

Creating Change

Summary Report 2019/20

Creating Change is an original arts intervention programme, designed and delivered by Bearface Theatre (BFT) with Hampshire Cultural Trust (HCT) for Hampshire & Isle of Wight Community Rehabilitation Company (HIOW CRC), funded by Hampshire's Police & Crime Commissioner and HIOW CRC.

This is a summary report by HCT, with excerpts taken from the full evaluation report and appendix by Independent Researcher Alexandra Russell, published Oct 2020.

Overview

Creating Change is an interactive arts programme using drama & theatre techniques to help individuals to identify, moderate and manage their attitudes, thinking and behaviours in order to make positive choices and changes in their own lives.

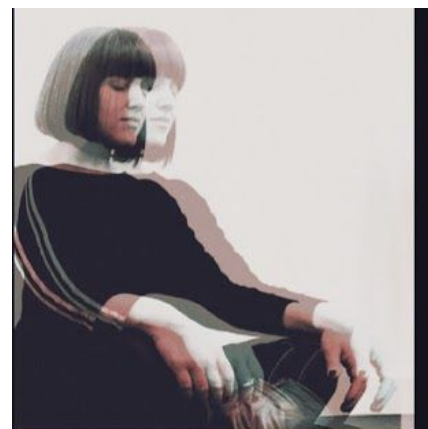
Creating Change was delivered across five settings; HIOW CRC Women's Centres in Aldershot, Cosham, Basingstoke, Southampton and Isle of Wight

- 8 two-hour sessions per programme.
- **65 Individuals on probation impacted in total:** 10 in Aldershot, 14 in Cosham, 16 in Basingstoke, 9 in Southampton and 16 on Isle of Wight.
- 37/40 group sessions delivered in total*
- 74 hours delivered (out of a planned 80*)
- 50% - 75% of Individuals attended 4-8 sessions
- The average increase in Individual self-scoring questionnaires was 34%
- Highest increase for an Individual score pre to post programme was 129%
- No self-scoring questionnaires showed a decrease in scores.

**Due to Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown measures implemented by the Government, Southampton and Isle of Wight had fewer sessions.*

Getting us to do activities and then sitting down and working out what it means to us and how it relates to our lives - it makes you think about how changing certain things could change your life. I find that really interesting. I've found something different in me. It feels like counselling - it makes me think. Getting up and playing things out helps you picture your day to day life choices"

(Participant)



The Programme

The independent report recommends adopting concise and accessible language to describe *Creating Change*, suggesting that **creative action for social change** best encapsulates the methods and ethos of the programme.

The *Creating Change* process is designed around a framework that is bottom up, co-produced, bespoke, collective, active, creative, forward looking, strength-based and pro social. It is informed by the 7 pathways to prevent re-offending, with specific focus on **the impact on attitudes, thinking and behaviour** of participants.

Creating Change aims to be responsive to people and their environments, supporting them to take control of telling their stories within a bottom up process that generates original material based on individual/collective life experiences. The programme supports individuals and groups to critically reflect upon their life choices and the motivations behind them, as well as learning transferable skills of positive self-expression that help develop forward looking strategies on a longer journey towards desistance (stopping crime).

A simplified example of the process Individuals are guided through on the *Creating Change* programme:

	Attitudes	Thinking	Behaviour
1st session	Everyone is out to get me —————>	I am scared and alone —————>	I stay in my house and do not communicate with, or see other people —————>
8th session	I am not alone; I know people that I can turn to for help —————>	I feel safe and in control —————>	I am developing healthier relationships and starting to discover new interests —————>

