

Evaluation of the Theatre Nemo Pilot at HMP Addiewell

March 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This type of project has never been undertaken before and therefore the evaluation has the potential to bring new learning and establish good practice for working with families and widening the scope of throughcare interventions. The Evaluation has involved interviewing all participants and analysing prison officer observations of those taking part both before and after the pilot. Prison and Theatre Nemo Management were interviewed as well as observational notes taken during sessions attended by the researcher.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Although all participants felt that they already had good interaction, they appreciated the opportunity to do something together as a family and found the action of doing things together bonding, and also more enjoyable than simply going through the motions of a visit.
- The prison officers felt that all the families who took part were interacting better and having more fun as a result, they also felt that the prisoners were calmer and happier than usual during the weeks of the course.
- Prison management described the officers as being sceptical about the pilot, but after witnessing the positive impact on participants they were said to be 'converted' to supporting this initiative fully for the future.
- All participants, but particularly the women attending had their levels of self-esteem and confidence recorded improve.
- The men said that the sentence they are doing in prison is harder on their family than it is on them and they felt that there should be more in prison to involve families. Equally it was clear from the interviews with all three women that having someone in prison has made their life difficult. For example, the two partners spoke about the loss of income and the reality of bringing up children on their own on a day to day basis, these testimonies further evidence the importance of support services such as *Circle* and *Families Outside*.
- The women greatly appreciated being connected to support in the community and it noted that although they want help they are often reluctant to ask for it, this shows that possibly services needed to do more to reach out to this population.
- Theatre Nemo have provided transport for participants and without this in place they would have struggled to attend. Transport to prisons is an ongoing problem and the main inhibitor identified, for future projects this cost should be factored in.
- The support offered by HMP Addiewell has been invaluable; Theatre Nemo and Prison Management have worked well together and established strong communication which has been a key factor in the project's success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There were a number of recommendations made, namely families could be given more information and options before the project starts, and also connections with services could be more strategic. This work has the potential to enhance the process of throughcare, and help support those who are leaving prison and their families to prepare for returning to the family home. Theatre Nemo are in contact with people who seem to be reluctant to ask for help even though they want it, therefore

inserts from services such as Families Outside or Circle could be particularly useful and have a lasting impact.

CONCLUSION

This pilot shows that the arts are a valuable tool for bringing families together, and because of their versatility they can be tailored so that they are age-specific and able to fit and match a range of skills and abilities. The very action of doing something together rather than going through the motions of a visit has had a significant bonding effect. Within this pilot families have been connected to wider sustained support and this is greatly appreciated by those taking part. There is no doubt that this projects success is because of the individuals who have taken part, however equally as well even those officers who were initially sceptical are now advocates and supporters of this work. In short, this pilot shows that the arts are an important and powerful tool, and this project in essence is giving families the chance to be families, and also focuses on developing their relationships through action and working together, the significance of the bonding opportunity this project brings should not be underestimated. The future evaluation will establish if the effects captured here are lasting, there is no doubt though that for all those who took part this is something they enjoyed, wanted to do again and would recommend to others. It is strongly recommended that the work which has been undertaken in the pilot is expanded and developed so that other families can also avail of this opportunity.

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REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 The Feasibility Study carried out before the beginning of the Pilot, noted that there no comparable projects that invite partners and their children into prison to work with the prisoner towards a common goal (Nugent, 2010). Therefore, this project is incredibly innovative, and the evaluation has the potential to bring new learning and establish good practice for working with families and widening the scope of throughcare interventions.

Evaluation

1.2 The Evaluation has involved interviewing the three prisoners, partners and their eight children who have taken part in the project, both before and at the end of the pilot. In partnership with the Visits Manager, Kirsty Manuel, all personal prison officers and those supervising the visits were asked to fill in a questionnaire to capture their observations of the families and the prisoners before and after the pilot. Moreover, observation notes were made based on two sessions attended and these will be referred to throughout the report.¹ The Links Centre Manager, Visits Manager and staff and Management from Theatre Nemo were also interviewed at the end of the pilot.

