



The Great Escape: Exploring the Rehabilitative Dynamics Involved in 'Changing Tunes'

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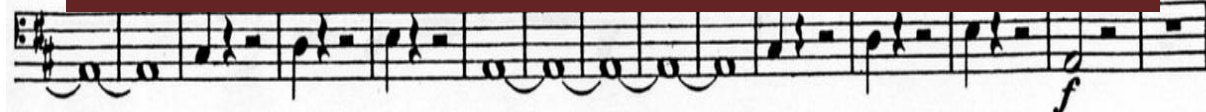
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*'When you're playing guitar, you feel like you're not in prison.
Music is a great escape.'*

-- Changing Tunes participant

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Changing Tunes (CT) is a registered charity that uses music teaching, rehearsing, recording, performance, improvisation and composition to aid the rehabilitation of prisoners and ex-prisoners. Participants almost uniformly express passionate support for the organisation and many insist that ‘music has changed my life.’ Many musicians and music lovers will understand this power instinctively. Others, however, may be sceptical about what relationship musical tuition has with turning around lives of crime. The goal of this report is to develop a logic model (see below) that can account for how CT 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 is based on qualitative feedback from CT participants themselves rather than an analysis of the existing literature on music and rehabilitation.

Changing Tunes Logic Model

Changing Tunes Processes	Immediate Impacts	Longer Term Impacts
Sense of Collective Ownership/Responsibility	Emotional Energy	Increased Confidence
Therapeutic Alliance with Facilitator	Therapeutic Management of Depression	Finding One’s Voice and Creativity
Group Bonding and Mutual Support	Anger Management	An Identity Separate from Being an Offender
Challenging Participants to Test Their Limits	A Drug-Free Means of Escape or Coping with Imprisonment	Increased Employability
Public Performance and Acknowledgement	A Calmer Prison Environment as a Whole	
Praise		
Fostering a Sense of Achievement		

Participants said that Changing Tunes provided them with a form of ‘escape’ -- not just from institutionalisation inside prison, but also from the cycle of punishment, shame, anger and defiance that prisoners and ex-prisoners find themselves trapped in. The model of change that emerges from participant testimony is a plausible model of rehabilitation – not least to participants themselves – and one that can now be empirically tested and refined in future research.

INTRODUCTION

Changing Tunes (CT) is a registered charity that uses music teaching, rehearsing, recording, performance, improvisation and composition to aid the rehabilitation of prisoners and ex-prisoners. Last year, the organization worked with over 500 prisoners across 13 prisons in the South of England as well as over 30 ex-prisoners. Surveys of CT participants suggest that those taking part in the projects are passionate in their devotion to the work and give credit to CT for remarkable changes in their lives:

‘Simply, Changing Tunes has changed me and my life.’

‘[CT] is the most wonderful thing that there is to do in a place like prison.’

‘Changing Tunes has changed me as a person in so many positive ways, too many to list. ... I now have a much better outlook.’

‘[CT] is a life changing experience.’

‘It might have changed my future.’

For most of us, there is something mysterious and inexplicable about the power of music. We know we like it, perhaps even need it, and know it plays an important role in our lives, but most of us are not able to articulate precisely why this is or how music impacts us the way it does. The participants in CT are no exception to this rule. Asked to explain the benefit of the project for them as prisoners, participants offered glowing but rather vague answers: ‘It’s amazing what music can do for people’ and ‘Without doubt music changed me as a person!!!’ One participant even waxed poetic, quoting Shakespeare: ‘If music be the food of love, play on’.

The problem is that in an era of “evidence-based” practice in all aspects of governance, policy makers expect more concrete explanations for how intervention projects work, what they are seeking to accomplish and how this might be measured. It is not enough to say that “music changes lives” or “music is the food of love”. In this report, I have been commissioned to try to explore the precise processes through which CT works through a grounded theoretical method¹. The goal of this paper is to develop a logic model that can account for how CT 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 is based on qualitative feedback from CT participants themselves rather than an analysis of the existing literature on music and rehabilitation².

¹ Grounded theory is a qualitative analytic method used primarily in exploratory or discovery-based research. The idea is to inductively build a theory from the “ground” up (i.e. beginning with the qualitative data) rather than testing existing theories with the data in a more traditional deductive fashion (see Glaser BG, Strauss AL. *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

² This report does not include a literature review. The funders judged that this would replicate previous and on-going research into the effects of the arts in prison (see e.g., Randell N., ed, *Including the Arts: preventing youth offending*. Report on the first national conference on the role of the arts in preventing youth offending. Youth Justice Board, Arts Council England and Paul Hamlyn Trust, 2002; Hughes, J. *Doing the Arts Justice: A Review of Research Literature, Practice and Theory*. London: Arts Council, 2005. The author of this report is a criminologist trained in developmental psychology and experienced in rehabilitation research. He is not a music therapist and has no specific expertise about the science of music therapy.

This study, then, is not an outcome evaluation. Internal evaluation research collected by the CT organisation suggests that CT participants' re-offending outcomes upon release are far better than the national average for released prisoners. These promising retrospective results suggest the need for an externally funded and designed, prospective outcome evaluation of the projects' impact on the lives of participants. Before such a study can be designed however, it is important to know what the CT projects are intended to do – the means and mechanisms through which change is supposed to take place and the short-term and medium term outcomes that are theoretically linked to reductions in re-offending. This is the function of this research.

A final point needs to be addressed. The CT projects are designed to be rehabilitative rather than deterrent in nature. This is obvious in the findings from this research. Participants not only find their involvement with CT to be therapeutic, they also find it to be deeply enjoyable and rewarding. Some observers -- primarily those with no experience of the prison system -- may find this to be a cause of concern. Should anything in prison be "rewarding" if prison is meant to be a punishment? At the extreme, such a narrow interpretation of the purposes of punishment would prohibit not just musical performance, but also engagement in sports activity, family visits, media consumption, casual socialisation among prisoners, reading, and even learning. After all, each of these activities can be exhilarating and enjoyable. More importantly, this narrow view on the purpose of punishment would not only ignore core penal aims such as successful rehabilitation and resettlement, but would actively prohibit most such engagement on the grounds that it may undermine the deterrence function of imprisonment by not being unrelentingly painful. This is not to mention the fact that the purely punitive prison, fantasised by the tabloid press, would be nearly ungovernable, prone to riots and rebellion, putting the safety of staff in constant peril.

For these reasons, every contemporary prison recognises the need for some forms of "escape" such as Changing Tunes. This word has multiple meanings, and almost all of them (except for the most literal) are intended here. All modern prisons, for instance, provide opportunities (through reading, watching television, using gym equipment) for individuals to "escape" the daily monotony of institutionalisation and the many punitive aspects of incarceration. All modern prisons, likewise, provide opportunities for individuals to better themselves through study, therapeutic engagement and other means of "escaping" lives of crime and punishment in the form of rehabilitation. These "escape routes" are justified on the pragmatic grounds of reducing re-offending and creating a safer society. Criminological research evidence is very clear that rehabilitative strategies are far more effective than punitive deterrents at reducing criminal recidivism³. The other reason such opportunities are provided in the prison environment is to control other, well-known means of "escape", such as the use of illegal narcotics, mental breakdown, suicide, violence, and self-harm -- all of which are rampant in prison environments around the world and are far more harmful than music.

