Evaluation of Prince’s Trust Fairbridge Programme - Holme House Prison Project

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*Final Report*

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Significant findings

The key findings from the research suggest that participation in the Prince’s Trust programme can potentially provide the starting-block for positive change in the lives of participants. Participants experience sustained positive, emotional, psychological and behavioural improvements. Engagement with this programme provides the potential to help give young offenders a chance to become non-offenders in the future by:

- acting as a catalyst for change in the lives of offenders;
- significantly improving confidence, listening and communication skills, tolerance, levels of self-expression, ability to cope with stress;
- enhancing participants levels of engagement with further education and training;
- positively impacting on the emotional well-being of the participants;
- being responsive to the particular needs of participants.
(1) Introduction
The goal of the evaluation was to examine how the Prince’s Trust Programme at Holme House Prison works as a rehabilitative strategy, outlining both the dynamic processes involved and their immediate/short-term and medium/longer-term impacts on the lives of participants. This model was based on qualitative feedback from participants themselves as well as an analysis of the existing literature on the rehabilitation of young people leaving custody. The programme began running in October 2012 with funding for two years. The programme is underpinned by using Kolb’s Learning Theory, Choice Theory and Reality Therapy.

(2) The Prince’s Trust Programme
The Prince’s Trust Fairbridge Programme is an individually tailored personal development programme combining one-to-one support and group activities. The aim of the Programme is to help young people leaving prison to build their ability to cope with life outside of prison and to reduce their capacity for reoffending. This approach to improving outcomes for young offenders aims to develop an enhanced model for early intervention to meet the multiple and complex needs of young people in a way which reduces the burden on criminal justice and community safety resources. The Programme aims to achieve these outcomes through establishing and embedding the Prince’s Trust Fairbridge Programme within Holme House Prison.

A designated person from the Prince’s Trust works with Holme House Prison staff to identify young people (aged 18-25) who are close to release. Typically 12 are identified and encouraged to attend the induction/ taster event which takes place in the prison. Approximately 9 of the 12 invited young people would attend. All of the young people were male and the offending behaviours included drug offences, driving offences, theft, burglary, robbery.

The induction event usually started at 9am with a PowerPoint presentation explaining how the Prince’s Trust programme works. There are three stages to the programme:
(1) Access Course: Upon release from prison the Prince’s Trust contact the young people and explain when and where the Access Course will take place. This is a compulsory five day part of the programme, including a two night residential. The access course runs every four weeks. The access course uses the Kolb Learning Cycle to identify what issues need to be addressed with the young person and includes outdoor activities such as absailing, caving, fishing etc. At the induction/ taster event all the young people confirmed their phone numbers to ensure they would be contactable upon release from custody and enabled to participate in the Access Course.

(2) Follow-on: After the Access Course young people can chose to dip in and out of follow on programmes as they consider appropriate. These courses include sports/ outdoor activities; personal/ social skills; health and confidence; business and enterprise skills; drystone walling; kitchen chef work; welding; photography; basic skills tutoring in Mathematics and English, cv construction and creative opportunities in art, dance, drumming and music. For the over 16 year olds this part of the programme runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays and they can pick which elements of it they wish to engage with. There is no end date to this stage in the programme so they can engage with it as they wish but the explicit intention is that they will be moved on to Stage Thee at some point.

(3) Exit – young people move on to another Prince’s Trust Programme and/or volunteering, apprenticeships or employment. The Prince’s Trust engaged in this programme have good links with local colleges and training providers.

After the initial presentation to the young offenders, development workers from the Prince’s Trust and members of the Prison Staff engaged in various activities which were based on problem solving, communication skills, teamwork and building trust. This served to give a taster of the activities that the young people will be engaged upon if they chose to join the programme.
Within the prison setting, the young people engaged wholeheartedly with these activities and all expressed clear aspirations for life outside of Holme House Prison including aspirations such as being a welder and youth and drugs alcohol worker. All of the young people engaged in the observed session were very keen to become involved in the programme upon release and at the end of the session several returned to the staff to ensure that they had given the correct phone numbers.

It was noted all of the staff were very enthusiastic, dedicated and committed to the success of the programme and to helping the young people involved in the programme. The success of recruiting young people to the programme is very dependent on close professional bonds between the Prince’s Trust staff and the prison staff, without these structured professional bonds based on specific individual interactions the programme could easily collapse. Continuity of staff is the therefore a key issue.

