

How Did I End Up Here?

A report into the project undertaken by three students from Winchester University on behalf of Hampshire Children's Services Participation Board and the Wessex Youth Offending Team.



April 2007

Section	Description	Page
1	Introduction	3
2	Background	4
3	Project Objectives	5
4	Context	6
5	Process	9
6	Evaluation	13
7	Findings	14
8	Moving Forward	18
9	Appendix 1 – stories	22
10	Appendix 2 – examples of work	27
11	Appendix 3 – example of Swanwick Lodge session plan	30
12	Appendix 4 – Programme from Ashfield Celebration	31

Lucy Dolman

Sophie Hartgill

Nick Mabey

Section 1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarise the drama-based work carried out between October 2006 and April 2007 by three Winchester University Students, Lucy Dolman, Sophie Hartgill and Nick Mabey with young offenders from Wessex. Supported by the Hampshire Children's Services Participation Board and Wessex Youth offending Team (YOT), we, the group, have been working with around 50 young people who have in common at least one criminal conviction.

This report cannot hope to capture the entire experience of the project; our modus operandi is very much about experiential learning through the process. However, some definitive findings and conclusions have been reached and are included with the caveat that they do not pretend to be scientifically arrived at.

It is intended that, wherever possible, this report should be read in the context of a live seminar presentation from us. Visual aids from this presentation are included as an appendix but, again, these cannot hope to replicate the lived experience.

Also included as an appendix are some of the young people's stories and work. We decided to include these to add flavour to what might otherwise be a rather sterile representation of our work. The stories were written by us, rather than the young people themselves, and should not be regarded as primary research; they should be viewed as bringing colour and humanity to the points raised in the main body of the report.

Section 2 Background

We are final year students at Winchester University studying for a BA degree in Drama, Community Theatre and Media. In September 2006 we were approached by Sharon Nash, Participation Officer for the Hampton Trust and part-time lecturer at the University, to consider working with young offenders for our final year group project. Two of us (Sophie and Nick) had worked successfully the previous year on a project with Young Carers and our third member, Lucy, was already carrying out research on drama and theatre in prisons as part of her dissertation.

Having secured the support of the Hampshire Children's Participation Board, Sharon introduced us to Steve Crocker, Head of Wessex Youth offending Team, with a view to gaining access to HMP & YOI Ashfield near Bristol. After two months negotiations we succeeded in getting access to Ashfield.

At the same time, in order to learn more about our community, we undertook research on a variety of related subjects. This led us to the conclusion that we needed more dimensions for our project than Ashfield. As a result we also managed to secure access to young people in Swanwick Lodge Secure Unit and also young offenders on non-custodial sentences in the community, via SOVA, the charity that specialises in restorative justice with young offenders.

The Group's Individual Statements

Sophie

I went to a school with a fairly bad reputation and watched as some very good friends and even my own sister went from being well behaved, friendly individuals at junior schools to being constantly suspended in secondary school. Some of those people ended up in institutions such as Ashfield. That played a huge part in my involvement of the project and was certainly a motivation for me. I anticipated that school would be a big issue for these young people, particularly in the transitional years from junior to secondary school.

Lucy

As a result of this course I have become interested in the field of working utilising the arts and specifically drama in the criminal justice system. By looking at the subject for a previous module, writing my dissertation and working practically throughout the project I have been inspired by the work that I believe is possible to achieve through advocating a process which promotes positive benefits for individuals.

Nick

I chose this project because I wanted a challenge and also I have enjoyed doing this work with young people in the past. I have found success in the past on this course using drama to explore issues and wanted to work with a community that I thought would be much more resistant.

Section 3 Project objectives

Our original project objectives were as follows:

- To research and understand the journeys' taken by young offenders, in terms of the underlying reasons why they ended up at the institution.
- To identify at which point(s) interventions could have been made by relevant services to deter potential young offending and/or anti-social behaviour.
- To document the stories of young offenders in an engaging culturally relevant and compelling manner, using Hampshire's Children's and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP) as a reference framework alongside the aims and objectives of Every Child Matters.
- To encourage young offenders to participate in devising strategies to prevent future potential inmates from arriving at institutions like Ashfield
- To disseminate and share information with specific audiences in a position to make change for potential young offenders; organising representations of young offenders' stories, in order to encourage early intervention and Prevention.
- To provide learning and self-development for existing young offenders in support of Every Child Matters.
- To learn more about working with this specific community, using tools for self-development and representation in an effective way.

As part of our ethos it was both important to start out with clear project objectives and also to remain flexible so that these could evolve through the process. For example, in Swanwick Lodge the institution gave us access under the terms of their own objectives, which we needed to adhere to whilst retaining a broader focus.

Section 4 Context

The project was initiated as a third year project by the group members. The course aims to create a positive intervention within a community using drama and the creative arts. The course encourages working within the community in a creative way, without allowing our opinions to be swayed by the policies of other agencies. We aim to be flexible during the project to allow for an effective exploration of the issues that arise during the work through the drama.

The project had several aims, the first of which was to find out why (in the young people's opinion) that they had started offending. There was a sideline of prevention methods, once they had initially offended to re-offending and ending up in an institution such as Ashfield. We were also interested on the positives that the Drama workshops would have upon the lads in Ashfield and whether it could have a positive impact on their personalities and communication techniques.

The group met with Steve Crocker, the Head of the Wessex Youth Offending Team, very early on in the project. For him the project gave another aspect to their services in which they could hear the young offender's voices in a way which was vivid and safe for the young people in terms of their confidentiality. It also gave an opportunity to find out how the services could prevent a young person from getting to the YOT's door and to find out prevention methods to stop those who offend early on from re-offending and ending up in Ashfield.

A key aspect of the project that Steve Crocker was most interested in was the participation of the young people in it, this was fairly unusual for a project supported by the YOT and made it stand out more for him. The project also coincided quite conveniently with an inspection of the Wessex YOT during March. The key aim of the youth justice system (as set out in section 37 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998) is to prevent offending by children and young people aged 10 to 17, most of the work is coordinated at a local level. The youth justice system aims to do this through several objectives.

- **The swift administration of justice so that every young person accused of breaking the law has the matter resolved without delay**
- **Confronting young offenders with the consequences of their offending, for themselves and their family, their victims and their community and helping them to develop a sense of personal responsibility**
- **Intervention which tackles the particular factors (personal, family, social, educational or health) that put the young person at risk of offending and which strengthens protective factors**
- **Punishment proportionate to the seriousness and persistence of offending**
- **Encouraging reparation to victims by young offenders**
- **Reinforcing the responsibilities of parents**

The project had the potential to give Steve an evaluation from the people who know most about what works and what doesn't, i.e. the offenders themselves.