³For reviews of this research see e.g., Gendreau, P., Goggin, C. and Cullen, F. (1999). *The Effects of Prison Sentences on Recidivism*. A report to the Corrections Research and Development and Aboriginal Policy Branch, Solicitor General of Canada, Ottawa; McGuire, J. (1995). The death of deterrence. In J. McGuire and B. Rowson (Eds.), *Does punishment work?* Proceedings of a conference held at Westminster Central Hall, London, UK. London: ISTD. McGuire, J. (2008). 'A review of effective interventions for reducing aggression and violence', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 363, pp.2577–2597.

METHODS

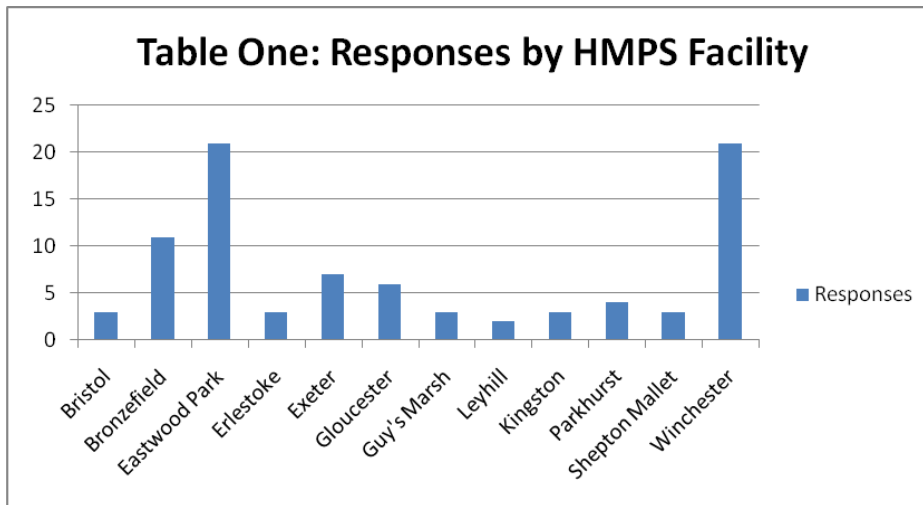
This report is based on a thematic content analysis of qualitative material. Three separate data sources have been utilised: A) Written feedback from 87 CT participants, B) Observations at two CT projects, C) Focus group interviews with CT participants. All three groups of qualitative data were combined into a single data set and content analysed thematically to better understand the process and outcomes of the CT process from the point of view of participants. The thematic content analysis of feedback forms was initiated prior to visiting the prisons, however. The observations, and in particular the focus group interviews, were therefore used to clarify any lingering questions that had arisen from the self-assessment analysis.

It was decided that this analysis would be entirely “grounded” (i.e. based on the reported experiences of participants themselves) and therefore not in dialogue with either the wider academic research on these issues or else interviews with CT staff and management. The perspective being developed is from the eyes of the participants only. The advantage of this approach is that it provides a realistic rather than idealistic guide for what an intervention can accomplish and how it is to do so. Rehabilitation is a complex, even mysterious, process and often there is a gap between how a programme is supposed to work and what is actually done on the ground⁴. This grounded analysis will provide an insight into what actually appears to go on in CT projects from the point of view of the participants involved.

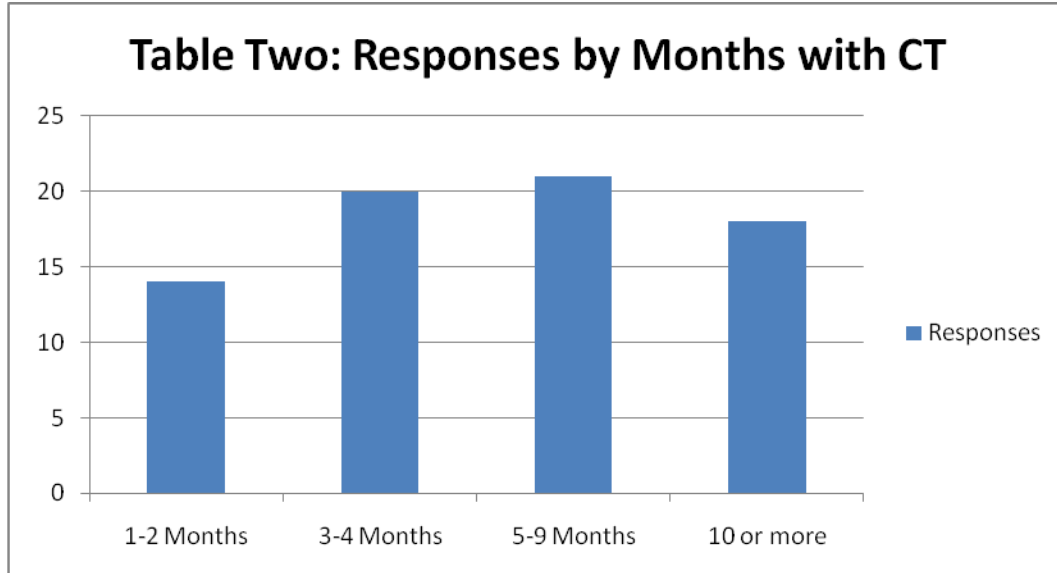
A) Secondary analysis of written feedback

Written feedback on the CT projects was submitted by 87 participants from 12 different prisons: Bristol, Eastwood Park, Leyhill, Parkhurst, Kingston, Shepton Mallet, Bronzefield, Erlestoke, Guys Marsh, Gloucester, Exeter, and Winchester (see Table 1, below). This feedback has been used with the permission of respondents. The wording of these quotes has been kept as per the author; however the spelling has been corrected where needed. All responses have been anonymised, including the removing of names of facilitators and facilities.

⁴ These “implementation” issues have assumed a prominent place on the research on offender rehabilitation in the UK in recent years with many observers arguing that too little attention has been paid to these issues in recent decades. See e.g., Gendreau, P., C. Goggin and P. Smith (1999) ‘The Forgotten Issue in Effective Correctional Treatment: Program Implementation’, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 43(2): 180–7.



Due to the nature of the interventions themselves (the projects are voluntary and do not have a set length of recommended participation), this assessment was not collected at the 'completion' of the project except for those individuals who were transferring out of the prison. Instead, participants were surveyed at various intervals, and as a result their experience with CT ranged from three weeks to over five years (see Table Two, below).



Participants were asked to respond to nine open ended questions about their experiences with CT and their thoughts for improving the projects (see Appendix A for this questionnaire template).

B) Observations

The author was able to observe two CT sessions first-hand – one at a male facility and the other at a women’s facility. There were some important differences in the two groups. Whereas the women’s group focused mostly on singing with some keyboard tuition, the men’s group involved a full rock band – drummer, guitars, bass, keyboards, as well as vocals, performing as one.

The women’s group performed both collectively as a small choir, but also in duets, and solo behind a microphone. Women brought in their own sheet music and set the tone of what they wanted to do in the session. The songs ranged from “Me and Bobby McGee” to “I Could Have Danced All Night” and included one song sung simultaneously in Dutch and English. While others were singing, the women participants were busy (sometimes feverishly) working. Two women would practice on the keyboards with their headphones so as not to disturb the others. Others were transcribing sheet music, memorising lyrics, and preparing for their turn at the microphone. They also listened to one another sing, applauded, provided compliments and peer coaching to one another.

At the male facility, one day of the week was devoted to tuition, another day was set aside for “jam sessions” with the full band. I observed one of the latter sessions. Five participants took turns at the different roles within the band – rotating from lead singer to drummer to keyboards, with only one or two prisoners staying at the same instrument throughout. Songs ranged from Jimi Hendrix to original songs written by participants.

