

August 2014

**“A Better Life...”**

**Review on Theatre Nemo creative work in Prisons**

**Participant Case Studies & Questionnaires**

**Evaluation and Research**

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**Background**

Theatre Nemo encourages people in the West of Scotland to improve their mental health and well-being through participation in arts-based programmes of engagement, support and rehabilitation. The organisation was established in 1998 by Isabel & Hugh McCue with the core principles of;

- Improving and promoting good mental health and well-being;
- Improving the support available for carers, friends and families of those affected by mental ill-health;
- Advancing society’s understanding of mental ill-health and challenge misconceptions;
- Making a significant and tangible contribution to create a more cohesive, integrated and inclusive community.

Widely acknowledged as a model of good practice by Members of the Scottish Parliament, NHS Practitioners, Prison Support and Rehabilitation Services, Theatre Nemo continues to coordinate, develop and deliver professional support services by facilitating a programme of support delivered by a bank of sessional staff committed to the core principles of the organisation: By promoting a culture of inclusion and understanding, staff encourage participants to gain ownership of client-led programmes. Theatre Nemo's work actively reduces isolation and disengagement from more conventional mental health support services and believes that the Arts should be one of the more predominant vehicles for moving towards better mental health.

Theatre Nemo currently has three main programme areas that allows them to delivers mental health support where it is needed the most -**Communities** (Community Choir; Guitar and Song-writing; Visual Arts and Animation, and; Drama/Performance); **Prisons** (painting and collage; drama; creative writing; drumming, and; animation); **PsychiatricHospitals**(Visual Arts and Animation; Choir, and; Crafts).

### **Purpose**

Theatre Nemo wishes to raise awareness of its criminal justice engagement and programmes activities with stakeholders, referring agencies and clients. It is hoped that by conducting a piece of small-scale research that gathers the views of participants through feedback, interviews and client case studies, Theatre Nemo will be able to present a honest review of existing services and evidence the value of the organisation's interventions to participants. The research will present the outcomes that have been achieved through client journeys that began as a direct result of the organisation's intervention and support.

## **Scope of Research**

Research that has been carried out and presented in The Scottish Government's *'Mental Health Strategy for Scotland: 2012-15'*, which evidences a greater need to address the issue of mental ill-health in Scotland. The findings emphasise the financial impact of mental ill-health on the Scottish Economy with references to medical and welfare allowances, as well as the cost of mental health support services as the main drivers for the strategy. The purpose of this study is not to undermine or challenge the Scottish Government Strategy, but to highlight the successes of Theatre Nemo's intervention as a voluntary sector organisation, in the delivery of mental health support services that contribute towards *"helping people to sustain and improve their health"* (Scottish Government Strategic Objectives<sup>1</sup>).

This research will be limited by participant data and not make exaggerated claims or highlight perceived deficiencies in existing Mental Health services. The research will present a true account of the contribution that Theatre Nemo has had in the lives of participants for the purposes of Marketing (promotion and presentations) and Operational (programme improvement) purposes.

## **Methodology**

The research will adopt a mixed method approach involving both qualitative and quantitative research methods: Specifically, one-to-one interviews will be carried out with 4 participants identified by the organisation; the findings of which will be supported by anonymous questionnaires completed by all other current participants in Theatre Nemo activities. By adopting such an approach it is argued that validity will be added to the research ensuring that the outcome of the research is uncontested

Data gathered will not be contrasted against results and only be used to present the genuine views and experiences of participants. All research data will be stored securely and anonymously unless participants give prior consent.

## Research Questions

The main focus of the research is to gather the experiences and opinions of participants in Theatre Nemo programmes. In doing so the research will address two main questions:

- *How* has participation in Theatre Nemo activities/programmes improved your overall mental health and wellbeing?
- *To what extent* has participation in Theatre Nemo activities/programmes improved your overall mental health and wellbeing?
- *And what difference* has engaging in theatre Nemo activities made to your life

The results from one-to-one interviews will describe individual experiences of engagement, experiences and journeys with Theatre Nemo programme(s) and in what ways the support has assisted in their mental health rehabilitation and/or feelings of well-being. The questionnaires will offer validity to these case studies and provide a foundation for analysis of the value of Theatre Nemo's support to individuals faced with mental-ill health

Having completed the pilot mentoring project in Barlinnie Date? it began to highlight just what problems the men leaving prison faced in the community. Fear, anxiety, homelessness, unemployment, isolation, poverty and loneliness These are just some of the emotional issues facing people leaving prison and entering into a sometimes very hostile community.

