Working in Scottish Prisons: An Artist’s Guide

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For the past three years Creative Scotland has been involved in delivering the Arts and Criminal Justice action plan. A major part of this work has taken place in prisons.

Scottish artists and arts organisations have been working within the justice system for many decades now and in that time have contributed greatly to the work of the learning providers and Scottish Prison Service.

Over the past three years developments in our work through the 'Artworks' programme and the establishment of the Scottish Prison Artists Network (SPAN) have led to questions over the needs of the artist in relation to work in prisons.

This publication attempts to offer some pointers and guidance for artists and provides an introduction to the Scottish penal environment. Of course, it is not exhaustive, artists working in the field will develop and learn through the process of undertaking work within prisons, but this guide alongside support from SPAN and the learning providers working in prisons will provide guidance and advice along the way.

The Scottish Prisons Service has long been supportive of the work of Scottish artists and arts organisations, this has been particularly apparent over the past three years. For example we have seen the first ever arts festival in a Scottish prison, the accreditation of the long running Drama programme in HMP Perth and the establishment of the multi award winning STIR magazine, produced across a number of prisons with an editorial board in HMP Shotts.

Artists continue to contribute towards amazing things in prisons: the sense of achievement that participating in purposeful, creative activity gives, increased self awareness and confidence and the acquisition of new skills. There is no question that working in the arts in prisons is rewarding, important work which can contribute towards rehabilitation and reform, it offers the opportunity to undertake work which can enrich the lives of those in need of a second chance. But it is demanding, difficult work, artists and arts organisations need support along the way, having an understanding of the context makes a difference. We hope this guide will provide that.

As our work on the three year plan draws to a close, we hope the work developed over the past three years can be built upon, with the arts becoming an ingrained element of provision for imprisoned people.

We want to see many more artists and organisations go on to deliver meaningful, interesting work with justice partners across the Scottish prison estate.
Colin McConnell
Chief Executive, Scottish Prison Service

This is indeed an exciting time for the arts in Scottish prisons and I am delighted to contribute to the publication of a guide for artists working in custodial environments.

The benefits of the creative arts have been well documented in underpinning rehabilitation initiatives across SPS and helped inform the SPS Organisational Review (December 2013), setting out our commitment to building a safer and stronger Scotland, by unlocking potential, and transforming the lives of those in our care.

The wide ranging scope of the Organisational Review has been supported by a comprehensive review of purposeful activity that is a central feature of custodial rehabilitation, enabling individuals to build on their strengths, preparing them to meet the challenges of work, family and responsible citizenship on their release.

Our success in progressing arts in custody with our partners Creative Scotland, learning providers and third sector organisations, has continuously demonstrated the benefits of this activity in stimulating engagement and motivating formerly reluctant learners to build confidence and self-belief, stimulating interest in wider educational initiatives.

To further inform our work in this area, we have commissioned a review of current arts activity across all Scottish prisons.

Examples of successful interventions include the creative writing talents demonstrated by women at HMP Edinburgh, innovative drama at HMP Perth and the multiple award winning arts based STIR magazine designed and edited by prisoners at HMP Shotts. Vulnerable prisoners at HMP Barlinnie have also substantially benefitted from person-centred arts engagement delivered through close collaboration between prison staff, learning providers and organisations skilled at working with individuals requiring a more therapeutic type environment.

These interventions, in association with research evidence, continue to inform us about the key benefits of the arts in sustaining improved physical and mental well-being, developing literacy skills and employability prospects and cultivating better relationships with family, peers, and ultimately with communities on release.

They also underpin improvements in the attitudes and behaviours which lead to offending through providing personal challenges and reflective practice for individual participants.

It is therefore not surprising that the promotion of a creative, asset-based and person centred environment is mirrored in wider government policy objectives as detailed within the Creative Learning Plan, Adult Learners Statement of Ambition and Adult Literacy in Scotland (ALIS 2020). These documents clearly chime with the principles and values of SPS in promoting respect, integrity and humility in recognising that we cannot do this on our own and that the contribution of partners is crucial to providing the context and drivers for change.

This collaboration, in conjunction with our positive experiences of supporting arts interventions in custody, will undoubtedly be enhanced by the publication of a bespoke guidance document to assist and maximise the impact of artists working in Scottish prisons. This type of information will build on the skills of those experienced in working within the arts in custody, enabling them to steer newcomers to tried and tested methodologies and areas of good practice. I would like to extend my thanks to all those who contributed to this publication and to convey my best wishes for the guide in supporting artists in their creative work across Scottish prisons.
The purpose of this guide

This document is designed to support artists and practitioners who are engaged in the delivery of creative work in the context of a prison or secure institution.

It seeks to offer an introduction to some of the key ideas and current discourse surrounding Scottish Criminal Justice as well as providing practical guidance on the processes and procedures involved in project planning and delivery. It also includes advice from artists working in the field and valuable reflections from prisoners on their experience of participating in work of this kind.

There are lots of ways to imagine how creativity can feature as part of wider prison activity. Individual art forms offer their own possibilities in relation to process and possible outcome and it is important to be ambitious and dynamic in the delivery of new ways of working and methodologies.

It is hoped that this guide will serve as a useful handbook to help artists locate their own practice in this context and support a thriving programme of cultural and creative activity in Scottish prisons going forward.

To be an artist is to believe in life.

Henry Moore, Sculptor

Artists working in a prison have long been asked the question; ‘why do art in prison? What is the function of it in there?’ In many ways it is a complicated question – fraught with inherited scepticism and traces of the tired stereotypes of circle games and poster paint collages on a Friday afternoon. And yet as artists we know that the answer is in fact very simple. Because you see...

art is the practice of being human.
Why do art in prison?

From the beginning of time, art is a tool that we have used to reflect on our experience and make sense of the world around us. We use it to tell stories, ask questions and explore feeling. It gives us the opportunity to look at things in a fresh way, to examine new perspectives and imagine new possibilities.