The observer stayed in the back of the room, taking notes by hand, and did not participate, except to occasionally applaud.

C) Focus Group Interviews

At the conclusion of both sessions a private focus group was arranged involving all of the performers (6 women and 5 men, respectively) without the facilitator for the group. Prison staff remained outside the door. The focus groups were used to clarify lingering questions about process and perceptions of the CT projects.

All three forms of qualitative data were transcribed, then analysed inductively using a modified “grounded theory” approach. Participants’ own voices are given primacy as the goal was to understand how CT works from those who are engaging in the process⁵.

⁵ It is important not to exaggerate this process, however. Grounded or not, these qualitative responses have been interpreted through the particular lens of the author of this research report. For my own biases (i.e. principles and previous theoretical statements regarding rehabilitation), see S. Maruna (2001). *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Books.

HOW TUNES CHANGE: UNDERSTANDING THE CT PROCESS

This analysis identified seven, key elements of the CT process that can account for how the projects “work”:

- A) Participant-led/Sense of Collective Ownership/Responsibility
- B) Therapeutic Alliance with Facilitator
- C) Group Bonding and Mutual Support
- D) Challenging Participants to Test Their Limits
- E) Public Performance and Acknowledgement
- F) Praise
- G) Fostering a Sense of Achievement

Each of these processes is described in detail below, drawing on data from the thematic content analysis of the qualitative data.

Collective Ownership

Prisoner participants felt that they were given considerable responsibility over the direction of the CT projects, and with this, experienced a sense of ownership. The participant-led nature of the project begins with enrolment which is on a voluntary basis. As one participant wrote: ‘People here want to be here. The atmosphere is great. People want to learn.’ Once they enrol, participants collectively determine what they will work on – what instruments, what songs, what speed they want to proceed at – with the guidance of a dedicated facilitator.

In the focus group interview, one participant explained, ‘This is the only thing in the prison that is really just for yourself’. Another clarified, ‘It is the only thing in here we are in control of’. My own observations of the projects contradicted this interpretation somewhat. It appeared to me that facilitators, although not domineering in any way, were subtly steering the workshops in a purposeful direction. As such, I pursued this point in the discussion, asking ‘Don’t the facilitators “call the tune” so to speak?’ Participants agreed that facilitators maintained a leadership role, but that they also actively empowered participants to share this responsibility. One explained: ‘[The facilitator] will suggest things’ but progress was ‘down to us’ in a democratic fashion. The written self-assessment feedback largely confirmed this theme with nearly all participants agreeing that they felt their voices were listened to in deciding the directions of the group. One responded, ‘Yes, if anything I was a bit bossy.’ Others described the environment as follows:

‘Very open, democratic and friendly. [The facilitator] was very sensitive to members of the group and included everyone.’

‘On occasion there were conflicts but they worked through to obtain a positive outcome I think everyone’s opinion was valued.’

Therapeutic Alliance

This sense of ownership over the intervention triggered both an obvious sense of pride in the achievements of the group but also a passionate allegiance to CT as an organisation.

‘[Changing Tunes is] 110% by far the best thing about prison. It’s a shame it isn’t everywhere.’

‘Very special and wonderful.’

In particular, participants reported feeling deeply bonded to the CT facilitators, with a level of praise and devotion that is probably unheard of elsewhere in the prison system:

‘[Our facilitator] is simply a sweetheart and I miss her a lot. I’m in another prison and there isn’t anything like Changing Tunes here.’

‘The best teacher ever.’

Much of this respect was earned purely on the basis of the remarkable levels of talent the facilitators all must have to do the work required to coach individuals at such different levels to such a high standard.

‘Most definitely, [the facilitator is] a master musician of the highest class. He gave 100%’

‘The Changing Tunes musician, the music man, genius and great teacher. I am still in touch with him and he is helping me with chords and lyrics for the band here at HMP and I can’t wait to work with him again.’

Participants suggested that their alliance with their facilitators went beyond musicianship, however, and that they felt they could reach out to CT for other types of emotional support:

‘Over the last year [the facilitator] has been a friend. Someone I can talk to, and has helped my get through my sentence.’

Most importantly, facilitators clearly practice a sort of ‘prosocial modelling’⁶, by exuding patience, calm, and a non-judgemental approach to tuition despite what must be at times a challenging environment in which to train musicians:

‘I could not have asked for a better more understanding tutor.’

‘[The facilitator] was understanding, even though I’m not the easiest to work with.’

⁶ This is the idea that one of the primary functions of treatment staff is to model appropriate problem-solving behaviours for participants, regardless of the type of intervention. See Trotter C. (1999) *Working with Involuntary Clients A Guide to Practice*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

‘To say excellent wouldn’t do [the facilitator] justice. He is brilliant and gave us all easy to follow instruction and patience.’

‘[The facilitator] was very laid back but at the same time skilled in his support with each individual.’

The result of this modelling combined with the “open and democratic” nature of the projects is the creation of a therapeutic environment of mutual respect within boundaries that are appropriate for the secure environment:

‘They provide a fun/enjoyable opportunity to release, heal, learn and grow in a relaxed, friendly and warm environment where you feel welcome, valued and respected.’

‘The tutor cultivated a very healthy climate of mutual respect, consideration and fairness, in which I felt totally comfortable and at ease in every respect in every session, to participate as much or as little as I wanted.’

Mutual Support

A third, core element of the CT process, then, is the support between participants themselves. At the women’s project I observed, six women stood around a piano doing a warm-up exercise in unison. Their ages ranged from early 20s to late 50s, they are ethnically and socially diverse group, but their voices are harmonising together beautifully. The effect of this choral exercise is palpable on both participants but also on me as an onlooker. There is clear friendship and affection between the participants and the facilitator but especially among one another. There was considerable hugging, even hand-holding in the women’s group as they warmed up in unison or moved from the microphone back off the ‘stage’. In the male group, there was also a clear camaraderie, an almost unavoidable consequence of performing songs like ‘Mustang Sally’ collectively as a band. At times, some of the participants had a habit of turning their backs on one another as they played guitar on such songs, and the facilitator was good about turning them around to face one another and read each others’ cues.

The participant feedback made clear that this bonding was both recognised and widely appreciated by CT participants. Almost all listed “being part of a group” as one of the key benefits of their involvement:

‘A good social network arose out of the music – mutually supportive in [the] prison setting.’

‘It got people working as one, which is usually very difficult to do in prison.’

‘The satisfaction and enrichment that comes from working together and interacting.’

One participant wrote in his feedback notes that he would “like a Changing Tunes t-shirt to feel more of a group/band” underlining this strong sense of a shared, prosocial identity as a group of

musicians. The CT projects also brought together prisoners from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in a way that several participants noted as being educational:

‘People come together who would possibly never [have] done if not for this workshop.

‘We played a wide range of music which catered for all races and cultures.’

An even bigger issue was the diversity of musical talent among new members. Participants arrived at CT with vast differences in their musical abilities and experiences. One wrote: ‘I couldn’t play a guitar before Changing Tunes’ whereas another stated: ‘I’m a proper musician, touring, recording etc.’ This wide range can be difficult to work with. One participant admitted that he ‘did feel like the weak link’, and other acknowledged that ‘Sometimes I had to be patient while some people tried to learn a song.’ However for the most part, this diversity in abilities within the group was turned into a strength, with the more experienced musicians coaching and tutoring the less experienced ones:

‘The group was made up of beginners and experienced musicians which worked very well as the experienced ones gave encouragement to the beginners.’