Background

1.3 HMP Addiewell was approached by Theatre Nemo in October 2010 with a view to undertaking arts projects with up to five prisoners and their families over ten weeks. Prison Management at HMP Addiewell were extremely enthusiastic about the idea and responded quickly to get it underway. Due to the timescales for the pilot, it was agreed that those receiving bonding visits already would be the most appropriate to take part because they have already been 'cleared' by security and are deemed low risk. In order to raise awareness and encourage interest of the opportunity the Visits Manager Kirsty Manuel spoke with the prisoners, and Theatre Nemo also presented some of their work.

1.4 Three families signed up to take part, two prisoners were fathers to their children and another wanted to strengthen the bond between his mother and niece. Fourteen participants in total took part, eight of which were children. The youngest child was less than a year old, and the oldest was nine, the average age of the children was six. Theatre Nemo planned to do an animation project from the outset because of the advantages presented by using this type of medium. Specifically, creating animation it is not something most people would generally do or have access to and is therefore entirely new for participants; it also requires team work and as a result should encourage developed interaction. Moreover, it gives an opportunity to learn new skills and each family would be able to take the DVD created home with them so that the benefits of this project could continue to be reinforced.

¹ In terms of the evaluation I would like to take this opportunity to thank Isabel McCue, Director of Theatre Nemo and also Hugh for their support. I would also like to thank Kirsty Manuel, the Visits Manager, who has been invaluable throughout in facilitating the project and getting information from personal prison officers and visits staff about the impact of the project.

2. FINDINGS BASED ON THE INTERVIEWS WITH PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Initial Views before the Pilot began

2.1 All participants were interviewed before the beginning of the pilot to establish a baseline measure, and their reasons for signing up and expectations of the project.

2.2 All felt that the service could be better advertised in the future. The men appreciated the organisation's presentation of their work and said that it was a key reason why they signed up, but they suggested that in future families should also be invited. All said that they would have liked more information before they started, but due to the short time scales involved in getting the project started this did not happen.

2.3 The three men spoke about how prisoners can often be weary of services, and that easing apprehension can mean meeting people face to face. All three said that the 'macho' image some men feel the need to portray in prison ultimately prevents them from opening up to ask for the help they need. For the future, they were convinced that 'word of mouth' about the project, and an ongoing presence of Theatre Nemo could potentially overcome the initial reluctant families seemed to have to signing up to take part.

2.4 All the men said they opted to do this project to spend more quality time with their family. Both fathers noted that the children have already played with all the toys and games in the Visits area, and the opportunity to do so something new and different was good. All were particularly glad that there was going to be a DVD made by the end of the course, as it would help remind the children of the contact and hopefully fun they had had with their father. The children in turn also said that they were excited about having the DVD. One father's son is having trouble at school; he hoped that this project could provide an opportunity and basis to discuss the deeper issues which need to be addressed. Overall, the men saw this project as a way of re-emphasising their role as partners, fathers or an uncle, and show their families that they care. Based on these testimonies it would seem that all three men regard their role within the family as positive, and arguably this is their 'human capital'. Using arts as a tool for expression, participants therefore can increase their human capital and accentuate their role as 'father', and thus see how they can 'make good' for the future, which is important for the process of desistance from crime (Maruna, 2005). Arts interventions are increasingly credited with enhancing social capital too (Williams, 1997). The importance of building 'social capital' or creating opportunities is now well established as a key factor in the process of desistance from crime (Farrall, 2002; Farrall and Maruna, 2004; Maruna, 2005; Whyte and McNeil, 2007). Through these interviews the men are highlighting that they see this project as offering them a way of moving towards and highlighting the positive identity of being a father or uncle, this acts as a buffer against the potentially debilitating label of 'offender' and 'prisoner' and is a way of building both human and social capital.

I want my family to get a chance to spend more time with me, but also it makes them see that I really do want to spend time with them.

(Prisoner)

Establishing a Baseline Measure

2.5 All felt that they already have excellent interaction with the children, however even though they were confident in their roles they appreciated that the project offered them something 'new' to do with their families.