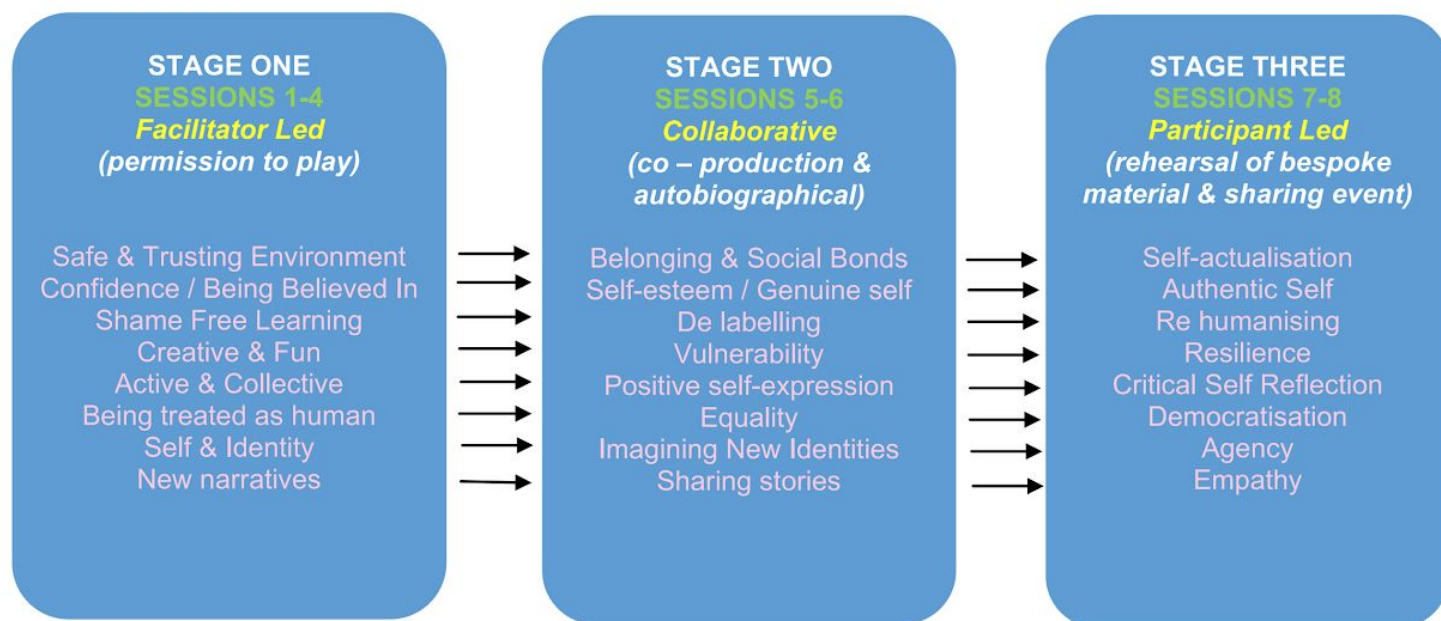
Methodology

The programme and the research are interdisciplinary, informed by the relational qualities of Applied Theatre, Applied Criminology, Psychology and Sociology.

Creating Change encourages Individuals “to build confidence, teamwork, self-esteem, creative thinking and self-reflection skills”
(Probation Practitioner, Basingstoke, 2019)

Theory of Change

This bespoke model has been developed and focused over three years of *Creating Change* delivery. The main aims of the programme are encapsulated within the three interconnecting and progressive stages of the Theory of Change model:



Alexandra Russell (Copyright 2020)

Questionnaire Scores (pre & post programme)

All Individuals and Probation Practitioners were asked to complete a self-scoring questionnaire pre and post programme. Helping to ascertain whether the programme achieved any positive impact relating to the Theory of Change model and other transferable life skills.

All questions were formulated based on the research aims and each question had a possible score of between 1-10 points. The scores from the 1st (pre) and 2nd (post) questionnaires were used to produce Individual scores, providing a point of comparison, as well as generating an average score across all five programmes.

- The highest increase for an Individual score was **129%**.
- The average increase in Individual self-scoring questionnaires was **34%**
- No self-scoring questionnaires (Individuals and Probation Practitioners) showed a decrease in scores in the 2019/20 programmes.

- The significant rise in the self-scores of Individuals and Probation Practitioners (across all five CRC Women’s Centres) suggests **a high increase in personal growth and development** as a result of the programme.
- Questions that showed the greatest increase in Individuals’ self-scoring include: *positive impact on self and identity, feeling part of a safe and supportive community, increased confidence and self-esteem, empathy for others, a new awareness of the importance of self-care, communication skills, and agency to make a positive change in their lives.*
- Self scoring questionnaires from the three fully delivered programmes recorded the following total average increases: Aldershot 46%, Cosham 21% Basingstoke 45%.