Observation of the induction session in the prison was a significant opportunity for the researchers to gain an understanding the programme’s goals as seen by Prince’s Trust workers, prison staff and the young people themselves. The observed session informed the development of the research interviews subsequently carried out by the research team.

(3) Findings from literature
Research undertaken in England tells us that prison-based cognitive skills programmes for young offenders can lead to a reduction in future reconviction (Cann et al., 2005, Mitchell & Palmer, 2004). Initiatives designed to improve the literacy skills of young people in prison have also been shown to lead to improved post-release outcomes for these young people (Brooks & Tarling, 2012). Whilst the overall effectiveness of offender rehabilitation programmes in reducing recidivism is now well established, there has also been much discussion of the reasons why rehabilitation programmes may be successful/ unsuccessful for some offenders. Understanding more about the mechanisms by which programmes help offenders to desist from offending is likely to lead to the development of more responsive and, ultimately, more effective programmes. Practical issues of planning for success are
extremely important. Key strategies in designing successful programmes are (Hollin, 1994):

(1) selection of suitable offenders;
(2) programme integrity;
(3) an empowering organizational structure; and
(4) staff training.

Some suggestions for those involved in the delivery of offender rehabilitation programmes include (Daya et al., 2006):

(1) being mindful of the sequence of components of programmes;
(2) the development of preparation (or readiness) programmes; and
(3) offering a broad suite of programmes to cater for different stages of problem awareness and assimilation among offenders.

Desistance theorists have identified the importance for offenders of a ‘hook for change’, something that will engage them and enable them to develop a pro-social identity, as well as contribute to building positive social networks. Two master themes for success were identified from the literature (Millward & Senker, 2012):

(1) dissociating from an offender identity; and
(2) authoring a new non-offender identity.

Sport is increasingly being recognised as a positive diversion, intervention and rehabilitation tool for use with prisoners as a vehicle to achieve non-sport policy objectives. Several theories have been proposed to describe how sport may contribute to crime reduction, for instance as an alternative means of excitement, competition and risk taking. Sport may also confer primary health benefits and contribute to desistance by providing an alternative social network, access to positive role models, improving employability, making reparation and developing a pro-social identity (Andrews & Andrews, 2003). Sports-based initiatives for young people in custody can confer significant psycho-social benefits and promote rehabilitation, particularly when integrated into wider programmes of support and provision (Parker
et al., 2013). Physical activity and sport has been found to be an effective means to engage young people in activities that they dislike, or would typically be reluctant to participate in through conventional means, such as classroom-based educational activities (Sharpe, Schagen, and Scott 2004) or rehabilitative work (Lewis and Meek 2012; Nichols 2007).

A recent evaluation of an intensive 12-week football and rugby initiative for 18–21 year olds, which combined physical activity with vocational qualifications in custody as well as ‘through the gate’ support, indicated significant improvements in established measures of conflict resolution, aggression, impulsivity and attitudes towards offending (see Meek 2012; Meek and Lewis, 2013). Similar findings have been reported by Dubberley (2010) in relation to participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award (a programme encompassing volunteering, physical activity, the development of life skills and expedition participation) by 14–21 year olds in the secure estate in England and Wales.

It should be noted sport alone will not necessarily prevent reoffending but it offers an effective and powerful way with which to embed numeracy and literacy, promote higher level learning and motivate prisoners who may be difficult to engage in other resettlement, educational or psychological interventions. Those sporting activities which de-emphasise regulations and winning, and instead place strong emphasis on choice for participants, the tailoring of programmes to suit individual needs, and on positive feedback have been shown to be most effective.

Operation New Hope (formerly Lifeskills ’95) is an American aftercare treatment program designed to assist chronic, high-risk juvenile offenders in their reintegration to the community after they are released from secure confinement. Operation New Hope shares many of the features of the Prince’s Trust Programme as it reinforces lifestyle and life skill treatment modalities in an integrated educational approach to healthy decision-making. This programme was evaluated by Josi and Sechrest (1999) using a quasi-experimental design with a nonrandomized treatment and a control group. Analysis of results concluded that there were significantly more control group (non-participant) parolees who were unsuccessful in their parole attempts, compared with experimental group parolees who participated in Operation New Hope. The experimental group was also significantly less likely to have been
arrested following release. At the end of the evaluation period, 32.1% of the experimental group parolees had been arrested one or more times, compared with 53.9% of the control group. The experimental group was significantly less likely to use drugs or alcohol and were significantly more likely to be employed (full or part time) and to be enrolled in school compared to the control group parolees.