‘I felt the tutor was sensitive to the different needs of the group.’

This mutual support was appreciated by newer musicians who felt pushed to perform at such a high standard:

‘I learnt more by working alongside proper musicians and people at my own level.’

‘My abilities may not have been to the same standard as others but learning with people better than I has improved my music skills tenfold. I also enjoyed the music we played.’

Yet, the more experienced musicians also benefited from the experience of tutoring and assisting those with less experience:

‘Yes I was asked by [the facilitator] if I minded staying in the group I was in as I could help others and I enjoyed every session.’

‘I’m a professional musician with my own band on the outside, but I thoroughly enjoyed myself playing with all degree of abilities.’

‘Yes I had to make most of the decisions as I had so much more experience of leading and playing in a band. It was always open for the others to pitch in and suggest things.’

‘I enjoyed...helping to teach others.’

Several of the latter group mentioned wanting to become musical instructors upon release and felt this was important training for that.

Challenge

What goes on in the session appears to be great fun, as is clear from the near constant laughter and enthusiasm of participants, but also is clearly scary, difficult, intimidating work. Participants talked about this as “getting outside their comfort zones”:

‘[The facilitator] has helped me to overcome my fear of singing in groups.’

‘Yes I felt out of my depth on occasion but managed to work within my capabilities.’

This includes working in styles that are outside of their musical comfort areas as well:

‘We produced songs that suited my style but I also tried different styles that I really enjoyed.’

When one, younger woman went up to sing a solo during my observation of a women’s group, her hands were so visibly shaking that she could hardly hold the sheet music she was carrying. Her strong voice, however, could be heard throughout the wing. One male participant’s repeated refrain was ‘I can’t do it’, to which his facilitator repeatedly assured him, ‘Yes, you can, I’ve heard you do it before’. Despite the participants’ steadfast insistence that he could not perform the particular sequence of chord changes on the guitar, the facilitator finally encouraged him to practice it solo. On the second or third try, he was indeed successful and the rest of the band fell in behind him almost immediately and they performed the rest of the song. The guitarist was visibly pleased with his achievement.

CT participants push themselves, and are pushed by the facilitator. Facilitators had very high expectations of the performers. Although they were encouraging and nurturing, facilitators did not shy away from criticism, explaining where the participants could improve and helping them achieve better. The atmosphere was not one of “anything goes” or “let’s just have fun on the microphone”, these were clearly training sessions for individuals with hidden talents who were striving to improve themselves and motivated to learn and grow. Both groups were therefore purpose-driven and focused, as if participants were in training for an upcoming West End show or a rock concert.

Public Performance

Of course, a key element of the CT process is precisely that the participants are training for a public performance, perhaps not on the West End, but probably to an even more intimidating audience of peers and staff in the prison itself. Some groups performed as many as four or more concerts per year in prison chapels and gymnasiums, and all of the participants I spoke to were highly enthusiastic about this aspect of CT, both as an opportunity to show off their new-found skills, but also as a means of helping others. They saw these as opportunities to lift other prisoners’ spirits (lower stress, reduce depression), but also to act as inspirational role models within the prison, showing what fellow prisoners are capable of doing.

“Seeing everyone’s faces [as we sing] is just intense”, one said. “They all join in – the officers, everyone. [The concerts] bring everyone together... at least for a limited moment”.

‘It is an encouraging experience for those taking part and when concerts are performed this is seen in a positive light by other inmates.’

Participants who have had the opportunity to record their songs on a CD are equally proud of this process. The CD’s become treasured proof of their achievements and also something they can give as a gift to family members and others.

Praise

Hard-won praise is also a key feature of CT sessions. Facilitators would routinely recognise little achievements throughout the sessions: “You kept time really well there”, “You’re getting so much better on hitting that high note”. Such comments are near automatic in musical tuition, but participants insist they are almost never given praise in their daily lives as prisoners:

‘The feeling that you are good at something. It’s even better when people tell you that you are great. For me, I’m over the moon and aspire to do more.’

Participants in both male and female groups consistently praised one another as well. At the finish of a song written by one male participant, but performed by the entire group, one of the non-writers turned to the writer and said, “That is a great song, man’. Applause was common after each performance of the women’s group. This was less the case with the men, probably partially because all of the men performed at once, and so the applause would be a kind of self-congratulation.

Fostering a Sense of Achievement

The final aspect of the CT process involves fostering a sense of personal achievement and a recognition of a person’s hidden talents or inner capabilities. Focus group participants described their sheer joy and amazement on first learning the basics of musical performance:

‘When I came in here [and started learning piano for the first time], I just wanted to play a song, any song. When I did, I couldn’t believe it. “I did that”, I thought, “That came from me”, I was over the moon, I was’.

These feelings appear to persist throughout the learning process as the participants recognise their own development as musicians:

‘[CT] helps prisoners to do something good.’

‘Brilliant chance to make something of yourself.’

This sense of achievement is particularly powerful in the context of lives where individuals are routinely made to feel like failures:

‘[CT] made me realise I was good at something.’

‘I now realize I can sing.’

‘People discovered talents they didn’t know about.’

‘It was the best thing I ever done. Learnt how to play the drums and made some really good friends.’

Participants took particular pride in the act of song-writing and participants were encouraged both to bring in songs for the group, but also to enter this work in the competition for the Koestler Award and other prizes:

‘It has proved my ability to write songs and perform them. Also it has given me the chance to hear my own songs when recorded.’

Prisoners who participate in CT recognise that, not just CT facilitators but other staff members at the prison and members of the wider public begin to think of them differently when they participate in CT:

‘Staff can see a different side to you other than just ‘a Criminal’.’

‘It reminds society that not all criminals are bad or even criminals that they still have something to offer.’

‘It shows the public that some prisoners can and do change for the better.’

IMMEDIATE AND SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Changing Tunes participants suggest that the processes described in the previous section have both immediate/short-term and medium-to-long term outcomes in their own lives and the lives of other prisoners. Chief among the shorter-term outcomes appear to be the following:

- A) Emotional Energy
- B) Therapeutic Management of Depression
- C) Anger Management
- D) A Drug-Free Means of Escape or Coping with Imprisonment
- E) A Calmer Prison Environment as a Whole

Emotional Energy

The emotional enhancement powers of listening to, but especially performing, music are well known, and the considerable emotional energy involved in performance was frequently mentioned by participants as providing a “high” for them. This emotional energy was attributed to both the music itself, but also to the friendship networks and hope generated through engagement in the CT workshops:

‘We had a brilliant time. I wouldn’t have missed it for the world.’

‘Sheer enthusiasm.’

‘I feel the group I was in was full of life and talent’.

This excitement was clear from the participants’ genuine and uncontrollable smiling and nervous laughter at their own mistakes. None appeared to be “going through the motions”, distracted or bored in any way. At the women’s group, some participants literally jogged up to the microphone when it was their turn to sing, clearly not wanting to miss a second of their allotted time. Such enthusiasm is not common in a prison environment, but indeed felt unusual for any environment late on a Friday afternoon when the observations were taking place.

Additionally, participants consistently said this elevated emotional experience carried on after the session was over:

‘I came out of the sessions on a high.’

‘I always felt elated when returning to my cell.’

‘I came away feeling inspired by music rather than it being boring or a chore.’