As representatives from The University of Winchester we have to be aware of their ethical code of conduct in terms of projects such as this. We had to consider this when planning the project. The University of Winchester has a policy on good conduct in research, which states:

“It is generally accepted that no policy or procedure is an acceptable substitute for an environment that promotes a culture of trust and openness. It is also recognised that the correct policy and procedures are increasingly essential to the successful implementation, conduct and completion of research projects. All researchers have obligations to the objects of their study, to sponsors and employers, to colleagues and to the further development and promotion of knowledge. Likewise, the University has obligations to the subjects of any study, to the governing body of the host institution, to the sponsors of the study and the research worker.

It is the policy of the University of Winchester that all empirical research must be conducted in accordance with internationally accepted ethical and professional standards. All Faculties within the University have researchers, research students, taught postgraduate and undergraduate students undertaking empirical research and as such are required to have procedures in place for the ethics review of these projects.

In order to ensure that the University is operating within, and according to, current accepted guidelines a University Research & Knowledge Transfer Ethics Committee is in operation. The University Research & Knowledge Transfer Ethics Committee is independent from any bias and compromise and is accountable to all stakeholders and representative of the University research community. The Committee supports and supplements existing ethics structures within the Faculties and provides support and guidance. All Faculties ethics procedures are expected to be approved, reviewed and subject to scrutiny by the University's Research & Knowledge Transfer Committee on an annual basis.”

www.winchester.ac.uk

From the outset the project was working in line with the green paper, Every Child Matters.

The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

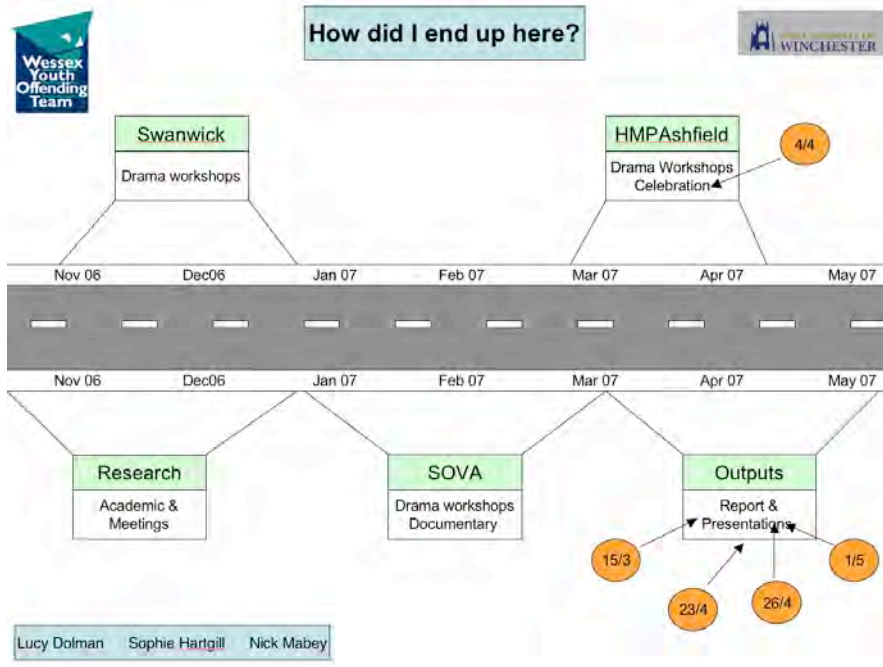
The paper concentrates on organisations that are involved with children and young people in order to **“protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life”**. This is relevant to one of the issues with young offenders, as they have normally come into contact with several organisations (Social Services, Children’s Services, Schools, Police etc.) and the project could prove to be an effective evaluation from the young people’s perspective of those organisations. The Children’s Fund (launched in November 2000) in particular is aimed at identifying vulnerable and disadvantaged children, preventing their social exclusion. Young Offenders are now becoming considered as vulnerable and are often victims of their cultural situations, so the question is whether they received the help and support that they needed from the services that are designed to help them.

Part of the paper also recognises the role of parents, carers and families which is sure to be an issue with the young people and whether the families’ receive the support that they need. The paper identifies the need of local authorities and partners to ensure a strong level of participation of children and young people in the design and delivery of the services. Every Child Matters also includes an outcomes framework which forms the basis for agreeing local priorities and local change.

Further Reading

Misspent Youth (1996) Audit Commission
Youth Justice 2004 (2004) Audit Commission
Restorative Justice Consortium (2006)
Doing the Arts Justice (2004) Jenny Hughes
Barred Voices (2006) Escape Artists
Geese Theatre Handbook (2002) Bain Brookes & Sandford

Section 5 Process



We began by academically researching in order to form a context in which we would be working, this allowed us to begin to be aware of the current policies and guidelines in practice. Research lead us to look at previous and current arts projects in the criminal justice system by companies such as ‘Geese Theatre Company’ and ‘RIDEOUT’, producing creative works. We looked into the production of documents such as ‘Barred Voices’ by ‘Escape Artists’ in 2006 and published writing on arts in prisons and resettlement such as ‘Doing The Arts Justice’ by Jenny Hughes.

Looking at other practitioners and legislative research, we began to form an administrative and academic view of the community we would be coming into contact with, both through institutions and young people. Meeting to talk with people involved in the system in order to initiate contact and set up the project also created important research to take with us through the project.

The initial practical section of the project began in Swanwick Lodge Secure Unit in Southampton working for seven weeks from October to December. The work consisted of two hour workshops, once a week, based on emotional literacy and coping strategies using drama based activities to engage the young people in active and issue based exercises. An example of a session plan is included at appendix 3.

From week to week workshops were planned to allow for the transient community in Swanwick Lodge, although the work from sessions was built on for following weeks in order to give returning participants a feeling of continuity. The workshops allowed for the young people to speak in the third person, devising characters, interacting and working with peers to explore situations and feelings of themselves and others. Game based

activities were used frequently to lead into more focused work based on trust and empathy.

A further dimension of the project allowed us to work with offenders within the community on Referral Orders through contact with SOVA. These comprised of three 2 hour sessions throughout Hampshire based in Andover, Basingstoke and Aldershot. The sessions were approached under the banner of 'How Did I End Up Here?' in the form of one off workshops to count towards hours to be taken off Referral Order time. We initially planned to use the medium of drama with these young people, however, the style of these sessions had to be quite flexible due the nature of the participants. The workshops were all quite different in that we allowed the process to have input and discussion with participants about what they wanted to do.