**On the Last week of our project in HMP Barlinnie 5 prisoners were interviewed**

### **Interviewee 1**

Q. What made you become involved in the TN Group?

A. I quite liked it and enjoyed it and think it's one of the best things you can do.

Q. Why do you feel this is one of the best things you can do?

A. It's a chance to be creative. It helps you become more confident. I suppose it helps you manage better. You can get stuck inside yourself, this doesn't help you achieve, you need a bit of confidence.

- Q. Is there any difference in you from before until now?  
A. Yes. More confident than I was. It's more of a relief and talking to people you find a lot of people are in the same place as you, you just don't realise it.
- Q. Do you think this will help you in the future?  
A. Yes I am going to go to Theatre Nemo when I get out and this will save me getting bored, I am looking forward to continuing the Taiko Drumming I loved playing them.
- Q. What do you think of the idea for a creative holistic support centre?  
A. Yes that would be good to have everything where you can find it and people know who you are, it's very easy to go off the rails when you get out you get really frustrated getting sent from pillar to post and it's very easy to end up in the pub.

### **Interviewee 2**

- Q. What made you come to the TN group?  
A. I thought I would come to see what it was like and interact with people, I had a lot of nerves before I came in, but I'm all right now. I found it was brilliant today, and I'd like another project to start again.
- Q. Is there any difference from before until now?  
A. Before I didn't really take part in anything because I thought no one would understand my accent. But now I just take part I am more confident and I have got to know people.
- Q. What is it you are doing?  
A. Ice breakers and getting to know new people and learn their names. We also play games to help memory and concentration. Performed a play we wrote.
- Q. Do you think this will help you in the future?  
A. I don't know, but hope I will be able to get to the groups once I get out need to get a house and everything sorted don't know where I will be living.
- Q. What do you think of the idea for a creative holistic support centre?  
A. I think it's a great idea and I think if you asked any prisoner they would say the same.

### **Interviewee 3**

- Q. What made you come to the TN groups?  
A. I was asked if I wanted to come and I thought I would come along to see what it was like. Since then I have come every week and have asked for it to be on more than once a week.
- Q. Is there any difference from before you came to now?  
A. Look forward to coming on a Monday. Before this there was nothing to look forward to. I enjoy this class. When I started the group "I think I lacked confidence and I was a bit nervous.
- Q. What is it you are doing?  
A. Group work, interaction and drama. One to one acting out drama.

- Q. Has being involved helped you in anyway?  
A. Yes, I was always shy – the drama games helps me focus this has helped me come out of my shell. I enjoy being involved. When I was in school or even outside I was shy and did not want to participate. As an adult I use alcohol to help with my shyness as this brought me out of my shell. Now I don't, as I want to be involved.
- Q. Do you think this will help you in the future?  
A. Yes, When I went into care when I was very young I had to grow up fast there was no things like art and drama I just tried to survive from day to day, now I find things I can do it makes me feel good
- Q. What do you think of the idea for a creative holistic support centre?  
A. Sounds like a good idea, its lonely when you get out be good to have other things to do apart from going to appointments.

#### **Interviewee 4**

- Q. What made you come to the TN group?  
A. I thought I would come to see what it was like and interact with people
- Q. Is there any difference in you from before until now?  
A. Yes. More confidant than I was. It's more of a release of tension and talking to people and having a laugh and I enjoy the group. I think it's definitely helped me with teamwork and working together. It's helped me to get on with the staff and to communicate better.
- Q. What is it you are doing?  
A. We started off playing games seemed a bit silly at first but then began to understand what we were learning.
- Q. Has being involved helped in any way?  
A. It has helped me relax a little; I am, quite a deep person until I get to know you. It has helped me get active and has given me something to look forward to on a Monday – a good start to the week.
- Q. Do you think this will help you in the future?  
A. Its helping me now that's all I know
- Q. What do you think of the idea for a creative holistic support centre?  
Don't know, cant imagine what it would be like.

