

CULTURE CONNECTS: 05/09/25

Session 2 - Arts & Criminal Justice

Attendees:

Charlotte: BearFace Theatre CIC
Jenny: BearFace Theatre CIC
Hannah: Nutshell & Winchester Jazz Festival
Lorna: Fluid Motion Theatre Co
Susan: City Eye
Helen Grime: Winchester University - Performing Arts
Emma Back: HCT Trustee
Miriam: Theatre designer, visual artist
Rebecca: playwright, Children/Family court magistrate
Gavin; Creative Island, IOW,
Simon; Artist photographer, fire fighter
Megan: HCC public health
Christopher: (retired) HCC Arts

We asked “What do you think of when you hear the term Arts in the Criminal Justice system?”

Understanding that the term ‘CJS’ is broad and working with ‘people affected by the CJS’ is vast. Do we need to box in the term CJS when to specify? The importance of language, to be inclusive of marginalised, vulnerable communities. People with poor mental health, families of people in prison, addiction, gambling. The term is broad and the CJS affects nearly all of us in some way.

Need to think about who we are supporting and how we are supporting them? Where is the need? Who is it for and why are we doing it?

Not enjoying the term ‘Hard to reach’ what does this actually mean? WE are hard services to reach for certain groups or individuals.

Prison on the IOW specialises in sex offenders. Very difficult to get artists or anyone to work with them. At what point do they not count?

What training is there for working with those who have committed sexual offences?

Suggestion of Geese Theatre Co - NCJAA - *Jenny (BearFace) is in conversation with Andy Watson, CEO at Geese Theatre and will bring to the next National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance advisory group meeting.*

<https://artsincriminaljustice.org.uk/>

Sport - Why is sport so different? In terms of its advertising & value.

Arts and Culture bring something special - Experiential learning - it needs to be felt to be understood? Bear this in mind for staff and gatekeepers who can also benefit.

Beyond the prison setting - prison population - those who have been released and on probation and their families and communities.

Community based settings - wider population. artists working with general public too to shift understanding, build compassion and strengthen communities.

BFT briefly described their 'Creative Connections' project with HCT in HMP Winchester

Lorna from FMT talked about her previous role in YOT, receiving significant funding for 18month pilot, running Summer Arts Colleges for young people and young carers - working at the base. Backing and support of the Youth Justice Board, so funding and data was more possible to get hold of, as well as this being part of a nationwide scheme to join up with evaluation and celebration.

Who do you need to be linked up with? Need for a local as well as national network for arts and CJS?

HOW do we capture the impact??

Reoffending rates - How do we prove impact against the reoffending rates?

BFT highlighted one of the angles of their new research report: 'Permission to play', using arts to bring joy, improving the quality of people's lives.

Idea that 'Arts' terminology is alienating, we should talk in terms of benefits e.g. Live longer, feel safer. The language, creativity isn't an industry, it's a way of life.

Who is the art for, the commodification of art, the baggage of the language, can be off-putting.

Simon talked about Class still being a massive thing, in our society art isn't seen to be an outlet for expression in the way some of us are born with, e.g. because our Education system has been stripped of the arts it is now only for those who can pay. If you're working class, not admitting that you're an artist, it's not what you do to make money - How is creativity perceived by the different classes? The privileged know what creativity is and the value it has. It's not a treat, it can impact our lives in fundamental ways. Creativity comes in all areas of our life, we need to shift our mindset about creativity and art not just being colouring in.

Challenge of the invisibility of working behind the walls of prison - hard to share your work beyond the walls and in the community - tricky to get the buy in if people can't see it. Find creative (non-exploitative) ways to share the impact.

The rules we put on ourselves - what does it mean to be creative and when are we?
Everyday creative things and creative thinking should be possible for us all.

The group wanted to make sure that the prison community and those affected by the
CJS aren't a forgotten community in Hampshire.

*This was a very passionate, interested and engaged group of people, thank you to
everyone who contributed.*