The current Scottish Government’s strategy for Justice (2012) outlines the following vision:

Of a justice system that contributes positively to a flourishing Scotland, helping to create an inclusive and respectful society in which all people and communities live in safety and security where individual and collective rights are supported, and where disputes are resolved fairly and swiftly.

www.scotland.gov.uk

The strategy also calls for a collaborative approach to ‘transforming justice’ with organisations working together in a variety of ways to ‘ensure that people lead productive lives in safe and secure communities’. As we consider the power and potential of the arts as a tool for engagement, we are able to recognise the large and significant role that creativity can play in working towards this goal – in supporting this idea of a ‘flourishing Scotland’.

By their very nature, creative projects offer individuals an active 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.

Through engagement in artistic activity these individuals are offered an opportunity to re-connect with their own innate creativity and explore their potential for expression and the making of meaning. This is the act of creation (not destruction), participation (not alienation), the building of bridges (not walls).

It is important to remember that Art is not an easy option. It is not a passive process but instead requires participants to be active, responsive and fully present in the task in which they are engaged. It demands commitment, personal risk and a real investment. It takes a brave person to make something new to share with others – to stand on stage and speak in front of a crowd, record personal perspective through the writing of poetry or the singing of songs. In this way it becomes clear that creative practice is not constrained to the acquisition of a new technical skill or the pursuit of accreditation but instead has the potential to impact on the learning and development of the whole person.

At its heart, art is an act of community. It offers the chance to relate to others, find common ground, to look for a way to connect and explore our shared human-ness. When considering these ideas alongside the goal of the SPS to ‘create an inclusive and respectful society’ it is possible to see the huge and far-reaching potential of the arts not only as a tool in the prevention of crime, but as a step to real and meaningful inclusion. It is part of the bigger journey towards a justice system in which the majority of individuals leaving prison no longer pose a ‘risk’ of further anti-social behaviour but instead go on to make a positive and sustained contribution to the health and well-being of society as a whole – the place where the rest of us live.
Introduction
The official purposes and aims of imprisonment in Scotland are changing. Though it may take many years to see these changes fully reflected in prison cultures and practices, the report of the SPS Organisational Review, Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives (SPS, 2013) sets out a new ‘vision’ and ‘mission’ for the service. The vision is of ‘Helping to build a safer Scotland – Unlocking Potential – Transforming Lives’ (SPS, 2013: 5). The mission is ‘Providing services that help to transform the lives of people in our care so they can fulfill their potential and become responsible citizens’ (SPS, 2013: 5).

This new vision statement is interesting in several respects. Firstly, it seems modest in recognizing that SPS can help build a safer Scotland, but by implication can’t do so alone. Secondly, it implies a belief in the value of prisoners as people and in their potential. Thirdly, it sets a very aspirational goal (transforming lives). More broadly, parts of the report that deal with partnership suggest an appreciation of the need to work with communities as well as agencies in supporting change. The report also engages seriously with desistance research (which I will briefly review below) and with the ‘assets-based approach’ popularised in the public health field by Sir Harry Burns, former Chief Medical Officer of Scotland.

Both models are centrally concerned with developing and using reintegration, and for the term ‘purposeful activities’ to be understood as extending beyond formal vocational, educational and treatment programmes and into other activities that support positive change. The redevelopment of the regime at HMYOI Polmont – effectively reconceptualising the institution as a secure college – represents one important effort to implement such thinking.

All of these developments beg two important questions in the context of this guide: (1) What do we know about how people who have offended change in positive ways? (2) What do we know about the role of the arts in such processes?

Leaving crime behind
Criminologists have been studying the process by which people move away from offending for many years. They refer to this process as ‘desistance from crime’. Defining desistance is not easy. Since it is impossible to know the moment at which any behaviour ceases permanently, researchers tend to see and to study desistance as a process. I think of desistance as a process of human development in social context; one that involves moving away from offending and into compliance with law and social norms. Shadd Maruna and Stephen Farrall (two leading researchers) draw an important distinction between primary and secondary desistance; the former relates merely to behaviour; the latter implies a related shift in identity. They suggest that shifts in identity and self-concept matter in securing longer-term, sustained changes in behaviour as opposed to mere lulls in offending. Secondary desistance is likely to be important for people who have been heavily involved in offending and/or heavily criminalized.

Recently, I have begun to develop the concept of tertiary desistance; referring not just to shifts in behaviour or identity but to shifts in one’s sense of belonging to a (moral) community. My argument (based on various research studies) is that since identity is socially constructed and negotiated, securing long term change depends not just on how one sees oneself but also on how one is seen by others, and on how one sees one’s place in society. Putting it more simply, desistance is a social and political process as much as a personal one.

These three aspects of desistance – behaviour, identity and belonging – are addressed in the main theories about how and why it occurs. These are usually divided into ontogenic theories which stress the importance of age and maturation; sociogenic...
theories which stress the importance of social bonds and ties; and narrative theories which stress the importance of subjective changes in identity. Recently, in an important review of desistance research, Tony Bottoms (one of the UK’s most distinguished criminologists) has suggested a fourth set of factors that are situational in character. He points out that various aspects of our social environments and of our ‘routine activities’ in these places and spaces also provide important influences on our behaviour, for better or worse. So, to sum things up a little crudely, people stop offending because they become older, more mature and less impulsive, because they develop (or renew) social ties that discourage offending, because they come to see themselves differently and because they develop new habits and routines that help them stay out of trouble. More recently, I have been arguing that penal policy and practice needs to reconsider how it frames its goals. Studying and supporting desistance eventually forces us to address the complex question not of what people desist from, but what they desist to. In other words, if desistance is a process or a journey, we are eventually compelled to seek to understand and articulate its destination. The concepts of citizenship, integration and solidarity may have much to offer in addressing this question; perhaps a positively framed set of goals for criminal sanctions built around concepts may help us move beyond a preoccupation with risk and reoffending.

Can creativity support and speed the journey?