Therapeutic Benefits

Participants described the complex ways in which musical performance was emotionally therapeutic for them. At the most basic level, participants said that music cheered them up when they were down:

‘Brightened my life up and stopped me feeling so sad.’

‘Music makes people feel happy and a happy prisoner has to be beneficial to the prison. Doesn’t it?’

‘It takes your mind off things. Also gives that unknown happiness.’

‘Gave me a good feeling and improved my depression.’

Others emphasised that performance could provide an important ‘emotional release’ allowing them to work out feelings of sadness and loss:

‘Gave me a chance to let it all out, express my inner most emotions that were kept buried deep in my subconscious.’

‘Music is one of the ways I can put my feelings down, especially when you don’t have anyone to talk to.’

‘I never realised that so many emotions could be changed through music, and the workshop gave me the opportunity to express my emotions.’

Sometimes prisoners found the emotions that music could trigger to be too much to handle. In the men’s prison, the facilitator suggested they sing the song “Delilah” at one point, and participants rejected the idea on the grounds that the song was ‘too depressing’: ‘That is the most depressing song in the world’, another agreed. A female focus group member admitted that, ‘Sometimes I feel like crying when I’m singing. In the middle of a song.’ Yet, others pointed out that it was precisely this emotional weight that made some songs therapeutic:

‘[CT] does allow you to sing sad songs. I felt happiest letting my sadness out that way.’

In addition to helping prisoners work out complex emotional issues, music was also credited with more serious therapeutic benefits, as a counter to thoughts of suicide and depression. One male prisoner in the focus group said, ‘I suffer from depression, I do, and this totally lifts you up’. Others wrote similarly powerful testimony in their feedback. One described the depression he had experienced as a result of several set-backs he experienced in a previous prison and said that his time with CT convinced him not to commit suicide: ‘It made my life worth living.’ Another wrote:

‘[CT] totally changed my life. Helped me address aspects of my PTSD [Post-traumatic stress disorder]’

Anger Management

One participant pointed out that ‘Music soothes the soul’, and male prisoners, in particular, spoke of the way that the CT sessions allowed them to control and manage their anger.

‘I played the drums, so I got rid of any anger, also stopped me getting into trouble plus gave me confidence.’

‘I used the guitar as a coping mechanism to control my anger – it worked brilliantly.’

Despite being a temporary emotional enhancer, musical performance appeared to have a calming effect on participants in the longer term:

‘People said since Changing Tunes I’ve changed as I’ve calmed down.’

‘The main advantage for me was that I found myself feeling far more relaxed as a person after attending these classes.’

‘A good hobby to release stress, therefore [it makes you] a better person. It has tamed me anyhow.’

Prisons have always facilitated sports activities, such as gym and football, as a similar means of allowing prisoners to “blow off steam”. Music may fulfil similar human needs. One participant said:

‘Music is important to inmates as the gym and exercise and that’s no overstatement, it is a fact.’

It is no coincidence, then, that ‘gym is the biggest competitor’ to the CT programmes. As one focus group member explained:

‘Getting to the gym is a big priority for a lot of these guys, so when they have to choose between CT and gym [due to scheduling by the prison], it is hard to attract more participants sometimes.’

Coping with the Pains of Imprisonment

The most common therapeutic function mentioned by participants was the role of CT in coping with the pains of imprisonment. One focus group participant said, “This group is so important for our emotional – I don’t know – sanity”. This sentiment was supported in the written feedback:

‘This is the only normality we’ve got. It feels like life on the outside’.

‘Every time I’m at Changing Tunes I forget I’m in prison.’

It is important to situate these findings in the wider context of imprisonment, and in particular in the way that prison was experienced by CT participants. Participants routinely framed their time at CT as a form of “escape” from the prison:

‘A big difference is we are stuck in a cell for 23 hours a day. It gave you something to look forward to.’

‘While I was singing I forgot I was in such a terrible place.’

‘Yes it allows a person to escape mentally from this place and makes the sentence more bearable.’

It is important to note that prisoners recognise this is a temporary ‘escape’. None said that involvement in music transformed their entire prison experience into a party in a ‘four-star hotel.’ Instead, the CT experience was very clearly framed in terms of the ‘one bright point’ in an otherwise, very difficult and punishing environment.

At the same time, participants did use their new-found musical skills and interests to keep them occupied in their cells. At the male focus group, a participant said, ‘It is a great thing to have in your cell. It gives your week a sense of purpose’. As one participant wrote, if nothing else, the prison experience presents a person with the time to learn a new instrument: ‘Music was always something I wanted to do, but I never had the time. In here, there is nothing but time’.

Interestingly the descriptions of the “highs” of CT participation sounded very similar to the way some individuals describe drug use. For example, participants wrote:

‘It was a way to fully relax and escape personal problems’

‘It makes you forget your problems / sorrows and makes you feel a whole lot better.’

Some of the participants acknowledged this parallel and addressed it directly, suggesting that engagement with music might help to replace the use of drugs to cope with imprisonment:

‘You get a great buzz from being involved and when you nail a track it’s better than any drug.’

‘It gives people the chance to be creative and express themselves. Also music can fill that gap that drugs fill in the lives of many.’

Importantly, this ‘escape’ was not just from the monotony of imprisonment, but also from the more damaging aspects of the prison experience or as one participant put it, CT ‘was like an oasis in the desert of prison life’. One focus group member said, ‘There is so much negativity in jail. It is always “No, you can’t do that. No you can’t do this”, this is one thing we can do’. In their feedback, participants wrote:

‘Perfect for the sometimes soul-destroying environment of prison life. [CT] was my weekly breath of fresh air.’

‘In prison you feel worthless, so act ignorant and defensive, but when doing something useful, you feel valued, so act differently.’

Participants compared CT very favourably to almost all of the other programmes and activities offered in the prison environment⁷. Most of the other educational offerings in the prison were ‘rather patronising’ according to the focus group members: ‘They assume you can’t read or write. Here [CT], they treat you on a more grown-up level’, one said. Another agreed: ‘The education department here is just determined to do nothing that is useful. They give you basic skills, but other than that, there’s nothing to let yourself better yourself’.

I asked both focus groups to compare CT to the “offending behaviour” or other rehabilitative courses they might have participated in during their time in prison or on probation. In both focus groups, the reaction was the same: an outburst of cynical laughter like it was perhaps the stupidest question they had heard. One of the male prisoners said the words back to me sarcastically, “offending behaviour programmes,” to the general amusement of the group as if nothing more needed to be said. At the women’s focus group, one of the participants let me in on the joke: “The difference is those are for *them* [the prison], this [CT] is for *us*”. Again, such a conclusion from a self-selected group is prone to bias, but it may explain, at least for CT participants why they may be less motivated in other rehabilitative settings.

Immediate Benefits for the Wider Prison Environment

Finally, participants frequently emphasised that the immediate benefits of CT were not confined to the participants themselves. In particular, the concerts were often held up as an opportunity to “do some good for the prison”:

‘The prison benefits in lots of ways. They are able to put on concerts for the prisoners as well as music for plays and Christmas [events] which shows the public that some prisoners can, and do, change for the better.’

Additionally, numerous participants made the case that the emotional energy generated in the CT projects had an infectious quality, and that the social harmony started in the groups carried on to the wings:

“You walk back to the blocks singing! It does give you a buzz and that carries on.”

