

Lyrics written and performed by prisoners

*"Arts projects in prisons and resettlement are nothing new. They have been making an impact for many years. The arts are particularly good at furnishing the foundations for change. They build confidence and self-awareness, trust, co-operation and respect – vital capacities when it comes to reforming attitudes and behaviour, and developing resilience in vulnerable people."*

Dr. Andrew Miles, senior research fellow, ESRC Centre for Research on socio-cultural change, University of Manchester, and chair of the Research into the Arts and Criminal Justice Think Tank (REACTT)

*When times get hard  
and my confidence is low,  
I come to you  
and you give that glow.  
When I was heavy on drink  
and I just couldn't think,  
you would try to put me straight,  
it was always too late.  
You gave me chance after chance,  
and I wouldn't give you a glance,  
but now I'm in jail  
and they won't give me bail.  
I've written this as if it's all better,  
but I've got further to go before I send you a letter.  
All you ever wanted was your K.... back,  
and I'm sorry mum  
I'm way off track,  
but now I am here,  
I've reached a new clear.  
Don't want to do this any more mum.  
Want to be the girl you adore mum.  
Now I'm not so wee,  
gonna be the woman you know I can be,  
gonna turn my life around,  
and hopefully one day make you proud  
so you can shout out loud,  
this is my daughter,  
this is my daughter -  
and you are my dearest mother.*

Designed and created by Caroline Carmichael [www.carolinecarmichael.co.uk](http://www.carolinecarmichael.co.uk)



## Arts in Prison

*"It's the only thing I  
have ever started  
and completed ... I  
learned I'm capable  
of achieving goals"*

*"It's really made  
me think about all  
the things I could  
be doing with my  
time on the outside  
rather than getting  
into trouble and  
drinking"*

*"She was polite and  
helpful and helped her  
peers and this is a  
direct contrast to what  
I know and she has  
portrayed to me prior  
to the course"*



## Vision and Background

Artlink Central has extensive experience of working within prisons and the field of restorative justice. For fifteen years, Artlink Central has been in partnership with the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) delivering beneficial arts programmes in HMP YOI Polmont and HMP & YOI Cornton Vale.

Artlink Central has a commitment to develop sustainable creative models of running arts projects in prisons and the criminal justice system. Our vision is to help offenders develop emotional and social awareness; to support prisoners in achieving greater citizenship, dignity, self-expression, self-confidence, well-being and social skills; to facilitate change and aspiration in prisoners through recognition of self-responsibility and potential; to align with the Scottish Prison Service in meeting Offender Outcomes; to demonstrate successful outcomes of well-planned arts programmes for prisoners; to maintain strong partnerships within the Scottish Prison Service and other establishments and agencies; to continually review our approach and effectiveness; to work with an attitude of equality towards people of diverse backgrounds, faiths, sexualities, gender, class, race and abilities; to respect the security requirements of the Scottish Prison Service.

## Research

Artlink Central is committed to evaluation and monitoring procedures and in 2009 commissioned a criminologist and researcher from Families Outside to assess its arts projects. This research examines the impact of Artlink Central's initiatives in the prison setting. The final report, published in June 2010, is based on evaluation of work delivered by Artlink Central in HMP & YOI Cornton Vale over the period of one year from April 2009.

## Artlink Central in HMP & YOI Cornton Vale

Research: evaluation and findings by  
**Briege Nugent and Dr Nancy Loucks, Families Outside,**  
**June 2010**

### Working in partnership

For the research project, Artlink Central delivered a series of intense, week-long arts programmes with the support of strategic managers and prison officers, HMP & YOI Cornton Vale. Workshops included drama, dance, music, animation and visual arts. The researcher gathered information from prisoners who participated in programmes; prison officers; Scottish Prison Service managers; partners in Education; Artlink Central artists. The evaluation and findings reveal the partnership between the Scottish Prison Service and Artlink Central is very strong. Other findings reveal:

- Prison officers report *“they felt the course had an impact on all of the women who took part”* and also that women *“improved their communication and social skills as a result of taking part in the courses.”*
- Prison officers feel the course *“allowed them to see a different side of the participants that was more positive”* and, as a result, *“this improved their relationship”* with prisoners.

### Meeting SPS Offender Outcomes

The evaluation suggests Artlink Central programmes directly contribute to Offender Outcomes by:

- assisting the prison in reaching its target of improved mental well-being among prisoners (Offender Outcome 1);
- helping offenders maintain or improve relationships with families and peers (Offender Outcome 5);
- improving attitudes and behaviour (Offender Outcome 9).

During the year from April 2009, 189 prisoners took part in Artlink Central's courses. This involvement supplied about 1,689 development hours to the Key Performance Indicator of the Scottish Prison Service – providing at least 2 million hours per annum of offender participation in activities such as workshops.

### Impact on prisoners

Based on interviews and feedback forms, prisoners benefited from Artlink Central's programmes by growing in self-esteem. One of the evaluation's main findings shows prisoners enjoy taking part in Artlink Central's courses. Offenders realise learning can be a means of self-development, which underlines the value of more interactive ways of teaching through the arts. The research also demonstrates:

- many prisoners appreciated the opportunity to learn something new and the chance to make something for themselves or for their children (Offender Outcome 1);
- all the women found the courses relaxing;
- prison staff and artists noted changes in the participants during each course and specifically highlighted the improvement in confidence and self-esteem; prisoners who were identified as more disruptive than others were reportedly calmer during the week of the course (Offender Outcome 9);
- prison officers and artists believe the project could have a long-term impact on participants in terms of improving their behaviour, helping them to build skills and ultimately to help them turn away from crime (Offender Outcome 9);
- prison officers recognise that Artlink Central courses have a big impact on those with mental health issues. In particular, two women who were prolific self-harmers did not self-harm during the week they were doing the course (Offender Outcome 1).

*The full evaluation report is available from Artlink Central*

## Looking to the Future

Artlink Central looks forward to a continued close partnership with the Scottish Prison Service. The key focus of our arts programmes are to sustain or improve the physical and mental well-being of prisoners (Offender Outcome 1), increasing their emotional and social awareness. According to the Prison Trust's Bromley Briefing Prison Factfile, July 2010, the majority of sentenced prisoners have mental health problems:

- 72% of male and 70% of female sentenced prisoners have two or more mental health disorders;
- 20% of prisoners have four of five major mental health disorders;
- 10% of men and 30% of women have had a previous psychiatric admission before they came into prison.

Artlink Central's arts programmes also contribute to Offender Outcomes 3 (Reduced or stabilised substance misuse), 5 (Maintained or improved relationships with families, peers and community) and 9 (Improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending...). The programmes accommodate planning, collaboration, clarity of roles, structure, aims, outcomes, relevance and assessment.

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