These sessions allowed us to have more of an insight into the journeys of young offenders and introduced and invited the young people to take part in further work with us if they wished. Exercises were designed to create workshops where the young people could contribute their own stories or experiences or contribute by working on the exercises in the third person in order to create a safe and explorative way of working.

Working both in Swanwick Lodge and with young offenders within the community allowed us to build experience for the objective of working in HMP & YOI Ashfield, in which the process was planned in the form of workshops, however, it was ultimately the participants who decided what they wanted to do in order explore the 'How Did I End Up Here?' theme.

We began by approaching the young people from Hampshire by pitching the project and promoting if you like the process and outcome that were possible by voluntarily taking part. This lead us to also advertise or personally invite those that initially signed up in order to maintain encouragement and make the young people aware of when it was beginning and where it would take place.

The workshops ran for 5 weeks, in which we had four groups of 1 to 6 lads for an hour and a half every Wednesday, culminating in a 'celebration'/ performance of the lads work over the course of the project. The sessions were approached by us informing the participants about the objectives of the project in that the stimulus or aim was to explore, aspects that contributed to them ending up in HMP Ashfield, for many it was not their first experience of the secure estate or of Prison.

Initially we had to form a rapport and it was obvious very quickly that was to be done in different ways with different groups and individuals. And so from each session we took away the contributions from individuals to plan the following workshops. Basically, we offered what we were able to do within the boundaries of the project, our skills and resources and the groups and asked what they would like to do with that. Subsequently, each group did something different.

Group one was of a very transient nature and so sessions were based on dialogue and discussion around topics that could be built on or introduced from week to week. The group initially expressed an interest in soap operas and dominant characters in story lines, which lead to writing a soap opera style story line and transgressing into looking at gangster films, culture and characters. This allowed us to design sessions that tapped into attitudes of gangster crime, culture, beliefs and ways of life. However, as mentioned the nature of this group was fairly transient and so group participation was varied and concluded into relating the work to talk about individuals experiences.

Through a process of encouraging dialogue and a rich mixture of ethnicities, the second group enjoyed participating in our first basic exercises and so came across the idea of stereotyping in relation to ‘How Did I End Up Here?’ This group utilised the idea of ‘game playing’ and built this from week to week to explore each others experiences of stereotyping.

The third group emphasised the individuality of the participants in that there isn’t a blueprint for working with offenders and just because circumstantially they are all labelled a ‘prisoners’ their needs and abilities are all different. This group expressed an interest in working creatively using drawing and using a comic strip style of drawing out stages in their offending behaviour. This lead to us being able to work one on one with the individuals in this group, which allowed us to have a real insight into their stories and experiences in relation to how they ended up in Ashfield. Consequently this group produced a number of outcomes. For example, the ASBO leaflet available in the appendix.

The fourth group, were again different and embraced and energised drama in sense of devising a story and performing it. This group immediately took the concept of the project and created a performance on their experiences of offending, focused on a central character and other characters in his life.

The process in Ashfield and similarly in Swanwick and with offenders in the community although less so, was organic and malleable throughout due to the expressive input and contribution of the participants, although with a continual focus on the initial intention of the project. The process encouraged and somewhat relied upon the dialogue and mutual trust and respect between ourselves and the individuals we were working with. This was reinforced by the opportunity to discuss the project and the issues raised from it at the ‘celebration’ in order to allow the young people to have their voices heard. It is difficult to express the entirety of the process as intensity of the environment, stories and experiences are often held in the space at the expressive points throughout.

We presented our findings to four forums, as follows:

Organisation	Venue	Date
Wessex YOT Management Board	Winchester Council Offices	15/3/07
Wessex Youth Justice Standing Conference	Southampton Civic Centre	26/4/07
Hampshire Young Person’s Standing Conference	The Rose Bowl, Southampton	1/5/07
Hampshire Children’s Service Participation Board	To be confirmed - this was postponed 23/4 and will now be in May	21/5/07

Our presentation took the form of a description of the process and a discussion about some of the findings, these being chosen by the participants. In total our presentation has been seen by approximately 100 professional stakeholders.

In summary, the process was an evolution; we began with a few set objectives as outlined in this report and although we remained clear of those objectives we were flexible in both our approaches and opinions as the process/ participants demand. When beginning the project we all had preconceptions, based on the research, about what the work would find, but the key to any project such as this is to become objective, putting aside your own preconceptions and the agendas of agencies you are working with to get to the truth.

Section 6 Evaluation

Constant evaluation was a feature of the way we managed the project. This was not just in terms of our efficacy at meeting our objectives but also ensuring we learnt and improved our practice as we proceeded through the process.

We undertook regular project review meetings with both Steve Crocker from Wessex YOT and Sharon Nash on behalf of the Participation Board. We also carried out regular and rigorous self-evaluation as a group.

An important part of evaluation was getting feedback from the young offenders we worked with and we made sure this was built into all our work.

As it happens, two of our workshops were inspected. The first, at Swanwick Lodge, was by OFSTED as part of their inspection of education at the institution. Feedback from the inspector was positive and we were assessed as 'good' in their marking system.

Our second inspection took place at HMP Ashfield and was carried out by HM Inspectors as part of a wider assessment of Wessex YOT. Anecdotal feedback from Dorothy, HM Inspector, was as follows:

- We created a level playing field, particularly in our involvement of Tracey (the prison officer assigned to us)
- It felt like a different space, not a prison at all
- We enabled the lads to practice different behaviours and ways of speaking
- We created a place where they could have fun

E-mail from Meri Mackney, Swanwick Lodge dated 12th December 2006

I know you won't get this until after the final session. I would like to say a big thank you to all of your group for the sessions you have done here. I know the young people have gained a lot from them and have enjoyed taking part. It was above and beyond what you might have been expecting to have to survive two Ofsted inspectors in the session as well. I hope you felt that Martin's feedback was helpful. I know that they were impressed and felt that you were delivering something valuable for the young people. The brief feedback we've had so far from the inspectors is extremely positive. Swanwick has been rated as good (they've done away with very good as a category) with the potential to be outstanding! For a secure unit, this is an amazing result - and you helped us to get it!

Thank you again.

Should any of you go into a course or job that will be using your workshopping skills, please feel free to use me as a referee.

Have a merry Christmas and a very happy new year!

Meri

The following is the outcome of a piece of evaluation of the project in terms of the work we did. This process of self-evaluation is vital both from the perspective of our experiential learning and secondly for other considering similar projects in the future:

- First and foremost our experience demonstrated the power of the praxis we had learnt on the course. A number of the participants developed visibly through the process and were empowered by it. This was summed up by one, normally reticent, inmate at Ashfield who, when asked by a HM Inspector what he thought of our work replied "It's good, we get to do stuff. Everything else is bullshit."