⁷ This is not a comparative study, and it would be very wrong to use data from these self-selected participants to undermine other activities in the prison. The purpose of these questions was to give some context to the participants’ views of CT.

‘It adds an extra dimension to the ‘regime’. The people involved always return from session ‘Happy and Smiling’ and that is infectious. It raises the mood on the wing. Gigs also provide entertainment which is rare.’

Numerous friendships between prisoners were clearly formed through CT involvement that carried on outside the workshops. Additionally, some participants suggested that their involvement in CT has convinced them to take the initiative to develop other, similar, arts-based projects for the prison. One focus group participant said she was trying to set up a theatre company in the prison. Her colleague credited this new-found self-initiative to CT, but said, “We can take it from here”.

Finally, the prison staff working on the wings of the two sessions I observed appeared to be hugely supportive of the initiatives (as were the governors I spoke to). At the women’s facility, a female prison officer helped to set up the microphone and other equipment for the session in advance of the participants arrival. The facilitator asked if she’d like to ‘have a go’ at singing and showed her some of the sheet music she had available. The officer at first objected, then changed her mind “Alright, go on, then”, and the two settled on “Killing me Softly”. Within seconds, the officer was serenading the empty chapel with a highly enthusiastic (if not, pitch perfect) rendition of the song, attracting beaming smiles from the prisoner participants who were just then being escorted into the room. At the song’s conclusion, the group (and I) burst into applause and the officer broke into nervous laughter, saying “I enjoyed that!” Likewise, in the male facility, a passing clergyman in full religious garb, was visibly ‘rocking out’ to the band’s rendition of ‘Tainted Love’ as he walked through the chapel where the session was being held to the amusement of the participants. These mutual interactions, facilitated through the contagion of music, likely helped to humanise staff in the eyes of prisoners, and prisoners in the eyes of staff.

MEDIUM AND LONG TERM IMPACTS

In addition to the more immediate outcomes of CT involvement, participation is also thought to result in some more lasting changes in individual self-concepts and life outcomes. Primary among these in the qualitative analysis include the following:

- A) Increased Confidence
- B) Finding One's Voice and Creativity
- C) An Identity Separate from Being an Offender
- D) Increased Employability

Each of these themes is discussed in detail below.

Increased Confidence

By far, the most frequently mentioned long-term benefit of participation in CT was an increase in one's sense of confidence and personal esteem:

'It provided an essential outlet needed in an institution; you can express yourself whilst boosting your self esteem and feeling you've achieved something to be proud of.'

'Changing Tunes has played a big part in helping me to believe in myself and has given me a huge increase in confidence and personal development.'

CT "helps you hold your head up high, gives you more self-confidence. It can only add to a person's self-worth."

Participants said this confidence translated into both hope for the future and the courage to explore alternative possibilities in their lives:

'It gives people hope and brings out the good in them and long may it continue.'

'It has given me the courage to experience new things.'

The importance of this new-found self-confidence is magnified in the context of the prison and the lives of the individuals who find themselves there:

'As a victim of serious abuse, whose self-confidence/esteem, expression and creativity was totally quashed/battered, these workshops have been invaluable for me.'

In the women's focus group, the participants compared this therapeutic benefit with other programmes targeted specifically at this same goal: "Self-esteem groups are just completely naff" one said. "Ha. Just a bit!" replied another. The women described the work involved in such groups as "making paper aeroplanes and that sort of thing".

Finding One's Voice

Numerous participants used the phrase of 'finding my voice' to describe the benefits of CT participation. The phrase was both meant literally to describe the vocal training provided, but also as metaphor for finding an inner self.

'Built my confidence and allowed my voice to develop.'

'It is an excellent way to find your voice and being able to express yourself.'

Others described this as 'coming out of my shell' or returning to the familiar 'release' metaphor as being 'released' from their own insecurities:

'Music workshops have not only opened me up to express myself but have brought down the very barriers that made me and other inmates so negative.'

Participants frequently credited CT with unleashing an inner creativity that they did not know they had inside them.

'Rather than stagnating and vegetating we can develop our creative side and help rebuild self respect.'

One participant summarised this concisely in his/her feedback: 'Music is creativity. Nuff said really.' Participants in both focus groups said they are now writing songs of their own. None had thought of or tried doing so prior to their CT involvement. This creative, generative work inside the prison is a stark counter to the passivity and helplessness of the standard prison routine. Participants stressed that this newfound creativity could be valuable to them in other life pursuits.

Discovering Their Value

At the most extreme, participants described CT as an opportunity for them to feel fully 'human' again or as valued human beings (again, an experience that is not always common in the prison context):

'It was brilliant and very rewarding, and gave me a sense of wholeness and that I was a valued member of the group.'

'It gave me a chance to be an individual.'

'People think that because you're a prisoner they seem to think you don't have a brain in your head. But, the amount of talent I've seen in girls in here [CT]'

Crucial to this newfound sense of self was the assumption of a new social identity as a 'musician' rather than 'just a prisoner':

‘Excellent, [the facilitator] made me feel like a fellow musician.’

This subtle process of “prosocial labelling” may be at the core of the CT process⁸. Facilitators establish a clear sense of respect among participants for their considerable musical abilities and accomplishments, as well as their skills as teachers. For such individuals then to treat the participants as ‘peers’ and to convey a sense of being ‘fellow musicians’ is a subtle, but crucial process in changing the way individuals think about themselves. Indeed, participants in their feedback notes often referred to themselves as ‘piano players’ or ‘drummers’ as in ‘I’m a drummer, so...’ suggesting a real internalisation of their musician identities.

Employability

Finally, the most contested outcome described by some, but not all, participants was improved employability upon release. Some participants were sceptical about how CT could improve their job prospects, particularly in the middle of a global recession:

‘Personally I cannot see how this could improve my prospects of employment in this current climate of job shortages especially as I will have a two year hole in my CV and conviction under my belt.’

Another responded to the feedback question about improving employability by writing, ‘No, but it hasn’t done me any harm.’ Another responded seemed even surprised by the question: ‘Honestly? I don’t see how’. One respondent even joked sarcastically: ‘I will be able to play a tune living on the streets to make money instead of begging.’

However, participants in both focus groups also visibly bristled when I suggested to them that ‘Some might say this isn’t very practical’ and that ‘Prisoners should be learning skills that would be more likely to lead to employment on release’. I was offering this as a sort of ‘Devil’s advocate’ position, but participants in the two groups found it an insulting suggestion and thought I was badly missing the point. They insisted that CT improved employability by building confidence, creativity and self-esteem.

Survey respondents wrote similar things when asked directly about the value of CT for employability:

‘Through social skills and confidence, not for employment but a sense of self-worth.’

⁸ Labelling theory is the idea that individuals internalise the negative labels that are assigned to them. Likewise, some rehabilitation theorists have started to argue that former prisoners can also be motivated to change through “prosocial labelling”, the perception that others believe they are more than just the sum of their offences. See e.g., Maruna, S., LeBel, T., Naples, M., & Mitchell, N. (2009). “Looking-glass Identity Transformation: Pygmalion and Golem in the Rehabilitation Process” (pp. 30-55). In Veysey, B., Christian, J., & Martinez, D. J. (Eds.) *How Offenders Transform Their Lives*. Cullompton, UK: Willan.

‘My musical skills did benefit although I don’t aim to go pro. My confidence did improve. It helps with meeting and making friends with other inmates and will definitely impact on my release.’

‘Music has made me want to attend college on release and has made me have more confidence in myself. It’s a must for getting inmates involved because it takes anger and negativity away from us.’