#### **Interviewee 5**

- Q. What made you come to the TN group?  
A. I was told about it up in day care and they were going to do a play about 130 years history of Barlinnie I thought I would go along and see what it was like
- Q. Is there any difference in you from before until now?  
A. Yes defiantly more confident and more willing to speak about my mental health, which meant I got support. It was good to do this with the other guys, as it was a nice kind of friendship in that we were all working together to put on a performance and supported each other, I liked that

Q. What is it you are doing?

A. I did the drama and my mother and brother came to see the performance, I didn't think they would come as they had got fed up with me. After the drama I took part in the Taiko drumming workshops they are great.

Q. Has being involved helped you in anyway?

A. It's helped my confidence and resolves to stay out of prison and to do that I need to stay away from drink and drugs.

Q. Do you think this will help you in the future?

A. I think it will because I know I have something good to do in the community when I get out, I am going to go to the drumming and the drama. I am also now in contact with my family.

Q. What do you think of the idea for a creative holistic support centre?

A. Its something I would use it would be a lot less stressful.

### **Interviewee 1 – Post release**

The first time I took part in Theatre Nemo in jail I got a mentor from Theatre Nemo and he was great and got me into college but I messed it up and went back on drugs, was stupid and sent back to prison. I was lucky enough to get another chance and did the Taiko Drumming this time I got about 6 months to work with theatre Nemo and that made a big difference, I was determined I was going to join them when I got out.

The day I got out I got a case worker I think she was from social work and she really helped me get to meetings but she had to leave me at tea time and I still didn't have anywhere to sleep so I went to the pub. At another time I would just have got drunk but I just had a juice and watched the football I didn't want to mess up again. I went to Theatre Nemo the next day and took part in the Taiko.

I'm not drinking now or taking drugs and pals and family are commenting on my better mood and I'm dressing better. I don't think I used to be a very nice person but people say I have changed and much more mellow and I defiantly feel more confident in fact I was talking about Theatre Nemo at STV studios last week.

### **Interviewee 5 - Post release**

I was really nervous about getting out as I had no house and felt I would be just left on my own. I got a case worker from Corner Stone and he has been great, I managed to get a house and I love it. I go to Theatre Nemo for the Taiko and took part in the performance in George Square that was brilliant, I am going to start the drama as well and do as much as I can to keep me occupied.

One of the great things is my family are now in contact and my mum keeps telling me how proud she is and gives me a hug every time I see her and they all came to George Square to see the drumming display.

I know I have to make an effort but feel I have a great chance now and don't want to let everybody down.

Some research

**(Department of health 2011)**

|Sustained investment in the arts results in significant economical savings even in the short term, occurring in a wide range of public sectors e.g health, social care and criminal justice.

**(Royal society for public health 2013)**

Access to an involvement in creative activity and the arts in all its forms is an important component in both the overall health and wellbeing of society and for individuals within it. Whatever setting, whatever stage of life course, it has an impact.

(SPS)

- Just over a quarter (28%) of all prisoners report being looked after in care at some point in their childhood and a fifth indicate that they have problems with their reading (18%) and writing (21%). Nearly two-thirds (64%) admitted to using drugs in the 12 months before coming into prison and 39% were worried their drug use would be a problem on return to the community. One fifth (22%) were receiving a methadone prescription. One half (50%) of prisoners were drunk at the time of their offence and 38% conceded their drinking had affected their family relationships. The link between inequalities and offending rates is now well established and has significant implications as to how Scotland should view the role of prisons and their relationship to the communities to which prisoners belong and to which they will return.
- All SPS prisons operate regimes that provide purposeful activity aimed at meeting the diverse needs and risks presented by those in custody. Traditionally, for very short-term or remand prisoners, the most that might be expected is that prison stabilises health and wellbeing, enables a degree of preparation for court or liberation and provides links and signposts into community services and supports. However, the profile of the prisoner population is changing. The average length of sentence in 2011/12 was over 9 months (284 days). The population of people in prison serving very short sentences has fallen, with 53% of offenders receiving a sentence of less than 3 months in 2006/07, compared to 28% in 2011/12.
- In Scotland people are sent to prison as punishment and not for punishment. Beyond the fact of safe, decent and humane custody, the role of SPS is to support and help to prepare those in custody for release and to help reintegrate them back into society better able to contribute positively as responsible citizens. Protecting the public is a core role of SPS. However, such public safety is not best delivered by incapacitation alone. The public will be most fully protected if the work that prisons do contributes positively to supporting desistance from offending and promoting citizenship. Such an approach, the evidence suggests, will be more effective in reducing reoffending, delivering safer communities, reducing future victims and lowering the cost of crime