(4) Methodology
This research utilised those methods of enquiry traditionally associated with qualitative research (i.e. participant observation, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis) in order to explore respondent experiences of the sports-based and cognitive interventions in question. The aim was to produce a theoretical narrative that captured each individual’s experiential account whilst also being sensitive to the idiosyncratic nature of their stories (Millward & Senker, 2012). Our approach thus contrasts with one that begins with predictions and aims to identify causality from an “outsider” perspective (Millward, 2006), and provides a compliment to important quantitative findings on young male offending and re-offending. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate where little in-depth information is available on the subject of study because it facilitates understanding of a research issue from the perspective of participants.

It should be noted a small number of intensively analysed cases are typical in qualitative work of hard to reach young people (Smith and Eatough, 2007). For example Millward and Senker (2012) recruited three male participants from one Youth Offending Service (YOS) in their study of how male young offenders on community orders made sense of their offending behaviour. The small number of participants allowed the researchers to engage in an in-depth study of what it meant to be an offender on a community order, with the view of generating insights into effective rehabilitation.

In our study we interviewed two young males who had completed the initial access course and were participating in Stage Two of the programme (as detailed above). All interviews were conducted by the researchers. Upon receiving informed consent from the young people, separate interviews were undertaken which took between 30
minutes to one hour. A semi-structured interview was conducted which allowed for the exploration of responses. (Smith and Osborn, 2003). The interviews were guided by topics such as family history, past and current living arrangements, offending history, experiences of role models, friendship groups, and future aspirations, rather than directed questions. The interview schedule was used as a guide like a “conversation with a purpose” (Burgess, 1984, p.102) such that spontaneously mentioned issues relevant to understanding the motivations of participants could be queried as they arose rather than at a specific stage of the interview. It was important to create a natural-feeling conversation insofar as the interviewees could otherwise start to feel ‘interrogated’ and become defensive and withdraw consent. All interviews were recorded in their entirety on a digital dictaphone, providing a point of reference and to facilitate verbatim transcription for subsequent analysis.¹

The analysis of transcripts drew on Smith and Osborn’s (2003) interpretative advice. Transcription provided an opportunity to re-engage with the interview and annotations referring to body language and tone of voice were included when considered informative in re-creating the interview context. The researchers read each transcript to create an overall impression of each individual case. From this, initial emergent themes were derived and then discussed to ensure conformity of understanding within the research team.

The small sample size permitted an in-depth analysis of each individual case, although findings cannot be generalised across the youth offending population and are therefore not discussed in detail in the data section of this report as with such a small number of interviews identification of individuals is highly likely and would breach the relevant requirements of the Data Protection Act and the researchers professional bodies standards.

Numerical data analysis draws upon spreadsheet information provided by the Prince’s Trust team at three points during the project. These data points were May 2013, August 2013 and December 2013. A range of socio-economic and socio-

¹ All research materials were held and treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998; 2003) in secure facilities.
demographic factors were subject to analysis and discussion and these are discussed below.

(5) Data collection

Initial data collection in May 2013 identified 19 individuals, of these seven were current or past clients and the remaining 12 were identified young people whom the project was due to start work with. Of the seven clients who were current or past clients, five were no longer part of the programme whilst the remaining two young people were still engaged with the programme. By the time of the final data point in December 2013 none of the originally identified current or past clients were being engaged with by this project.²

![Known destinations of those who left the programme by data point 2](image)

By data point three of the 24 young people listed, four were currently being worked with (one sporadically), while the remainder were either employed (four young people) or not engaging with the project. In this latter group of young people two had

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² Due to the way in which potential future clients were indicated in the recording data it is impossible to identify which coding refers to which client. To do this analysis of personal recorded details is required.
been disengaged from the project due to threats to staff. Of the remaining 18 young people, two were in custody.

At the second data point (August 2013) 16 individuals were identified, of whom seven were being ‘worked with’ at the time of the first data collection by the Prince’s Trust Holme House Prison Project. At this stage there were no young people identified as future clients a situation persisting at data point three in December 2013.