2.6 One father is keen for his children to see him as a ‘father’, meaning that the visits aren’t just fun but are a time to provide discipline and support his partner as well. Over the past few months during the bonding visits he and his partner have been helping the children do their homework; he was worried about how the ten weeks would interrupt this interaction but ultimately was still glad to be taking part. HMP Edinburgh have been doing homework clubs as part of the bonding sessions that the men and their families are taking part in. In HMP Parc in England the families have a ‘Learning Together Club’ which is available to prisoners with children aged between 3 and 14. This Club takes place once a month, and aims to provide an opportunity for dads to help and support their children with learning that is appropriate to their child’s age and ability.² Each father takes part in a one day course prior to the Club where they speak about how to teach their child, and also cover Basic English and mathematics, as yet there has been no evaluation of this work, but undoubtedly it sounds like a worthwhile and promising idea. For the future this is something that HMP Addiewell could possibly also offer or explore.

I think this is actually the best part of the project, as I think they will really benefit, this sentence is harder on them than it is on me.

(Prisoner)

2.7 All three families spoke about the lack of public transport to the prison; as a result they only visit once a week. The prisoners and two partners hoped that within the project there would be time set aside so that families had the opportunity to discuss issues and speak privately. As a result of this early feedback Theatre Nemo ensured that the first forty-five minutes of the bonding session was for the family alone if they wanted it, and this has worked well.

2.8 All three prisoners felt that the sentence they are serving is harder on their families than it is on them, one man in particular pointed out that he was acutely aware of the difficulties his partner faces as she is now bringing up the children on her own. All said that the most important thing in their lives was their family and this kept them motivated and focused on the future.

2.9 All participants felt that there could be more happening in the prison to involve families, and they spoke about the ‘family day’, which happens once a year as being a good thing which should be encouraged. Two men said that the media presented a major barrier to good work happening in the prison for families, they felt that in effect this lack of contact was harmful to their children; they accepted that they had to be punished but did not think that their children should be punished for their mistakes too.³

2.10 All three prisoners rated themselves medium to high in terms of self-confidence, hope and self-esteem but the two partners and mother scored themselves low in all three categories. In the first interview the women spoke about feeling isolated and stressed as a result of their loved one being in prison. Two women were struggling to deal with serious debt problems. One woman, who has three children said that her washing machine had broken down a month ago; she could not

² This information was taken from: http://www.insidetime.org/info-visitorsinfo.asp?nameofprison=HMP-YOI_PARC

³ Although this is not the best forum for the more developed discussion required in relation to this, it should be noted that there perception is not unfounded. For example, Orr (2009) reported in the *Independent* that the London Royal Festival Hall was obliged to remove a sculpture and apologised for displaying it after *The Times* revealed that it was the work of a child sex killer. In a paper for the Howard Journal for Criminal Justice, Nugent and Loucks (forthcoming) also pinpoint the media as one of the main barriers to the use of arts in prison.

afford to replace it, and felt that trying to keep in top of everything seemed impossible. After the first interview the researcher offered all three partners the offer of being connected to other support, and specifically the organisation *Families Outside*,⁴ who offer intensive emotional and practical support to families affected by imprisonment. All three took up the offer and said that they would have liked to have known about services earlier. In the main reception area there are many services publicised, however these three cases show that sometimes asking the individuals directly can mean the difference in them actually accessing the support. One woman said that when her son was first sent to prison she felt completely alone and suggested that there should be information given to families at this stage to help them realise that support is out there.

2.11 The women appreciated that Theatre Nemo offered them a chance to ‘drop in’ to their service in the community and take part in arts projects for free; however the barriers to doing this was both the costs of transport and that the women were busy looking after the children.

Summary of Baseline Measure Based on the Interviews with the Families

2.12 The families feel that they already have good interaction at their visit times but appreciate the opportunity to do something new together as a family. The men rated their confidence, self-esteem and hopes for the future medium to high; however, the women scored low in all three categories. The men said that the sentence they are doing in prison is harder on their family than it is on them and they felt that there should be more in prison to involve families. Equally it was clear from the interviews with all three women that having someone in prison has made their life difficult. For example, the two partners spoke about the loss of income and the reality of bringing up children on their own on a day to day basis; this further evidences the importance of organisations such as *Families Outside* and *Circle*. One woman suffers from panic attacks and felt that having her main source of support in life in prison had made her condition worse. Overall, from the outset these families appear to be stable however the partners’ low levels of self-esteem, hope and confidence suggest that they could particularly benefit from this project.