If you are reading this as an artist, I’m guessing that as you read the last section you’ll already have made many links to the possible contribution that participation in arts and creative activities might usefully play in supporting and speeding the process of leaving crime behind. And, indeed, researchers have been elaborating these connections very helpfully in recent years. Desistance research (and its influence in policy and practice) has helped the debate move beyond the narrow question of whether arts projects reduce reoffending. For example, my own interest in the role of arts in desistance was first stimulated by being part of the team of academics that evaluated the Inspiring Change programme in Scotland, which brought a multitude of leading arts organisations into Scotland’s prisons to work with hundreds of prisoners. Some of what that experience taught me is summed up in a paper available here: blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/files/2011/09/McNeill-et-al.-2011-Inspiring-Desistance.pdf

The research literature reviewed in the paper – and the evidence from the Inspiring Change evaluation – suggest several ways in which arts activities might usefully play a key part in this process. They can help to build better relationships between prisoners and between prisoners and staff, they can engage prisoners in educational and personal development processes, they can help prisoners to recognise and develop their existing strengths and their positive potential, they can build self-esteem and self-confidence, they can both use and encourage peer support and team or group work, and they can encourage participation in other forms of learning. Putting this in the terminology of desistance theory and research, arts activities offer more than ‘just’ the development of new skills; they may enable prisoners to think differently about themselves, their families, their relationships with their peers, and their relationships to the prison regime and the opportunities it offers. More generally, they may help prisoners to ‘imagine’ different possible futures, different social networks, different identities and different lifestyles. In and of themselves, arts activities may be unlikely to deliver the concrete, realisable sentence and resettlement plans which many prisoners will need to tackle the full range of needs, issues and challenges that they face; but they may help to foster and to reinforce motivation for, and commitment to, the change processes that these formal interventions and processes exist to support. They may also play a part in bringing positive social contacts and networks into the prison-based process. More recently, a review for the Arts Alliance (an umbrella body representing arts organisations involved in criminal justice in England and Wales) has reached very similar conclusions, drawing on new evidence. See: www.artsalliance.org.uk/re-imagining-futures-exploring-arts-interventions-and-process-desistance
Art, communication and re-creativity

In a recent public lecture for the Sutherland Trust, I had an opportunity to reflect again on the relationships between the ‘science’ of desistance and human creativity, as expressed in and through the arts, assisted by colleagues in Vox Liminis.

I started that lecture by asking Louis Abbott, of the band Admiral Fallow, to share a song called ‘Breathe Life’ that he had co-written with a man finishing his sentence in the Open Estate. The song was intended to be sung to his (new) wife by the man at their wedding. The lyrics include these words:

“You keep my head afloat when all I want is to sink… Breathe life into me. You’re my wife, you’re my all, you’re my something wonderful. You breathe life into me. I’ll always be your dancer, your partner, your lover, and step by step we’ll circle the fire, and the heat from the flames steals the air from my lungs, and you breathe life into me.”

It’s a beautiful song, the product of creativity, but also centrally about re-creating the self. It is about the promise and the hard work of transformation; work that takes unpromising materials in unpromising situations and re-creates something good or something beautiful out of it. That work, it seems to me, is itself an artistic process. It involves writing new stories, singing new songs, painting new portrayals of self and society, sculpting a reshaped life, learning to dance in a new way.

However, art in prisons is important not just because it supports these personal transformations. It is as important that the works of art produced can communicate and represent these transformative processes to others. In that process, art narrows the social distance between people by inviting them to share experiences and emotions, to understand (not just in the cognitive sense) their common humanity, maybe even to build the reciprocities on which ‘the good life’ depends.

At the end of the Sutherland lecture, Louis sang another song, this one written by Andrew Howie in collaboration with Joe Bowden of ‘Positive Prisons? Positive Futures...’. The song reflects upon the experience of leaving prison and is called ‘What if my best isn’t good enough?’ Its refrain runs:

“Better sit still than rise up and fall? Or better to fail than not try at all? Can anybody help me?”

I don’t think I’ve ever given a lecture before where people sang together at the end. But the singing was the perfect ending, because, in doing it, we all breathed in and sang out the life of someone struggling with reintegration – and that made our accountability for supporting that process something that we felt, as well as something that we thought about.

So, my conclusion is that, if imprisonment and release are to be crafted around ‘Unlocking Potential’ and ‘Transforming Lives’, then we need creativity to be at the heart of the process – reaching into prisons to support personal change, and reaching out of prisons to support social change. Practising the art of integration is a creative challenge for every one of us.
Think how much more could be achieved if we truly all work together with a common purpose of creating real, practical opportunities for change for those who truly want to take them, backed-up by their desire to make their lives better.

Colin McConnell, SPS Chief Executive

Artists delivering creative work in prisons should become familiar with the guiding aims and operating procedure of the Scottish Prison Service. Understanding the language and values of the organisation will enable you to collaborate more effectively with prison staff and to build positive and sustainable working relationships going forward.

In 2013 the Justice Committee published a report detailing an inquiry into ‘Purposeful Activity’. This refers to the question of what a prisoner does during the time s/he is incarcerated and how this activity contributes to the overall goal of rehabilitation and desistance from crime. In response to this report the SPS published ‘Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives’ (2013) a major review outlining a fresh mission for the organisation and a new set of goals around offender management and the overall well-being of prisoners in their custody and care.

The new Mission of SPS is: Providing services that help to transform the lives of people in our care so they can fulfil their potential and become responsible citizens. Many of the programmes and interventions delivered by SPS are guided by what are called ‘the Nine Offender Outcomes’, a set of aims for individuals to achieve on release from prison.

These are:
- Sustained or improved physical and mental wellbeing
- The ability to access and sustain suitable accommodation
- Reduced or stabilised substance misuse
- Improved literacy skills
- Employability prospects increased
- Maintained or improved relationships with families, peers and community
- The ability to live independently if they choose
- Improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending and greater acceptance of responsibility in managing their own behavior and understanding of the impact of their offending behavior on victims and on their own families.

Although the Nine Offender Outcomes provide an important framework for much of the activity with prisoners ‘Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives’ also discusses the need for a flexible, more holistic approach in order to engage with individuals and support the move away from offending behaviour. As a result of this, the SPS is open to working together with a range of organisations to provide a wide range of opportunities for prisoners and are positive about the role that the arts can play in the overall goal of building safer communities in Scotland.
Prisons in Scotland:

There are currently 15 Prisons in Scotland, each housing a slightly different population. In order to best plan your creative project, it can help to know a little of the context of each individual institution:

HMP Addiewell
Opened in 2008, it houses all prisoner types with the exception of females and convicted young prisoners. Addiewell is designed as a learning prison, where prisoners can address their offending behaviour and the circumstances which led to their imprisonment. The learning aims to improve their employability prospects, their wellbeing and community support networks, leading to a reduction in reoffending.

