure institutions.

https://www. good-vibrations. org. uk/welcome-to-good-vibrations/

9

(Winder B, Sperling V, Elliott H, Lievesley R, Faulkner J & Blagden N.)         p9

Evaluation of the use of ‘ Good Vibrations’ percussion courses to improve motivation to change and treatment readiness with convicted sexual offenders embarking on treatment programmes

http://artsevidence. org. uk/media/uploads/goodvibrations-nottinghamtrentuniversity. pdf

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(Henley, 2015)       p1

Henley, J. (2015) Musical Learning and Desistance from Crime: The Case of a ‘ Good Vibrations’ Javanese Gamelan Project with young offenders. Music Education Research 17(1). 103–‐120.

http://www. artsevidence. org. uk/media/uploads/henley–j-(2014)-musical-learning-and-desistance-from-crime. pdf

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(Cohen M, Henley J, 2017)

Cohen M & Henley J (2017), Music-making behind bars: the many dimensions of community music in prisons, in B Bartlet & L Higgins (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Community Music , (153-176), Oxford University Press [ ISBN 9780190219505 ].

https://www-oxfordhandbooks-com. yorksj. idm. oclc. org/view/10. 1093/oxfordhb/9780190219505. 001. 0001/oxfordhb-9780190219505-e-11

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(Higgins, 2012)

Higgins, L. (2012). Community Music: In Theory and in Practice . New York: Oxford University Press.

13 NOT SURE OF THIS REFERENCE. YOU CAN CHECK IT AND SEE IF IT HAS THE IDEA IN IT THAT IS IN YOUR ESSAY. OR IT MAY BE THE SAME AS REFERENCE 11. SEE ME TO DISCUSS IT.

(Cohen M, 2015)

Cohen, M. L. (2015). The Oakdale Community Choir: Promoting connections between incarcerated men and the community through choral singing and songwriting. Music as a Natural Resource Compendium. International Council for Caring Communities.

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(Wilson, 2013) 15a p202; 15b p199- 200;

Wilson, Catherine Marie. “ If you listen, I’ll tell you how I feel: incarcerated men expressing emotion through songwriting.” PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) thesis, University of Iowa, 2013.

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(Cohen, 2012)

Cohen, M. L. (2012). Harmony within the walls: Perceptions of worthiness and competence in a community prison choir. International Journal of Music Education , 30 (1), 46–56.

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(Cursley J, Maruna S, 2015)A Narrative-Based Evaluation of “ Changing Tunes” Music-based Prisoner Reintegration Interventions:

Full Report. Jo Cursley, Ph. D and Shadd Maruna, Ph. D. 2015 . http://www. artsevidence. org. uk/media/uploads/final-report-cursley-and-maruna-changing-tunes. pdf

* 19 (Henley et al, 2012) Henley, Jennie & Caulfield, Laura & Wilson, David & Wilkinson, Dean. (2012). Good Vibrations: Positive change through social music-making. Music Education Research – MUSIC EDUC RES. 14. 1-22. 10. 1080/14613808. 2012. 714765. https://www. researchgate. net/publication/241732696\_Good\_Vibrations\_Positive\_change\_through\_social\_music-making