Main Findings based on Feedback after the Pilot

Growth in Confidence and Self-Esteem

2.13 The men felt that although they did not grow much in confidence as a result of taking part, they had seen a difference in their partners and children. All the women said that they had grown in confidence and self-esteem; this reinforces findings from other research highlighting the positive impact of the arts (Allen, 2004; Cheliotis and Tankebe, 2008). One mother in particular said that normally, even in general day life, she found it difficult to talk to strangers and felt that the project had ‘brought her out of her shell.’ It is interesting to note that both the Links Centre Manager and the Visits Manager interviewed agreed that they could see a difference in the confidence levels of the partners.

Relaxing

2.14 The women said that doing the arts projects helped them feel relaxed. One woman who has mental health problems felt that whilst doing the project she was calm and less stressed, all the men also described being surprised at how relaxing they found it to make things with the materials.

Sense of Achievement

2.15 All participants expressed a sense of achievement because of the models made and projects completed, as well as the animation they were doing. The DVD was regarded as being the pinnacle point to this achievement being completed.

⁴ For more information on this service go to: www.familiesoutside.org.uk

Having Fun

2.16 The children were particularly vocal about their enthusiasm for the project, and it was clear that they enjoyed it and were excited about taking part. One girl spoke about how coming to the prison and doing the project with her father was brilliant, but she wouldn't tell her friends about this because it was a secret that her father was in prison. This small but significant insight highlights how these children, who are all under eight years old, are already dealing with complex emotions and situations. The opportunity for them to have fun with their parents is an important aspect of growing up and having a parent in prison greatly limits this. As Marshall points out:

The children of prisoners are the invisible victims of crime and the penal system. They have done no wrong, yet they suffer the stigma of criminality. Their rights to nurture are affected both by the criminality of their parents and by the state's response to it in the name of justice' (200: 8).

This project is allowing these children to be children within the context of a family environment, which is not easy to replicate within prison walls.

Bonding

2.17 Although as noted all of the men felt that they had good interaction with their children before the project started, all three commented that this project brought the whole family around the table working together. In the same way as a family dinner it provided an opportunity for the families to do something as a family rather than simply have a visit. One mother said that it was strange because she had not expected that through the project she would be able to see a different side to her son, she described it as 'a happier side' and felt that they had bonded more as a result. The Home Office consultation paper in England and Wales, *Every Child Matters*, states:

The bond between the child and their parents is the most critical influence on a child's life. Parenting has a strong impact on a child's educational development, behaviour, and mental health.... We need to pay more attention to the critical relationships between children and their families and provide them with better support. We should recognise the vital role played by fathers as well as mothers. (Chief Secretary to the Treasury 2003: 3.1 and 1.18).

2.18 This project in essence is giving families the chance to be families, and also focuses on developing their relationships through action and working together, the significance of the bonding opportunity this project brings should not be underestimated.

Normally the kids would all be running about, but this brings us together sitting around the table, being a family.

(Prisoner)

Doing Something New

2.19 The children as well as the adults said that they were glad that they were doing something new and learning new skills, they were excited about doing the project and that the phone conversations during the week with the children often revolved around discussing the arts project, which all felt built upon the bonding felt during the course.

Getting Access to Other Support

2.20 All three women have been put in touch with *Families Outside* by the researcher after their first interview. All three are getting practical and ongoing emotional support. For example, one woman has been given a grant to get her washing machine fixed and was grateful that the service

had made her aware that support is out there and she doesn't have to do everything on her own. All of the women said that having someone to talk to who could understand and help was really useful and helped them to feel less isolated.

Importance of Practical Support

2.21 One of the key areas of learning about this project is the importance of giving families practical support to actually be able to make the visits and take part. Theatre Nemo provided a community bus and taxis service to families because the train and bus services are either non-existent or limited to the prison at the weekends, and this provision has been invaluable. One woman even said that she is dreading when the project ends as she'll have to worry about the transport issue all over again. All of the families are on benefits and therefore the travel costs are an important consideration. This finding highlights a wider issue faced by families. SPS have drafted a Family Strategy which involves addressing the lack of transport links to prison as this remains a long standing issue (Higgenbotham, 2007). The basic barrier presented by a lack of transport, costs and practicality of getting to prisons essentially acts as a major inhibitor to family involvement.