HMP Barlinnie
A large local prison, receiving prisoners from the courts in the west of Scotland. The prison houses male prisoners, remand and convicted who are serving less than 4 years. There is also a national top end for life sentence prisoners approaching a potential release date. In recent years Barlinnie has taken prisoners from all over Scotland in order to facilitate the new building programme within the Scottish Prison Service.

HMP Castle Huntly
Scotland's only open prison accommodating a capacity of 285 low supervision adult male prisoners from any Local Authority area. Following a robust risk management process and a period in closed conditions prisoners can progress to Castle Huntly where the emphasis is on careful preparation for release. Activity focuses on enhanced personal responsibility, job readiness and positive citizenship with the aim of reducing the risk of reoffending and contributing to safer communities.

HMPYOI Cornton Vale
The principle prison in Scotland for holding female prisoners, women are also held in Edinburgh, Greenock, Grampian and Inverness.

HMP Dumfries
Dumfries prison serves the local courts of Dumfries and Galloway. It holds up to 80 male prisoners who are remanded in custody for trial and those convicted but remanded for reports. Dumfries prison also provides a national mainstream facility for holding up to 100 long-term and short-term prisoners who require to be separated from mainstream prisoners because of the nature of their offence, termed as offence related protection prisoners.

HMP Glenochil
Glenochil manages adult male prisoners who are short term prisoners; long term prisoners, life sentence prisoners and extended sentence prisoners (Order of Life Long Restrictions).

HMP Edinburgh
Edinburgh is a large community facing prison, receiving prisoners predominantly from courts in Edinburgh, the Lothians and Borders, but also prisoners from the Fife area. The prison manages adult male and female prisoners for those on remand, short term prisoners (serving 4 years or more), life sentence prisoners and extended sentence prisoners (Order of Life Long Restrictions).

HMP & YOI Grampian
Grampian was opened on 3rd March 2014 and is the first national top end for life sentence prisoners (Order of Long Restrictions).

HMP Geoffrey Field
Geoffrey Field is designed as a learning prison, where prisoners can address their offending behaviour and the circumstances which led to their imprisonment. The learning aims to improve their employability prospects, their wellbeing and community support networks, leading to a reduction in reoffending.

HMP Inverness
Inverness serves courts in the Highlands, Islands and Moray – a large and diverse catchment area embracing rural and urban communities. The prison manages remand prisoners both adult and young persons, convicted adults serving up to 4 years and various other offenders who are awaiting to go their prison of allocation or need to spend time with us as a management support. The prisoners in this category tend to be serving long term sentences including life.

HMP Kilmainham
Kilmainham is a 500 cell prison facility operated by Serco Ltd on behalf of the Scottish Prison Service under a contract with the Scottish Ministers. Housing a range of prisoner types, Kilmainham is generally a local community facing prison, receiving prisoners because of the nature of their offence, termed as offence related protection prisoners.

HMP Low Moss
Low Moss opened in March 2012. This prison manages male prisoners on remand, short term prisoners (serving less than 4 years), long term prisoners (serving 4 years or more), life sentence prisoners and extended sentence prisoners (Order of Life Long Restriction) primarily from the North Strathclyde Community Justice Authority area.

HMP Perth
Perth is a large community facing prison receiving prisoners predominately from courts in Perth and Kinross, Dundee, Angus and Fife. The prison manages adult male prisoners on remand, short term prisoners (serving less than 4 years), long term prisoners (serving 4 years or more), life sentence prisoners, sexual offenders and extended sentence prisoners (Order of Long Restrictions).

HMYOI Polmont
Scotland's national holding facility for male young prisoners aged between 16-21 years of age. Sentences range from 6 months to Life. The average sentence length is between 2-4 years.

HMP Shotts
Shotts prison was built in 2012 and is a maximum-security prison for long term adult male prisoners with a capacity of 553. The prison seeks to provide a secure, safe, caring and productive environment, while providing opportunities for prisoners to come to terms with their sentences and address their offending behaviour. Shotts also houses the National Integration Centre (NIC) for adult male prisoners who are in the initial stages of sentences of eight years or over and prepares them for eventual movement to mainstream prisons. It provides a supportive regime for those sentenced to life or eight years or over during the first six to nine months of their sentences.
Communicating with SPS

It can be useful for artists to be aware that SPS is a highly disciplined organisation operating under a strict set of regulations and procedures. As a result, language used in correspondence from the organisation can often feel instructional and directive. Although this may be counter-cultural to the general practices of artists and arts organisations it is important to state that it is not indicative to the quality of working relationships and should not be taken personally.

Training:
Before beginning your project in any of the prisons listed above you will be required to complete a programme of SPS training. These sessions are mandatory for all staff and cover a number of areas including:

- Fire Training
- Personal Protection Training (PPT)
- Issues related to Health and Safety
- Key training (not necessary for artists working with prison escort)
- ACT2 – Suicide Care Risk Management

All training is updated on an annual basis and is delivered by SPS officers.

For more detail on any of the information outlined in this section please visit www.sps.gov.uk
Partnership Working

Learning Centres:
Prisoner learning in Scotland is currently delivered through contracts with Fife College and New College Lanarkshire (each serving a proportion of the prisons across the country). Both colleges have a long and celebrated history in working in partnership with artists and organisations to deliver a range of successful arts projects and creative interventions with a variety of groups in the context of learning and skills development.

In 2011 New College Lanarkshire (formally Motherwell College) delivered a major creative project, Inspiring Change. This involved arts-based projects from seven national companies: Scottish Opera, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, National Youth Choir of Scotland, Scottish Ensemble, Citizens Theatre, the Traverse Theatre and the National Galleries of Scotland, who provided a total of 12 projects in 5 Scottish prisons (Shotts, Barlinnie, Open Estate, Polmont and Greenock) with both male and female prisoners.

The evaluation report, which focused on the impact of engagement on prisoners attitudes and behaviours as well as their ability to learn can be downloaded at: www.scottishprisonarts.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Final-report-Inspiring-Change-april-2011.pdf.