**Ethnicity and Parental Status**

All participants at all data points were white British males and were aged between 19 and 25 years of age. At the second data point two of the current clients were parents. In only one case was the age of the child known, in this case the child was aged five years old and the parent was aged 24. The remaining young parent was aged 21 years. The only client recorded at data point two and at data point three was one of those young men with a child.
Education
For data point 1 qualification level information is not recorded for two of the seven young people who were current/past clients, four had no qualifications and one young person had entry level and level 1, 2 and 3 qualifications.
For data point 2 of the seven young people recorded at data point 1 the qualification level was not recorded for two young people, four had no qualifications and one young person has entry level and level 1, 2 and 3 qualifications.
Of the remaining young people four had qualifications at level 2, two had qualifications at level 1 and the qualifications for the remaining two young people were not known.
For data point 3 the one young person who had been present at data point 2 had no qualifications. Of the remaining young people of the three remaining engaged young people the qualifications of one were not known, and the remaining two young people had qualifications at level 2.

Employment or Training
As regards previous employment or training a full history of status is not given. For example at data point 2, one young person aged 24 is recorded as having being unemployed for two years. Bearing this limitation in mind the following information is recorded for young people at data point 2. All the young people involved in the programme were unemployed; the period of time was either not stated or ranged between three months and six years. One young person had been unemployed for six years and another young person for five years. The previous employment or training experiences of one young person were not stated.

At data point 3 the limitation identified above is present. In this case of the 24 young people listed as being engaged or no longer engaged with the programme, only two of the young people had previously been employed or engaged in training, one who was ‘just released from prison’ and one whose status re training or employment was unknown. Of the remainder one was categorised as ‘unemployed’ with no time duration stated. For the remaining 21 young people, two had been unemployed for six years (one aged 25 and one aged 21 (the latter case is somewhat doubtful). Two had been unemployed for five years, two for four years and two for three years. Four
young people had been unemployed for two years, three for one year and the remainder, three young people, for less than one year.

Health

In terms of health issues at data point 1, four of the young people had defined medical needs. Two of the young people had mental health issues, one had a history of self-harm and one had epilepsy. In case of the young person with self-harm issues they also suffered from asthma. One of the young people with mental health issues also suffered from stomach ulcers and a shoulder injury. Addiction issues were indicated as not applicable for two of the seven young people currently engaged in the programme. Of the remaining five young people, two were indicated to have alcohol issues, two drug and alcohol issues and one young person had drugs issues. At data point 2, ten of the 16 young people had defined medical needs. Of these the seven young people who had been present at data point one reported their medical needs as unchanged. Of the ‘new’ young people at data point two, three reported no issues, three reported mental health issues, two skeletal issues and one reported partial hearing loss.

At data point 3, the young person who had been present at data point two had reported no change in their medical condition. Of the remaining engaged young people none reported health issues. The twenty ‘no longer engaged’ young people reported a range of issues some of which were reported at data point 2. There were four reports of mental health issues, one of self-harming behaviour, one specific mention of depression and one report of ADHD. One of the young people with mental health issues also suffered from stomach ulcers and a shoulder injury (they were present at data point 2). There was one report of repositioned bones and partial hearing, while one young person reported a metal fixing in one of his hands. In the case of the young person with self-harm issues they also suffered from asthma and had been present at data point 2. There was one report of epilepsy. One young person was identified in terms of ‘moving on information’ as needing specialist support and they were currently engaged with the Mental Health Crisis Team and JobCentre+. 
Living arrangements
At data point 1, two of the seven young people were currently living with their parents, one was currently in HMP, one was living independently and was in supported living. One young person had moved to Ireland and the final young person was of no fixed abode and ‘sofa-surfing.’ At data point 2 of the seven young people reported on previously, two were living with their parents, two were in Supported Living provision, one was in HMP, one was in Hostel accommodation and the final young person had moved to Ireland. Of the remaining nine young people at data point 2, three were living in Hostel accommodation, two were living with their parents, one was living with parents and relatives; one was living with relatives and the remaining young person was living with friends.

At data point 3 of the four young people currently engaged with the programme, one was living with his cousin, one was in Supported Living, one was living in Hostel accommodation and one was living in rented accommodation.

Of the 20 young people previously engaged with six were living with their parents, one was living with their parents/relatives five were living in Hostel accommodation and three were living in rented accommodation, two were in Supported Living. One young person was ‘sofa surfing’ living with friends, one was in Prison and one (as recorded at data point 2 had moved to Ireland.
Eight non-offenders recorded and not shown. Some young people committed more than one crime.