‘It has certainly helped push me in that direction, for employment and helping me progress as a better person.’

In other words, the projects’ effects on employability are mostly indirect rather than direct, with CT-triggered increases in self-confidence leading to better future life prospects.

Others, however, were insistent that their CT participation will lead directly to jobs on the outside. One focus group participant said, “The UK has one of the biggest music industries in the world” with many employment opportunities. Other participants talked about putting a band together on the outside or getting involved in providing private tuition on the guitar. Similar comments could be found in the written feedback:

‘I do dream or hope of having my own band when I get out. I love, eat, sleep, drink and dance music. It’s my life.’

‘I have been told I could earn a living from singing, so I suppose it has improved my prospects.’

‘I am hoping to go to a music college and I certainly feel more positive about working in the music industry.’

Although finding great success or even surviving financially in the music industry is always a long shot, these individuals appeared to be level-headed in their assessments of their prospects. In particular, participants pointed out how difficult it would be to find traditional forms of employment as ex-prisoners and suggested that former prisoners often find the forms of self-employment that are common in the music industry to be the most practical sources of income.

LOGIC MODEL SUMMARY

This research has resulted in the development of a three-part logic model describing how Changing Tunes works based on an aggregation of responses from CT participants themselves (see Table Three, below).

Table Three: Changing Tunes Logic Model

Changing Tunes Processes	Immediate Impacts	Longer Term Impacts
Sense of Collective Ownership/Responsibility	Emotional Energy	Increased Confidence
Therapeutic Alliance with Facilitator	Therapeutic Management of Depression	Finding One's Voice and Creativity
Group Bonding and Mutual Support	Anger Management	An Identity Separate from Being an Offender
Challenging Participants to Test Their Limits	A Drug-Free Means of Escape or Coping with Imprisonment	Increased Employability
Public Performance and Acknowledgement	A Calmer Prison Environment as a Whole	
Praise		
Fostering a Sense of Achievement		

It is unlikely that the contents of this model will come as any great surprise to facilitators of the workshops or indeed to participants themselves, as the model emerged out of a synthesis of their own responses. In fact, one participant in the men's focus group provided what could be a three-

line summary for this entire report, in his own words: ‘Coming to jail totally knocked my confidence. I felt like I was worthless. Then you get up there [at a concert] and 100 people are applauding you and at first you are scared to death, then you realise, “I can do this.” That is big.’

So, what value is a report that basically reiterates to the CT community what it already knows? Among other uses, this logic model can act as a foundation for future research. Theory-driven evaluation models⁹ suggests that in order to be meaningful, evaluations need to go beyond testing for outcomes (i.e. asking whether those in an experimental group have lower recidivism rates than those in the control group). Theory-driven evaluation also seeks to know “how” or “why” interventions get the outcomes they do, and this requires a logic model such as this one that can outline how programmes are supposed to work. Each step of the model above could, in theory, be measured. Process measures could be developed for the level of mutual support in a group, the sense of collective ownership, or the therapeutic alliance established by the facilitator. These process measures could then be systematically linked to short-term/immediate outcomes such as anger management and relief of depression, which could also be measured systematically. Likewise, longer-term outcomes such as increased confidence and employability, are also outcomes that could be measured. Finally, all of these could then be linked to measures of recidivism, employment or other long-term outcome variables of interest. When these long-term outcomes (e.g., measures of recidivism) are added, one can then trace back the factors that best predicted this outcome in the logic model and research might identify the “magic” ingredients in the CT process. So, for example, theory-driven research might find that the primary predictors of recidivism might be “fostering a sense of achievement” and “increased confidence”, allowing facilitators to focus efforts on these aspects of the work rather than trying to achieve a more abstract goal such as “reducing re-offending.”

At the very least, the above logic model can provide an answer to the question of “what is the purpose of CT in prison?” Those associated with CT work appear to have little or no doubt about the value and benefits of musical engagement in prison. Involvement in the work apparently provides its own justification along the lines of ‘you understand it, when you do it’. For those who have never participated in CT (or indeed, who have not had the opportunity to undergo collective training in music), however, the work requires some explanation. As with all public services, prison resources are scarce at the moment. It is reasonable to ask why public resources should be committed to musical tuition if there is no connection between this and reductions in re-offending. This research outlines one logical explanation for how CT might be effective in reducing crime. Future evaluations can test whether this model “works” or not, although internal CT evaluations have already suggested considerable success in reducing re-offending beyond what might be expected.

What matters, until such outcomes have been established, is that the model is a plausible one -- at the very least to those participating in it. The perspectives of participants are sometimes overlooked in evaluation research or deemed to be irrelevant. This is unfortunate as they provide an important source of face validation for the goals of an intervention. CT participants’ clear

⁹ See e.g., Chen, H. (1990). *Theory-driven evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage; Pawson, R., & Tilley, N. (1997). *Realistic Evaluation*. London: Sage.

commitment to the model of change developed above may or may not translate into success on the outside, but certainly translates into programme engagement and motivation that would be the envy of other rehabilitative interventions¹⁰.

In theory, CT can provide an ‘escape’, not just from institutionalisation, but from the cycle of punishment, shame, anger and defiance that prisoners and ex-prisoners find themselves trapped in. In theory, CT participation provides them with a sense of hope, a sense that they can rise above familiar bad habits and surprise themselves and others. The outcome is then ideally a “changing of tunes” both for the prisoner and for the prison. Indeed, the logic model suggests that future evaluations might usefully look at success in two, different ways. In the first, CT works on individuals to lower their likelihood to re-offend. Equally, however, this research suggests that CT should work on an institutional level, lowering overall rates of self-harm, depression and spirals of hostility that can become endemic in the prison environment. Either direction of future research would be most welcome.

¹⁰ See e.g., Ward, T. & Maruna, S. (2007). *Rehabilitation*. London: Routledge.

APPENDIX A:

CURRENT CHANGING TUNES FEEDBACK FORM

Project Evaluation – Prisoner Feedback

Please complete this form and return it in the addressed envelope provided to _____ Your feedback is extremely valuable to us and is essential in ensuring that the Changing Tunes sessions are run in the most enjoyable and productive way possible. Feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you like.

Establishment: _____

Period of Attendance:.....

Number of sessions attended

Do you feel that you were placed in the group most suited to your abilities / musical tastes?

.....
.....
.....

Were you able to ask questions, state your opinions and have a say in the decisions made by the members of your group?

.....
.....
.....

How do you feel about the tuition you received from the Changing Tunes Musician?
Was it easy to follow and at your own pace of learning?

.....
.....
.....

Is there anything you would change and / or could be improved about the set up of the weekly sessions? (For example: The length of time of the sessions / The Venue / The number of prisoners attending ...etc)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Do you feel that these workshops gave you an opportunity to express yourself?

.....

.....

.....

Did these workshops make a difference to your life in Prison? (Please explain any positive benefits or disadvantages)

.....

.....

.....

Do you feel that attending Changing Tunes has improved your prospects of employability on release, either through improving your musical skills or through increased confidence and personal development / social skills?

.....

.....

.....

How do you feel a project like Changing Tunes benefits the Prison as a whole?

.....

.....

.....

Would you recommend Changing Tunes Music Workshops to others?

Why?