For artists looking to work in collaboration with learning centres a useful first step is to make a connection with the Head of Offender Learning or the Learning and Skills Managers at Fife College and New College Lanarkshire who help you to connect to existing activity and strategy.

Health Centres:
NHS Scotland consists of 14 regional health boards that are individually responsible for providing health care and medical services in the prisons in their local area. Artists wanting to work in a health context should contact the relevant board for information on key personnel and next steps.

A particularly successful example of this work can be found in HMP Barlinnie where Glasgow company Theatre Nemo have been working with the Day Care Unit for a number of years on a variety of art based projects. These projects have clearly demonstrated the significant role that creativity can play in supporting vulnerable individuals to build confidence and develop core skills in a variety of areas.

Third Sector Organisations:
Voluntary, charity or community interest organisations play a significant part in the overall process of rehabilitation and offer a huge amount of resource and practical support to prisoners and their families in Scotland. Such organisations also fulfil a key role in through-care and issues related to prisoners making the transition from custody back into the community.

Creative projects offer a clear and effective set of tools both in working with individuals and group building. As a result collaborating with artists can be a dynamic opportunity for third-sector organisations in working towards a larger set of outcomes. For more information and reading around Third Sector partnerships in Prisons visit:
- The Robertson Trust
  www.therobertsontrust.org.uk
- Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum
  www.ccppscotland.org

The Partnership Development Initiative:
The Partnership Development Initiative was set up in 2008 with the objective of improving the co-ordination between third sector services and statutory criminal justice agencies.

The development of a model framework was intended to support positive engagement, clearer communication, better understanding and improved partnership arrangements – working together to improve services and service outcomes.

As a result, Partnership Packs were introduced to be completed by both SPS and the Third sector partner wishing to work in a prison. This process is designed to determine whether the service delivery is relevant for a particular establishment and how the partnership will work to reach the outcomes jointly set.

More information about this process can be accessed through:
- Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum
  www.ccppscotland.org/cjvsf/hot-topics/partnership-working-prisons

Individual Prisons:
It is also possible for arts organisations to establish successful relationships with individual prisons and to deliver a programme of work in collaboration with internal staff. This said, it is useful to remember that the culture of the establishment means that key personnel often move or progress with short notice which can impact on project planning or long term programming.

For artists looking to work in collaboration with individual prisons it is helpful to connect with the Head of Offender Learning or the Learning and Skills Managers at Fife College and New College Lanarkshire who help you to connect to existing activity and strategy.
Project Planning

A clear and considered approach to planning is a key part of all successful arts projects and yet this is even more relevant when delivering creative work in the context of a prison.

A strict operational procedure means that secure institutions require a large amount of detail about possible projects well in advance of the date they are due to begin.

It is advisable to begin your planning process at least 2 months prior to the start of your project (perhaps longer if funding is still to be secured). It is useful to begin with a visit to the prison and a meeting with the contact you are working with. At this stage you will be required to supply the following information:

For the initial meeting:
• A clear set of aims and outcomes.
• A timetable of all project activity.
• A list of logistical requirements – rooms/equipment/number of participants etc.
• Details of all the delivery team.
• A summary of the final event.

At this stage it is crucial that you are clear about everything you want to achieve and the resources that you require for delivery. External projects can take a great deal of time to organise and often require liaison with more than one area of the prison. Once confirmed, it can be problematic to change arrangements and any alteration has the potential to jeopardize your work entirely. Make sure to do your thinking ahead of time so as to ensure a smooth start and a positive relationship with the institution.

Prisons are busy places with a great deal of demands on staff. If you have not yet heard back about a project you are planning it can be useful to follow up in order to move things forward. Keep copies of all e-mail correspondence to ensure you are clear on what has been agreed and any key information that will help you in your communication.

In the weeks before your project commences you will need to provide the following information:
Before the project begins:

- A list of all technical equipment/materials being brought into the prison.
- Details of relevant Disclosure/PVG for all delivery staff.
- A risk assessment covering all planned activity.
- A list of all external visitors attending the final outcome (this can be supplied a week before this event).

When planning any project in a prison (regardless of scale) it is important to remember that there is almost as much administration required as actual delivery with participants. Make sure to build this into your overall schedule and projected budget in order to make sure you have all necessary resource in place.

Considering context:

When designing a creative approach to working, it is useful to think about the specific context of the participants involved. Aside from the logistics of the prison environment there are a number of issues related to certain groups that can have significant impact on the quality of engagement. For example, a project aimed at the women in HMP YOI Cornton Vale might be structured very differently to one targeted at a group of young men in HMl YOI Polmont. Understanding the nature of each establishment and the people it houses is an essential part of the planning process and helps to ensure that projects remain responsive and relevant to everyone involved.

The Practicalities

Working in a prison requires artists to apply their practice within a controlled environment and as a result you will need to work within the specific rules and guidelines of the institution. The following sections outline some of the things you can expect to encounter in this context.

Security:

On arrival at the prison you will need to clear security at the gate. Here you will be asked to show official photographic identification (drivers license or passport is best) and provide the name and department of your contact in the prison for verification. You will be issued with a visitors’ pass that you will need to display throughout your visit. In most cases you will be required to put all your personal belongings through an electronic scanner to ensure you are carrying no dangerous or contraband items. Each establishment will adhere to its own set of rules but examples of the types of items that are generally not allowed into a prison are as follows:

- Mobile phones.*
- Laptop Computers or hand-held devices.
- USB or hard drives.
- Cameras.

At this time you will also need to supply a copy of an agreed list of technical equipment or workshop materials (see Section 7: Project Planning) to be checked. It can help to have everything labelled clearly so as to assist this process and to carry spare copies of any correspondence.

Lockers are available for you to safely store these items or for any personal effects (e.g. purses/keys) you wish to leave on the outside of the prison.

Depending on the nature of your project (assigned officers etc) you may also be required to wear a personal alarm. These will be supplied by the individual prison and staff will explain correct use. Entry to a prison can be a time consuming process and it is not unusual for visitors to have to wait for long periods while information is checked and verified. Make sure to arrive in plenty of time to allow for delays and to have details of your contacts to hand.