Eight non-offenders recorded and not shown. Some young people committed more than one crime.
**Other Agency Working**

With regards to other agencies involved with working with the young people at data point 1, in two cases it was not known if other agencies were involved and in one case only the Probation Service was involved in working with the young person. In the remaining four cases two agencies were involved in working with the young person. In two cases one of the other agencies was JobCentre+ (with the Mental Health Crisis Team in one case and CRI in the other) and in a further two cases the Albert Centre (with Pertemps in one case and the Probation Service in the other case).

For data point 2, of the seven young people from data point one who were still being engaged with by the Prince’s Trust, JobCentre+ was engaged with by three of the young people. Four young people were engaged with the probation service and two young people were engaged with the Albert Centre. One young person was engaged with Pertemps, one with the Mental Health Crisis Team and one with CRI. As earlier some of the young people had multi-agency engagement.

Of the remaining nine young people who had not been present at data point one, all were engaged with the Probation Service, seven young people were engaged with JobCentre+ and two young people were engaged with Pertemps. Two young people were engaged with Mental Health Services, one young person with Drug and Alcohol Support. One young person was engaged with Social Services and one with Bridge House. The status of agency involvement with one young person was unknown. In only one case was one of the ‘new’ data point 2 young people engaged with a single external agency.

At data point 3 all of the four young people still engaged with Prince’s Trust were also engaged with JobCentre+, three of the four were also engaged with the Probation Service and one young person was also engaged with Avanta.

Of those no longer engaged with by Prince’s Trust, the level of engagement with other organisations was not known for two of the young people while 16 were engaged with the Probation Service and 11 with JobCentre+. Four of those no longer engaged with by Prince’s Trust were engaged with by Pertemps whilst three were engaged with the Mental Health Team (two of these through Crisis Team involvement). Two young people were engaged with the Albert Centre and two were engaged with Social Services. Each of the following organisations were engaged
with by one young person from the Prince’s Trust: CRI, Drug and Alcohol Support and Lifeline.

The range of organisations dealt with by the young people engaging with the Prince’s Trust in this project serves to illustrate the difficulties and complexities these young people face in engaging in society and the labour market due to their disrupted and chaotic lifestyles and their previous and, in some cases, on-going criminal behaviours.

(6) Findings
The findings of this evaluation study suggest that there are several aspects of the Prince’s Trust programme which map well onto existing knowledge about the re-socialisation of young people. All participants clearly benefitted from the opportunity to be listened to and respected as individuals during their interviews. They felt that engagement with the Prince’s Trust was instrumental in instigating personal change. Both participants had demonstrated that they had taken ownership of the decision to change from offender to non-offender and both had developed clear and realistic plans for a non-offending future in which they would become positive contributors to society. Both responded positively to the practical learning style of the programme and the physical activities elements which characterised the programme. Both described the physical activities as new experiences for them. One interviewee clearly felt that the physical activities allowed him to overcome fears and to develop confidence/ self-esteem, inter-personal skills and leadership qualities. The other interviewee enjoyed the activities as they helped to alleviate boredom, but he did not see a clear link between the activities and his ultimate aim of finding paid employment. He repeated his aim throughout the interview of “to find a job” and his willingness to “work at anything”. He could not see how the activities were helping him towards this goal.

The small sample size necessitates caution in interpreting results. Whilst this permitted an in-depth analysis it is recognised and acknowledged that this may have implications for making generalisations across the youth offending population. Our research focussed on those young people who engaged with the Prince’s Trust
programme, further research is needed on why young people left prison and did not engage with the programme after initial participation within prison. All of the young people who engaged in the taster session in prison were contacted by Prince’s Trust staff within a few days of their release. However only a very small number engaged with the Programme. One of the interviewees has returned to the programme several years after having previously engaged with the Prince’s Trust as an under-16.

The skills and knowledge required by practitioners to develop relationships with young offenders that will engage and sustain them in intervention programmes is a core theme of the ‘effective practice’ literature and is illustrated in this research. Yet the question of how to secure young people’s engagement is scarcely examined in research on interventions with young offenders, despite an apparent preoccupation with ‘what works’. Further research is needed on how to support practitioners to engage with young people with previous and on-going offending behaviours in order to help the young people identify and meet personal and social development goals, including desistance from offending.
References