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX B:

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING FEEDBACK PROCEDURES

As an additional aspect of this study, the researcher was asked to “evaluate” the evaluation forms being utilized by the Changing Tunes projects to self-monitor their work (see Appendix A, above). The process of self-evaluation is a critical one for an organisation to learn from both its successes and failings, and in particular to tap into the insights of participants. Changing Tunes is to be congratulated for its routine monitoring of participant feedback, but there are improvements that could be made to this system.

Most feedback forms contain both close-ended and open-ended questions. The former, usually in the form of yes/no questions or limited response items (such as “too easy”, “too difficult”, “just right”) are suited to quantitative analysis, and are helpful for making reliable conclusions such as “65% of participants reported satisfaction with X”. Open-ended items allow participants to use their own words to explain their answers to the closed-ended items or to raise new issues in feeding back about the projects. These items are not as appropriate for statistical generalizations. One can say “50% mentioned having difficulty with Y”, yet it is difficult to know how to interpret such findings if all participants were not asked directly about Y. Some might have forgotten to mention Y accidentally. On the other hand, open-ended items can provide detail, nuance, and insights that are not available from the “tick-box” closed-ended responses.

Changing Tunes, currently, asks a variety of closed-ended questions in the format of open-ended questions. So, for example, “Do you feel that you were placed in the group most suited to your abilities / musical tastes?” is actually “yes or no” questions, and some participants answered it that way, despite having three lines available on the form to expand upon their answer. As part of this analysis, the responses were coded both for their content and also for their answers to all such closed-ended (yes/no) items.

Unfortunately, the latter type of data was not found to be useful enough to include in the preceding analysis for a variety of reasons. Partially, this is because, as a qualitative/exploratory piece of research, closed-ended items are on their face unlikely to generate useful new insights. However, this was not the only problem. Almost every “yes/no” item received 90 to 100 per cent “yes” responses across all the different projects evaluated. Hardly any participants ever answered ‘no’ to these questions, and only around 5 to 15 per cent even responded “don’t know” or “not applicable”. These results are obviously extremely positive. On the other hand, they are not very helpful for facilitators or administrators wanting to learn from the feedback to improve the projects, nor are they useful for multivariate statistical analysis because they do little to differentiate participants. [Consider, for example, one was doing an analysis of whether gender is an important predictor of success in some field, and had a sample that was 100 percent female, or else was gender-balanced but was 100 percent successful.]

Ideally, to be of value, closed-ended items should be sensitive enough to pick up minor differences in views among participants (even those who broadly support a given project). One easy suggestion here is to replace “yes/no” response sets with a likert scale (e.g., “On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being ‘least satisfied’, please rate the following...”) or else a wider variety of responses such as “This is something the project should look more closely at” “Some progress is

being made, but more work could be done on this in the future”, etc. In general, respondents should feel comfortable giving critical answers within a broad context of support for the programme, so items might also be prefaced by statements like, “We do not just want to hear the positives, please also be honest with us about where we can improve” and so forth.

An effort could also be made to include items that are more likely to differentiate one participant from another on useful background/process factors. The following is an example of a background item that might be useful.

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being “no involvement at all” and 10 being “considerable involvement”, how much exposure did you have to musical performance and musical training prior to enrolling with Changing Tunes?

Such an item would allow CT management and staff to determine if the workshops are having equal success for those with little or no musical background as it is with those who have come to the programme with some previous experience.

Future measures of process could be based directly on the findings from this research. So, for example, items might ask participants to rate the therapeutic alliance they felt with their facilitator utilising standardised measures for this from the literature. These in turn can be used to differentiate participants on their levels of overall satisfaction or outcomes such as recidivism or dropout/retention. That is, immediate and medium-term outcomes can be linked with both process measures and long-term outcomes in order to help understand why some participants experience different outcomes.

Open-ended items should continue to be used to allow participants a voice in shaping the future of the projects, however, these should encourage more narrative-based responses. Items might ask them to describe their first impressions of the workshops and initial involvement, followed by questions about turning point experiences, high points and low point experiences with CT, and how their impressions of and engagement with the group has changed over time. These more chronological/biographical questions will allow for a better sense of individual trajectories across involvement with the work.

APPENDIX C

REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE

Finally, a very secondary part of this commissioned work was to provide critical feedback on the practices of the CT projects themselves. Due to the limited nature of the data collection for this project, these suggestions need to be interpreted with some caution. For instance, due to the design of this research, it was impossible to interview anyone who was highly dissatisfied with their experience with CT. Methodologically, it makes sense to interview participants themselves to find out what benefits they perceive of a given intervention. The problem with such an approach, however, is the issue of selection bias. As individuals who already come to CT, voluntarily and willingly, these participants obviously find something of value about the programme or they would not keep coming back. The methodology misses those who perhaps have dropped out of the projects or who were not interested in what they saw or heard about them¹¹.

Nonetheless, a few constructive criticisms did emerge in the written feedback and in the focus groups from participants who were otherwise very satisfied with the CT workshops. At least thirty respondents to the solicitation for written feedback mentioned wanting more sessions per week. A participant in the women's focus group told me, "They could easily double or triple the number of participants if there were more opportunities during the week". Another thirteen respondents asked for longer sessions (the workshops I observed lasted around two hours apiece).

Some participants suggested the need for additional private tuition in addition to the group work:

'Yes but I do think I would have benefited from a few more 1:1 sessions.'

'The tuition was great. I could have done with a bit more theory, one to one basis.'

¹¹ To get at these sorts of issues, I asked participants in both groups if they could remember any former participants who had to drop out of the projects. I worried in particular, about individuals who might be intimidated by the high standards of talent that I saw on display in the two sessions I observed, and decided that they would embarrass themselves in front of the other participants. In both focus groups, however, I was surprised that participants struggled to think of any such former participants who had dropped out. Most of the turnover in CT was a result of people being transferred or released from the prison they told me. The women's group, consisting of some very long-term participants, could not recall a single incident of someone leaving out of intimidation or for any other reason. The male participants could think of just one dropout – a 'professional' musician who felt he was 'too good' for tuition and more advanced than others in the band. 'He didn't come in with the right attitude', one said.

This assessment was not shared across the board. Indeed, some respondents praised the amount of private coaching they received:

‘Yes, I feel that I had a lot of help and a one to one at times when I needed it.’

This suggests that this is an area of work that could be made more uniform across the different prisons. Other participants discussed the need for better space (a bigger or dedicated room in some facilities) or better access to instruments, recording equipment and the like.

Finally, some participants expressed a sense of frustration with the amount of time CT sessions were cancelled:

‘Changing Tunes made a huge difference to my stay at [prison] in that it gave me something to look forward to. However I felt great frustration that the sessions were frequently cancelled.’

Participants suggested that these cancellations were not the fault of CT facilitators, but rather the host prisons. CT sessions tend to be the ‘first thing cancelled’ inside the prison, with other departments and activities given precedence over the work. In describing his frustration regarding such cancellations, one interviewee suggested that CT was not viewed as important or urgent by the prison service, and treated with the respect given to other interventions.

However, the prison staff members who had contact with the two groups I observed appeared to be inordinately keen on the introduction of music into their day, and participants in the focus groups said that prison staff attending the concerts were highly supportive as well. One wonders if there could be a role for more staff participation in the groups – one facilitator told me that one prison’s head of security was ‘a keen drummer’ and that he had had contact with some officer musicians as well. Introducing staff to the CT workshops might at first disrupt the bond between band members, but it could also conceivably improve staff’s understanding of the CT process and be a means for breaking down some of the barriers between staff and prisoners. Music may be able to do this better than almost any other method.