*Remember it is an offence to carry a mobile phone or personal device into a prison – take extra care to ensure you do not have these items at the point of entry.
The Prison Regime:

Daily prison life is structured around a strict regime in which fixed periods of time are assigned to certain activities. It is rarely possible to alter this schedule and therefore artists must expect to work inside of this timetable. As a result, workshops or rehearsals should correspond with the planned movement of prisoners around the facility—a process that is commonly referred to as the ‘route move’. During the route movement, numbers of prisoners are counted as they leave one area of the prison and arrive at another. This number is then verified by officers on duty before the scheduled activity can begin. It is not unusual for this process to take some time and you should anticipate a wait before all of your participants arrive at the room and are ready to start working. On occasion there might be a re-count causing significant delays to your session. There is also the possibility of lock-down that will lead to a complete cancellation of the day’s activity. It is useful to anticipate these unexpected disruptions in the delivery of your project and view them as an unavoidable part of working in the context of a prison.

If you find yourself in a situation where you are uncomfortable or unsure as to how to respond to a specific question or request from a prisoner you are working with, always seek advice from your prison staff contact.

Appropriate conduct:

Artists working in prison are expected to conduct themselves in a clear and professional manner. It is important to observe the guidelines set out by SPS and to follow any specific instructions issued by the staff in each individual prison. Dress should be appropriate to the environment with no short skirts, revealing items of clothing or football colours. When managing relationships with the prisoners in your group it is vital to maintain well-defined boundaries and to establish clear rules for a positive working environment. In this respect here are a few useful guidelines:

• Do not give out personal details.
• Do not agree to carry out any tasks on behalf of the prisoner (i.e. contact a friend or solicitor).
• Do not agree to carry anything in or out of the prison.
• Do not agree to participate in social networking with a prisoner or with any family member.
• Do not give gifts.
• Do not engage in unnecessary or casual physical contact.
• Adjust personal boundaries in line with the secure environment.

If you find yourself in a situation where you are uncomfortable or unsure as to how to respond to a specific question or request from a prisoner you are working with, always seek advice from your prison staff contact.

Participants:

The prison community can often be transitional and subject to a lot of change. As a result it can be difficult to maintain a regular list of participants for an external project and to anticipate the attendance at each session. It is not unusual for prisoners to be moved at short notice or for a court date to be changed to an unexpected time. There is also the chance that a member of your group will be released during your project and will therefore be unable to complete the work you have started together. Again, these are factors beyond your control and very much par for the course with work of this kind. The best you can do is to prepare to alter your ideas at short notice and find creative ways to cover any gaps in order to keep the project moving forward.
Sharing Work

Having delivered a successful project in a prison, it is important to go on to consider how best to share what has been created with a wider audience.

Whether for the rest of the prison community, external visitors or for the friends and family of the participants a ‘final event’ or ‘sharing’ can be an effective way to celebrate the work of the group and all that has been achieved through the creative process. The best way to share work will be largely informed by the individual art form, but possibilities include:

- Exhibitions.
- Film screenings.
- Theatre performances.
- Concerts/gigs.
- Presentation.

These types of events can offer a useful shape to a creative process and instil a sense of momentum and energy around a formal outcome. The sharing of work can also offer participants the opportunity to receive positive feedback for their efforts and to recognise the value of their work. This can be especially meaningful when it is possible for the prisoner’s friends and family to attend the final event and share in the success of the project and what they have created.

It is important to remember that organising events can take a huge amount of extra consideration in the context of a prison and so planning for the end of a project should begin early (see Section 7: Project planning).

Aside from sharing work inside individual prisons there are also a number of ways to platform work made by artists in prison to a wider audience:

The Koestler Awards
An annual exhibition and award scheme of art work created by prisoners. www.koestlerrtrust.org.uk

Scottish Prison Arts Network (SPAN)
SPAN hold regular events for artists to come together to discuss practice and share work created in Scottish Prisons. There is also a website in which artists and organisations can upload details of projects and share art work. www.scottishprisonarts.net

STIR Magazine
An award winning Scottish publication created for prisoners by prisoners featuring articles, reviews, creative writing and art work. www.stirmagazine.org

Gallery Magazine

Please Note - When planning to present any work created in a prison outside of the institution you must ensure you have the necessary permission of SPS, the relevant staff of the individual prison and the individual participants of your group.
Capturing Learning

We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.

*John Dewey, Philosopher*

Arts projects in prison can be some of the most exciting and rewarding experiences for both the participants and the team of artists involved. With this in mind it is important to consider how best to capture the learning experience both in terms of the creative work produced and the larger outcomes of the project.

Evaluation:

Conducting evaluation of creative projects in prisons is a key way for artists to communicate the value of the work within a wider dialogue. Producing a clear record of the work and the positive experience of participants can play a crucial part in proving the efficacy of the arts as a tool for learning and development.

Depending on the scale of your project and resource you have available it can be useful to involve an external evaluator as part of your team. This enables the benefit of an ‘outside eye’ to help record outcomes and link practice to a larger field of research. For smaller projects it is a good idea to find ways to capture experiences and to gain valuable feedback for use in future work. Suggestions for ways you might do this include:

- A sketch-book or journal for each participant to record key reflections throughout the process.
- A written questionnaire on key areas of the project.
- Interviews with the group of participants.
- Focus group with related prison staff around benefits of the project.
- A map of the creative journey from the view of participants (as a group or by individual participants).

It is important always to consider the range of ability and learning styles within your group. Not all participants will find it easy to express ideas and opinions through writing and it can be useful to find other creative ways to collect reflection.

When completed, documentation and individual project evaluation can be uploaded and shared on the Scottish Prison Arts Network (SPAN) website for the purposes of peer learning and critical dialogue.

[www.scottishprisonarts.net](http://www.scottishprisonarts.net)
Certificates and Accreditation:

Participating in creative arts projects can be a hugely significant experience for prisoners offering the opportunity to develop a whole range of new skills.

As a result it is useful for the individual to be able to clearly evidence this work as part of an on-going portfolio of achievement. Evidence of achievement can include:

- **Certificate**
  A certificate with logos of lead organisations endorsed with signatures of key personnel.