- We ran a series of one of workshops, via SOVA with young offenders in the community. These turned out to be difficult and not particularly successful sessions. The reasons for this were (1) the young people did not know each other and were therefore reluctant to open up (2) they were there to fulfil ‘hours’ on their order, rather than because they wanted to be there and (3) there was not enough time to build up any trust between the group and us or our process
- Getting access to Ashfield was initially difficult because, rather than focus our proposal on drama, we positioned the work as participation research. This dragged in a range of issues from the psychology department at the prison.
- Our title “How did I end up here?” made assumptions of our community. Firstly we assumed that our community would want to tell us; whilst this was true for some it was a long process of building up trust first. Secondly we assumed that they would have the personal awareness and analytical skills, not to mention the communication abilities, to be able to step outside themselves and answer the question. There were a few individuals who had these skills, the vast majority didn’t but were able to later through the process, whilst some could not.
- Our process produces a humanising side-effect. In our work we noticed individual humanity, in terms of self-esteem, respect for others and unique personality, growing as the workshops evolved. This was counter to the notion of the groups being defined solely as ‘young offenders’.

Section 7 Findings

Below is a collection of our findings. These have not been prioritised in any way, neither have they ordered to create any specific rhetoric. They are stimulated in some cases by very specific issues raised by the young offenders; in other cases they describe a more general view formed during the process.

‘How can I love my family and friends and at the same time reject the culture they live in?’

There was a strong anti-drug philosophy at Swanwick Lodge, such that discussion and dialogue was not encouraged. This was understandable given the nature of the inmates. However, offenders who had come into Swanwick from an environment where drug taking was part of the culture, both with family and friends, and were being ‘rehabilitated’ with respect to drugs whilst inside, were leaving the institution to return to those same environments with a very strong drug culture. The gap between life inside and outside seemed too great to bridge in this respect.

‘People keep coming in and out of my life and now I don’t trust anyone’

The people we worked with shared in common a lack of stability in their lives. Their families had not provided it, which may have been the initial factor in them getting in trouble. Then the agencies they dealt with could not provide it either. They had been moved around educationally, social workers were regularly moving on, the police were an unknown menace and even the court system was faceless. The children seemed to need a rock on which they could anchor their lives- a mentor, a wise counsel, a stable respected relative etc.

There was a sense that most of the lads we worked with had a lack of stability in their lives. Their creative work mostly involved anarchic scenes representing chaotic lives.

From feedback received from the young people, those who had come into contact with a number of services, all expressed a lack of continuity and talked about the nature of establishing constant and stable relationships with workers difficult. It was clear that this created low trust and a negative attitude to interventions. Therefore, there is a need for services to be a constant positive feature as opposed to an inconsistent negative feature in the young people’s lives.

‘I challenge you to live where I live and not breach my ASBO’

ASBOs seemed to feature in a bizarre way. Many of the inmates had ASBOs. As well as the ‘badge of honour’ issue, it seemed that the ASBOs were restrictive and inflexible, such that they were almost guaranteed to be breached. Also, they were used by inmates as a ‘passport’ to get back to into prison for some respite from their lives; i.e. the least hassle way of getting locked up.

‘Every Child Matters – what’s that?’

A number of the inmates we spoke to had been or were being released to no fixed abode. This would seem to contravene 'Every Child Matters' and almost guarantee re-conviction.

The 'Every Child Matters' Outcomes Framework does not seem to apply to the children we worked with. Of the 25 outcomes listed, very few were evident amongst the community, particularly within HMP Ashfield; particularly absent were:

- mentally and emotionally healthy
- choose not to take illegal drugs
- safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation
- safe from bullying and discrimination
- have security, stability and are cared for
- attend and enjoy school
- achieve stretching national standards at secondary school
- engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school
- live in decent homes and sustainable communities
- live in households free from low income

Within the 57 criteria describing 'how the inspectors will judge the contribution of services to improving outcomes' there are some particular areas that our work suggests need focus, as follows:

- 1.4.1 Children & young people have access to an appropriate range of support if they feel troubled (NSF 9)
- 2.2 Children & young people are provided with a safe environment
- 2.8.6 Transitions between settings and from children's to adult services are well managed
- 3.1 Parents and carers receive support in helping their children to enjoy and achieve
- 3.8 Children & young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to enjoy and achieve
- 4.2 Children & young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives

'Why are they punishing my mum for something I did?'

Parenting orders were pretty well universally hated (by those who knew about them). Firstly they were felt to be ineffective, an example of just going through the motions rather than responding to a parent's situation. Secondly, the fact that they were applied following the child's offending was seen as a punishment that created more friction in a difficult relationship and created more animosity towards the authorities.

There was a commonality in the issue of parenting in that they are part of the problem for young people and so need to be part of the solution. Many expressed a lack of knowledge of how to access services in relation to parenting and places or ways of dealing with poor parenting or problem family environments. Similarly, those having experienced parenting orders due to their own problem or offending behaviour felt that it was inappropriate for their parents or guardians to be receiving them, not only taking personal responsibility but expressing the increasing pressure it put on their families, including younger siblings. The stigma attached to being seen as a 'poor parent' also came across as a negative factor which contributed to a self fulfilling prophecy of being unable to parent to the needs of the family.

'I wish I had stayed in school'

The stories we learnt indicated a sharp increase in offending behaviour, both volume and severity, once children had been excluded at school. Many of the lads had not made it through the school system and, having been excluded, had long boring hours of freedom in which to get into trouble. There was almost a plea to keep them in mainstream schools.

Pupil Referral Units were felt to be a waste of time. For children with no interest in learning they were just a pain to get to and de-motivating. For those who did want to learn, it was not possible to make progress when surrounded by 'naughty kids'.

'If I want stability, routine, education and peace, there is only one place I can get it'

Several of the lads said that they wanted stability, routine, good education, meals, peace and there was only one place they could get it – prison.

Community sentencing or post custody community licences are extremely difficult for young people to achieve success with. In one particular case, a young man in Ashfield expressed a desire to spend his time in prison rather than living in a community in which he was restricted. He found it easier to exist in prison than to live in his community, not only due to the stigma attached to an ASBO but also the way that they are not re-assessed according to a person's changing needs. Many expressed the return to prison for breaking a community sentence or licence agreement to be inappropriate, feeling that they would rather complete sentences than be released earlier so that they could return to society with a clean slate.