Theatre Nemo Staff and Prison Officer Support

2.22 All participants felt that Theatre Nemo staff had gone out of their way to ensure that families were able to take part fully in the project, all felt welcomed even from the first day, and comfortable to use the materials. It was noted in the observations made during the courses that because of the outlay of the visits hall prison officers are able to provide surveillance in a less intrusive way than older prisons. Also, it was noted that the staff were not intimidating or did not inhibit the project in any way; it was very much a 'hands off' approach. Although this may seem like a minor point, the support from prison officers is crucial and this is reflected in past research and highlighted in the feasibility study. In other projects, such as the art therapy sessions in Barlinnie Special Unit, the prison officers were more involved and this was said to help prisoners as well as prison officers recognise that they weren't so different and thus improve the interaction between both parties (Nellis, 2010). In HMP Addiewell it was noted that officers do not take part in the project at all, however equally families seemed to have a good relationship with the officers. Unlike in other prisons staff in HMP Addiewell wear name badges, and the prisoners refer to staff by first name, arguably therefore the humanising aspect which was so ground breaking in these other projects is less important within this prison. Also as this project is about family interaction as opposed to improving relationships outside of this, it is recommended that the current format of supervision continues as it is more in line with what the project needs.

Suggestions for Change

Wanting the Course to be longer

2.23 All the families and especially the children said that they would like the course to be longer. Two men suggested that in order to give more families an opportunity to take part possibly the course should be shorter.

Do Different Activities

2.24 Although the families enjoyed the animation, and were keen to have the DVD to take home, it was suggested by the children and the partners that maybe in future each week should be about doing different things, such as painting, drawing or music. It was noted in the first week after the children had made the set for the animation that they wanted to take it home to continue to work on it, the idea of being able to work on an activity that can then be more fully developed outside of the project may be worth exploring for future projects.

Should this project be extended to those prisoners not eligible for bonding visits?

2.25 All of the prisoners and their families were asked if they felt that this type of project should be extended to those who are not yet eligible for bonding visits. All but one participant said that it should, those interviewed felt that it would be particularly beneficial for families who are maybe struggling to interact. One participant however said that he was not keen on low risk prisoners mixing with others in this context; he reasoned that he worried about his children potentially being exposed to those who are unstable. He pointed out 'If they can't keep their heads down here (referring to the cells), then they can't be relied on to keep their heads up here (referring to the Visits Hall).' All of the prisoners though agreed that it was unfair that essentially the children of prisoners were being punished when their father was not eligible for bonding visits, they however could not see a way around this and felt that the system at the moment was fair. This finding suggests that future expansion of the project beyond those eligible for bonding visits would require careful handling. However, there is no reason why the benefits generated for this group could not be replicated for others. Indeed, the partners in this group who were low in confidence and self-esteem at the start have really been able to show the positive impact of this project, therefore arguably the more vulnerable prisoners could really gain from taking part.

Summary of Findings based on interviews with Participants

2.26 As noted there are significant benefits reported by the families, even these parents who reported being confident, have noted that the interaction they have had during the course has improved. The levels of confidence were especially improved by partners, and overall everyone agreed that this is something they would like to see happen again in the future, and they would recommend it to other families. Theatre Nemo have tried hard to help support families, and the practical support they provided by way of transport has proved invaluable to ensure the attendance of participants. This project highlights that those who need help, and particularly the partners and families of prisoners are often not aware of the support available, and possibly services need to reach out more to this population.

3. FINDINGS BASED ON PRISON OFFICER FEEDBACK

3.1 The Visits Manager Kirsty Manuel has been instrumental in ensuring the feedback from both personal officers and visits staff to capture how they feel the project has impacted upon each of the prisoners who have taken part.

Baseline Measure of Behaviour and Impact

3.2 As noted, the men who have taken part in this project are already eligible to receive bonding visits and are therefore the lowest risk prisoners and generally 'best behaved' in the prison. The personal officers were asked to rate the individual prisoners on a normal day to day basis in relation to their behaviour (5 being extremely volatile and difficult, and 1 being placid and no trouble at all). Two prisoners were scored as being a '2' before the beginning of the course; this has dropped to '1' at the end. One man's score remained unchanged as he was rated a '1' both before and after, however in all three cases the prison officers commented that they felt the prisoners was calmer and happier during the course.