- **Record of Achievement**
  A written report provided by lead artist outlining significant learning undertaken and key progress made by the participant.

There are also a number of formal ways to accredit arts-based learning.

- **ASDAN**
  A series of short courses centred around context based learning including a programme in the ‘Expressive Arts’.
  [www.asdan.org.uk](http://www.asdan.org.uk)

- **Arts Awards**
  A nationally recognised qualification aimed at young people up to age of 25.
  [www.artsaward.org.uk](http://www.artsaward.org.uk)

- **SQA/HNC/Highers etc**
  Qualifications at different levels within the context of a college or prison learning centre.

Creative work can also be submitted to be considered for a Koestler Award [www.koestlertrust.org.uk](http://www.koestlertrust.org.uk) in a large number of categories across all art forms. Entries are accepted annually from January to April and can be submitted by individual prisoners or as part of group work. A national exhibition is held in November each year at the Southbank Centre in London as well as some regional exhibitions throughout the year – including one of Scottish work in Glasgow.

Documentation:

Good quality documentation of both the process and the final event can be a really valuable resource for participants in understanding their achievements and valuing their effort.

It can also serve as a useful way for artists to illustrate the learning that has taken place after the project has finished. This can include:

- Photographs
- Film
- Audio recordings

Due to the nature of the context, documentation can be a highly sensitive process and requires careful handling. When taking images or making recordings of any kind it is crucial you seek permission from staff at the prison as well as any partners you are working with. Each participating prisoner will also be required to fill out an official media release form giving permission to be included in any documentation of the project.

A useful way to make sure you follow correct procedure and secure relevant permissions is to work with a photographer from the SPS Media Centre although many artists choose to use their own equipment. If doing so, ensure that all images and footage featuring prisoners is stored carefully and not distributed widely so as to manage the appropriate framing of the work in a public forum.

Participating in creative arts projects can be a hugely significant experience for prisoners offering the opportunity to develop a whole range of new skills.
Practical Advice From Artists

On Theatre
Elly Goodman and Neil Packham: The Citizens Theatre

Developing a positive and upbeat atmosphere in the room is essential when embarking on a creative experience, with a new group of people, particularly in prisons. For some, taking part in a Theatre project might seem like a daunting prospect, and it is your job as the facilitator to create an environment that feels supportive, as you nurture the group’s ideas and talent. The group should be encouraged to invest in the material that comes from their ideas and imagination and not from a script that is imposed upon them. When a group has a sense of ownership over the content and overall shape of the performance piece, they are more likely to commit to the project and respond enthusiastically to what is asked of them. It is essential to build a rapport and sense of trust that you’re going to treat their stories and ideas with respect.

When developing a performance, explore avenues of material that everyone feels they can contribute to regardless of the diversity of personality, skill and ability in the room. Everyone has a role to play in your session whether that be as a writer, performer, improver, story teller, singer, song writer, digital music artist or musician.

Prison should not define the people you work with; it is the venue that contains the creative possibilities.

Multi-disciplinary arts, work well as you have a wider opportunity to meet the needs of your group and affords the opportunity for individuals to play to their strength. All creative contributions command respect and mutual appreciation, this is crucial to the success of the project, bonding the group from individuals, into a cast of performers.

Working towards a common goal, such as a sharing of work or rehearsing a polished performance, enhances the group’s commitment and ultimately their overall sense of achievement.

The theatre process is a significant and important journey to embark on which has the potential to create positive bonds and a lasting effect within the group. Just remember, treat a group in prison with the same respect that you’d give any group. Each person has taken a leap of faith by attending a drama session, progressing towards performing in their unique devised play. They have shown that they are open to trying something new and possibly out of their comfort zone. For some it may be the first time that they have ever performed.

When developing a performance, explore avenues of material that everyone feels they can contribute to regardless of the diversity of personality, skill and ability in the room. Everyone has a role to play in your session whether that be as a writer, performer, improver, story teller, singer, song writer, digital music artist or musician.

On Music
Alison Urie: Vox Liminis

Equipment – All equipment needs to be listed, and given to the gate, in advance of the project. The details, including serial numbers of recording equipment and laptops need to be recorded, and if a laptop needs to be brought in, an SPS form ‘Application to Use a Laptop in a Scottish Prison’ needs to be completed in enough time to be signed by a Governor. It is worth thinking through all eventualities and listing equipment to deal with them – e.g. taking an extension cable for power, to ensure the room can be set up as you wish.

Space – It is helpful to see the space where you will be working, in advance. Room sizes can be hard to judge in conversation – e.g. a ‘classroom’ in prison tends to be much smaller than a ‘classroom’ in a primary school. For music, it’s important to make sure that noise from the room is not going to effect other people’s work. And if splitting the group to work on sound, it might be necessary to have more than one space to work from.

Ownership and sharing – it is right to think through the ownership of any work created, and permissions for any subsequent sharing of it.

Performance – It is important to ensure that participants stretch themselves, and if performance is an end point of the work, fully own that process, while not pushing individuals beyond their stretch.

Mixed ability – workshops need to be planned with varying literacy levels, language, culture and musical knowledge and ability assumed within every group.

Ambition – Highly ambitious, and intense projects will generally result in greater learning and achievement for all involved.
On Creative Writing
Stewart Ennis: Tutor at HMP Shotts

Writing and sharing stories and poems allows students to create new narratives about themselves that aren’t only about being a prisoner; to see themselves and be seen by others, in a new light.

“Did you really write that story?” / “Did you really write that poem?” / “And I thought I knew you!”

On my first day I decided to start with something everyone could relate to.

“Ok! Everyone write about a happy childhood memory! Christmas! A birthday party! Summer holidays! That sort of thing.”

Easy! Yet some students were thinking about it for an inordinate amount of time.

“Happy childhood memories!” I repeated.

“I don’t have one!” said one student.

“One what?”

“A happy childhood memory.”

Don’t assume, as I did, that we all share similar life experiences. Okay, maybe there are assumptions you can make; that we all have stories, and that these stories are worth telling and worth listening to.

Finally, join in! I’m a tutor, but I’m also a fellow writer. It feels right to share my work in the group. Also, it’s important that the class is an enriching, creative experience for me as well as for the students.