The clear picture we built up was a polar relationship between life on the inside and the outside. There was mostly a chaotic lifestyle and environment that had caused the offending. The prison provided the complete opposite of almost every facet of life. Then release was straight back into the chaotic lifestyle. We are not sure if this is an intentional policy, we only observed it as a striking feature.

'Who are Social Services? They are the people who take me away from my mum'

A question like 'what about social services?' more often than not drew a blank look and a shrug of the shoulders. Other than to remove children from the family home, the lads were not able to describe anything that Social Services did.

Very few of the young offenders had experiences of social services in their lives. This is not to say that they did not need social services, but they did not receive the support necessary to them. Those who did had a negative opinion of social services and the support they provide. Many did not know what support was out there for them at a younger age, and the services that were provided to them were inappropriate for their situation and as such ineffective. Some only saw social services as the ones that would take them away from their parents. So there is a need for more accessible services and more advertisement to what can be offered other than being taken away from their parents.

'I don't know what I am going to do'

A clear message through our work was that the answer to re-offending, and to an extent offending in the first place was blissfully simple, i.e. somewhere to live and gainful employment, in other words basic stability and routine from the outset.

The system, specifically in terms of custody is one of a controlled, sanitised nature in which young people are likely to receive consistent discipline and management. This creates a contradiction to the often chaotic, unstructured lifestyle they are used to living on the outside. For example, many of the young people are not regularly attending full time education and often live in unstable family environments. While much rehabilitation is achieved whilst in an institution, pending return to an environment which contributes to offending behaviour makes it unrealistically attainable for young people to be consistent in not re – offending

'You are not scary, you are just the people that catch us'

The perception of the police was universally negative. Whilst it is fairly obvious that offenders would not like the people who caught them, it is clear from their creative representations that the current police approach is not working. Most of the offenders' first contact with the police is as a result of offending. There is no context for the young people to place their personal experience.

The prevention techniques from the police are often based on instilling a sense of fear in the young people. They rarely have an open dialogue with those that cause most trouble; the police should not under-estimate the power of a level playing field and equal status. Although this is increasingly difficult with relationships between young offenders and the police being very tenuous, the police need to open new avenues to explore in terms of how they can make a difference to both re-offending rates and initial offending rates. Quite frankly the young people are not scared of you any more, you are the enemy in their eyes (due to either personal experience or peer accounts) and what you are doing is not working.

'School is shit'

When asked to write one word about schools the young people at Ashfield wrote boring, rubbish and some other choice words we chose to leave out. The general consensus was not a positive one. Many of them had not completed school, many of them having spent time in pupil referral units, rather than main stream schools. However at the discussion that followed the celebration all agreed that they would rather have stayed at mainstream school. So there is a desire for education, but the system as it stands does not fit the requirements of the young people, it fails to cater for their individual personal and learning needs. If school were more vibrant and the subjects delivered in an interesting and enticing way then it is far more likely that the young people would be able to concentrate further on their school work.

There is also a great need for more vocational subjects such as motor mechanics, brick work etc. that are more culturally relevant to these young people as an encouragement to stay in school and get a real solid qualification. We would also raise the point that many of the young people had fairly turbulent homes lives and considering that some stayed in school until secondary level, why did the teachers not see this? Also many have been diagnosed as having varying levels of learning disabilities since being at Ashfield that were undiagnosed at school. This includes a young offender with conduct disorder and paranoia who had stayed in school until 16 and completed his GCSE's.

'We are all unique, which is a paradox'

This was an actual quote from one of the Ashfield lads and demonstrates a level of both articulation and self-awareness that surprised us at first.

One of the most resonant conclusions from working with the young offenders throughout the project was that they are all unique both in personality and their needs and issues within the system. The individuality amongst groups requires the need to value individuals and highlights the practice of working in this way, as there is no blueprint that fits all offenders due to their distinctly differing needs, attitudes, behaviour and personalities. This extends to the conclusion that in fact a number of the young people which we came into contact with are victims themselves, often through failings of poor access or effectiveness of earlier interventions before reaching custody. Credit must be given to those with the ability to coherently assess their own needs in relation to preventions in re – offending, as we have found many able to do so.

'Nobody usually asks us what we think'

A recurring theme that came out was that intervention from stakeholders, whether that be social services, police or school was neither early enough nor effective and did not involve the offenders in a proactive way. There was a key missed opportunity for many of the offenders when they first started getting into trouble, at around age ten or eleven.

We could not find any examples of effective partnership working between agencies. On the contrary, there seemed to be a breakdown in thinking and action in some of the lad's lives; which compounded their problems. For example, one lad's ASBO prevented him going to school.

There was a sense that institutions create a culture of "out of sight, out of mind". We assumed this a feature of punishment rather than rehabilitation, however there did not seem to be enough integration or enough contact with the people they love.

Section 8 Moving Forward

Action Required

This report marks the closure of our work with Young Offenders. However by its very nature the project has opened up issues rather than shut them down. The report will have no value if it merely chronicles the work, action is required if any sort of sustainability is to be achieved.

Follow Up

It has become clear, particularly during the presentations to professionals, that we have just scratched the surface and that there is potential to use this report as a vehicle for a deeper investigation with other groups of offenders, perhaps to take some of the issues raised and explore them further. We would strongly recommend this is done and that drama and the creative process remain the core methodology for such work. We hope we have demonstrated that it is the most effective tool for opening up dialogue that otherwise may not take place.

Voices

It is also clear to us that there is no systemic process in place to make sure that the voices of offenders are heard amongst those of professionals during debates on policy or strategy. We have provided that voice – warts and all – and this has been a source of satisfaction and frustration. Satisfaction that our process has enabled offenders to be heard by key decision makers, and frustration that this is a one-off project carried out by three drama students.

Further work

The three of us are graduating this summer and planning the next steps of our own journeys. We are keen to apply our experiences of this project within our working lives and would be happy to carry out further projects, either collectively as a group or individually, to support the admirable commitment Hampshire Childrens' Services and Wessex YOT are making to include the views of offenders in their thinking.

Lucy Dolman
07701 012468
Lucydolman@hotmail.co.uk

Sophie Hartgill
07843 600576
s.a.l.hartgill@hotmail.co.uk

Nick Mabey
07930 536013
nick@ndmcommunications.co.uk

Section 9 Appendix 1 - Stories

These stories are in the 1st person, however they were written by us. They do not attempt to reflect either the subject's complete life stories or their personalities. Their purpose is to add flavour. If the content is random and spasmodic it is because that is the nature of the way stories came out. The names have been changed to protect their identities.

Luke

It started when I was 11. I saw someone stealing mints from the local shop and thought it looked fun. Anyway, I got caught stealing a packet and the police was called. They put me in handcuffs and took me away. It was really embarrassing. I got off with a warning that time.