“Seeing the Individuals engage and enjoy the programme so much has helped me realise the value that a creative, fun and active programme can bring and the progress it can allow the women to make. For the future I now feel that I have skills and activities I can use in future sessions to make it more effective for Individuals”

(Probation Practitioner)

Impact

- **95% of informants articulated a desire and willingness to make a positive change in their lives by the end of the programme.**
- Informants cited **significant increases in confidence and self-esteem.** They also described **experiencing profound shifts in personal growth and development** throughout the duration of the programme.
- Individuals stated that the use of active, participatory and creative methods made the programme fun and the **learning experience more memorable.**
- No aggressive or violent attitudes, thinking or behaviour was displayed by any Individuals during programme sessions.
- Individuals commented that they were developing a **better understanding of their motivations and triggers**, as well as learning to **positively address and reimagine their sense of self and identity.**



- All participating Probation Practitioners stated that they had enjoyed taking part in *Creating Change*. Many commented that they believed the experience had **improved their working relationships** with Individuals, both within the programme and beyond.
- The aims and philosophy of the *Creating Change* programme can be found in the three progressive stages of the Theory of Change model – achieving one or all of the three stages has shown to have **a profoundly positive impact on highly vulnerable Individuals**. However, it is important to note that not all Individuals progress to stages two and three of the model. In fact, Individuals often appear to move forward and backwards through the three stages, and thus it is not always a linear process of progression.
- The profoundly valuable attributes stated in the three-stage model are often something that non offenders take for granted. However, they can have a **significant positive impact on self and of identity** for Individuals, **especially for those that have been traumatised and criminalised**.



- One of the main barriers to progression was - often due to unavoidable and complex life circumstances - that Individuals were only able to attend 4 or fewer sessions. Reduced attendance is often accompanied by Individuals articulating that they do not feel ready to make a positive change in their lives. However, it can still be **a profound and meaningful experience of personal growth and development** for those Individuals that attend 1-3 sessions and just achieve stage one.

"Lots of people have a lack of understanding of emotions and how to deal with them but this is making you think about your daily lives and how your actions affect your life and how you can stop bad actions in your life. It's going to help me understand my son a bit more too. I think this is going to make me be a bit calmer by understanding emotions better"

(Participant)

Conclusion

Although desistance (stopping crime) was not one of the key measures of success for *Creating Change*, the programme still offered Individuals a skill set that appeared to have a **significantly positive impact on their sense of identity and decision-making processes**. Testimonies given by Individuals during the delivery of the programme indicate **profound shifts in attitudes, thinking and behaviour**. The full independent report argues that the personal growth and development that Individuals demonstrated should be considered **a vital stepping stone** towards helping them to meet their human needs. Therefore, the programme should not exist in a vacuum, instead it should be used in conjunction within a wider holistic package of care and support (support with employment, education, community engagement, housing, economic security, childcare, drugs misuse etc.). Only then will Individuals have a realistic chance of moving forward to desist from crime and live meaningful and purposeful lives.



Current findings suggest that the BFT methods and philosophy of working within the criminal justice system would have value being **applied across genders, settings and interventions**. Therefore, serious consideration and discussion should also be given to running *Creating Change* with male groups serving Probation Orders.

Most Probation group programmes run for **12 sessions**. It is suggested that *Creating Change* could be extended from 8 to 12 sessions. This would also enable a longer study which would provide a significant increase in sample numbers and a more robust and rigorous evidence base to evaluate the impact of *Creating Change*.

"I have enjoyed every session and attended every session. This has helped me deal with everyday life issues. It has given me confidence and happiness. I can come to a session feeling down, unhappy, but finish and leave, without a care in the world. I'm more confident. I feel happy with myself. I've made friends. I've learnt a lot about myself. This group has reminded me that it is OK to be myself and laugh. It has been fun!"

"Initially I did not like being in groups, especially with women. Now I'm so much more confident to be involved in a group. It has enabled me to be more active in the meetings I now go outside out of sessions. This is exactly what I needed for where I'm at now and for my future. Thank you!"

(Participant)

The full research report can be found at: <http://www.bearfacetheatre.org/research/> and <https://www.hampshireculture.org.uk/social-impact/creating-change>