On Visual Art
Suzzie Swan: Lecturer in Art at HMP Perth and HMP Castle Huntly

Working within the prison establishment is a challenging but rewarding job. Before you take on a project make sure you have visited the area in which you will be working and establish how it all works as every prison is set up slightly differently.

Once you have a plan in place make sure you have all the required equipment on site as you will find trying to bring in specialist equipment, a tricky process and everything needs to be cleared by security well in advance.

Running a relaxed environment is important, make sure you know your craft well, don’t try and take on a topic that you are not confident to deliver.

Always have a plan b. Dress appropriately, be organised, calm and relaxed, never become too complacent nor over friendly, keep yourself and others safe. A top priority is to be enthusiastic for your creative subject and enjoy teaching new skills to your learners.
Working in Scottish Prisons

I have met many prisoners who are coping without me. But also my family and how they thinking about my life in prison, every day pressures. Not just I find it a great release from the work and co-operation within the group. Trying to tend to the atmosphere and how much help of support can impact session and developing a sense of team work and co-operation within the group. Trying to tend to the many distractions, one-to-one needs of struggling participants and breeding or actual feuds between participants as a solo artist, whilst at the same time maintaining a sense of control over the room and positive foundations drive throughout each session often leads to participants missing out on a well delivered, quality arts experience. Make it clear to the prison that each prisoner is different. One project model/style of delivery/session length/ambition may work incredibly well in one prison but need a total re-think in a different establishment. The attending participants will count for a large part of these variables – mental health, physicality, availability and commitments to other projects will all impact your project, but too will the different staff communities within each prison – some are particularly supportive of the arts, whilst others may need more convincing. Officers have differing opinions as to the validity of dance in instigating powerful and lasting change within individuals – their attitude of support can impact session atmosphere and how much help you may be entitled to on the logistical side of things.

Team Teaching – in my experience when working with groups with mental health considerations, behavioural or anger management issues, and vulnerabilities that present themselves in many different guises, it is necessary to work as part of a TEAM ie: in pairs. Two highly trained dance artists with an agreed and pre-planned approach, and an understanding of the varying behaviours that may be encountered are very well equipped to deliver a project that keeps the group as a whole moving forwards whilst at the same time being able to tend to the needs of the individual in picking up steps at a different pace to the majority, venting and diffusing frustrations, supporting and developing a sense of team work and co-operation within the group. Trying to tend to the many distractions, one-to-one needs of struggling participants and breeding or actual feuds between participants as a solo artist, whilst at the same time maintaining a sense of control over the room and positive foundations drive throughout each session often leads to participants missing out on a well delivered, quality arts experience. Meet your group as a Dance Artist – allow your passion for your own art to enthuse participants and take them on a journey where they can meet you as artists themselves. Yes we do have to think carefully about how we deliver our dance project, but we don’t have to try and anticipate what participants may already know and try and meet them there.

Meet your group as a Dance Artist – allow your passion for your own art to enthuse participants and take them on a journey where they can meet you as artists themselves. Yes we do have to think carefully about how we deliver our dance project, but we don’t have to try and anticipate what participants may already know and try and meet them there.

On Dance

Rhiana Laws, Far Flung Dance

Art became my escape where I could experiment with different paints and techniques. I don't know if the arts is the key to rehabilitation, as many say, but it doesn’t matter because I enjoy it and I will continue to do it. What makes the experience are the teachers – they care, they introduce you to new ideas and have an interest in helping you improve. Someone who says ‘Here’s a couple of paintbrushes’ and leaves you to it is not wanted. The relationship between student and teacher is paramount in the success of someone continuing with the arts.

Craig Before coming to prison, I was never interested in art or writing, but now it's a big part of my life. I find it a great release from the everyday pressures. Not just thinking about my life in prison, but also my family and how they are coping without me. I have met many prisoners who take great joy from painting and writing and they all share my opinion that art has brought a new way of coping. The feeling you get when you finish a painting or piece of writing is great because you never thought you had it in you to produce art that people actually take notice of, and in fact complement you on your work. The teachers are great and build our confidence and belief that we are well capable of the projects we undertake. I am well and truly glad I have it in my life.

Eddie The Creative Projects in Cornton Vale have allowed me to explore a side of myself I never knew I had. They have given me an understanding of my emotions, allowed me to connect with myself and turn emotions into something positive. The trust that staff had in me during Create and Curate, for example, not only brought me out of myself, but also helped me connect with others and focus in on the things I didn’t think were important. As someone who usually withdraws into myself, I think I took a lot from sharing my work, especially when we worked with writers and also musicians on the Malawi project. I got a deep sense of satisfaction from this, and I know that I speak for many of the girls as they would say the same. Sculpting emotions with the help and guidance of visiting artists left me quite astounded at one point, when an elderly gentleman came forward to me, as I finished reading an emotional piece from my poem collection. With tears in the man’s eyes, he expressed how moved he was from listening to my work; that blew me away.

Rita

The Prisoner Experience

Picking up a paintbrush for the first time I didn’t think I would have the ability to create great works of art, but I quickly realised that that didn’t matter.
Sign-Posting

The Scottish Prison Arts Network (SPAN)
The Scottish Prison Arts Network is a professional network for artists across art forms engaged in the field of criminal justice.
www.scottishprisonarts.net

Koestler Trust
A UK Charity awarding, exhibiting and selling artworks by offenders, detainees and secure patients for 50 years.
www.koestlertrust.org.uk

Positive Prisons? Positive Futures
A community of interest which draws upon the shared lived experiences of people who are or have been subject to punishment.
www.positiveprison.org

Clinks
An umbrella organisation supporting voluntary organisations that work with prisoners and their families.
www.clinks.org

Families Outside
Families Outside is a national charity in Scotland that works solely to support the families of people involved in the criminal justice system.
www.familiesoutside.org.uk

The Scottish Consortium for Crime and Criminal Justice (SCCCJ)
Bringing together leading organisations and individuals concerned with crime and criminal justice in Scotland.
www.scccj.org.uk

Scottish Justice Matters
A publication of the Scottish Consortium for Crime and Criminal Justice.
www.scottishjusticematters.com

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