3.3 The Visits Managers noted before the pilot that all of the families interacted quite well before the course started, however it was felt that as a result of taking part in the pilot the men played with their children more and seem to be more confident in doing this, and generally the families are having more fun at the visits.

It was nice to see this prisoner sitting on the floor laughing and smiling with his family.

(Prison Officer)



3.4 As a way of gauging the potential longer term impact of the course the Visits Manager has offered to carry out this exercise and collect prison officer's observations of prisoners at least three months after the project has ended. This type of assessment will be invaluable to try to establish whether or not the positive effects of the course are lasting.

4. FEEDBACK FROM PRISON MANAGEMENT

4.1 The Deputy Governor Tony Simpson, previous Links Centre Manager Robert Thomson and Visits Manager Kirsty Manuel have all played key roles in helping Theatre Nemo get the pilot started. The importance of support from the prison establishment itself is invaluable for projects, and plays an instrumental role in any subsequent success (Nugent and Loucks, 2010). Those supporting the project are aware of the impact this project can play in terms of supporting those taking part, but also towards wider policies which SPS are working towards. Specifically, this contributes to the Scottish Prison Service's 4th Key Performance Indicator that each estate should achieve at least 2 million hours of offender participation in activities such as workshops, formal education, building life skills or work skills (Scottish Prison Service 2008). The project is also able to make a number of contributions to the Scottish Prison Service's nine Offender Outcomes identified in the SPS Delivery Plan as having a positive impact on reducing offending (Scottish Prison Service, 2009). The courses can improve mental well-being, attitudes and behaviour and be a step towards improved literacy, employability and access to community support. From the first meeting between Prison Management and Theatre Nemo, it was made clear that the support given by HMP Addiewell to this project is about helping fathers to remain connected to their families and to build on this interaction.

4.2 The Visits Manager Kirsty Manuel and Links Centre Manager Paul Kennedy were interviewed at the end of the project, both have been vital to ensuring continued enthusiasm and support. They agreed that before the project started many prison officers were sceptical and the project was described as a 'hard sell.' Both Managers said that officer's report seeing a change in both the men and their families as a result of taking part, namely improved interaction and behaviour. As a result, officers who had previously been described as sceptical were said to be 'converted' supporters of the use of arts. Therefore, this pilot has not only had a positive impact on the participants but also the prison officers involved too. The Visits Manager has invited all officers to the premiere of the DVD and hoped that this would further reinforce the optimism generated.

4.3 The Links Centre Manager, who used to be the Security Manager, said that in his previous role he may have been reluctant to support this project because of the potential risks involved, such as allowing materials to be brought into the prison. However, as a result of witnessing the impact this pilot has had on participants he was keen to find ways around any potential barriers, and both he and the Visits Manager are eager for this work to continue and expand. Both agreed that reinforcing the positive identity associated with being around family members was good for the prisoners and their families. As a result of taking part prisoners were said to be calmer and happier, it was pointed out that this makes the prison officers' roles easier, and also because it helps build family relationships it was said to be something that services and prisons should support.

4.4 Both described the pilot as giving families an opportunity to do something and be a family, rather than simply 'going through the motions of a normal visit'. In line with the observations carried out by the researcher it was accepted that HMP Addiewell has facilities which are more welcoming than most other prisons, this gives a strong basis for this type of activity to happen more.

Proposed Changes

Strategically use this project to help process of Throughcare

4.5 It was suggested that this project could sit easily as a way of helping prisoners particularly prior to their release and thus promote the process of reintegration, and the inclusion of other services to help prisoners and their families' link up with support would be beneficial.

Possibility of Extension beyond those entitled to Bonding Sessions

4.6 Theatre Nemo staff were described as 'impressive', professional and management could trust that for future projects security questions raised could be dealt with. Both agreed that this type of project could even be made available to those prisoners who as yet have not been able to meet the criteria for bonding visits.

Continue Communication to make this project 'easy' for participants

4.7 Both agreed that the transport links to the prison could be better and they could continue to help find more suitable times for families to take part. In the beginning the project was changed from Sunday to Saturday because of the poor public transport particularly on a Sunday, this type of communication needs to continue. Management spoke about the staffing issue currently being faced, and that this has had an impact on what can be offered. Overall, it was clear that management were keen to keep the project going and find solutions and ways around potential barriers, and they were strongly aware that communication with Theatre Nemo needs to remain strong.