It's really boring where we live. Me and my co-defendant tend to spice things up with Vodka and weed. We pinch the vodka from his mum or nick it from the shop.

This is my third time in here. First time was ABH, then I got recalled for breaking my licence. This latest time was for GBH and robbery. Basically we drank a bottle of vodka at his house then caught a bus into town. The bus driver gave us some lip so we kicked his head in. We then bumped into a prick from school and decided to take his wallet and mobile phone after giving him a kicking too.

Brian

We got shown a picture of a paedophile living in our area. I was with my brother and I saw him getting off the bus. I've got little brothers and sisters and my brothers got kids and he just walks around...I couldn't control myself and I beat him up. So I'm here doing time for GBH but I don't care because he was a scum bag. I've done victim awareness but I wanted my early release and if you do stuff like that you get it.

Martin

I have always got in trouble. I have 42 convictions and have been inside four times. I have been assessed as 98% risk of returning to prison. Pretty well all my crimes are violence related or breaking my ASBO which is very strict. I currently live in a tent, having been released from prison to no fixed abode.

I have done pretty well every drug you can think of and drink a lot, which is generally when I get violent. I don't have to be drunk to fight though, basically if anyone has a go at me I will give it back.

It all started when I was about nine or ten. I used to get in fights and basically no-one could handle me. I love my mum but she has never had any control over me. I just can't seem to stay out of trouble.

The last time I got sent to prison was for breach of my ASBO. I wanted to go back to prison because I missed the routine and stability. It is so easy to breach my ASBO, I just have to go to my local shopping centre. Typically this time there were no coppers about so I stood in front of the CCTV to make sure it was recorded that I was there. I then went and got really pissed and then handed myself in at the police station. I told them I had breached and dared them to check the CCTV footage if they didn't believe me. Luckily they did and I was back inside the next day. When I got released I had no fixed abode. Some mates lent me a tent and I am now living in that.

Leon

I have always been a criminal, I will always be a criminal. I used to rob people in the street but it's a risky crime and the money isn't always that great. Now I just do commercial burglary. It is our way of life.

“I'm no YO, I'm a PYO”. I'm a commercial burglar, it's my living, and I do it as job. What would make things better for me? If the police could leave me alone to do my job. I was on the run for eight months before I got caught this time, they tried to arrest my mum so I'd go to the police station to try come and get her but she kicked off anyway, she hadn't done my crimes. This is my third time in Ashfield, prisons just a part of life. My older brother came here, he ran his this place and I've got loads of boys here. We all know how it goes, just get on with it and ride our time. When I get out I'll do more burglaries, I'm a criminal and I'll always commit crime, I'll be a criminal 'til the day I die.

Kieran

I come from Portsmouth. My dad used to beat me, my mum and my brother up. He left when I was 7. I used to get in trouble when I was 10 or 11 so the social services put me with a foster family in Southampton to give my mum some respite. I hated Southampton and missed my mum so I nicked a car and drove it home. That's when I first got in trouble.

After that we moved to Fareham. I couldn't handle school; I got kicked out when I was 13 for drug dealing and chucking a chair at a teacher. Since being in prison I have been diagnosed with ADHD.

By 14 I was doing a lot of drugs and started getting in house burglary to pay for it. That's how I first got put away. This time I am in for breaking my licence. I was pissed up with my girlfriend when someone said something to her, so I punched him. It wasn't ABH or anything, but it was enough to get me back in here.

Jordan

What do you think when you see all these young people up here? Crooks? Criminals? Thugs? How about victims? I'm obviously speaking for myself but I'm sure what I'm saying is related to a lot of people here.

I'm in for actual bodily harm and am 3 months into a 6 month sentence. I started with petty stuff, like shoplifting and nicking bikes gradually progressing to motorbikes and cars. When I lived in Gosport I was chased by the police everyday, I always had a warrant out for my arrest, always reported as a missing person and one day it led me to beat up my best mate because of the police. They told me that he'd grassed me up so I beat him with a rolling pin.

I was raised to think that violence was good and now my knuckles and the windows in my cell are suffering. I went into foster care at 12 but most are just in it for the money and I carried on offending. I ended up living on the streets because I kept getting kicked out of foster homes and social services couldn't find me anywhere else. Once I'd started offending it started affecting my life and the people around me. I was seen as an offender, not as who I am.

If a young offender has support from their family then they wouldn't have started offending. If I had been able to contact my Dad's family or if Social Services had contacted them, then I wouldn't be here now. I've got a better family support and I plan on stopping now. I will stop now because I've got people and family to stop for.

Kyle

When I was eight I started shop-lifting cos I thought it would be fun. I was living with my Mum and brother. I didn't see my Dad that much, but I know that he had been in prison. A girl came to my house one day who was really fit when I was 11, I didn't think she liked me but we went down the shops and I nicked loads of sweets to look bad.

When I was 12 I started nicking from bigger shops, started nicking pushbikes (from gardens and outside shops). I started smoking drugs. I was an opportunist. I remember being with some older people, they were round the back of the shops, smoking drugs and a man pulled up on a pushbike in front of the shops. I ran past and took the pushbike to

show my mates.

When we'd buy the green we would go round someone's house called Skinny Marks that we didn't even really like. I started drinking at 13 and started getting violent. I get in fights when I've drinking vodka and with my mates, normally on a Friday night, cos we were in school during the week.

Me and 3 mates used to go around popping garages and nicking stuff out of them when I was 14. I didn't do it for the money, I had money, I did it to get the pushbikes to ride around on. Me and Craig and the rest of the South Ham lot went up J Sainsburys and robbed the back of it, filling up trolleys and selling the stuff at Christmas.

I wouldn't call myself a criminal, I'm more of a thug.

Keith

You want to know my story? Read the leaflet I produced for the celebration. It tells my story better than I can. (appendix 2)

Drew

I deal class drugs for one reason only, to make money. I need money to support my family, we are very close. I got caught and am now doing my time. I hate it in here and do not want to come back.

I did well at school and got in no trouble. I got my GCSEs, including French and Information technology.

John

I never got in trouble until my mum died about three years ago. I did really well at school and went onto college. I was also in the local athletics team. My older brother was working to support us but it wasn't enough so I started nicking things. I then had a major fight with my older brother and left. That's when I started dealing heroin. I never touch the stuff myself but it is a good money earner. I worked with a partner and we used to sell it locally.

Inevitably that meant getting into fights. I worked out to make sure I could look after myself and I didn't carry a weapon. I can disarm a knife holder but you have to be careful because a gun gives you no chance. I work to a code. I don't fight or steal from women, children or old people.