Summary of Findings based on Prison Officer and Management Feedback

4.8 The pilot has overcome the initial scepticism faced from some prison officers. The only barrier to the work taking place is staff problems and most importantly the lack of transport to the prison. The project has linked in with other services, but for the future this could be more strategic. This project has had significant benefits not only to prisoners, but their families, prison officers and prison management. Prison management and staff feel that the pilot is something they want to see continue and expand.

5. FEEDBACK FROM THEATRE NEMO MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

5.1 Theatre Nemo management and staff were pleased with the positive impact they had also witnessed from prisoners and their families, and they agreed that this project was worthwhile and should continue and be expanded for the future. Theatre Nemo reinforced the view that this project brings the family together working towards something which is tangible and rewarding. The practical support provided to help families overcome transport difficulties was again cited as being vital for future projects.

Proposed Changes

Project should be set up to be age-specific

5.2 Although it was agreed that the concept of the animation project had worked well, it was pointed out that this medium requires patience, and the age group were probably too young to engage fully. This view fits with what the children themselves said, whereby they wanted to do different things each week instead, and indeed Theatre Nemo accommodated this, as they did other projects as well as the main animation. In short, it was agreed that ideally for the future, before the

project starts the ages of the children should be firstly established, and where possible the project set up should be tailored better, or even based on what families have said they would like to do beforehand.

Welcome pack for participants

5.3 It was agreed that before the project starts Theatre Nemo should distribute a welcome pack to families and prisoners to give them an overview of the work happening, and even give participants options of the activities available. This pack could also contain information about support services in the community and in prison which prisoners or their families can access.

Better Linking up with Other Services

5.4 Theatre Nemo are glad that the three women attending have linked up with support from the organisation *Families Outside*. It was agreed that for the future *Families Outside* could be invited to attend at least one of the sessions and speak to the families directly. Theatre Nemo hoped that if the project was to continue they would be able to facilitate connecting participants with other support services as much as possible, particularly those that are focused on family support such as *Circle*.⁵

Build on Family Interaction

5.5 It was suggested that families could be given tasks to do during the week in between the project taking place so that the interaction started could continue to be built upon. Overall it was agreed that this should be fairly limited due to the pressures faced by families, and would be undertaken based only when families felt that this is something they wanted to do.

Designated Space

5.6 During one of the sessions it was noted that children who are not taking part in the project sometimes out of curiosity came along and sat in on the sessions. Although this undoubtedly shows that awareness of the project and enthusiasm is generated, it also disrupts the activities taking place and in particular the family interaction which this project aims to promote. Also, in one session it was noted by the researcher that one couple who had not signed up to the project had used it as a babysitting service. One suggestion to overcome this issue is that an area is sectioned off within the hall, so that it is clear that this is only for those who have signed up to take part. The hall in the prison has the ability to facilitate this and therefore it is suggested that for future projects this is put in place and monitored.

Clarify Objectives to Participants

5.7 In the first week of the project staff described how the three families had come together as one large group and it was immediately clear that this was not conducive to encouraging family interaction. Each family from this week onwards were given their own specific area and this worked well. In short, it was felt by staff that for the future, the service needs to communicate to those taking part the objectives of the project, and indeed this could be part of the welcome pack, as well as being reiterated in the first session.

Keep Number of Participants Relatively Low

5.8 In the original specification Theatre Nemo had wanted to have five families involved in the project, however due to timescales for recruitment three families had take part. It was agreed by both Theatre Nemo and Prison Management that three families are actually ideal, and any more than this would have been too much.

Make Course Shorter

⁵ For more information on this service go to: www.circlescotland.org

5.9 Theatre Nemo Management felt that the course should potentially be split, so that it runs for five weeks rather than ten as this would give more families the opportunity of taking part. However, this finding was not shared by participants and would need to be a decision made with participants and prison management.

Summary of Findings based on Theatre Nemo Management and Staff Feedback

5.10 Overall, it is clear that Theatre Nemo Management and staff agree with prison management and staff that this project has greatly benefitted all participants, to help them to build confidence and self-esteem, and this impact has been notable. Theatre Nemo set up the project quickly within Addiewell and as a result information given to participants before it started was limited. For future projects a welcome pack was suggested, and also projects would be decided ideally in consultation with participants and be more age-specific. Theatre Nemo have been responsive and made changes needed as the project developed. Ultimately the proposed changes are in relation to more planning from the outset. Theatre Nemo and staff at Addiewell have worked well together and it is clear that the information sharing even at this early stage has been good, and this should continue.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Based on the feedback from participants, prison officers and Management, Theatre Nemo Management and Staff, there are a number of recommendations made which should enhance future projects. These are:

1. Projects should factor in substantial time for planning and dissemination of information to participants and families about the proposed work.
2. Ideally before the start of the course, families and participants should be presented with options of what they can do, and Theatre Nemo therefore can decide based on this consultation process, and information about the children, to set up age-specific arts projects that participants want to work on.
3. Due to the transport problems involved in getting to prisons, all future courses should factor in transport solutions for participants, and where possible continue to communicate difficulties faced to prison management so that they know about the issues faced.
4. Theatre Nemo have contact with families and prisoners who sometimes are not aware of the support available both in prison and in the community, where possible Theatre Nemo should help participants link up with support agencies. Services which have been set up particularly to support family interaction and relationships, such as *Families Outside* and *Circle*, should be given a more strategic insertion into the programme so that they can meet families face to face.
5. Theatre Nemo should ideally have a designated and sectioned off space within the visits hall which is exclusively for participants.
6. Theatre Nemo should continue to raise awareness of the success of this project so that prison officers can understand the benefits of the use of arts and family involvement.
7. This project has been able to highlight how important it is to have individuals who really support and want the project to do well. Within this evaluation it has been clear that Theatre Nemo and Prison Management have wanted this project to succeed, and have worked hard together to make it happen, these individuals such as the Visits Manager Kirsty Manuel, Robert Thomson and now Paul Kennedy the Links Centre Manager, Isabel McCue and Hugh McHugh from Theatre Nemo should continue to work together to develop and build on these links. These links should grow to involve wider staff so that these types of projects continue to gain credibility based on the success they have achieved.
8. Theatre Nemo and Prison Management should continue ongoing communication particularly when the project becomes self-evaluating.

9. It is recommended that this project is expanded and developed so that other families are able to take part and benefit in the same way as those participants in the pilot.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The feasibility study established that this type of project has never been attempted before, and therefore presented an important opportunity for learning and establishing good practice. Based on the interviews with participants, and observations from prison officers and management before and after the project, it is clear that this project has helped bring families closer together. Rather than simply going through the motions of a visit, this has given the families a chance to do something together, and the significant bonding impact of this should not be underestimated. Participants, particularly the partners attending, all had their levels of self-esteem and confidence recorded improve as a result of taking part. All the partners have been connected to wider support in the community and were grateful of this, their reluctance to ask for help even though they need it shows that services sometimes may need to reach out more to those in this position.

7.2 All the children who took part were under eight years old, and are already dealing with complex emotions and situations. The opportunity for them to have fun with their parents and family is incredibly important, but having a parent or family member in prison greatly limits this. This project is allowing these children to be children within the context of a family environment, this is not easy to replicate within the prison walls but has been achieved here.

7.3 By taking part in the pilot the men are moving away from the debilitating label of 'prisoner' or 'father', and towards the positive and enabling label of 'father', based on past research this should have the effect of assisting the process of desistance from offending.

7.4 There have been some recommendations made for future projects, namely families could be given more information and options before the project starts, and also connections with services could be more strategic. This work has the potential to enhance the process of throughcare, and help support those who are leaving prison and their families prepare for returning to the family home. It is clear that the only inhibitor to the success of future projects is the practical issue of transport; therefore it is strongly recommended that this is budgeted and planned for. The communication and support given by Management and staff at HMP Addiewell has proved invaluable, this should continue to be built upon, particularly if this project is to become self-evaluating.

7.5 In conclusion, this pilot shows that the arts are an important and powerful tool, and this project is giving families the chance to be families, and also focuses on developing their relationships through action and working together, the significance of the bonding opportunity this project brings should not be underestimated. The future evaluation will establish if the effects captured here are lasting, there is no doubt though that for all those who took part this is something they enjoyed, wanted to do again and would recommend to others. It is strongly recommended that the work which has been undertaken in the pilot is expanded and developed so that other families can also avail of this opportunity.

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