When I come out I want to keep my head down and focus on my music and athletics. I will be living with my brother on tag and on curfew so that should keep me indoors a lot.

Before I started getting into trouble I was often being stopped and search for no reason. In the end I thought "well I if I am going to keep getting stopped as if I was a criminal then I may as well do something to deserve it.

Mark

None of my family have been in trouble. My dad is in the import/export business. I got in trouble for violent disorder. I do not want to talk about it.


I am Asian, my favourite food is fish and chips and I love Stella Artois. I hated school.

Adam

I can't wait to get to a proper prison so I can use the phone. In here people have to call you and sometimes when they ring the people here tell them you're busy. I've heard when you go to proper prison or in other secure units you get a phone in your room and you can talk for as long as you want. Sounds good.

Section 10 Appendix 2 – examples of work


ASBO



Created in HMP Ashfield

Offences/ Offending Behaviour:

- Shoplifting
- Street Robbery
- Burglary
- Knife point robbery



ASBO Conditions:

- In the indicated areas, it is an offence for this young person to carry out the following:
- Swearing
- Smoking
- Drinking
- Wearing a hood
- To be in the company of more than four people at any one time
- Fighting
- Cause harm, alarm or distress

FIXED FOR 5 YEARS

Aspects which have contributed to my offending behaviour

- No constructive outlet for anger.
- Hanging around in bad crowd at a young age.
- Not knowing who to turn to for help with poor family stability. By the time intervention was found, it was too late for me and not right for my mum.
- Poor police attitude in my area, I feel that being one of few black people in my area I am often picked up for offences which I haven't committed, wasting my time & encouraging me to think that the police aren't doing their jobs properly.
- Being placed in a Pupil Referral Unit so far away from home discouraged me to go.
- Boredom when out of school
- Receiving no warning about being 'named and shamed' means I am always viewed as an 'offender' by community, rather than just a young person.

GA6195

The factors contributing to my offending behaviour have been realised through doing this work, I have also come to be able to express my own interventions that would help me to stop being re-convicted after I am released from HMP Ashfield.

'The aim of an ASBO is to protect the public from the behaviour, rather than to punish the perpetrator.'

'An ASBO is a civil order, not a criminal penalty – this means it won't appear on an individual's criminal record. However, a breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence punishable by a fine or up to five years in prison.'

www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Please refer to map handout

Things that would help me stop offending/ prevent me from being re-convicted:

To meet my licence conditions when I leave Ashfield I have to complete full time education. I can't go to my local school because it's restricted in my ASBO. I would be more likely to want to go to school if I could go to my local school and therefore more likely to meet my licence conditions. All I have to do is take the exams & I want to do this.

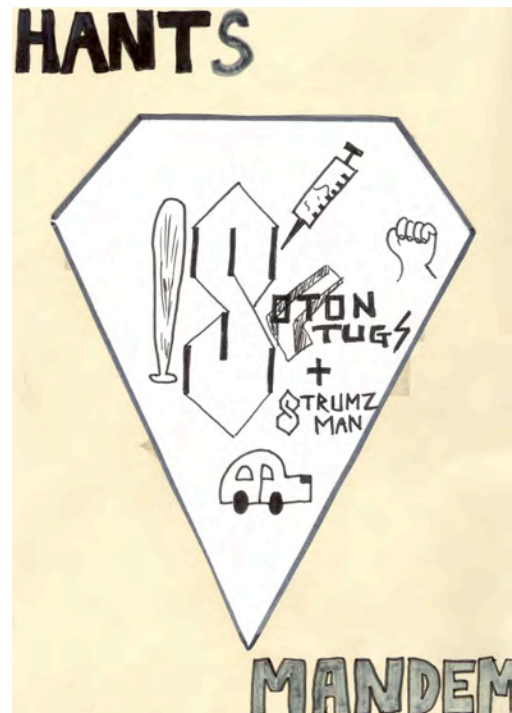
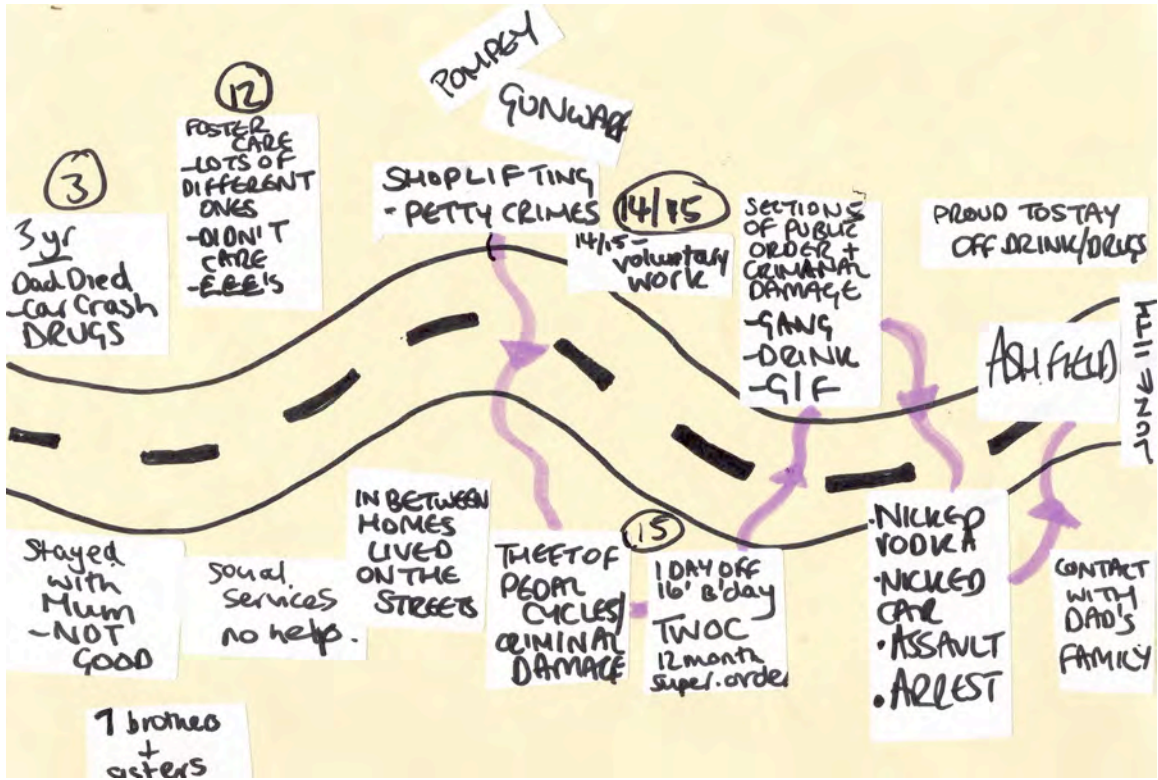
I have completed all my coursework which has been marked by school, however, by attending another school I will have to repeat the lessons I have done in Ashfield and re-do all the coursework. My YOT don't realise this.

My curfew means I have to be at home from 7pm. If issues at home start happening again, I have nowhere to go to chill out. I am more likely to break my curfew if I have to get out of the house because of family issues. Respite (but not care) would stop me feeling pressure at home.

I feel isolated from my friends because they can go to the areas where there are things to do like football & basketball courts, there are no alternative activities in place for me. Why should my friends always go out of their way to see me?

I was offered employment before I came back to Ashfield this time, I couldn't take it because the work meant going to areas which are banned in my ASBO.

I will be viewed as an offender by community for the next 3 years, until I am 19. My ASBO conditions are not re-assessed, even though a person's needs change all the time.



Section 11 Appendix 3 – Swanwick Lodge Session Plan

1. Stuck in the Mud: A variation of the original exercise, using ‘Stuck in the Mud’ and a tap on either the arm or shoulder as a ‘tag’. “Out of the Mud” and likewise a tap with release a caught person. The tagged participant must stand with arms outstretched in the air. *Focus will be on warming the group up physically and de-restricting movement, gaining a sense of body and the space. Also limits physical contact of a nature not compliant with Swanwick Lodge regulations.*
2. Associating Sounds: Stood in a circle, each of the group portray an impression of an animal, and create a sound for that chosen animal. When they have done so, a facilitator will start the game off by performing their own sound and movement, and then trigger someone else in the group by performing theirs also. *Identifying each other by a recognisable sound and movement as opposed to a name creates a feeling of safety and is a metaphor for anonymity, allowing the young people to be recognised by different means other than a name. It is possible friendship groups may be demonstrated by this.*
3. Organising Silently: The participants organise themselves in silence into lines and groups dependent on their physical self or interests. Such as height, and alphabetical name order, or favourite music for example. *Possibly establishing dominant characters and personalities to the facilitator, also looking into confidence and freedom to make own decisions whilst encouraging team work and communication.*
4. Creating a character: Sat in a circle, the facilitator introduces ‘Bugs’. Bugs is imaginary entirely. Together we create a personality together, and everything about this new person.

- ♣ Who is Bugs?
- ♣ How old are they?
- ♣ Where do they live?
- ♣ What are their interests?

This task can be interspersed with brief imagery and tableaux should an individual volunteer. This may instigate conversation within the group. A new person can be moulded to become part of the session. The main result of the task being that Bugs has to be given a problem to overcome, or a decision to make based on the nature of the character created. Facilitators should explain Bugs will be used in the second half of the session. *This exercise looks at the creative and imaginary capabilities of the group, and conversational and vocabulary skills they have when explaining about Bugs. A facilitator should write all this down for the group to look at throughout the task.*

15 minute Break

1. Psst Psst: A facilitator poses as ‘it’, and the other members of the group spread around the outskirts of the room facing inwards. The group have to catch the attention of one another without ‘it’ seeing so. They can do this by any means. Maybe by using their animal movement to identify someone to swop over with? Once they have made the decision to swop with one another they must “Psst Psst” run and take the others place before the person who is it gets it first. *This task will bring focus back to the session, involve team work and look at relationships with one another.*
2. Image Theatre: The remainder of the session is spent creating images of Bugs in his/her everyday life based on the creativity of the 1st sector, promoting conversation and expression of self. The facilitators can be moulded by the group, or joined by them should they desire. Portrayals of A Day in The Life Of Bugs. (Notes for facts)
 - ♣ How do the group collectively make Bugs?
 - ♣ What do they think of him/him so far?
 - ♣ What do we like/dislike about him?
 - ♣ Does he get on with the other people in the picture?
 - ♣ How does he/she speak?

Section 12 Appendix 4 – Programme From Ashfield Celebration

How did I end up here?



Celebration

The Chapel,
HMP & YOI Ashfield
Wednesday 4th April 2007

Programme of Events

10.00—10.30	Arrival
10.30—10.40	Welcome
10.40—10.50	Stereotypes
10.50—11.00	Stories
11.00—11.10	Art
11.10—11.30	Theatre
11.30—11.40	Acknowledgements
11.40—12.00	Questions 1
12.00—12.10	Move
12.10—12.30	Questions 2

The Groups

Soton Tugs

You will be asked to participate in a game which explores stereotypes. This is an area which has been built on by the by group sharing experiences of being stereotyped due to offending behaviour, race and attitude. From week to week this group have used 'game playing' and other activities to explore each other as people, not just prisoners.

George & Dragon

This group have been experimenting with storytelling and characterisation, looking at soap opera and gang film culture. Although this hasn't lead to a performance for you to see, the process reveals a lot about their opinions.

Criminals

This group expressed an interest in working using art early in the project. This has taken the form of comic strips, posters and written work to tell their stories. Initially they began working as a group but it became evident that working individually would be more effective, as they all have very different stories to tell.

Hants Mandem & Strumz

This group have, from week one, been working on creating characters and a story that represent their experiences of offending. The piece you will see centres on a character called 'Birdie', played by Ben Murphy, and his journey. Please be aware that the play may contain some strong language.

The Questions

Questions 1

At this point we would invite you to ask the lads questions you have concerning the issues raised in their creative work.

Questions 2

At this point we would invite you to ask the students questions about the processes involved in their work with the young people.

Credits

Soton Tugs
David Rwirangira, Lance Egan
Mohammed Afzal, Jamie Bellows

George & Dragon
Kye Griffiths, Kieran Gray, Liam Darby


Criminals
Jareth Martin, Kenley Herbert
Tony Magee, Lewis Dewick

Hants Mandem & Strumz
Ben Murphy, Stephan Lock, Chris Byrne
Craig Laurie, Charles Moore, John Harris

With special thanks to:
Tracey Brinda- LSA & willing participant
Sharon Degg - Organisation
Everyone at HMP & YOI Ashfield

References

Bullet Boy (2004) Saul Dibb, BBC Films
Kidulthood (2006) Menhaj Huda, Stealth Films
Gesee Theatre Handbook! (2002), Bain Brookes & Sandford
Doing the Airs Justice (2004) Jenny Hughes
Barred Voices (2006) Escape artists



Lucy Dolman,
Sophie Hartgill,
Nick Mabey

